

Understanding Informal Segregation: Racial and Spatial Identities among the Indian Minority of Mokopane

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Abstract

Although South Africa's history has brought a great deal of research attention to racial dynamics in the post apartheid period, much of this research has been on the largest demographic groups in urban centres. This study focuses on the spatial arrangement of minority identities, through continued informal segregation, among the Indian minority of Mokopane. Drawing on 28 open-ended interviews, segregation is explored in everyday interactions and spaces. Working within a spatial-discursive framework, observational, critical discourse and rhetorical analysis is employed. Participants' discursive constructions overwhelmingly demonstrate patterns of informal segregation among the Indian minority community, within the micro-ecology of contact. It is argued that informal segregation acts as a regulator of hostile and hidden racism. In mapping the dialogue of the Indian minority, a story of the evolution of segregation emerges, which replicates internal divisions between the established 'South African Indians' and recent 'immigrant Indians'. This study ultimately demonstrates the need for a spatial-discursive orientation and a more "embodied" turn in our understanding of segregation.

Keywords: minority groups, micro-ecology of contact, segregation, race relations, spatial identity

Rethinking Social Boundaries: Micro-Ecology of Racial Division

More than a decade after the demise of apartheid, the promise of transformation and reconciliation still lingers. Racial isolation persists to invade wider, but especially more private spaces. Although much research is emerging from South Africa aiming to engage the challenges of integration, more emphasis has been placed on macro-processes of institutional change. More intimate, micro-ecological considerations have not received the same amount of attention (Dixon, Tredoux and Clack 2005). At the same time, Black-White dimensions of segregation¹ and prejudice

have also dominated traditional research. Minorities, such as the South African Indian community, have been neglected (Radhakrishnan 2005; for review see Hansen 2012).

Gordon Allport's (1954) *contact hypothesis* set the premise for future studies on the consequences of the inevitability of interracial contact. In short, the contact hypothesis maintains that continued isolation of groups enhances the development of negative attitudes and stereotypes, while increased contact reduces prejudice. A range of research emanating from the contact hypothesis has produced inconsistent results and a host of limitations (Dixon 2001). Although the theory cannot be entirely discredited, revision is necessary. In a synthesis of past research, Pettigrew (1998) argues that the optimal conditions required are insufficient, since inter-group

¹ Segregation is understood in terms of Goldberg's (1998) definition as "an ideology narrating the presumptuous degrees of racial separation" (p. 21).

contact should rather be viewed as a slowly evolving process and possibly unsuitable for real-world situations. Pettigrew and Tropp's (2006) meta-analysis, combining the results of 515 studies, concluded that contact typically *does* reduce inter-group prejudice. It is suggested that while optimal conditions are not essential, their absence can enhance the reduction of prejudice.

Dixon, Durrheim and Tredoux (2005), although supporting the basic assumptions of the contact hypothesis, maintain that it is in need of a 'reality check'. Past empirical studies have mostly been conducted under ideal or unrealistic conditions, specifically in laboratory or experimental work. Inter-racial contact in reality is much more complex and traditional experimental studies do not unlock these complexities. To access the validity of the contact hypothesis in South Africa, the authors suggest that experimental focus move to explore the reality of everyday prejudice and contact in real-life settings. While recognising the presentation of racial division at various scales of society, most researchers have neglected to explore segregation in everyday interactions and spaces. In South Africa, more emphasis has recently been placed on exploring the underlying mechanisms behind prejudice and specifically focusing on informal segregation. The pioneering beach studies of Durrheim and Dixon (2005) established informal segregation as a dominant pattern in South Africa's changing segregation dynamic. Real interracial contact between groups was in fact scarce. Informal segregation persisted and manifested itself in more discreet, 'bodily' divisions, again embodying a process of preferred segregation.

It has been proposed that inter-racial contact in the new South Africa may be occurring on the surface, but contact is still avoided in more intimate spaces. It is argued that racialised boundaries are maintained by continued racial categorisation and racial attitudes, regulating the intimacy of intergroup contact (Dixon, Tredoux and Clack 2005). One may conclude that the micro-ecology of segregation has remained a neglected dimension of research and that the greatest shortcoming of the contact hypothesis is its disregard of spatial dimensions. There remains a need to

explore the lived experience of segregation in terms of bodily 'positioning', as Foster (2005: 498) explains: 'Various kinds of spaces either enable or constrain particular action. Places have specific meanings for people; they resonate with symbolic and emotional significance. We all carry with us various senses of 'place identity' '. Discourse is not the only means to uncover meanings behind continued segregation. Integrating bodies, discourse and space into a combined analytical framework will result in a more holistic understanding (Foster 2000).

Rethinking Psychological Focus: South African Indians as Minorities

It is suggested that Black-White dimensions of prejudice have dominated most research. The South African Indian population remains marginal. The Indian minority is a numerical minority, having a population of only 1,115,467 compared to the total population of South Africa, 44,819,778. The most basic definition of a minority is based on a numerical assessment. When a group constitutes less than half the population they are regarded as a minority (Banton 1972). Furthermore, differentiation between ethnic and racial identity is a complex and contested distinction (Cornell and Hartmann 2007). For the purpose of this study, no distinction will be made between ethnic and racial minorities.

During the nineteenth century, the development of the sugar industry in KwaZulu-Natal placed demands for cheap labour. When the African labour was not willing to work under poor working conditions, additional labour power was then imported from India (Kuppusami 1983). The majority of the Indians in South Africa are Hindu, although some converted to Christianity. 1860 to 1905 marked the peak of Indian immigration, by 1911 there was a large decline (Freund 1995). There was a secondary group of Indian Muslim immigrants who voluntarily came to South Africa, to escape religious persecution. These Muslim Indians predominantly established themselves in the trade industry (Kuppusami 1983). The Indian settlers in Mokopane fell within the second category. More recently there has been an increase in the number of first generation immigrants

from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, immigrating to South Africa for work, family or under refugee status (Statistics South Africa 2011).

Radhakrishnan's (2005) study is one of the few that has begun to comment on the shifting meanings of Indianness in South African society. The new South African climate, it is argued, still neglects the value of the minority community, facing the well-known notion of "not being white enough" and now "not black enough". Meanings of 'Indianness' appeared to constantly shift in order to accommodate for a changing political and social climate (Vahed and Desai 2010). This study will adopt a case-study approach and use the Indian population of the small town of Mokopane as the site for research. Assuming a spatial-discursive psychological framework and within the micro-ecology of contact, continued and adapted forms of segregation within the town of Mokopane, and the Indian minority in particular, is questioned.

Design and Methodology

This study aims to explore how everyday processes and interactions maintain and regulate new racialised boundaries within the Indian minority, working under the general hypothesis of a continued pattern of informal segregation. Explorations into the subjective experience of Indians in Mokopane will attempt to unlock an understanding of shifting racial and spatial identities, working within the framework of a micro-ecology of contact. The integration of 'race' and gender as a means of social division, although highly pertinent, moved beyond the scope of this present investigation. Therefore, the main research question framing this study is: how does continued informal segregation manifest itself within the Indian minority of Mokopane, and how have racial and spatial identities changed within this minority group? This paper will address these questions by investigating and analysing spatial considerations, and how people talk about space.

Based on a 2008 pilot study, the South African Indian minority of Mokopane was identified as the primary focus of the research in question. The analysis presented here is based on inter-

views conducted with multiple residents of the Indian community of Mokopane, Akasia, over a three week period, from the 29th June to 17th July 2009. The primary source of data collection was open-ended interviews, with an interview schedule used as a rough guide. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. Informed consent was secured and pseudonyms used. Although spatial patterns were discussed within the context of the interview itself, contextual data (i.e. maps of the town) were additionally collected. A total of 28 people participated in the study. The overall sample represented a mixture of age, gender and social-economic groups, specifically male (n=15) and female (n=12).

A discursive psychological approach was employed, which included a critical discourse analysis. However, here one should also observe that this methodological approach does not offer a fixed strategy, but rather a general set of guidelines for textual analysis (Parker 1992). A combination of two approaches to discourse analysis was used. These included Potter and Wetherell's (1994) discursive strategy, emphasising the variability and function of discourse, as well as a Parkerian approach directed towards a critical orientation, which facilitated an examination of power, ideology and institutional influence. Furthermore, underlining the significance of argumentation in social life, this analysis will integrate Billig's (1987, 1991) rhetorical approach to social psychology. Although no formal analytic approach was utilised, spatial segregation patterns were further examined by mapping changes in the physical layout of the town. Analysis of the interplay between spatial and linguistic dynamics of racialised isolation expands the framework in which we understand ongoing segregation patterns (Christopher 2001). The article uses the proposed socio-spatial framework to help uncover mechanisms of informal segregation, specifically exploring the positioning of the Indian minority.

Context of Segregation: Indians in Akasia, Mokopane

Mokopane falls within the Mogalakwena municipality district, incorporating many neighbour-

ing villages. An estimate of 19,394 people reside in the town of Mokopane, excluding the neighbouring ‘townships’ of Mahwelereng and Sekegakapeng. Of the four racial categories constructed under apartheid, three of these ‘race’ groups hold a presence in Mokopane: Black, White and Indian. The designated Indian township assigned during apartheid was named Akasia. There are approximately: 9,111 Black African, 9,419 White, 771 Indian and 93 Coloured persons in Mokopane (Mogalakwane Municipality 2009; Statistics South Africa 2003, 2011). Agriculture has historically been the town’s main industry, however currently the mining industry has taken precedence. For example, Mogalakwena Platinum Mine (MPM), located very near to Mokopane within the Mogalakwena municipality, has contributed significantly to economic growth in the district (Mogalakwane Municipality 2009). As one of the oldest towns in the old Northern Transvaal, Mokopane, formerly known as *Potgietersrus*, was founded on a series of conflicts between the local communities and the Voortrekkers [Boer settlers who had left the Cape in the 1830s] (Du Plooy 1995). The town of Potgietersrus was officially named after the Voortrekker leader, Piet Potgieter. In 2002 the town of Potgietersrus was renamed Mokopane. ‘Mgombane’ was the chief of the Kekana’s ‘tribe’, responsible for Potgieter’s death. As in other parts of South Africa, renaming is a tool used to assert a new place identity which transcends colonial and apartheid white supremacy.

The history of the Indian community can be dated to a few pioneer families who settled in Mokopane in 1888, engaged in the trade industry in the town. Most of the Indians in Akasia come from the province of Gujarat and follow the Muslim religion; although a few are Gujarati-speaking Hindus (Hassan, Cachalia and Mohamed 2004). More Indians slowly moved into the area from Natal, adding to the population of Akasia. Akasia remains primarily Indian. However, in recent years, a few African families have moved around the boundaries of the area (Mogalakwena municipality 2009). Officially there are 771 Indians living in Mokopane (Statistics South Africa 2011).

Spatial Illustration of Continued Informal Segregation

A. J. Christopher’s (2001) *Atlas of a Changing South Africa* presents a visual account of the separation enforced upon South Africa. The deconstruction of apartheid’s spatial divisions, both in wider institutional separations and the more ‘personal’ apartheid, is an on-going process. The structural architecture of apartheid not only affected the larger segregation patterns in urban centers, but invaded private spaces. Christopher’s studies have shown the effectiveness of using visual representations, like maps, to track changes in segregation patterns. With the abolition of the Group Areas Act, investigating the ‘remapping of the Apartheid City’ may provide further insight into new patterns of segregation (Dixon, Tredoux and Clack 2005).

The Map in Figure 1 is a simplified presentation of the topographical layout of what was previously known as Potgietersrus. The area marked as ‘Sentraal’ represents both the residential and business center. Before the imposition of the Group Areas Act the White and Indian populations resided in the central area, with the Black community living on the outskirts, mostly in surrounding villages. This mixed living was mediated by the Indians providing trade services. The main businesses in town were clustered in Potgieter Street, renamed Nelson Mandela Street in the post-apartheid period, and marked in red on the map. However, with the imposition of the Group Areas act in 1950, Potgieterus was tailored to fit the architectural design of the new ‘apartheid city’. To promote the ‘separate development’ policy of the new apartheid government, Potgieterus was declared a “White” area in 1963, and in 1969 the Akasia Township was established as a designated “Indian” area (Hassan, Cachalia and Mohamed 2004). Interestingly, Potgieter Street runs directly to Akasia and the Mosque specifically, therefore limiting the movement of the Indian community to a very small section of the town, even somewhat detached from the more central White areas of Potgieterus.

The larger township of Segsegapang was also established further north of Akasia. Maharaj (1995) comments on how Indian townships such

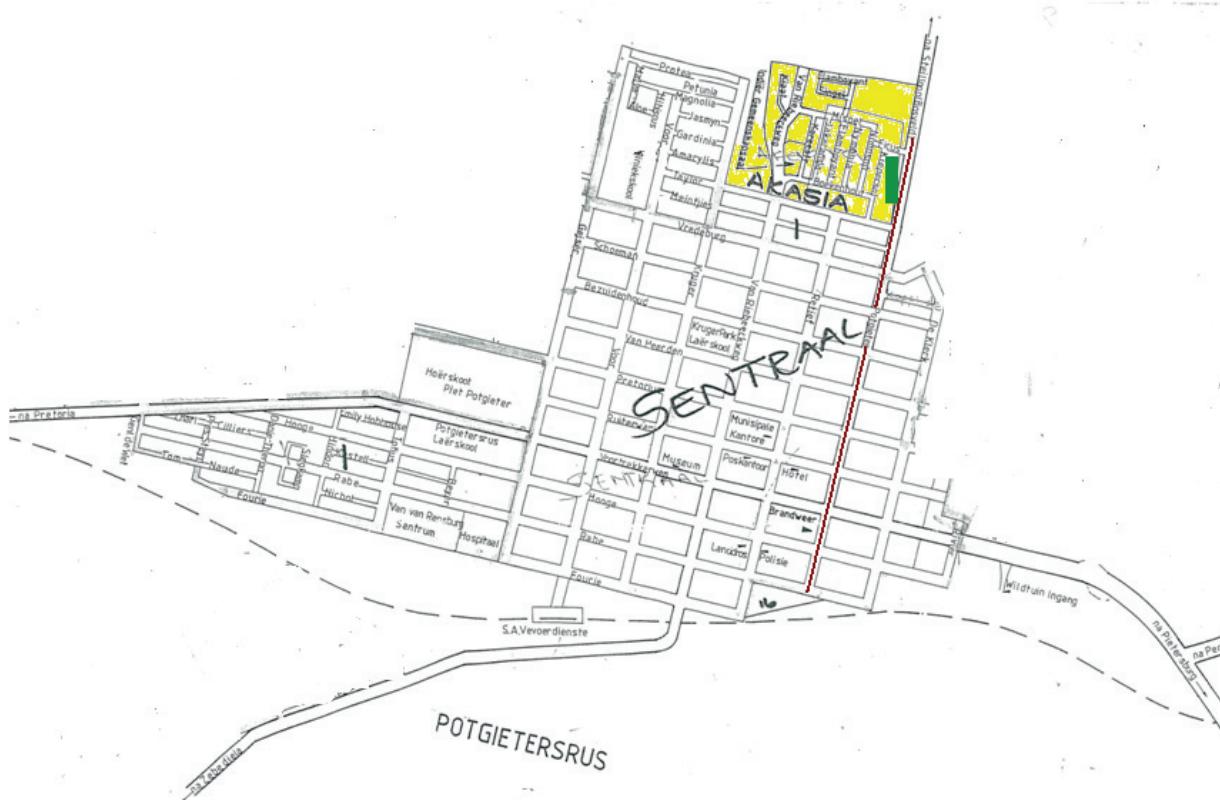


Figure 1: Map of Potgietersrus/Mokopane pre-1999

The map shown is a simplified topographical layout of the town of Mokopane, when it was previously known as Potgietersrus before 1999. The map shows the different ‘areas’ of the town, namely: the ‘sentraal’ area which was both a residential and business area for the White population, and the ‘Akasia’ area (highlighted in yellow), which was the designated area for the Indian community after the imposition of the Group Areas Act. The main street running through the town, Potgieter Street, is highlighted in red, and it is where the main businesses of the town cluster.

Source: Mogalakwane Municipality. 2009. Integrated Development Planning review. Unpublished Manuscript.

as Akasia seemed to act as a buffer between “White” and “Black” areas physically and perhaps symbolically. The Akasia area appears to serve the same purpose, being placed directly in between the “White” and “Black” districts of Potgietersrus, and also unusually close to the trade centres (Xaba 2001). This positioning of the Indian locality also serves as a spatial representation of the hierarchical categorisation of the apartheid system, with Indians having marginally more privileges than Africans. The implementation of the Group Areas Act used buffer zones or natural barriers to limit interracial mingling. Many Indians in Mokopane were involved in the trade industry, currently holding a strong economic presence in the town. The Akasia neighbourhood interestingly is almost attached and runs directly to Potgieter Street, the business

hub of Mokopane. The Indian “township” is relatively removed from the White neighbourhoods, but near enough to the business district to facilitate the needed trade services.

The current map of Mokopane (see Figure 2) does show significant growth. However, the ‘Sentraal’ and Akasia residential areas have remained primarily White and Indian. Sections marked seven and eight are mostly occupied by Black residents, while section nine and twelve are the newest neighborhoods and have a mixture of both White and Black residents, and a sprinkling of Indian people. Areas to the right of the city centre are mostly industrial. The representation of the town, as demonstrated in the above maps, runs in close comparison with that of Goldberg’s (1998) portrayal of the ‘new segregation’, a society with no legal constraints to interaction, yet

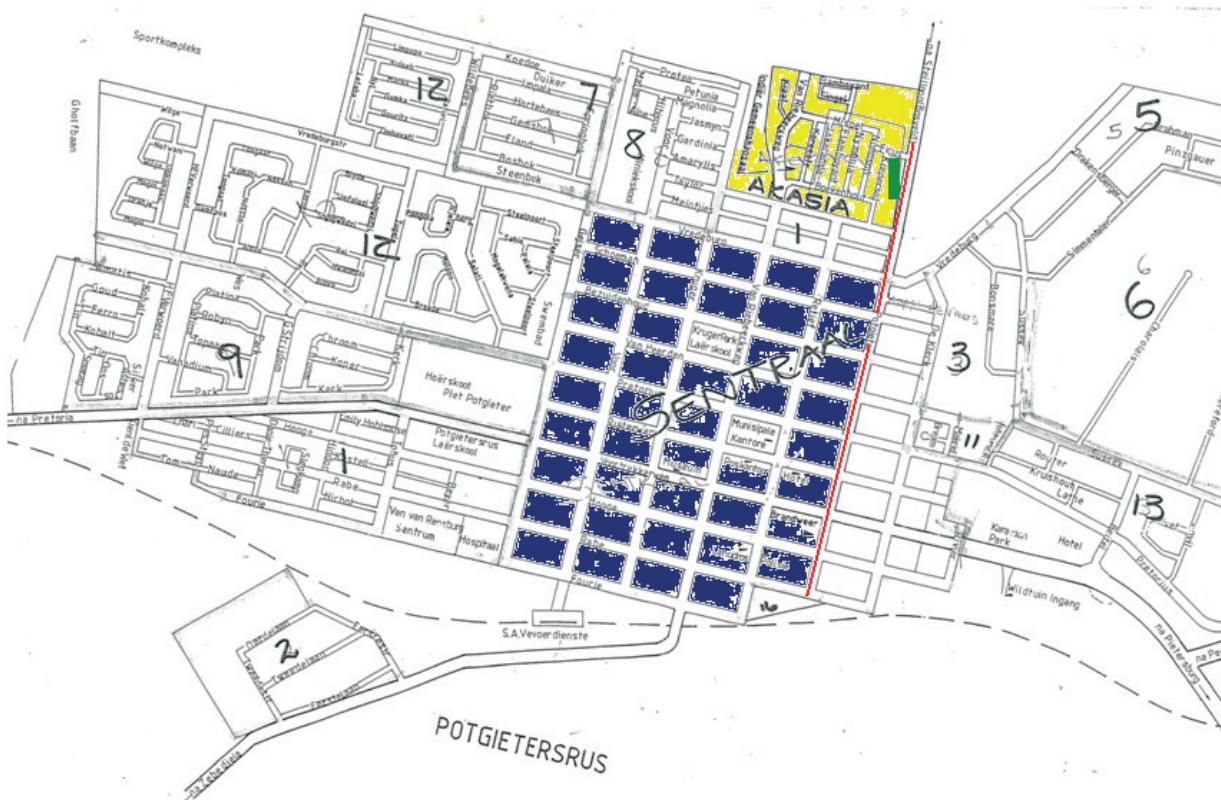


Figure 2: Map of Mokopane at Present

The map shown is a simplified topographical layout of the town of Mokopane at present. The current map shows significant growth in the town. The area marked in blue is the 'sentral' area, which has remained mostly inhabited by the White population, while the 'Akasia' area, highlighted in yellow, has remained primarily an Indian residential area. The sections labelled as seven and eight are occupied mostly by Black residents, while area nine and twelve are the newest and more affluent areas that have a mixture of both White and Black residents. The areas to the right of the city centre are mostly industrial.

Source: Mogalakwane Municipality. 2009. Integrated Development Planning review. Unpublished Manuscript.

persistent in its tendency towards racial isolation. Through interviews and informal conversations, it became apparent that only a handful of Indian families have chosen to live outside Akasia; from my interactions, five very affluent families have moved out of the neighborhood.

Despite the removal of legal segregation enforced by the Group Areas Act, divisions of the 'old Apartheid City' remain relatively intact. Askasia has remained primarily an "Indian" area, with a few Africans moving in. The notion of *place identity* therefore resonates with this illustration. Similar to Durrheim's (2005) description of the historical importance of spatiality, Dixon (1997) maintains that racial identity is imprinted within physical locations. Although Akasia was initially established as an institutional demand of the apartheid government, the area now holds

a more symbolic meaning. It was *their* space, an *Indian* space, and therefore not a mere physical location but rather a promise of acceptance and comfort.

Discursive Depictions of Continued Informal Segregation

Despite evident restructuring of the town, residents, particularly Indians, still assume a physical separation. The basic observational analysis of the above spatial patterns in the layout of Mokopane, and the arrangement of Akasia itself, demonstrates continued racial isolation. Participants' discursive constructions of change and racial integration in Mokopane overwhelmingly demonstrate a pattern of continued informal segregation. Twenty-five of the participants, across gender divides, constructed a picture of

regulated contact. As one respondent, Abraham, remarked, 'By in large, apartheid served its purpose, it has kept people apart'. Despite structural changes, it appears that 'the character of the town has stayed the same', as described by Grace: 'I often say to people that you stay in Mokopane in the Limpopo province, but you are still living in the Northern Transvaal [laugh]. Nothing has changed! I refuse to call it Mokopane, because I feel that it is still Potties.'

That is not to say that there has been no amendment to the previous social structure. As with the physical name change from Potgietersrus to Mokopane, there has been structural and social transformation in the town, as in Masroor's description, 'today things are different, you could not imagine that we were treated as animals'. Although there is evidence of transformation, the intimacy of such contact is once again questioned. Racial contact in the town may be routine and frequented in different daily activities (see Durrheim and Dixon's 2005 for similar example), however genuine social contact is lacking. One respondent, Salim, explains:

We have pretty much stayed apart, geographically, but as well as socially... I really don't think they give a damn. They are living their own life. *They* don't mix with the Indians, and we don't have other friends.

In the narrative Salim directly expresses the apathetic attitude of the town towards real social integration. His statement not only objectifies and depersonalises other 'race' groups by using *they* to identify them, but demonstrates a lack of any desire to instigate or cultivate a friendship with anyone other than Indians. This is reiterated by Mona who expresses her frustrations with living in the town:

It sometimes becomes very frustrating, because we don't have those opportunities, that open mindedness... It is not just the Indian community, but the entire town, hmm, they just don't see things futuristically... People deal with each other because of business or work, but it is pretty superficial... I come home, she comes home, our cultures are very different, that sort of thing... There is an open door to allow you to talk about business, but we're not going to come over every Saturday for a braai [barbeque] or sit on your couch.

Much emphasis has been placed in traditional social psychological literature on the importance of contact in finding a 'resolution' to prejudice' (Dixon, Durrheim and Tredoux 2005). However, the transformation attempts in Mokopane demonstrate how change in a social organisation does not necessarily result in a change of attitudes. Fatimah's statement, for example, illustrates this apparent lack of shift in attitudes and practice; "Ya, you won't change the attitude too much, but we all live where we want to live... some people are just stuck in their ways". Even with regards to the local High school², racial divisions tend to persist spatially. Iraj explains: "We are just separate, we just stay out of each other's way. I know that the Indians have a certain section of the school". In this example the intersection between a space and ideology again surfaces. It is not just a school, a neutral geographic location; it is interlocked with historical and personal significance. Racialised categories in the town appear to 'know their place', as an unwritten rule or as a result of social conditioning. Without institutional or legal demands, groups demonstrate a natural tendency to migrate towards 'their own kind'; therefore keeping to previously defined spatial locations.

Spatial positioning in the town and even the school may not be inadvertent, but echoes the analysis of *White Spatial dominance* (see Schreiff et al. 2005). Potties is referred to as "their town", the "farming town", as Sujata expressed, "Ya this actually is an Afrikaans town... You feel you are a small part of a big White Afrikaans town, you do anything to survive in this town because you are Indian". Although Afrikaners are in the minority, White supremacy appears to still linger. Similarly, in the local high school, the notion of spatial

² The local high school in question was previously an Afrikaans medium high school. The associated primary school had a very contested and violent integration process, when forced to desegregate the school and change the language medium. The high school was permitted to become a dual-medium school and avoided a similar experience, but still the school remains primarily Afrikaans, and so White, with a handful of English (Black and Indian) students. Language appeared to be used as an excuse to maintain a degree of racial separation.

entitlement re-emerges. Echoing Dolby's (2001) case-study on an Indian student at Fernwood School, Indian students at the local high school similarly experience a subordinate position. As Iraj again explains, "The school is doing us a big favour by accommodating us." Previous graduates describe their experience as "racist, actually not so good" or as Jatin describes:

"It was a White school and being Indian [pause] that was difficult. It was like, he is Indian, we look down on him, yeah...In a farming town, the White race still dominates".

It appears that a racial hierarchy still dictates 'race' relations in the town. Textual constructions of space, across most interviews, primarily converge on the representation of the town as a 'farming community' and 'Afrikaans town'. The collective identity of the Afrikaner *volk* is intrinsic to the idea of the *boer* or the farmer (see Dubow 1992), interlocked within the spatial significance of the bush *veld*. Therefore, a description of the town as a farming community or 'Afrikaner stronghold', provides greater insight to the Indians' perception of white spatial identity and dominance in the town.

'Potties', the abbreviated term for Potgietersrus, is not just a town, but a space that resonates with reminders of past oppression. As Parvin put it: "In this town, how we suffered with all those Whites. How they used to boycott our shops... at one stage the government was ready to deport all the Indians". Parvin's narrative contains the negative undertone latent with the community's depiction of Mokopane, and paralleled in Navid's words: "I don't want to stay in the middle of a boera [farmer] place". Goli similarly explains how she prefers to just stay away from the 'White dominant areas', and how it is still difficult for her to be reminded of past injustices. In contrast, Akasia embodies a place of comfort, 'home'. Akasia was no longer a space imposed by the apartheid government, but rather a refuge away from Afrikaner dominance. Here the ideological becomes physical. Finchilescu's (2005) notion of meta-stereotypes may also explain why the Indian community prefers to stay away from "White" identified areas. Avoidance of these con-

tact situations may thus be a result of intergroup anxiety, causing the Indians to withdraw into their comfort zones.

It appears that reconciliation has taken limited hold within the community, possibly as a result of enduring resentment of the apartheid past. The majority of participants reported stronger feelings of solidarity with the Black community, explaining that "during apartheid, we were seen as Black". Drawing on this shared oppression during the struggle, Abraham articulates a sense of community with his 'African neighbours', explaining how it is "easier to relate to African people, there is no difference, I always considered ourselves as the oppressed group, the ANC talks about the Black oppressed, that includes Indians and Coloureds." In contrast, there is still much resentment directed towards the White community, particularly the Afrikaners, most admitting to a kind of "boer [farmer] hate".

Experiences of Exclusion

Contrary to previous research, racial isolation in Mokopane moves beyond informal segregation to what can be described as hidden or covert racism. Several discourses reaffirmed this idea of masked racism, as in Yusif's description: "most of it is just swept underneath the carpet." Yusif and Abraham continue to describe how townspeople perform opposing public and private roles (see Goffman's 1971): 'So there are those people that can be nice because of business, but we are not home friends... behind closed doors, you are still a coolie³', 'Ya there might be a degree of superiority among the white folks over other groups... but that open racism is not there, but you feel it at times, the majority [White people] keep to themselves'. Despite the structural changes in the town, participants describe that 'the character of the town has stayed the same'. As Jasmine narrates:

I think it is not easily forgotten. For me it serves as a barrier. That memory is still so deep that you often look at people and wonder, you have enjoyed everything for all your life and you still stand there and look at me as if you are superior.

³ 'Coolie' is historically a derogatory name used to refer to Indians in South Africa.

It appears that apartheid's previous ideologies have not yet dissolved, but still linger. More covert mechanisms, such as informal segregation or hidden racism, seem to arise and re-establish the status quo. Interestingly, when speaking to both White and Black residents, the Indian community emerged as misunderstood and isolated, as "quite another ball game altogether." As a minority in the town, Indians possibly assume the identity of the 'other'. As one Afrikaans resident described: "But the Indian community, you know, have their own religion, we cannot be intimate friends, because you cannot have a very good relationship if you don't have the same religion".

In the absence of the 'optimal conditions' of racial contact (Pettigrew 1998; Pettigrew and Tropp 2006), racial interaction is sometimes characterised by hostility, even violence. Descriptions used by Iraj and Mohammad illustrate the nature of racial conflict and reveal the volatile nature of inter-racial relations in Mokopane:

And when people don't discuss issues and hide it under the mattress, it sometimes burns up and explodes... you still have racism among the Whites, in certain places you cannot go, they will start fights. So to avoid that we just keep away.

Dolby's (2001) overall impression of the Fernwood School is similarly described. She explains that desegregation in the school, like the town, is conflict-ridden, with hostilities erupting with increased racial contact. Re-segregation thus 'diffuses' racial tension, adopting a peace-keeping function. Therefore it can be argued that informal segregation acts as a regulator of hostile and hidden racism, "So you get conflict, but they just won't fight they just abstain from one another".

Rhetorical Constructions of 'Race'

Wetherell and Potter (1992) argue that discourses are not purely ideological, but also adopt a rhetorical function. In this way, "race talk" can be considered as rhetorically constructed to create a particular reality, seemingly factual and stable, by using various discursive devices. Drawing from ancient Greek rhetorical tradition, Billig (1987) maintains that language

is a method of persuasion, actively constructed against an "other". In all interviews, some form of argumentative dialectic emerged. In navigating their story of "Indianness" in Mokopane, discursive constructions regarding racial interactions in the town commonly took shape in the form of argumentative practices. Two dominant rhetorical strategies can be located, labelled as "normal", which moves into a defensive justification.

Normalise and Justify

This is a process in which a phenomenon is described as normal and natural, functioning to close off the argument. Billig (1991) argues that customs and practices emerge as uncontroversial and undisputed when identified as natural or normal. In most interviews, but in particular among Indian men, the interview was eventually concluded by racial divisions being described as natural or normal. The conception that racial "groupings" are an innate or unchangeable tendency was duplicated in multiple discourses; participants describe how "naturally you socialise with people that are the same as you" or "how it is a natural thing for a person to like his own community or group", creating a normalised representation of segregation.

Across interviews, rhetorical constructions were orientated towards the regulation of the status quo. Rhetorical practices commonly function to legitimise or normalise racial division (Durrheim and Dixon 2005). As in Wetherell and Potter's (1992) conclusions in *Mapping the Language of Racism*, where White New Zealanders used the "culture" of the Maori people to legitimise segregation, the Indian community similarly used the "culture" argument to defend their own "cultural" exclusivity. Persons seemed moved to validate their reasons for limited interactions with other "race" groupings in the town, using Indian "culture" as a motivation. Standard rhetorical arguments of self-distancing and victimisation (Billig 1991) can thus be identified as core rhetorical techniques used. Individuals seemed to deflect self-blame or avoid a racist label by using the "culture" defense, as replicated in Misag's statement:

You see they have a different culture... I think as a rule we like to stay among ourselves. But it is our culture, it is a natural thing.

The normalisation strategy then moves into a “comfort” rhetoric: it is not only normal, but more comfortable to prefer “culturally” similar company. In Shanta’s case she explains that before meeting her Indian colleague she had friends at the office, but now has “someone she can relate to”. Iraj honestly conveys this impression of in-group solidarity by explaining that “An Indian just feels for another Indian”.

However, the presentation of racial segregation as a natural human experience can be understood beyond rhetorical workings, in the context of what Barker (1981) refers to as the “new racism”. This theory proposes that, for better or for worse, *it is* a human condition to be bound to one’s “community”, aware of “outside” differences, maintaining that it is human instinct to preserve one’s culture and defend one’s territory. Focusing on British attitudes towards immigration, Barker further identifies an emotional connection with the nation as not just a place, but a national home. It is further explained that the “new racism” can also be considered as a “cultural racism”. To appear more neutral and appropriate in justifications for continued racial division, assumed racial differences are explained as cultural variations or dismissed as inherent lifestyles and habits. As Vahid illustrates:

You look for company you are comfortable with... it is a natural thing for a person to like his own community or group, there is nothing wrong with it. I can relate easier to people that are not white. I have White friends, but it is not an easy relationship. I have no feeling of comfort with White Folk.

Foreign Invasion and a New and Pattern of Indian Segregation

Up to now this study has documented changes in segregation patterns, comparing Indian integration with other racialised groupings in Mokopane. However, interviews and observational analysis revealed internal divisions and hostility within the Indian minority. Again drawing on Billig’s (1987, 1991) notion of an internalised dialogue, the Akasia community is engaged within

their own internal segregation struggle. With the community remaining small in its numbers and with few families moving in, group solidarity during the apartheid period was described as strong. The Indian population in South Africa was very stable for almost a century, with no new infusions of people. Since the end of apartheid, many new immigrants from the sub-continent have arrived, coming mostly from India and Pakistan, and have moved into cities and towns such as Mokopane. These people are simultaneously slotting into “perceived” apartheid categories and disrupting those groupings, especially for those who were historically labeled by them. The exact number of recent immigrants in Mokopane is unclear, partially due to the fact that many are residing in South Africa illegally. As a result, the dynamics of the Indian minority in Akasia appear to be shifting, with the community forced to mediate their own internal divisions. Brown (1995) describes social categorisation as necessary for any form of prejudice. Without distinguishable groups, it is almost impossible to discriminate or segregate. Classification implies a label or given name, if we are not labelled as “other” there is limited difference on which to act. Apartheid classifications labelled and grouped a large cluster of people into one category of Indian. However conceptions of Indianness lie on a broad spectrum. In this case, two separate categories of “Indian” surface: South African Indian and immigrant Indian. Abrahams describes there being ‘a lot of Indians from the Indian sub-continent, so it is that sort of Indianness that draws them here... There is a marked difference, in attitudes, manners and approach’.

Drawing on an Us-Them/We-They distinction, two South African Indians describe the large increase in recent Indian and Pakistani immigrants and the apparent ‘differences’ between them: “they are definitely becoming the majority” (Nava), while Yashpal asserts a more marked difference; “they are from there [India], we are not”. Participants’ discursive constructions acted to create a separate category, referring to “them” as aliens or foreigners. As a religious leader in the community, Vahid attributes this difference to westernisation. We are reminded

of Hutnik's (1991) conclusions that minority values constantly come under pressure by the majority, resulting in minorities often conforming with majority values (i.e. western values). A clear example of this is the adoption of English as the primary language medium; only some of the elderly community speaks any local Indian dialect. English, for the South African Indians has now become the language of choice. As Vahid, a South African Indian respondent, explains:

Our ways have changed, we have developed, if I can call it westernised, eating habits, ways of dressing, everything has changed. But *those* people still have that culture... for a long time we have been exposed to western education system and learning White history and I think their ways are different and the people are different.

Following the apparent classification of the "other", a sense of fear also surfaces with the influx of the immigrants (for a different example of invasion narratives see Durrheim and Dixon's 2004). The "local" Indian community complains about the influx of Indian and Pakistani immigrants, "coming in large numbers". Parvin's description highlights their frustration and concern of invasion or taking over:

Oh yes! Oh, I can't live with them, I don't know, I don't mix with them. We are flocked with Indians and Pakistanis. You don't really talk to them... people are not too happy with it. There is an issue of overcrowding. It is escalating, it has not stopped escalating.

Some of the South African Indian participants even go as far as describing it as a "new apartheid" or xenophobia. Salim attributes the difference to "habits, like personal hygiene", while acknowledging the discrimination as "almost like apartheid in our own culture" and recognizes that "it is a bad thing". Akbar describes their relationship by explaining that "we have friendships but we know our limits". An underlying hostility may also still linger. A sense of "tension" is described, accredited to the degree of contact. According to some respondents, the conflict is exacerbated by living together. The consequences of such attitudes should not be underestimated in light of new xenophobic tensions that could arise between groups (for review see

Harris 2002). Vahid, for example, has a particular vantage point, since he is a religious leader. His assessment is that:

People keep things in their hearts, they hide their feelings, but sometimes derogatory names are used. Like in previous times the Whites had names for people. So it also crops up from South African Indians and those coming from India, someone will make a comment. People don't discuss it, but the problem can erupt, because the tension is building up and then there are outbursts.

Unlike apartheid's enforced racial segregation, the internal segregation described is not due to legislative or institutional demands. Jithoo (1985, July) describes how the caste system in India was carried over into the South African Indian community, proving that internal segregations and classification are not a novelty within this minority group. A further motivation driving inter-group segregation is class: the immigrant population is less affluent than the South African Indians, acting as an obstacle to integration. Practically, segregation is a result of housing affordability which then reinforces social segregation. Here it becomes apparent that segregation is not always caused by prejudice, but rather that prejudice is a result of segregation (see Saldanha 2007). In fact outsiderness can be mobilised to define social cleavages (see Ballard 2004). As Essed (1991) argues, it is difficult to separate the micro and macro aspects of segregation, since in many ways they are codependent entities. With this in mind, institutional ideologies may have easily filtered down into the everyday experiences of the Indian minority. Prejudice and tendencies towards categorisation, whether arising from traditional Indian conventions or apartheid dogmas, now are seemingly integrated into the daily experiences of the Indians in Akasia.

Towards Reconciliation

It is easy to pinpoint small towns as being highly racist or conservative in their views. The real question asked is: how we can progress in our reconciliation efforts? Obviously there is no easy solution to prejudice and social divisions, however studies such as this can lead to social action or at least help communities engage in a

dialogue of transformation. This account of the Akasia minority may appear to be labelling and characterising integration patterns as unpromising. However, there were many clear markers of a move towards reconciliation.

Although not the focus of this study, isolated cases of reconciliation were readily identified. Racial integration at schools in South Africa has mostly not resulted in genuine racial integration. Although formal legislation on segregation in schools has long been disbanded, genuine inter-racial integration has proved to be problematic (Dolby 2001; Holtman et al. 2005). Integration challenges at schools in Mokopane are not an exception. Inter-racial tension at the local high school is in fact a continued problem for the Indian community in particular. Some interviews even raised concerns relating to the establishment of a private primary school in the Indian area, causing both racial and economic divisions in the community⁴. However, observations concluded that in both the government and private primary school there is an almost even ratio between Black and Indian students, with few White learners attending either school. Interviews and observations revealed that integration between Black and Indian students has had very positive results. Ashwine, the principle of *Akasia Primary School* – the government school – describes the relationship between the Black and Indian children as encouraging. Ashwine explains how Black and Indian children “run to him and

hug him... truly seeing what mixing has done”. In both schools teachers describe, and observations concur, that Indian and Black learners interact in class-rooms and the playground without any apparent racialised animosity or social distance. Referring to Black-Indian interactions in the private school, one of the mothers recalls her child referring to a Black friend as “the chocolate covered boy”. This description suggests that the boy is seemingly oblivious to racialised classification, describing his friend with a childlike innocence.

Moreover, it appears that group cohesiveness can be achieved with the mediation of one commonality. Brown (1995) argues that social classification is a prerequisite for prejudice, and therefore that breaking down social categories may minimise bigoted tendencies. He proposes a hypothesis of *cross-cutting categories* as a commonly found phenomenon. Brown describes cross-cutting categories as two categories that literally ‘cut’ the other, creating a common factor between different groups. For example, the Black and Indian groupings are two racialised categories that can be ‘cut’ or ‘crossed’ by religion, language, gender or the liberation struggle, facilitating what is called *cross-cutting kinship*. Many seemingly different groups are in fact interdependent. This may, for example, explain how the combined effort of the Black and Indian population in the liberation struggle may have helped harbour better relations between the two groups. A further example of *cross-cutting kinship* may be represented by Kayvan, a Black Muslim, living in Akasia and working for the Mosque. Kayvan, a middle-aged family-man, proved to be a noteworthy case-example of the possibilities that exist for group integration. As a Black male, originally from the townships, Kayvan narrates how Akasia has now become his home. After converting to Islam and pursuing Islamic studies, Kayvan now works for the mosque and lives with his family in Akasia. Although his account does comment on the ‘cultural’ differences and consequent difficulties in integration, his Muslim identity appears to overshadow other differences, including ‘race’.

In this respect, it is interesting to consider the impact of these commonalities and cross-cutting aspects. Nationality, camaraderie during the

⁴ A local public primary school has long been the only ‘Indian’ primary school in the area, previously designated as an ‘Indian only’ school during apartheid. In recent years, the school has integrated with many Black and few White students. Five years ago, a new private primary school was established by a few affluent members of the Indian community. Certain interviews revealed a concern among some of the parents regarding the low standard of the public school resulting in the founding of the private school. Other participants however, questioned the true intentions of the founding of the new school, claiming the true concern was concerning the influx of too many Black students to the school. However, observations concluded that the private school itself has more Black students than Indian; both primary schools appeared to have a good ratio of Black-to-Indian students, with few White learners attending.

apartheid struggle, to a lesser extent education and most strikingly religion can be examples of such commonalities or cross-cutting categories. It also appears that the less pervasive racial categorisation is, the lower the tendency for racial segregation. In line with Pettigrew's (1998) conclusions, the emotional qualities that characterise such interracial friendships must also be investigated. Exploring the reasons behind such changes in behaviour or integration patterns can enlighten our understanding of how to cultivate inter-racial friendships. In many respects the reconciliation processes in South Africa can be considered as top-down or institutional transformation. Bottom-up or grassroots attempts at reconciliation with communities may prove to be more successful in instigating genuine change and integration.

Conclusion

Although this study was limited to a small, case-specific investigation, it serves as another important addition in the analysis of the micro-ecology of segregation. Using the Akasia community in the small town of Mokopane as a micro-ecological setting, this study has attempted to engage in a dialogue of transformation and raise the voice of the South African Indian minority. It has been argued that 'race' relation research is in need of both a perspective and methodological shift, moving research into more natural, real-life settings. This paper explored the lasting consequences of segregation and classification by analysing the spatial dimensions (e.g. physical layout of the town) using observational methods, and

discursive constructions by analysing how people talk about space.

A continued pattern of informal segregation was easily identified in Mokopane among the Indian minority community. Informal segregation is not only a reinforced everyday practice, but acts as a regulator of hidden and hostile racism. The struggle to dismantle the physical and ideological legacy of apartheid is thus ongoing. Informal segregation can be attributed as an enduring consequence of the Group Areas Act, with segregation effecting public and private spaces. A new pattern of internal segregation was further identified between the '*South African Indians*' and '*immigrant Indians*'. The assigned colonial/apartheid racial category (Indian) continues to have enormous material and discursive importance in the post-apartheid era, which continues to operate as a social cleavage in the town. Added to this, there is now a new immigrant population group that somehow is incorporated into the received category of 'Indian', even though they were never part of the story of apartheid. This apparent 'slotting in' is, however, not seamless within the generalised category, since the established 'South African Indian' group does not identify with them. Future research should invest attention to mapping progress in cases of reconciliation in particular. This study has demonstrated that a commonality can be the biggest influence in group integration, whether it's 'culture', family, nationality or religion. More direct focus on successful accounts of integration can offer more insight into the key components needed for future reconciliation.

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