

**ETHNIC IDENTITY, RACISM, AND PERCEIVED
DISCRIMINATION AMONGST STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF
THE FREE STATE**

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READER'S ORIENTATION

In accordance with the regulations of the University of the Free State, this dissertation is presented in article format. Consequently, each article should be viewed as an independent yet related entity. A list of contents, tables and figures precedes each article.

By virtue of the fact that two aspects of the same broader field of interracial relations are examined, it may translate into a perception of overlap and repetition between the articles. However, it is not unusual in the research community to publish several articles based on a single study. Consequently, it is suggested that the reader view each article independently although they deal with inter-connected facets.

ARTICLE ONE

**ETHNIC IDENTITY AND PERCEIVED DISCRIMINATION
AMONGST STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE**

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Abstract

The legacy of apartheid continues to pervade society on numerous levels and thus it remains imperative to study issues pertaining to discrimination, ethnicity and race. This study examines the relationship between ethnic identity and perceptions of discrimination amongst students from four groups (white Afrikaans speaking, white English speaking, Sotho language group and Nguni language group) on the main campus of the University of the Free State, Bloemfontein. Data were collected from 397 psychology students by making use of the *Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure* and the *General Ethnic Discrimination Scale*. Statistically significant differences were found between the language groupings in terms the levels of discrimination they perceived to experience, but not in terms of their strength of ethnic identity. A significant positive relationship was found between ethnic identity and perceptions of discrimination.

ETHNIC IDENTITY AND PERCEIVED DISCRIMINATION AMONGST STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The past 12 years of political liberation have removed numerous physical boundaries and with the Constitution as platform, South Africa has seen significant change in terms of for example, political policy, corporate strategy and economic development. Theoretically, a society has been created that renders all citizens equal. However, all these tangible changes remain mere tokenism if there has not been a fundamental transformation in the attitudes and perceptions of the individuals that make up the new South Africa. More concretely put, for a rainbow nation to exist, it will be necessary to find evidence of a racial tolerance and a decrease in acts of racial discrimination.

There are clear indications that racial bias continues to exist in numerous settings. A study into the state of affairs 10 years into democracy showed that 33% of South Africans had been victims of racism (Kaiser Family Foundation & Harvard University, 2004). It also appears that racist perceptions and stereotypes remain prevalent amongst all racial groups in South Africa (Slabbert, 2001). More specifically, 62% of South Africans were seriously concerned that they would be discriminated against on the basis of their race (Kaiser Family Foundation & Harvard University, 2004).

Universities are known to be an environment where many of a country's future leaders are cultivated. Yet, being microcosms of society campuses are not exempt from many of the social problems prevalent in the broader community – racial issues

appear to be no exception. Various studies at American universities, report that racial tension, segregation and acts of discrimination remain a concern amongst students (Ancis, Sedlacek & Mohr, 2000; Marcus, Mullins, Brackett, Tang, Allen & Pruett, 2003; Sidanius, van Laar, Levin & Sinclair, 2004). The situation appears to be similar in South Africa. For example, an analysis of a university residence dining hall found that informal segregation clearly still exists between black and white students (Schrieff, Tredoux, Dixon & Finchilescu, 2005). Various other South African studies indicate that although there is evidence of improved racial relations, elements of racism continue to exist (Smith & Stones, 2001; Smith, Stones & Naidoo, 2003; Walker, 2005).

Evidently much progress must still be made for this “rainbow nation” to be a reality. The perceptions people within society have regarding the state of racial affairs can either contribute positively to intergroup relations or undermine the plethora of efforts aimed at eliminating this vice from society.

Relevance of Perceptions

Individual perceptions of and subsequent reactions to racism differ vastly. Kurt Lewin’s field theory serves as a widely accepted framework within which to interpret such differences (Lewin, 1951). Lewin was one of the original proponents of what is now the widely accepted psychological theory that human behavior is the function both of the person’s individual characteristics and their environment – the two elements being mutually interdependent. Individuals can be seen to behave differently based on the way in which the dynamics between perceptions of the self and of the environment were processed. The total psychological field, or ‘lifespace’,

within which people acted, had to be viewed in order to understand the differences in behaviour. This widely researched theory continues to be confirmed in recent studies (Marcus et. al, 2003; Operario & Fiske, 2001). Perception of a situation for an individual extends beyond the objective facts to a deeper level, involving factors such as motives, the level of social support the person has access to, the level of certainty or ambiguity as to the intent of the action, and the group's relative status. Therefore, when interpreting any situation people from different races and backgrounds will make dissimilar attributions. A reasonable deduction to draw is that "prejudiced" acts from the target's perspective and from the perpetrators' perspective are likely to have entirely different meanings. Investigating perceived discrimination becomes important because the extent to which individuals perceive and appraise events as racist will influence the effect these events will have on them personally and the manner in which they will interact with others:

On a personal level, perceived discrimination is regarded as a stressor that could impact the mental health of individuals. Individuals who believed they were being discriminated against reported for example, lower levels of life satisfaction, increased anger and heightened anxiety (Landrine & Klonoff, 1996). Furthermore, the stress individuals experienced was influenced by the frequency of the event, as well as their individual appraisals (Landrine, Klonoff, Senaida, Fernandez & Roesch, 2006). The outcomes were both event-specific and global (having long-term implications) (Sellers & Shelton, 2003) and affected both attitudes and academic achievement (Hidden bias, 2005).

Interactions with members from other groups are affected by individual's perceptions. The expectations individuals have in a situation contribute significantly to whether or not they will perceive an event to be negative or positive. Thus, individuals who had accrued a history of negative contact with an out-group had a higher expectation of being discriminated against, and that these persons who saw themselves as potential targets experienced higher levels of stress (Tropp 2003). Similarly, Shelton, Richeson and Salvatore (2005) found that when a person expected to be discriminated against, they had more negative experiences out-group members. The interplay between perceptions and expectations is made evident by the relatively new concept of meta-stereotypes (Finchilescu, 2005; Vorauer & Miller, 1997). A meta-stereotype is essentially what a person thinks the out-group thinks of their group. This type of group level thinking has both emotional and behavioural consequences. For example, if a person believes that the out-group holds negative attitudes towards their own group, they subsequently avoid contact with them. These negative outcomes stemming from intergroup anxiety are mirrored and lead to a cycle of hostility and avoidance. This avoidant type behaviour then serves to create a context within which diverse groups manage to live in close proximity, but also manage to avoid real interaction. The expectation that interaction with the out-group will be negative, also results in an increased chance that otherwise neutral or even positive events are interpreted as prejudice. These expectations and avoidant behaviours thus contribute to the perpetuation of false beliefs about other groups, increasing likelihood of both perceived and real discrimination.

Ethnic Identity

The concept of ethnic identity, extends beyond mere membership in an ethnic group to include an element of psychological attachment. Ethnic identity has two components: an internal attitudinal component (the extent to which an individual feels attached to the group), as well as an external component that embraces the extent to which individuals participate in ethnic group activities and rituals. These two sub-components are labeled ethnic affirmation and ethnic exploration respectively (Romero & Roberts, 1998). Romero and Roberts also found that individuals with high ethnic affirmation have positive attitudes to their own group and feel a sense of belonging and commitment to the group's ideals. Individuals with high ethnic exploration, on the other hand, actively searched for information regarding the group, engaged in dialogue about the origins of the group and participated in "in-group" activities.

The nature of this in-group attachment plays a role in the extent to which an individual perceives racial discrimination. Various researchers have confirmed a link between ethnic identity and perceived discrimination, finding that the stronger an individual's group identification was, the more sensitive they were to information concerning the group – particularly to racial stigmatization (Sellers & Shelton, 2003; Sidanius et. al, 2004). Moreover, Operario and Fiske (2001) found that individuals who were high-identifiers were more likely to label ambiguous events as discriminatory compared to the low-identifiers who were presented with the same information. Additionally, Operario and Fiske propose a cyclical relationship between ethnic identity and perception of discrimination. Hence, minority identification makes one more vulnerable to prejudice, which in turns causes the individual to identify more strongly with their group.

Whilst Kaspar and Noh (2001) note that the negative mental health outcomes associated with discrimination may be greater for high-identifiers, other researchers contend that ethnic identity is a resilience factor against the negative outcomes of discrimination (Landrine et. al, 2006). More specifically, Sellers and Shelton (2003) found that the elements of ethnic exploration were positively associated with discrimination, but that the ethnic affirmation protected individuals against negative consequences. These recent studies indicate that the relationship between these two variables might be more complex than initially assumed.

Group Status

The relationship between ethnic identity and discrimination cannot be understood fully without taking into account the role of group status (Tropp, 2006; Tropp & Pettigrew, 2005).

Group status is largely defined by who has access to valuable resources and in most countries/situations this is the majority group (numerical). When determining dominant group status, access to political power is more important than being the numerical majority – but economic and social status remain the most important determinants (cf. Bornman, 1999; Duckitt & Mphuthing, 1998; Johnson, 1994).

According to the widely accepted social identity theory (Tajfel 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1986), members of high status in-groups will experience more emotions that are positive and are less likely to perceive that they must compete for resources. They also tend to have more positive evaluations of out-groups and tend to be less highly

identified with their particular group. Low status groups who must make more of an active search for positive group identity will tend to have a higher ethnic identity. In their search for a basis upon which to distinguish themselves positively from other groups, there is an increased tendency to develop negative attitudes towards out-groups. Contact between individuals from high and low status groups will be affected by the extent to which these groups are aware of social stratification (Tropp & Pettigrew, 2005) and in such interactions devalued (or low status) groups will be keenly aware that they are more likely to be the victims of discrimination (Tropp, 2003).

Determining group status in the fledgling democracy South Africa presents researchers with a unique challenge. For the greater part of 40 years, the numerical minority group enforced political power and restricted access to resources and economic opportunity, with the inevitable result that they became the high status in-group. Pillay (2004) correctly points out that since the dawn of democracy in South Africa a theoretically equal society has been created where all individuals have equal access to education, resources, movement and opportunity. However, they continue to participate in the greater community under unequal conditions and race remains a key determinant in who has access to resources. An analysis of the status quo reveals the gross inequalities that pervade South African society. According to the General Household Survey (Statistics South Africa, 2006), the overall unemployment rate amongst economically active individuals in South Africa is around 27%. However, only 5% (118 000 people) of whites are unemployed as opposed to 32% of blacks (12 million people). Such discrepancies result in disproportionate access to financial resources. Although the overall poverty situation in South Africa has improved since

the last census held in 2001, the relative positions between racial groupings has not changed significantly. Furthermore, there were statistically not enough whites who had no education for the number to be recorded, but more than 2.6 million blacks had no education whatsoever.

Clearly, despite having obtained political power the non-white majority still do not have the benefits of economic, educational or social status. It could therefore be proposed that whites maintain their higher status. However, attempts to redress the past, for example affirmative, action policies and government initiatives such as Black Economic Empowerment, pose a real threat to the current high status of whites. It would not be unrealistic to suggest that currently both blacks and whites could perceive their group to be of a lower status – blacks in terms of their current access to resources and whites in terms of their future access to these resources. A social context is created that is highly susceptible to racial tension. A paradox now presents itself where policies, both pre- and post-democracy, create an environment where rivalry between groups is primed and not rivalry between individuals.

From the foregoing discussion it was thus decided to investigate the relationship between ethnic identity and perception of discrimination in an ethnically diverse setting, namely the University of the Free State. Given that this university is a historically white Afrikaans university, strong racist attitudes were prevalent prior to 1994. Yet, since the time of the first democratic elections, it has developed a reputation as one of the institutions on the forefront of transformation within the higher education environment. Therefore, evidence of racial tolerance in such a setting heralds hope for transformation even in the most resistant of contexts in the wider South African community. As noted before, although a university campus does

not necessarily represent the entire population, it is true that a campus represents a society of its own, albeit on a micro level. Furthermore, it is important to investigate the attitudes of the youth because they represent both the leaders and the parents of the future who will instill in their children largely the same attitudes and values that they hold.

METHODOLOGY

Participants and procedure

A total of 440 psychology students at the University of the Free State, Bloemfontein Campus, participated in the study. The research design was non-experimental in nature and convenience sampling was employed. Students of all ethnic groups, year levels and faculties were incorporated. Although analysis of responses from all ethnic groupings and languages was originally proposed, due to the very small representation of Coloured, Asian and students from other groupings, it was decided only to use the questionnaires completed by white and black students. After discarding the questionnaires completed by Coloured, Asian and other groupings a total of 411 students remained. Of these, 14 questionnaires were incomplete and were discarded, thus the final sample thus consisted of 397 participants. The demographics of the sample are found in Table 1.

Table 1 *Demographic Characteristics of the Sample*

	n	%
Gender		
Male	76	19.1
Female	321	80.9
Age (years)		
Under 18	4	1.01
18	25	6.28
19	77	19.39
20	89	22.43
21	69	17.38
22	63	15.88

23 and above	70	17.63
Language and Ethnicity		
White Afrikaans	199	50.1
White English	69	17.3
Nguni Speaking	47	11.8
Sotho Speaking	91	22.9
Year of study		
1	144	36.27
2	111	27.96
3	48	12.09
4	66	16.62
5 or more	28	7.06

Approximately 80% of the sample were between the ages of 18 and 22. Only 1% of the participants were under the age of 18 and 18% of participants were 23 and older. For black participants, language was used to classify students into one of two broad groupings namely the Nguni group (Xhosa, Zulu, Ndebele and Swati speaking students) and the SeSotho group (SeSotho and Tswana speaking students). Half of the respondents were white Afrikaans students; this high percentage is understandable given that the University of the Free State is a historically white Afrikaans University. Whilst a third of the respondents were black, there were double the numbers of SeSotho speaking respondents compared to Nguni speaking respondents. This too can be expected given that SeSotho is the most widely spoken official language in the Central South African region.

Permission was obtained from the lecturers involved and questionnaires were administered during class time. Consent was obtained from all participants by means of a consent form ensuring that participation in the study was entirely voluntary. Completed consent forms were handed in separate from the completed questionnaires in order to ensure confidentiality. Questionnaires were administered personally by the researcher in all instances.

Measuring Instruments

The following measures were administered:

- A self-compiled biographical questionnaire obtained information on: age, gender, year of study, faculty, home language and ethnic grouping.
- The *Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure* (MEIM) (Phinney, 1992) was used to operationalise ethnic identity. Items in this 11-item scale are based on a 1 to 4 Likert type scale. It has demonstrated good reliability (above 0.80) and an overall internal consistency of 0.82 across a wide range of international ethnic groups and ages (Phinney, Masse, Chen, Romero & Roberts, 1999; Romero & Roberts, 1998). The measure demonstrated sufficient reliability in the South African context in a study conducted by Smith, Stones and Naidoo (2003). The scale measures the extent to which an individual identifies with, feels belonging to, has pride in, and has knowledge of their ethnic background. Scores potentially range from 11 to 44, where a low score is associated with a weak sense of ethnic identity and a high score with a strong sense of ethnic identity.
- The *General Ethnic Discrimination Scale* (GED) (Landrine et al., 2006) was used to operationalise the extent to which respondents perceive they are discriminated against in their daily lives, more specifically in the last year. The 18-item measure is based on the *Schedule of Racist Events* (SRE) (Landrine et.al, 2006). Although the GED scale measures the latent construct of perceived discrimination in a similar

manner to the *Schedule of Racist Events*, its advantage, according to the authors, lies in the ability to measure this construct equally well amongst all ethnic groups. The language used requires only a Grade 5 education and is simplified to accommodate participants who do not have English as a first language. The scale includes questions on both the frequency and the appraisal of incidents perceived as discriminatory. Scores potentially range from 0 to 265, a high score indicates the participant subjectively believes they are frequently discriminated against. According to research in the USA, the *General Ethnic Discrimination Scale* has high internal consistency (0.94 to 0.95) and one-month test-retest reliability of 0.95 to 0.96.

Statistical Analysis

In order to examine the relationship between the two variables, Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was conducted. A MANOVA was performed to determine the differences between the four language groups in terms of their scores on the *Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure* and on the *General Ethnic Discrimination Scale*. Where significant differences were found, these were further investigated by means of Scheffé's test (Howell, 1995). In such cases, the practical significance of such results was investigated by calculating effect sizes. The following indexes were used to determine effect sizes (Nolan, 2002):

$$R^2 = \frac{\text{SS between}}{\text{SS total}}$$

SS total

The following guiding values were used: $R^2 = 0,01$ = small effect, $R^2 = 0,06$ = a medium effect, and $R^2 = 0,14$ = large effect.

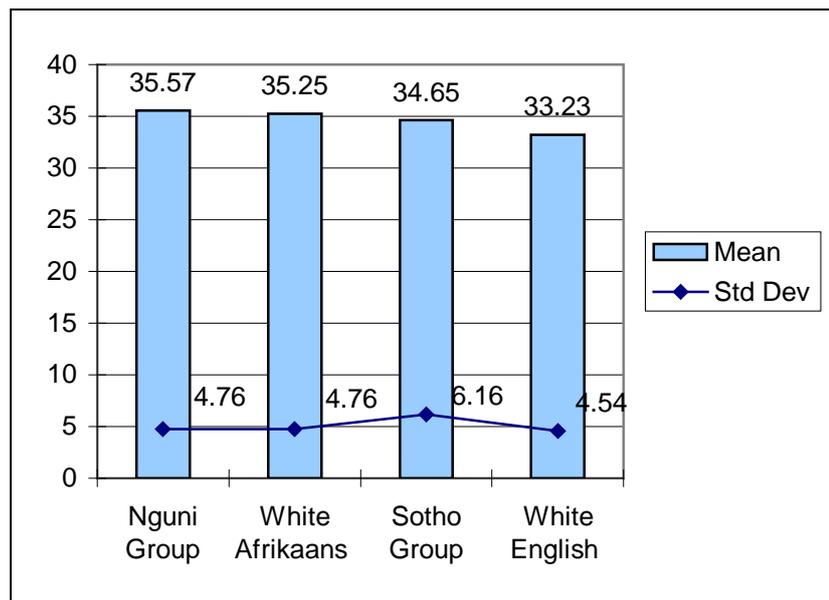
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results obtained from the two measures will be discussed next.

Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure

The mean scores for the *Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure*, ranked by group, are presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Mean scores Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure



The mean score for the measure of ethnic identity was 34.84 (maximum 44). The average score is not exceptionally high, but does indicate relatively strong ethnic identity amongst all groups.

In order to examine differences between the four language groups in terms of scores on the *Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure*, a MANOVA was performed. The results are shown in Table 2. No significant differences between the four language groups were found. No further analysis was therefore conducted.

Table 2 *Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure: MANOVA Results*

Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure	F Value	p value
	2.78	0.0408

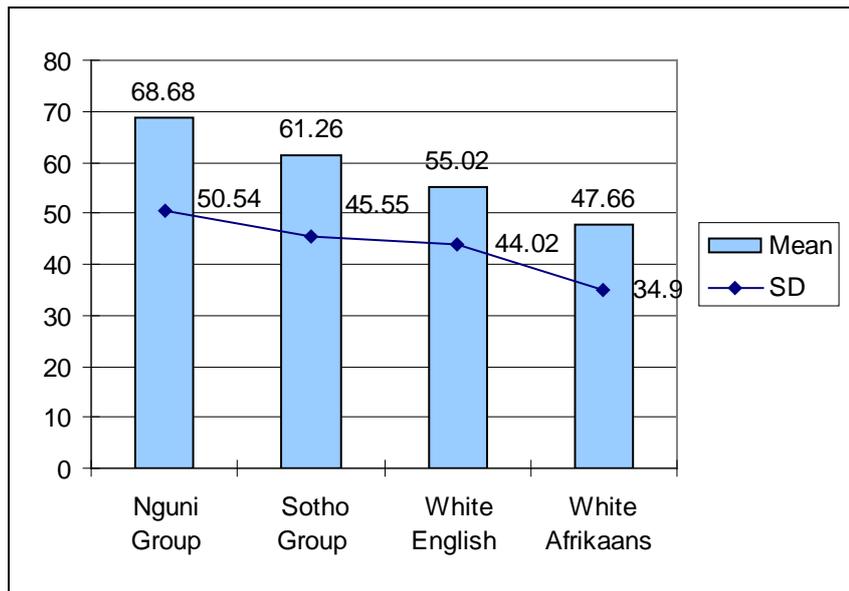
This result is not entirely consistent with the findings of other research studies in South Africa. Previous research has found significant differences between all ethnic groups (Smith & Stones, 2001), and also that English speaking whites demonstrated a weaker sense of ethnic identity than and Afrikaans speaking whites (Appelgryn & Bornman, 1996; Bornman, 1999)

Differences between previous studies and the current research could possibly be linked to perceptions of relative deprivation and group status. As previously mentioned, access to resources and the perception of low in-group status will have an effect on strength of in-group identification. The relatively high means for all groups on the *Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure* can be attributed to a perception amongst all groups that they are in a position of relative deprivation. In other words, it is plausible to hypothesise that blacks are keenly aware of the inequalities that remain between races resulting in the perception that their group still has lower status and needs to compete rigorously for resources and thereby enhancing their sense of ethnic identification. On the other hand, whites (both English and Afrikaans speaking), although still at a relative advantage currently, could interpret their future in terms of the impact that Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment and affirmative action policies may have on their lives (Smith & Stones, 2001). Consequently, they also perceive their groups to be of lower status, strengthening their sense of ethnic identity. The consequence is that the differences in ethnic identity found in other studies is not evident in the current research, it appears in particular that for English speaking whites strength of ethnic identity is increasing.

General Ethnic Discrimination Scale

The mean scores for the *General Ethnic Discrimination Scale* ranked by group are presented in Figure 2.

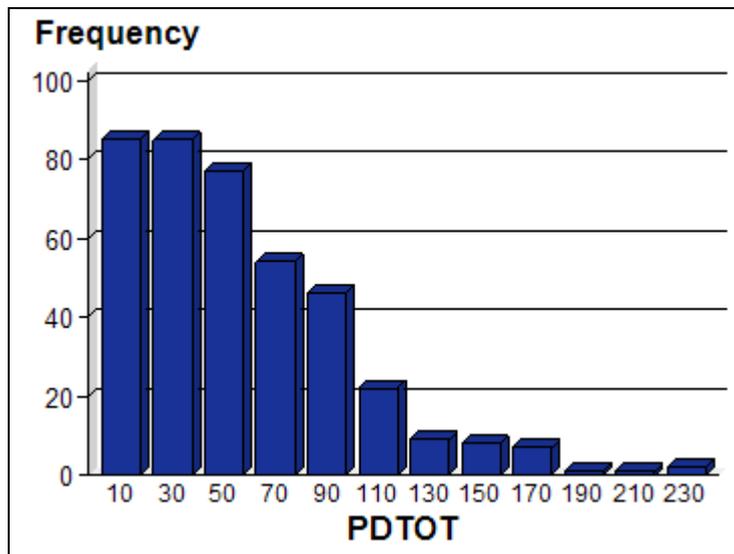
Figure 2 Mean scores General Ethnic Discrimination Scale



The mean score for the *General Ethnic Discrimination Scale* was 54.38 (maximum 265). This very low mean indicates that students do not perceive that they are frequently discriminated against in their daily lives.

Furthermore, if the distribution of scores graphically illustrated in Figure 3 is examined, it is evident that the distribution is skewed heavily to the right.

Figure 3 Distribution of scores on the General Ethnic Discrimination Scale.



A noteworthy finding is that 3% of the respondents had a total score of 0, i.e. they have never experienced any form of racial discrimination in their entire lives. Approximately equal numbers of black and white respondents constitute this 3%. More than 60% of the sample had scores under 50. Results such as this are encouraging because the lack of direct experiences of racial discrimination is evidence of the emergence of the desired “rainbow nation”.

In order to examine differences between groups in terms of scores on their *General Ethnic Discrimination Scale*, a MANOVA was performed. The results are shown in Table 3. Significant differences were found between groups in terms of their perceived levels of discrimination. In order to determine the nature of these differences, Sheffé’s test was conducted (Howell, 1995). The only significant difference was found between Afrikaans speaking whites and Nguni speaking blacks. By examining the group means it can be seen that the Afrikaans speaking group

perceived the least discrimination and the Nguni speaking blacks perceived the most. The effect size was calculated where $R^2 = 0.034$, which is considered to be small (Nolan, 2002).

Table 3 *General Ethnic Discrimination Scale: MANOVA Results*

General Ethnic Discrimination Scale	F Value	p value
	4.55	0.0038

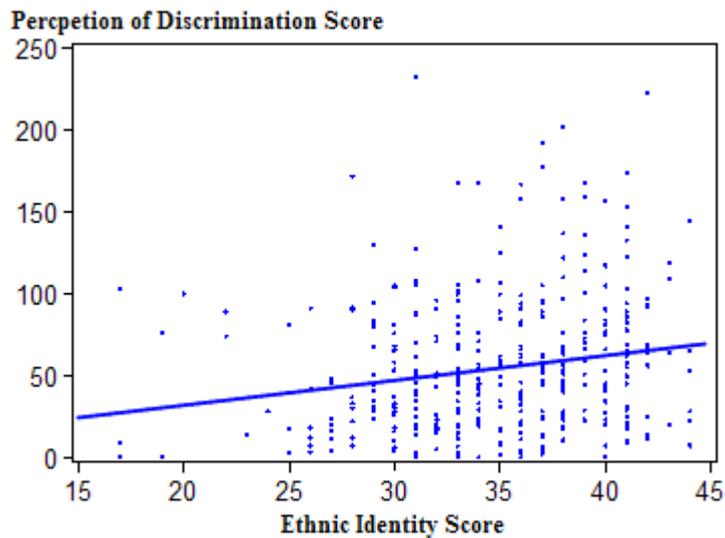
The nature of the scale that measured perception of discrimination must be taken into account when interpreting the low scores, especially amongst white students. The scale assesses the extent a person believes they have been a victim of discrimination in the past (their entire life and more specifically the past year). It is logical that until this point whites will have experienced very little discrimination, having been the majority group with exclusive access to privileges. Policies such as affirmative action and the Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment may be interpreted by whites as a form of discrimination, and studies conducted into perceptions of discrimination within this group in the next 5-10 years may yield different results.

Relationship between the Variables

The correlation between ethnic identity and levels of perceived discrimination was investigated by the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (SAS, 2004). A significant positive relationship was found ($R=0.18$, $p<0.00000$). Thus, the higher the students' sense of ethnic identity, the more likely they are to perceive that they are the victims of racial discrimination. Perception of discrimination has previously been linked to ethnic identity and thus the significant result found here concurs with

previous research (Operario & Fiske, 2001; Romero & Roberts, 1998; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). The correlation is graphically illustrated in Figure 4.

Figure 4 Scatterplot and correlation for scores on the two measures



CONCLUSION

Since racial issues continue to pervade South African society on all levels, the results of the present study (although limited in their generalizability), should add valuable insight into pertinent issues and reveal potential areas of research. Firstly, there were no differences in strength of ethnic identity amongst the participants. For all four language groups, relatively high levels of ethnic identity were found. It furthermore appears that ethnic identity is increasing for the English group. Secondly, significant differences were found between the groups in terms of the levels of racial discrimination they perceive themselves to be exposed to. Afrikaans speaking whites perceive the least discrimination against them and the Nguni speaking black group the most. Thirdly, the relationship between ethnic identity and sensitivity to racial discrimination was confirmed in this study.

However, the findings in this study should be interpreted with caution. When evaluating the study as a whole, there are two factors that potentially limit its generalizability. Firstly, it should be noted that the educated tend to be more liberal and thus, university level students may be more open-minded in their opinions. For example Bornman, (1999) found that Afrikaans people with higher ethnic identity had lower levels of formal education. Secondly, the present study was conducted at a historically Afrikaans university in the Free State Province, a context within which one could expect to find more conservative attitudes. Should the study be replicated in other geographical areas of a more cosmopolitan nature, different results might be found.

Although the results of the current research appear optimistic, a following should be considered in future research. In order to fully understand and explain the relationship between ethnic identity and race related information, the subcomponents of ethnic identity may need to be studied), a sentiment supported by the research of Romero and Roberts, (1998) and Landrine et. al (2006). Also, to further understand ethnic identity and the role that it plays for various groups in South Africa, it is important to study the perception of status of the various demographic groupings (cf. Tropp, 2006; Tropp & Pettigrew, 2005). Clearer understanding of each group's perceptions of themselves and of other groups, can aid the understanding of ethnic identity in South Africa and the factors that perpetuate racial tension.

Recent research has shown the value of taking a phenomenological approach to investigating race (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005). Future research in this regard should consider the value of combining the quantitative approach in this study with an

examination of the lived experiences of respondents, to gauge precisely how individuals experience racism in their daily lives. For example, it is not unlikely that racism has different phenomenological meanings to black and whites. Whites are more likely to believe racism has been eliminated when people's attitudes have changed, whereas blacks would be more likely to believe it has been eliminated when there is greater justice in distribution of resources (Smith & Stones, 2001).

It is also evident that group status is in constant flux and plays a role in race relations in South Africa. Future studies should consider taking into account for example, the role affirmative action and land redistribution will play in extent to which whites feel that they are discriminated against and how this affects their attitudes towards blacks, as well as their strength of ethnic identity.

Continual improvement in racial relationships on campuses is not only a unique opportunity to contribute to the greater transformation of South African society – it is an imperative. Thus, at institutions of higher education adequate attention needs to be given so as to ensure that student life encourages high quality, equal status interactions between groups. Only once contact moves beyond superficial proximity to genuine relationships can we hope to eradicate prejudice (Smith & Jorge, 2001).

The perceptions that individuals within society have of the proverbial “rainbow nation”, will continue to influence race relations between groups. Studies such as the current research indicate that although individuals do not currently

experience frequent discrimination, continued attention must be given to issues of race to ensure that these positive trends not only continue, but improve.

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Should it be found that in the participant's daily lives they feel discriminated against on the basis of their race, perhaps the resilience of racist attitudes has been underestimated (cf. McConahay, 1983, 1986; Dixon & Tredoux, 2005)

ARTICLE TWO

**ETHNIC IDENTITY AND RACIAL INTOLERANCE AMONGST
STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE**

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Abstract

Given the racial history of South Africa and the inevitability of racial categories that must now be employed to address the inequalities created by apartheid, it remains imperative to study issues of ethnic identity and racial intolerance. This study examines the relationship between ethnic identity and racial intolerance amongst students from four ethnic groups (white Afrikaans speaking, white English speaking, SeSotho language group and Nguni language group) on the main campus of the University of the Free State, Bloemfontein. Data were collected from 397 psychology students by making use of the *Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure* and the *Subtle Racism Scale*. Statistically significant differences were found between the language groupings in terms of their racial tolerance, but not in terms of the strength of their ethnic identity. A significant positive relationship was found between ethnic identity and racial intolerance.

ETHNIC IDENTITY AND RACISM AMONGST STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE

LITERATURE REVIEW

Strong emotion has been stirred by the media and politicians alike around the concept of the so-called “rainbow nation”. The term was intended to encapsulate the ideal of multiculturalism and the coming-together of people of many every race in South Africa, in a country previously defined by the strict division of white and black. The question that now needs to be asked is “To what extent do South Africans believe they live in the rainbow nation?” In essence, is the post-apartheid South African experience a non-racial one or is merely there a façade of contact lacking in true integration and interaction?

Unfortunately, despite numerous attempts aimed at transformation, a residual tension appears to remain present in the social dynamics and interactions between racial groups. The findings of various researchers (Slabbert, 2001; Kaiser Family Foundation, 2004) that show racist perceptions and stereotypes still exist between different groups in South Africa, are augmented by numerous media reports (Blandy, 2006; Ras, 2006) and current social discourse. An analysis of university residence dining halls on a South African campus, for example, found that an informal segregation clearly still exists between black and white students (Schrieff, Tredoux, Dixon & Finchilescu, 2005).

Other studies conducted into racial issues indicate an increase in tolerant racial attitudes (Smith & Stones, 1999; Smith, Stones & Naidoo, 2003), but also found that the degree to which psychological transformation has happened is disappointing. Furthermore, these studies have established a relationship between strength of ethnic identity and racism. In order to provide a theoretical context these two variables will be discussed briefly.

Racism

Defining racism is virtually impossible due to its multifaceted nature and complexity; however, the following brief discussion should enhance understanding of the topic. Racism is not a static concept, but manifests in various forms (individual, institutional, structural, and cultural) at different points in history (cf. Duncan & de la Rey, 2002). Prejudice is defined by Duckitt (1994) as “a negative intergroup attitude which is bad, unjustified, or irrational in some way or other”. Bunzel (1991) summarized racism as an attitude of hostility because of a person/persons background or membership in one race that is irrational. Thus, all racism is a form of prejudice, but not all prejudice attitudes are racist in nature.

Racial prejudice, frequently leads to discriminatory behaviour, although depending on prevailing social norms this is not necessarily the case (McConahay, 1986; Tajfel, 1982). Societal norms define what forms of racism are acceptable and unacceptable, and thus the expression of racism changes as each society changes (Henry & Sears, 1995; Slabbert, 2001). The nature of racist attitudes and their resilience to change (McConahay, 1983, 1986; Dixon & Tredoux, 2005) make it naïve to assume that dissolving political boundaries in South Africa automatically resulted in positive intergroup attitudes.

Racism creates a system of beliefs where inequality is rationally justified, the common element in all forms of racist expression being the favourable effects that discrimination has for in-groups and negative effects it has for out-groups (Kaspar & Noh, 2001). Examples of various forms of racism are briefly mentioned. Old-fashioned racism (Jim Crow/traditional racism) assumes that it is just to subject an “inferior” group to unequal and unfair treatment, i.e. there is a strong behavioural component (Duckitt, 1991, 1994; Kleinpenning & Hagendoorn, 1993). During the apartheid era these types of overt racist

attitudes and behaviours created a context within which it was acceptable to prohibit inter-racial social contact, and oppose equal opportunity for members of all races (cf. McConahay, 1983). Dramatic changes in social norms and legislation led to the emergence of modern racism (subtle/symbolic racism) that no longer condoned the overt expression of racism. The underlying negative attitude towards members of other racial groups remains the same, but expression becomes inhibited. Another example of the current expressions of racism is aversive racism. Here individuals hold subconscious negative beliefs about other races (that result from socialization and become internalised through social discourse), but still consciously try to portray egalitarian attitudes. In order to deal with this incoherence, interactions with out-groups are avoided (Kleinpenning & Hagendoorn, 1993; Bobo, Klugel & Smith, 1996). Whilst the prevalent political and social environment in South Africa places strong emphasis on monitoring and eliminating acts of blatant racial discrimination, it is possible that indirect racial discrimination such as the abovementioned are creating a façade of racial equality, but in reality a society still exists that is divided along racial lines (Pillay, 2004).

Ethnic Identity

As previously mentioned, research has determined a link between racism and ethnic identity (Smith & Stones, 1999; Smith, Stones & Naidoo, 2003).

The concept of ethnic identity extends beyond mere membership in an ethnic group to include an element of psychological attachment. Ethnic identity has two components: an internal attitudinal component (the extent to which an individual feels attached to the group), as well as an external component that embraces the extent to which individuals participate in ethnic group activities and rituals. These two sub-components are labeled ethnic affirmation

and ethnic exploration respectively (Romero & Roberts, 1998). Romero and Roberts also found that individuals with high ethnic affirmation have positive attitudes to their own group and feel a sense of belonging and commitment to the group's ideals. Individuals with high ethnic exploration, on the other hand, actively searched for information regarding the group, engaged in dialogue about the origins of the group and participated in "in-group" activities.

Racism and Ethnic Identity

Many of the investigations into the link between racism and ethnic identity have been done within the theoretical framework of social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Essentially this theory proposes that individuals have a need to be regarded positively. Furthermore, individuals derive a part of their self-concept from their group membership and the value they attach to being a member of a particular group. Members of high status in-groups will experience more emotions that are positive and are less likely to perceive that they need to compete for resources. They tend to have more positive evaluations of out-groups and tend to be less highly identified with their particular group. Low status out-groups who must make more of an active search for positive group identity will tend to have a stronger sense of ethnic identity. In this search for a basis upon which to distinguish themselves positively from other groups there is an increased tendency for them to display negative attitudes towards out-groups (Bornman, 1999). Operario and Fiske (2001) found that the greater the extent to which individuals identify with the group, the more sensitive they are to information concerning the group. Hence, they may be particularly vigilant to discrimination and race-related information.

Smith and Stones (1999) found general support for this argument in South Africa where groups with higher ethnocentrism had more negative attitudes to social change, held

more positive attitudes towards in-group members and more negative attitudes towards out-groups. Similarly, Bornman's (1999) study found that for whites (both English and Afrikaans) and blacks, higher ethnic identity led to more negative out-group evaluations. Other studies have found differences between racial groups, for example, Operario and Fiske's (2001) study suggested that for blacks ethnic identity might play a bigger role in the perception of race-related discrimination than for whites. High white ethnic identity appeared to be more strongly associated with feelings of guilt or perceptions of power and superiority than with perceptions of discrimination. This is further supported by Sellers and Shelton (2003) who firstly confirmed the link between ethnic identity and prejudice, and further found that the more blacks identified with their group, the more likely they were to report racial incidents within the past year.

Romero and Roberts (1998) investigated this relationship on a more in-depth level by examining the link between racism and the two sub-categories of ethnic identity. Contrary to the assumptions of social identity theory, their study showed that individuals with high ethnic affirmation actually held more positive attitudes towards out-groups. However, in line with social identity theory, the second component, ethnic exploration, was linked to more negative out-group attitudes. This research suggests that intergroup attitudes may not be based only on ethnic identity in general, but rather on the sub-elements of it.

Access to Resources, Group Status and Race Relations

Group status is largely defined by who has access to valuable resources and in most countries/situations this is the majority group (numerical). When determining dominant group status, access to political power is more important than being the numerical majority –

but economic and social status remain the most important determinants (cf. Bornman, 1999; Duckitt & Mphuthing, 1998).

Determining group status in the fledgling democracy South Africa presents researchers with a unique challenge. For the greater part of 40 years, the numerical minority group enforced political power and restricted access to resources and economic opportunity, with the inevitable result that they became the high status in-group. Pillay (2004) correctly points out that although in South Africa a theoretically equal society has been created where individuals are all afforded the same opportunities, they participate in this greater community under unequal conditions. Race still remains a key determinant in who has access to resources. This is clearly illustrated by information gleaned from the General Household Survey (Statistics South Africa, 2006). The overall employment amongst economically active individuals in South Africa is around 27%, however only 5% (118 000 people) of whites are unemployed as opposed to 32% of blacks (12 million people), 21% of Coloureds and 12% of Indians. Such discrepancies logically create inequality in access to financial resources. The overall poverty situation in South Africa has improved since the last census held in 2001, but the relative positions between racial groupings has not changed significantly. The General Household Survey further revealed that there were statistically not enough whites who had no education for the number to be reported, but 2 million blacks had no education whatsoever.

Thus, it is evident that the minority grouping still largely maintains a higher economic and social status and by implication theoretically maintains their in-group status. According to social identity theory, this scenario will cause the out-group to continue striving to gain access to these resources, maintaining a strong sense of ethnic identity and holding onto

negative attitudes towards out-groups. The very nature of these inequalities will lead to conflict since scarce resources are a key determinant in race relations (Duncan & de la Rey, 2002). However, attempts to redress the past, for example affirmative, action policies and government initiatives such as Black Economic Empowerment, pose a real threat to the current high status of whites. It would not be unrealistic to suggest that currently both blacks and whites could perceive their group to be of a lower status – blacks in terms of their current access to resources and whites in terms of their future access to these resources. A social context is created that is highly susceptible to racial tension. A paradox now presents itself where policies, both pre- and post-democracy, create an environment where rivalry between groups is primed and not rivalry between individuals.

In order to examine the relevance of these theories in interpreting race relations in South Africa, it was thus decided to explore racist attitudes and ethnic identity amongst students at the University of the Free State. Although a university campus does not necessarily represent the entire population, it is true that a campus represents a society of its own, albeit on a micro level. Students between the ages of 18 and 23 at university in South Africa today did not receive any of their school-level education in the formerly racially segregated system. It can therefore be expected that the opportunity to learn in an integrated environment such as this will have resulted in improved racial attitudes. Furthermore, it is important to investigate the attitudes of the youth because they represent both the leaders and the parents of the future who will instil in their children largely the same attitudes and behaviours that they hold.

METHODOLOGY

Participants and Procedure

A total of 440 psychology students at the University of the Free State, Bloemfontein Campus, participated in the study. The research design was non-experimental in nature and convenience sampling was employed. Students of all ethnic groups, year levels and faculties were incorporated. Although analysis of responses from all ethnic groupings and languages was originally proposed, due to the very small representation of Coloured, Asian and students from other groupings, it was decided only to use the questionnaires completed by white and black students. After discarding the questionnaires completed by Coloured, Asian and other groupings a total of 411 students remained. Of these, 14 questionnaires were incomplete and were discarded, thus the final sample thus consisted of 397 participants. The demographics of the sample are found in Table 1.

Table 1 Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

	n	%
Gender		
Male	76	19.1
Female	321	80.9
Age (years)		
Under 18	4	1.01
18	25	6.28
19	77	19.39
20	89	22.43
21	69	17.38
22	63	15.88
23 and above	70	17.63
Language and Ethnicity		
White Afrikaans	199	50.1
White English	69	17.3
Nguni speaking	47	11.8
SeSotho speaking	91	22.9
Year of study		
1	144	36.27
2	111	27.96
3	48	12.09
4	66	16.62
5 or more	28	7.06

Approximately 80% of the sample were between the ages of 18 and 22. Only 1% of the participants were under the age of 18 and 18% of participants were 23 and older. For black participants, language was used to classify students into one of two broad groupings namely the Nguni group (Xhosa, Zulu, Ndebele and Swati speaking students) and the SeSotho group (SeSotho and Tswana speaking students). Half of the respondents were white Afrikaans students; this high percentage is understandable given that the University of the Free State is a historically white Afrikaans University. Whilst a third of the respondents were black, there were double the numbers of SeSotho speaking respondents compared to Nguni speaking respondents. This too can be expected given that SeSotho is the most widely spoken official language in the Central South African region.

Permission was obtained from the lecturers involved and questionnaires were administered during class time. Consent was obtained from all participants by means of a consent form ensuring that participation in the study was entirely voluntary. Completed consent forms were handed in to the researcher separate from the completed questionnaires in order to ensure confidentiality. Questionnaires were administered personally by the researcher in all instances.

Measuring Instruments

The following measures were administered:

- A self-compiled biographical questionnaire obtained information on: age, gender, year of study, faculty, home language and ethnic grouping.
- The *Subtle Racism Scale* (SRS) (Duckitt, 1991, 1993) operationalised inter-racial tolerance. This widely used 10-item uni-dimensional scale assesses the

acceptance of inter-racial contact and the extent to which individuals aspire to equal status amongst all races. The scale was designed specifically for use within South Africa and has demonstrated reliability coefficients ranging from 0.91 to 0.76 in previously published studies (Duckitt, 1991; 1993; 1994; Duckitt & Farre, 1994). Sufficient construct validity has been established (Duckitt, 1991, 1993, 1994; Duckitt & Farre, 1994). Scores on this measure potentially range from 0 to 40, with low scores indicating high acceptance of inter-racial contact and high scores indicating low acceptance of inter-racial contact.

- The *Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure* (MEIM) (Phinney, 1992) was used to operationalise ethnic identity. Items in this 12-item scale are based on a 1 to 4 Likert type scale. It has demonstrated good reliability (above 0.80) and an overall internal consistency of 0.82 across a wide range of ethnic groups and ages (Phinney, Masse, Chen, Romero & Roberts, 1999; Romero & Roberts, 1998). The measure demonstrated sufficient reliability in the South African context in the study conducted by Smith, Stones and Naidoo (2003). The scale measures the extent to which an individual identifies with, feels belonging to, has pride in, and has knowledge of their ethnic background. Scores potentially range from 11 to 48, where a low score is associated with a weak sense of ethnic identity and a high score with a strong sense of ethnic identity.

Statistical Analysis

In order to examine the relationship between ethnic identity and racial intolerance, Pearson's Product Moment Correlation was conducted. A MANOVA was performed to determine the differences between the four language groups in terms of their scores on the

Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure and the *Subtle Racism Scale*. Where significant differences were found, these were further investigated by means of Scheffe's test (Howell, 1995). In such cases, the practical significance of such results was investigated by calculating effect sizes. The following indexes were used to determine effect sizes (Nolan, 2002):

$$R^2 = \frac{SS \text{ between}}{SS \text{ total}}$$

The following guiding values were used: $R^2 = 0,01$ = small effect, $R^2 = 0,06$ = a medium effect, and $R^2 = 0,14$ = large effect.

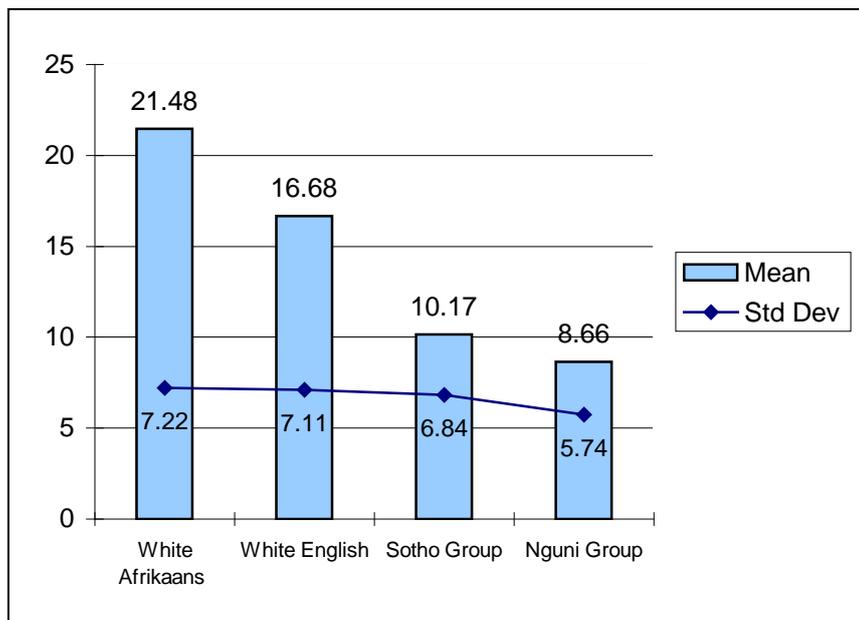
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results obtained from the two measures will be discussed next.

Subtle Racism Scale

The mean response scores for the *Subtle Racism Scale* ranked by group are presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Mean response scores for the Subtle Racism Scale



The mean score for inter-racial tolerance is 16.47 (maximum = 40). This low mean is indicative of high levels of inter-racial tolerance and suggest the existence of the “rainbow

nation". This is confirmed in the findings of the Kaiser Family Foundation and Harvard University (2004) report who found that 71% of Blacks, 67% of Coloureds and 54% of whites believed that race relations had improved since 1994. Furthermore, they found that 70% of South Africans believed that race relations would improve even further in the next five years.

In order to examine differences between the four language groups in terms of their scores on the Subtle Racism Scale, a MANOVA was performed. Significant differences were found. Results for the MANOVA are shown in Table 2.

Table 2 *Subtle Racism Scale: MANOVA Results*

Subtle Racism Scale	F Value	p value
	88.36	<0.0001

In order to determine the precise nature of the differences post-hoc analysis was done by means of Sheffé's test (Howell, 1995). It was found that the Nguni speaking group does not differ significantly from the SeSotho speaking group in terms of their tolerance for inter-racial contact. However, both black groups differed significantly from both the white groups. Furthermore, English speaking white students differed significantly from Afrikaans speaking white students with regard to their tolerance for inter-racial contact. By examining the means for the various groups it is noted that Afrikaans speaking white students are the least tolerant, English speaking students are more tolerant than the Afrikaans speaking students, but less tolerant than both black groups who demonstrated the most tolerant inter-racial attitudes. The effect size was calculated where $R^2 = 0.403$, which is considered to be large (Nolan, 2002) and thus the results can be considered to be of practical significance.

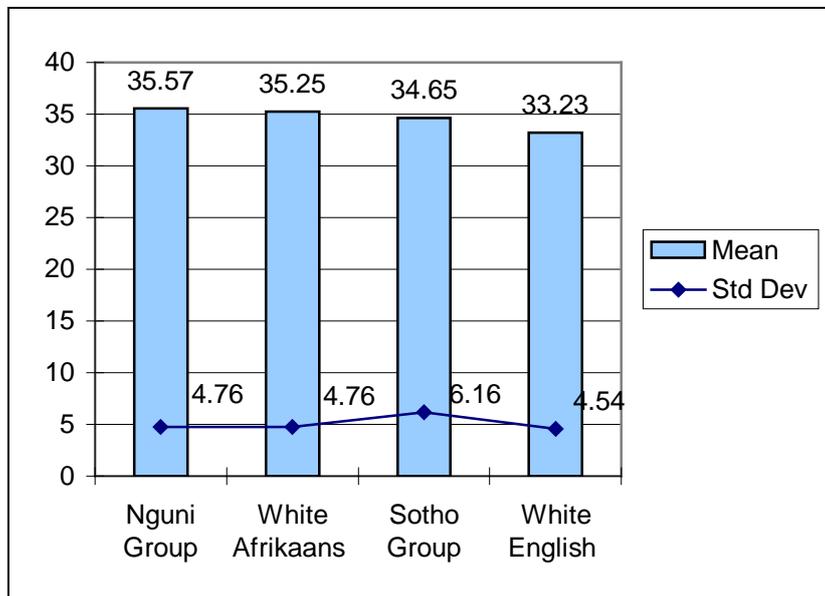
The *Subtle Racism Scale* has shown similar differences between the four language groups in other studies, for example Smith and Stones (1999) found that black students were

the most tolerant and that white Afrikaans students were the least tolerant. Furthermore, the differences between English and Afrikaans speaking students has also been noted in previous research (Appelgryn & Bornman, 1996; Smith & Stones, 1999; Smith & Stones, 2001), where it was found that Afrikaans students demonstrated significantly less racial tolerance than the English speaking group.

Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure

The mean response scores for the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure ranked by group are presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2 Mean response scores Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure



The mean score for the measure of ethnic identity was 34.84 (maximum 48). The average score is not exceptionally high, but does indicate relatively strong ethnic identity amongst all groups

In order to examine differences between the four language groups in terms of scores on the *Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure*, a MANOVA was performed. Results for

the MANOVA are shown in Table 3. No significant differences between groups in terms of their ethnic identity were found. Since no significant differences were found, no further analysis was conducted.

Table 3 *Results of MANOVA: Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure*

Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure	F Value	p value
	2.78	0.0408

This result is not entirely consistent with the findings of other research studies in South Africa. Previous research has found significant differences between all ethnic groups (Smith & Stones, 2001), and also that English speaking whites demonstrated a weaker sense of ethnic identity than and Afrikaans speaking whites (Appelgryn & Bornman, 1996; Bornman, 1999)

Taking into account that for many white English South Africans, ethnicity has been strongly linked to apartheid policies, objections to the system could previously have led to a decreased sense of ethnic identity in English whites. These increases in ethnic identity amongst English whites can possibly be understood in terms of social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) and realistic conflict theory (Duncan & de la Rey, 2002) discussed previously. Access to valuable resources (e.g. job opportunities, education, quality of life) is linked to in-group status and influences ethnic identity and race relations (Bornman 1999; Operario & Fiske, 2001). Vast changes in public policy (for example Black Economic Empowerment and affirmative action) may have led to English whites perceiving the relative deprivation of their group, resulting in stronger group identification (Appelgryn & Bornman, 1996; Smith & Stones, 2001).

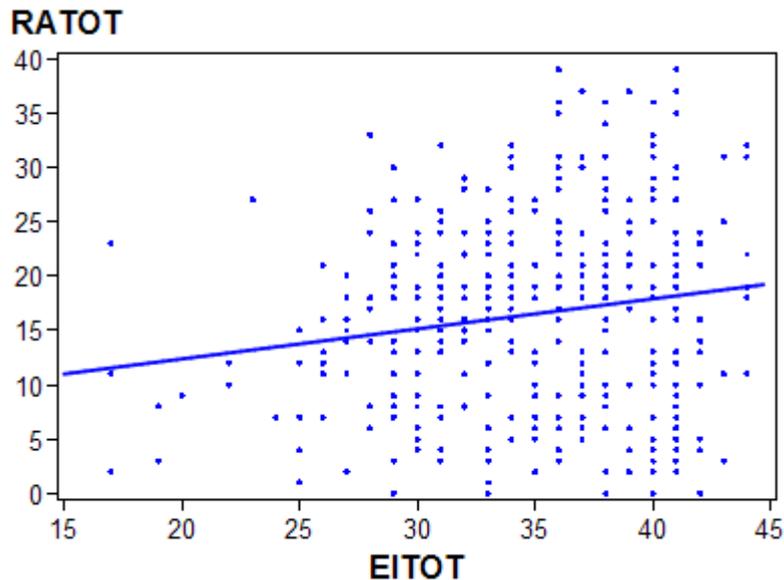
The fact that no significant differences were found between the various groups in terms of their ethnic identity could possibly be linked to current perceptions of in-group status. Access to resources and the perception of in-group status will have an effect on strength of in-group identification and feelings towards the out-group (Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Bornman, 1999; Operario & Fiske, 2001). The groups with higher status should demonstrate, according to social identity theory, lower levels of ethnic identification and higher levels of inter-racial tolerance, as their access to resources is not threatened. The opposite result is expected for the group with lower status. However, the complexity of the South African political, social and economic environment and the gross inequalities previously discussed makes it almost impossible to determine which group has high group status. For example, it is plausible to hypothesise that blacks are keenly aware of the inequalities that remain due to the legacy of apartheid. This awareness of inequalities results in the perception that their group still has lower status and needs to compete rigorously for these resources and thereby enhancing their sense of ethnic identification. Whites (both English and Afrikaans speaking) on the other hand, although still at a relative advantage currently, interpret their future in terms of the negative impact that black Economic Empowerment and affirmative action policies may have on their lives and thus also perceive their groups to be of lower status, also resulting in stronger ethnic identity. A situation is thus created where all groups perceive themselves to be threatened and to be of lower status.

Relationships between the Variables

The relationship between ethnic identity and racial tolerance was investigated by means of Pearson's Product Moment Correlation. (SAS, 2004). A significant positive correlation between scores on the *Subtle Racism Scale* and the *Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure* was found ($r=0.161$; $p=0.0013$). Therefore, the more an individual identified with

their group, the less tolerant of inter-racial contact they were. Results are graphically demonstrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3 Scatterplot and correlation for scores on the two measures



This is confirmed by various previous studies (Smith & Stones, 1999; Smith, Stones & Naidoo, 2003; Bornman, 1999; Operario & Fiske, 2001). Fisher's r to z transformation was used to determine whether there are statistically significant differences between the four language groups in terms of the strength of the relationship between ethnic identity and racial intolerance. The only significant difference between groups ($\alpha = 0.05$; critical value = 2.326), was between the Sotho speaking group and the Nguni speaking group, the Sotho speaking group displayed a stronger relationship between the two variables than the Nguni speaking group.

CONCLUSION

Given the numerous media reports and current social discourse, it remains evident that racism in the context of South Africa has not been entirely eliminated the results of the present study (although limited in their generalizability), could add valuable insight into the pertinent issues and reveal potential areas of research. Firstly, no differences in strength of

ethnic identity were found amongst the participants. For all four groups relatively high levels of ethnic identity were found, and it appears that ethnic identity might be increasing for the English speaking group. This needs to be investigated further by investigating ethnic identity as a multi-dimensional concept and by exploring perceptions of group status and examining the role status plays in determining strength of ethnic identity. Secondly, significant differences were found between the groups in terms of their tolerance of inter-racial contact. Levels of racial intolerance are low overall, with the Afrikaans speaking group being the most intolerant of inter-racial contact and the two black groups the most tolerant. Thirdly, relationship between strong ethnic identity and racial intolerance was confirmed in this study.

However, the findings in this study should be interpreted with caution. The precise nature of racism in South Africa is hard to define, given that the nature and expression of racism is constantly changing (Bunzel, 1991; Henry & Sears, 1995; Slabbert, 2001). It therefore remains imperative to ensure that racism as a construct is conceptualized correctly. The measures of determining racial tolerance need to be re-examined in order to ensure that they are in fact measuring the constructs that are directly related to racial attitudes in democratic South Africa (Baillie, 2006). For example, it is not unlikely that racism has different meanings to black and whites. Whites are more likely to believe racism has been eliminated when people's attitudes have changed, whereas blacks would be more likely to believe it has been eliminated when there is greater justice in distribution of resources (Smith & Stones, 2001).

Recent research has shown the value of taking a phenomenological approach to investigating race (Durrheim & Dixon, 2005). Future research in this regard should consider the value of combining the quantitative approach in this study with an examination of the

lived experiences of respondents, to gauge precisely how individuals experience racism in their daily lives. For example respondents could be asked, “What do you think the face of racism in SA today looks like?” or “What does being white/black mean to you in the post-apartheid context?”

A further limitation is that in order to truly understand ethnic identity and the role that it plays for various groups in South Africa it is important to study the perception of status of the various demographic groupings. Clearer understanding of each group’s perceptions of themselves and of other groups can aid the understanding of ethnic identity in South Africa and the factors that perpetuate racial tension.

When evaluating the study as a whole, there are two factors that potentially limit its generalizability. Firstly, it should be noted that the educated tend to be more liberal and thus, university level students may be more open-minded in their opinions. For example Bornman, (1999) found that Afrikaans people with higher ethnic identity had lower levels of formal education. Secondly, the present study was conducted at a historically Afrikaans university in the Free State Province, a context within which one could expect to find more conservative attitudes. Should the study be replicated in other geographical areas of a more cosmopolitan nature, different results might be found.

In conclusion, changes in ethnicity and racial tolerance will continue to play a role in the construction of the beloved “rainbow nation” and although studies such as this signal an element of hope, researchers and policy makers alike need to continue to pay close attention to the factors that shape attitudes and group identity if the envisaged ideal of a unified democracy is to be realised.

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