

The Impact of Gender and Residential Background on Racial Integration: Evidence from a South African University.

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Abstract

South Africa is one of those countries that openly rejected racism and this is entrenched in its Bill of rights. Despite the acceptance and incorporation of racial integration into the South Africa Constitution, the implementation within some sectors, most especially the educational sector, seems difficult. Recent occurrences of racism in some higher institutions of learning in South Africa are indications that racial integration/ racial transformation is still farfetched in the country's higher educational sector. It is against this background that this study was conducted to understand how gender and residential background influence racial integration in a South African university which was predominantly a white Afrikaner institution. Using a quantitative method to test the attitude of different categories of undergraduate students at the university, this study found that the factors- residential background and gender- used in measuring student's attitude do not necessarily have a significant relationship towards racial integration. However, this study concludes with a call for more research with a range of other factors in order to better understand how racial integration can be promoted in South African institutions of higher learning.

Keywords: *Racial integration, Gender, Residential background, Transformation.*

Résumé

L'Afrique du Sud est l'un de ces pays qui ont ouvertement rejeté le racisme et cela est inscrit dans sa Déclaration des droits. Malgré l'acceptation et l'intégration de l'intégration raciale dans la Constitution de l'Afrique du Sud, la mise en œuvre dans certains secteurs, en particulier dans le secteur de l'éducation, semble difficile. Des manifestations récentes de racisme dans certains établissements d'enseignement supérieur en Afrique du Sud indiquent que l'intégration raciale / la transformation raciale sont toujours farfelues dans le secteur de l'enseignement supérieur du pays. C'est dans ce contexte que cette étude a été menée pour comprendre l'influence raciale et résidentielle. En utilisant une méthode quantitative pour tester l'attitude des différentes catégories d'étudiants de premier cycle à l'université, cette étude a révélé que les facteurs - antécédents résidentiels et genre - utilisés pour mesurer l'attitude de l'étudiant ne le sont pas. nécessairement avoir une relation significative avec l'intégration raciale. Cependant, cette étude conclut avec un appel à plus de recherche avec une série d'autres facteurs afin de mieux

comprendre comment l'intégration raciale peut être promue dans les institutions sud-africaines d'enseignement supérieur.

Mots clés: *Intégration raciale, Genre, Antécédents résidentiels, Transformation.*

Introduction

The concept of race has been a controversial issue in many countries for years, for example South Africa and the United States of America. Scholarly works have shown that while some countries may have embraced racial desegregation, others have not accepted it totally. South Africa is one of those countries who have openly accepted racial integration and unity among people of diverse races and this is entrenched in the country's Bill of Rights. Prior to 1994, racial segregation characterised South African society dictated by apartheid laws of separate development (Van der Berg, 2007). As a fledgling democratic state, South Africa is still striving to achieve racial integration in most sectors of its society despite its progressive Constitution.

Conversely, within the educational system, transformation seems to be a complex word that is yet to be fully accepted in South Africa. Through studies conducted on the state of higher education during apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa, the background of the research problem in this study is illustrated. According to Van der Berg (2007:851), the legacy of apartheid education led to the racial segregation and under-resourcing of schools for the majority of this country, which brought about fundamental educational differences between race and class. This shows that race was a determining factor for quality and even quantity education during the apartheid. However, South Africa witnessed policy change in 1994 when all forms of racism and apartheid were abolished and new democratic society emerged. The first step the new post-apartheid government undertook was to change old policies through merging of some higher institutions. In particular, education was affected by government policy to racially integrate all sectors in South Africa, and some universities were merged as a result of the new policy (Durrheim et al. 2004; Wolpe, 1995). This was to correct structural inequalities, primarily those of race and class, at all levels in South African society.

This study therefore investigates the impact of two factors - gender and residential background - on the integration of students of different races in a South African university that was predominantly White under the apartheid government. Overall, this study sheds more light on the relationship between racial integration and gender as well as residential background among undergraduate students at the university. The following sections grappled with the historical background of racism in South African universities, methodology and the findings of the study.

Racism in Post-Apartheid South African Universities: A Brief Discussion

Occurrences in most South African universities raise concern on the issue of racism in South Africa. These incidences have shown that despite the implementation of structural transformation, institutional and personal racism still exist within universities in post-apartheid South Africa (Moguerane, 2007:59). This is most clearly evident from different occurrences like in 2008 when racism was at display in a South African university (the University of Free State) when an offensive racist video went viral on the internet. This video was produced by four White students at the University of Free State. In the video, four White male students made some Black African employees (four women and one man) swallow a bottle of beer, run a race, play rugby, kneel and eat what looks like mincemeat which had been urinated upon (SAHRC, 2012:14). Soudien (2008) argues that this video was made at the Reitz residence initiation ceremony to protest against the university's policy to racially integrate residences. Similarly, the 'Rhodes Must Fall' campaign by some students and staff at the University of Cape Town (UCT) for the removal of Cecil John's statue, which was later granted on April 9, 2015 also came to limelight years later (O'Connell, 2015). According to O'Connell (2015), this incidence brought the issue of transformation to the forefront, which he believes is still at its complex stage, as it is yet to metamorphose. Both incidents at the University of Free State and the University of Cape Town show that racial integration seems to be unrealistic in South African higher education institutions at the moment.

In the same vein, another incidence is the fight for inclusivity and eradication of racism at Stellenbosch University. This incidence also produced another viral video "Luister" meaning listen. This video, presented in a form of documentary, involves several students and a lecturer expressing the racist incidences they have experienced on campus at Stellenbosch University. The video contains interviews of mainly black students accounting their personal experiences of racism and discrimination both within and outside the lecture rooms of the University. This incidence obviously invokes reminiscence of the old apartheid South Africa. Overall, these racist events show that transformation is yet to take place in most South African Higher Education Institutions. As defined by Kotecha (2006), transformation refers to the replacements of one set of conditions by another, which brings about equity and excellence, within a fixed period. However, Soudien (2008:670) report concludes that "transformation is not only painfully slow but also that discrimination in particular to racism and sexism is pervasive in our institutions". The preceding quote shows that South African higher institutions are still experiencing slow transition and that racism is still rampant in most institutions thereby obstructing racial transformation in South African educational sector. It is against this backdrop that this study examines the influence of gender and residential

background on racial integration among different categories of undergraduate students in a previously white dominated South African university.

Review of Literature

Numerous studies have been conducted in South Africa on racial integration among students of different race groups in higher institutions of learning (Alexander and Tredoux, 2010; Pattman, 2010; Moguerane, 2007; Walker, 2005; Jansen and Taylor, 2003) and in relation to transformation (Binikos and Rugunanan, 2015). However, despite studies on the impacts of racial integration by some South African and international scholars, (Ritter et al. 2012; Scott and Letseka, 2012; Alexander, 2011; Letseka, 2010; Vandeyar, 2010; Spencer et al, 2009; Harper and Hurtado, 2007; Orfield and Lee, 2006; Kotecha, 2006; Durrheim et al. 2004; Eckel and Kezar, 2003; Hill and Leighley, 1999; Wolpe, 1995) less attention has been given to its effect among students of different race groups in tertiary institutions. These scholars have explored the concept of integration but few have examined the perceptions of students, particularly undergraduate students (using gender and residential background), on racial integration and the level at which they experience transformation. In order to show the gap, this section reviews existing literature both locally and internationally examining gender and residential background as the main themes.

Racial Integration and Gender

Since Judith Butler published her influential book, *Gender Trouble* (1990), numerous discourses, events and actions have occurred which continue to disconcert our understanding of gender and concepts associated with it. The American Psychological Association (2006) defined gender as the attitudes, feelings and behaviours that certain culture assigns to a person's biological sex. To conceptualise gender in a simplified way, it is the division into either female or male. The concept of gender is paramount in this study because it exposes how female (subordination) and male (domination) is socially defined. However, gender and race are two complicated concepts that have developed over time through different scholarly works particularly feminists who believe in the existence of a relationship between these two concepts (Glen, 2002; Crenshaw, 1989). Glen (2002:7) believes that social constructionism theory provides an easy way to see the relationship between gender and race - ways in which gender is racialised and race is gendered. The culture of different institutions on the concepts of race and gender differ. In analysing these two concepts side by side, there is need to consider the concept of culture.

Kivilu et al. (2010) studies in different schools found that there have been negative

attitudes towards female and male integration in schools basically because of traditional and cultural practices that were designed to keep each gender in their respective role. Another research on the racial incidence at the University of Free State concluded that most universities in South Africa are attached to the institutional culture of male chauvinism where it is expected that the males dominate while females were viewed as the weaker sex (Suransky and Van der Merwe, 2014). After an extensive search of literature, it is safe to argue that there is paucity of literature on gender and racial integration among students especially in South Africa. Therefore, this research explores the relationship between gender and racial integration in order to add to the body of literature in this scientific field of study.

Residential Background and Racial Integration

This section takes into cognisance the impact of residential background on students' attitude towards racial integration. It examines the influence of residential background in two forms a) where students predominantly grew up and b) where students stay in the course of schooling. This is to identify the influence of the residence/environment stayed at important stages of a student's life. However, this study conceptualises this theme more on where students predominantly grew up. This is to discover the effect of residential background on student's interaction. Radloff and Evans (2003) argue that the residential background of a student influences his or her perception of racism. They reported that white students who grew up in predominantly white neighbourhoods were not exposed to first hand integration before higher education and thus had no prior experience of what racial integration entails. Similarly, in South Africa, opportunities for racial integration were limited due largely to racial segregation in residential areas and schools. Muyebe and Seekings (2010:1-2) believe that "residential and educational segregation persist, in practice, for most South Africans: Most South Africans live in mono-racial¹ neighbourhoods and their children attend mono-racial schools". In other words, most South African children attend school and live predominantly in areas that accommodate their race, and this reduces any interaction with people of another race. Despite democracy and freedom from the shackles of apartheid, Muyebe and Seekings (2010:9) reported that "the 'post-apartheid' city should be viewed on a 'neo-apartheid' city, with the overwhelming majority of people living in mono-racial areas". Moreover, it is argued that the structural difference of a gated house, mostly occupied by white South Africans, is sometimes construed as preventing inter-racial interaction (Muyebe and Seekings, 2010:2).

Conversely, the influence of the residence while in school also plays an important role. Moguerane (2007: 43) argued that "voluntary sharing of 'intimate spaces' such as

¹ People of same racial group or a single racial group

bathrooms and kitchens in residential places is a key indicator of non-racial practice amongst individuals of different races". However, this is not practised in most South African universities as segregation in living spaces is a common act that is not openly practiced (Moguerane, 2007). Transformation policies can be seen as successful through indicators of racial integration measured through the qualitative and socio-political standard of the society (Moguerane, 2007). In other words, if racism still persists among university students, the policies of transformation into a racially integrated society have not succeeded. The above discourses reveal that residential background plays an important role in integrating or segregating students of different races. Despite the significance of sharing of intimate spaces, most South African universities' residences seem still rigid in their integration.

Methodology

This study adopts a quantitative research approach so as to have access to large database which can easily be coded and statistically tested. A total number of 170 registered undergraduate students in a South African university made up the total population of this study. They were selected based on gender and race. The data was gathered through self-administered questionnaires over a period of two weeks among undergraduate students of diverse racial groups at one of the university campuses in South Africa. The questionnaires administered in this study took approximately 30 minutes to complete and consisted of basic demographics, gender and residential measures. The independent measures include questions on student's perception on gender and residential background, while the dependent variable assessed student's opinion on racial integration. Scales were selected based on the evidence of validity and reliability. The wordings and numbering of the Likert labels on some of the original scales were slightly modified in order to achieve consistency across measures.

Random sampling was adopted. The random technique was useful because it gave all members of the racial groups at the university a chance to be selected. This method of data collection generated important information as students were encouraged to answer these questionnaires individually thereby generating new opinions. Students were asked questions about their gender, types of residence they live in, amongst other issues. This gave standardised information on all students being studied. Questions asked were used to measure the attitude of students towards racial integration. Questions like "To what extent do you think the university has racially transformed?" "What is the racial composition of the neighbourhood stayed during most of your high school years?" "How would you describe your residential location during term time at this university?" "In which area did you predominantly grow up?" "To what extent does gender influence you to interact with people of a different race?" "How often do you interact with people

of another race?" "To what extent do you agree or disagree that male and female should be educated separately?" "To what extent do you agree that both genders are equal?" The data collected through the answered questionnaires from participants was analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22. Data collected was analysed and interpreted properly to represent the views of respondents.

Research Question and Hypothesis of the study

This study operationalised within the following research question and hypotheses: What are the views of different categories of undergraduate students towards racial integration at university A?

Based on the problem statement, this study was guided by the following hypotheses:

H₀₁: There is a relationship between gender and the attitude of undergraduate students towards racial integration at the university.

H₀₂: There is a relationship between residential background and the attitude of undergraduate students towards racial integration at the university.

This study expects to find the significant relationship between the residential background, the gender and views on racial integration among undergraduate students at the university where the study was conducted.

Profile of Sample

The demographic representations of the profile of the sample are presented as follows. Of the 170 students who participated in this survey, there were 52.9% female and 47.1% were male. Majority of the participants were Blacks consisting of 43.5% of the entire population, 22.4% were Whites, 14.1% were Indians, 17.7% were Coloured and 1.2% were others. From the residential background of participants, 49.4% grew up in the suburbs, 29.4% grew up in the township, 9.4% grew up in the rural villages, 5.3% grew up in estates, 4.7% grew up in the CBD and 0.6% grew up on farm or agricultural holding and other areas.

Outcome

The objective of this study was to examine the influence of gender and residential background on racial integration among different categories of undergraduate students in a previously white dominated South African university. However, in order to test the attitudes of the different categories of students, there to accept the factor analysis of a test, the Kaiser-Meyer Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) should be equal to or exceed 0.6 (the cut-off point), which will indicate that there is a sufficient correlation

Furthermore, in testing the second hypothesis, Kruskal-Wallis U test (also similar to one-way ANOVA because it is a non-parametric test) is used. Table 4 shows the test statistics, which has the p-value (Sig) of 0.273, which is > 0.05 . This implies that we do NOT reject the null-hypothesis and conclude that there is no statistically significant difference in means. This test is used because residential background, an independent variable in this study entails more than two categories of variables and because the dependent variable is a continuous variable.

Table 4: Table indicating test statistics

	factor1 attitudes towards racial integration thru Extra
Chi-Square	7.555
Df	6
Asymp. Sig.	.273

- a. Kruskal Wallis Test
- b. Grouping Variable: q20_GrowUp What type of area did you predominantly grow up?

Discussion

This study examined the impact of two factors; gender and residential background on the attitude of undergraduate students towards racial integration in a South African university. Student's opinions were tested against these two factors in order to ascertain if each of these factors influences their attitudes towards racial integration. In accordance with the hypotheses, significant relationships were predicted between the dependent and independent variables. Below is an interpretation of results of each hypothesis in relation to the research question.

Contrary to Radloff and Evans (2003) and Muyeba and Seekings (2010) believe that residential background plays an important role in the interaction of children, the test result shows that there is no significant difference between residential background and racial integration. This implies that residential background does not influence student's attitudes towards racial integration. Though this may not be in accordance with some of the findings of the literature used in this study, it is important to note that over the years, gradual acceptance and transformation is taken effect within the higher institutions

of learning. Furthermore, the argument of literature on the influence of gender is that tradition (chauvinism) and culture play an important role in the integration of both male and female, which influences racial integration. Surprisingly, this study found no significant gender differences in exploratory measures of racial integration. However, the number of female and male participants was significantly different which may affect the result.

Finally, this exploratory analysis found that the two factors employed do not have significant influence on racial integration. It is possible that had this study used other factors to evaluate their impacts on racial integration, it may have found that these factors influence student's attitude towards racial integration. It is interesting to know that the university where the study was conducted has transformed racially in the in-take of students and interactions among students from different race groups to a reasonable extent. From the discussion of the above literature, the level of racial integration is not necessarily influenced by each theme. This study suggests that further study should be done using other factors that are pertinent in understanding how racism can totally be eradicated in higher institutions of learning in South Africa.

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