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**INVESTIGATING THE EXPERIENCE OF
WORKING IN A DIVERSIFYING WORKFORCE: A
CASE STUDY OF THE COMMITTEE SECTION OF
THE SOUTH AFRICAN PARLIAMENT.**

THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of MSocSci of the
University of Cape Town

By

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Due to significant shifts in the political, economic and demographic environment the imperatives for change within South African organisations are becoming increasingly more urgent. One strategy that organisations are adopting in the face of increased pressures is to create and maintain diverse workforces. This trend is matched on a global basis and the need to manage diversity has become commonplace. While increased workforce diversity presents a challenge to traditional organisational management it also holds the promise of providing innovative strategies for a changing work environment. Whereas there is an abundance of literature on managing diversity there is a paucity of work on the psychological, experiential aspects of working in a diverse workforce. The principal objective of this research was to develop a conceptual framework for understanding the experience of working in a diversifying workforce. The research followed a case study approach focusing on the committee section of the South African Parliament. Data were collected from twenty committee clerks through open-ended, in-depth interviews. The data was analysed using qualitative data analysis techniques. Five major themes emerged from the interviews comprising: Confronting a Changing Workplace, Meeting and Engaging with the 'Other', Stimulating Growth and Development, Learnings and Coping Mechanisms. Each theme is made up of a series of sub-themes. The study presents these results in a diagrammatic form and provides an extended discussion of the themes and sub-themes. Analysis of the results demonstrates that working in a diversifying workforce has an enormous impact on the participant's experience of work and the quality of their working lives.

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CHAPTER ONE - LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of workforce diversity is generating increasing amounts of attention as a contemporary topic in the study of organisations world-wide. This world-wide trend began to emerge after the publication of the Workforce 2000 Report and other publications predicting a more diverse workforce in the United States and throughout the world. Workforce diversity takes on particular significance in South Africa in the context of our Apartheid past.

The following chapter will review the major areas of research and writing around the concept of workforce diversity. The chapter is divided into three sections. Section one looks at common definitions and models of understanding workforce diversity. Section two focuses on the major themes in the abundant literature on managing diversity. Section three introduces the current research project and outlines the conceptual framework in which it is grounded; the aims and objectives of the study will be looked at in this section.

SECTION ONE: COMMON DEFINITIONS AND THEORETICAL MODELS OF UNDERSTANDING

1.1. DEFINITIONS

The concept of workforce diversity is a relative newcomer in the academic world and there is an inadequate reliable body of theoretical knowledge and research on it (Nkomo & Cox, 1997; Kanhai, 1991). The concept is a complex one and is described by a variety of words and phrases.

Common definitions of diversity range from narrow to very broad. Narrow definitions highlight race, gender and ethnicity (Cox, 1993; Cross, Katz, Miller & Seashore, 1994; Nkomo & Cox, 1997). Broad definitions include variables like age, personal and corporate background, education, work function, personality, lifestyle, sexual preference, geographic origin and work experience (Flederman, 1996; Jackson, 1992; Jamieson & O'Mara, 1991; Siler, 1991; Thomas, 1991).

Broad definitions suggest that the term refers to all individual differences among people while narrow definitions refer to people who are in particular gender or racio-ethnic minority groups in a social system. Despite the disparities in definitions of the concept, one shared premise is that the concept refers to diversity in identities based on membership in social and demographic groups, and how differences in identities affect social relations in organisations (Nkomo & Cox, 1997).

Diversity is generally understood as differences between people (Kanhai, 1991; O'Mara, 1994). Differences in and of themselves are not really problematic but in certain situations differences can become hurdles or obstacles if they interrupt the smooth flow of our activities or behaviour and complicate the process of goal achievement (Kanhai, 1991).

Workforce diversity cannot be understood as a 'state' but needs to be conceptualised as a process. Organisations are embarking on a process of workforce diversification. Creating heterogeneous workforce composition is one step in the process. The process also involves creating a working environment that integrates diversity at all levels of the organisation. The process of workforce diversification impacts on the way the organisation is structured and the flow of communication within the organisation. It affects organisational behaviour and the organisational culture. Workforce diversification represents a major change initiative for organisations.

Workforce diversification can be understood as a change in organisational values and ethics. It stands in opposition to more traditional understandings of organisations that are founded on the underlying belief that uniformity and homogeneity are the key to organisational success.

Almost without exception the literature reviewed presented workforce diversity as having positive implications for organisations. The majority of the literature reviewed is premised on the fact that workforce diversity causes difficulties for organisations but if managed well is ultimately constructive, and potentially essential, for organisations and their survival in the modern world.

1.1.1 THEORETICAL MODELS OF DIVERSITY

Various scholars have developed conceptual models of diversity in an attempt to broaden understanding of the concept. The two most salient models as defined by Nkomo & Cox (1997) will be briefly reviewed.

The Interactional Model of Cultural Diversity

The interactional model of cultural diversity designed by Cox (1993) maintains that differences in group identities among individuals (both physical and cultural identities) interact with an intricate aggregation of individual, inter-group, and organisational factors (the diversity climate) to determine the impact of diversity on both individual and organisational processes (Cox, 1993).

The individual outcomes as predicted by the model are divided into affective response variables like satisfaction, organisational identification and job involvement, and achievement variables like performance and compensation.

Organisational outcomes are divided into first level outcomes which include attendance, turnover and quality of work and second level outcomes which include organisational performance or profits. The levels are based on expected directness of impact (Cox, 1993).

The model is grounded in two key assumptions. Firstly, workforce diversity will influence measures of effectiveness at both individual and organisational levels. Secondly, the nature of the organisational context for diversity is primary in determining whether the influence of group identity differences on organisational effectiveness will be good or bad.

A recent study by Strydom & Erwee (1998) attempted to assess the applicability of the interactional model of cultural diversity in a sample of South African companies using an interview schedule. The key finding was that while the sample acknowledged the potential advantages of diversity, they did not yet experience a pressing need to optimise diversity in their workforces.

There are a number of general trends that emerged out of the results of the study. (1) The results show a tendency for human resource managers to believe in the importance of managing diversity yet the dominant groups within the organisations do not necessarily value diversity. (2) Minority groups have to assimilate into the dominant culture of the monolithic companies comprising the sample group and there is little sign of attempts at integration. (3) The companies are indifferent to critical components required to move from monocultural to multicultural companies (Strydom & Erwee, 1996).

The study also found that South African companies are wary of some of the strategies and models used by their American counterparts to effect organisational change and manage workforce diversity (Strydom & Erwee, 1996).

A Framework for Understanding the Dynamics of Diversity in Work Teams

Jackson, May & Whitney (1995, cited in Nkomo & Cox, 1997) present a theoretical model of more than thirty variables organised into a conceptual framework designed to facilitate better understandings of the nature of diversity in work teams. The model does not attempt to identify the interrelationships between the complex array of variables.

The three main components of the model are (1) aspects of diversity (2) mediating states and processes and (3) behavioural manifestations/consequences (Jackson et al, 1995, cited in Nkomo & Cox, 1997). These three components are analysed across three levels of analysis - individual, interpersonal and team - and contextualised within broader social and organisational environments.

The framework posits that diversity can be understood as a characteristic of individuals, as the difference between an individual and their work group and as a characteristic of the work group itself. The framework specifies dimensions of diversity as either being task-related (tenure, education, etc.) or relations-oriented (sex, race etc.).

The framework suggests that the aggregation of individual characteristics, interpersonal likeness and team profile effects outcomes like personal performance,

power balances and team creativity. This relationship, however, is interceded by task and relational variables like attention, recall, and stage of socialisation and cognitive and affective responses (Jackson et al, 1995, cited in Nkomo & Cox, 1997).

All three models have similar frameworks in that they are compilations of learnings about what variables are meaningful when attempting to understand workforce diversity. They are not parsimonious academic or theoretical propositions, which can be converted to mathematical problems for linear statistical analysis (Nkomo & Cox, 1997).

The next section will outline and discuss some of the major themes in the literature on workforce diversity.

SECTION TWO: KEY THEMES IN LITERATURE

1.2 MANAGING DIVERSITY

The extensive review of the literature on workforce diversity demonstrates that the majority of the research, writing and work that is being conducted in the area focuses on how to manage diversity.

Management involves the planning, organising, leading and controlling of resources to achieve organisational goals effectively and efficiently (Jones, George & Hill, 1998). Planning involves choosing appropriate organisational goals and courses of action to best achieve those goals. Organising involves establishing task and authority relationships that allow people to work together to achieve organisational goals. Leading involves motivating, co-ordinating and energising individuals and groups to work together to achieve organisational goals. Controlling involves establishing accurate measuring and monitoring systems to assess how well the organisation has achieved its goals.

Workforce diversification introduces a new context in which management needs to fulfil the above functions. In this new and changing context management's responsibility for organising becomes a social process where management is

responsible for affecting a process of adapting to change and creating change through their, and their subordinates', actions.

The need to manage diversity comes from the existence of differences between people (Kemp, 1998). Managing diversity is defined as the ability to work with people from diverse backgrounds in a manner that enables each individual to reach his or her full potential, in pursuit of organisational objectives, without being subject to unfair discrimination or disadvantage because of irrelevant considerations (Torres & Bruxelles, 1992; Gardenswartz & Rowe, 1993; Kandola & Fullerton, 1994; Rosmarin, 1992).

Managing diversity involves recognising and appreciating the differences between individuals and ensuring that the differences do not hinder professional growth (Bartz, Hillman, Lehrer & Mayhugh, 1990; Siler, 1991).

An underlying assumption is that managing diversity and workforce diversity itself is a process to develop an organisational environment that works for all employees. It is understood by the majority of authors as a positive process which does not attempt to control or contain diversity, but rather to support and empower members of the workforce to perform at their best (Rosmarin, 1992).

1.2.1 BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE CHANGING APPROACHES TO MANAGING DIVERSITY

The early work on managing diversity is referred to as the melting-pot approach (Carr-Ruffino, 1996). The melting-pot approach advocates the assimilation of divergent groups into the dominant culture. The melting-pot approach implies that difference is wrong or inferior and that the best approach to cultural diversity is to ignore it. The goal of the approach is to eliminate cultural differences through assimilation (Simons, Vasquez & Harris, 1993).

The melting-pot approach proved damaging to organisational effectiveness in that forcing everyone to assimilate left untapped potential. In a competitive environment assimilation is stifling and deadly and talented employees tend to seek out

organisations that better accommodate them and provide a supportive multicultural approach.

Carr-Ruffino (1996) documents the transition from the melting-pot approach, which failed to create equal opportunities for minority groups, and describes how it was superseded by the legal approach.

The legal approach emphasises the need to legislate for equal employment opportunity and affirmative action. This approach has focused on meeting legal requirements and has failed to promote the valuing or managing of diversity. It highlights the need to achieve equality of opportunity in the workplace through changing organisational demographics (Gardenswartz & Rowe, 1993). The legal approach is considered remedial action where specific target groups benefit as past wrongs are remedied. Similar to the melting-pot approach this approach assumes that groups will assimilate into the system as opposed to the system adapting to incorporate new norms.

Both the above approaches were superseded by the development of the valuing diversity approach. Valuing diversity has emerged as a popular theme in the literature on workforce diversity. Valuing difference emphasises the appreciation of differences and creating an environment in which each individual feels valued and accepted (Gardenswartz & Rowe, 1993).

Valuing diversity provides organisations with a much richer environment, a variety of viewpoints and paradigms and greater productivity. Its major contribution is its emphasis on the richness of ideas that diversity brings to the organisation (Copeland, 1988).

The valuing diversity approach to understanding workforce diversity emphasises learning about and understanding the needs and interests of one's workforce. The valuing diversity approach encourages organisations to create and articulate a corporate vision and mission that their workers can identify with, and to participate in and behave in ways that demonstrate respect to and value of all individual workers (Lewan, 1990).

The valuing diversity movement advocates the appreciation of difference (Carr-Ruffino, 1996). It regards diversity as an asset that offers valuable opportunities like innovation, networking, and marketing savvy (Carr-Ruffino, 1996).

Theorists like Carr-Ruffino (1996), Clark (1995) and Gordon (1995) maintain that the valuing diversity approach to understanding workforce diversity is based on educating people to make appropriate attitude shifts. The approach emerged in the 1980s and forms part of the managing diversity approach to workforce diversity. Like managing diversity, valuing difference is also a business imperative designed to enhance productivity and performance.

Unlike valuing diversity, which is ethically driven as it is based on morals and ethics which drive the need for culture change, managing diversity is strategically driven. While valuing diversity is idealistic in that individual organisational members benefit directly from having their cultural mores acknowledged, accommodated and appreciated, managing diversity is primarily pragmatic because of the potential positive organisational outcomes that emanate from it (Gardenswartz & Rowe, 1993).

A number of authors argue that while managing diversity is often associated with concepts like equal employment and affirmative action, they are essentially different processes altogether (Gardenswartz & Rowe, 1993; Human, 1991; Carr-Ruffino, 1996). Lacob (1997) explains that affirmative action programmes are mechanisms for ensuring the entry into organisations for previously discriminated against individuals and groups. Implementing affirmative action results in a demographically diverse and representative workforce. Managing diversity initiatives focus on creating organisational environments in which all members are able to perform to the fullest potential. Employment equity is the end result of both affirmative action and managing diversity (Human, 1993; Human, 1995). The former results in a diverse workforce while the latter ensures its effective management (Thomas, 1995).

Contemporary work on managing diversity is grounded in the multicultural approach (Carr-Ruffino, 1996). This approach is founded on the principles of valuing diversity

and advocates changes in corporate culture to create supportive and nurturing work environments for all employees (Carr-Ruffino, 1996).

The multicultural approach to managing workforce diversity aims at increasing corporate power through unitising the potential of diversity (Thomas, 1990). Thomas (1990) suggests that the reason companies should move away from using legal approaches to managing diversity is that policies like affirmative action do not deal with the causes of prejudice and inequality, nor do they develop the potential of every man and woman in a company. In companies striving for competitive advantage, the goal of managing diversity from a multicultural approach is to develop the capacity to accept, incorporate, and empower the diverse talents of diverse workforces (Thomas, 1990).

The following section will review the literature on managing diversity for competitive advantage.

1.2.2 MANAGING DIVERSITY FOR COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

A key theme in the managing diversity literature is managing diversity for competitive advantage. Managing diversity is strategically driven in that it requires behaviours and policies which are seen to contribute to organisational goals such as profit and productivity.

Managing diversity means more productive employees and it means keeping good employees. Numerous authors argue that establishing a corporate environment that allows all employees to reach their maximum potential is no longer a legal, moral or social responsibility, but is critical for business survival (Copeland, 1988; Cox & Blake, 1991; Crockett, 1999; Goss, 1994; Mandrell & Kohler-Gray, 1990; Price, 1997; Ross & Scheinder, 1992; Strenski, 1994; Thomas & Ely, 1996; Thomas, 1990, Thomas, 1992; Whitehead, 1999).

Cox & Blake (1991) identify six areas where good management can create a competitive advantage from workforce diversity: (1) cost, (2) resource acquisition, (3) marketing, (4) creativity, (5) problem solving, (6) organisational flexibility. They

refer to cost and resource acquisition as 'inevitability-of-diversity' issues. The latter four areas are referred to as 'value-in-diversity hypothesis' in that workforce diversity brings net-added value to organisational processes through the above areas.

The cost argument is based on research that demonstrates that organisations fail to manage women and racio-ethnic minorities as well as white males (Cox & Blake, 1991). Data indicate that turnover and absenteeism tend to be significantly higher for these groups. Organisations that learn to effectively manage these groups and facilitate greater organisational integration will have a better cost advantage than those that do not (Bartz et al, 1990; Carr-Ruffino, 1996; Cox & Blake, 1991; Morrison, 1992, Walters, 1995).

The resource-acquisition argument is based on the idea that companies that develop good reputations for diversity management will be able to attract and retain the best personnel (Cox & Blake, 1991; Keenan, 1994; Morrison, 1992; Rosen & Lovelace, 1991).

Williams & Bauer (1994) conducted a study to assess the impact of a managing diversity policy on people's perceptions of organisational attractiveness. The study used an experimental design in which they examined the potential impact that a company's public stance on managing diversity might have on its human resource systems. The hypothesis was that the job applicants' reactions to recruitment brochures would be more positive if the organisation communicated that it had a managing diversity policy as opposed to a commitment to affirmative action or equal employment opportunities. Individual's found an organisation that described a managing diversity policy in their information brochure more attractive than organisations that did not discuss the issue (Williams & Bauer, 1994).

The marketing argument suggests that for multinational organisations, the insight and cultural sensitivity that members with roots in other countries bring to the marketing efforts should improve these efforts in significant ways (Cox & Blake, 1991).

The benefits of diversity in relation to markets are not restricted to multinational organisations. Creating a diverse workforce ensures that the workforce shares the

same experiences, backgrounds and sensitivities as the market it services and the communities in which it operates (Crockett, 1999; McNerney, 1994; Morrison, 1992; Overman, 1991; Walters, 1995; Whitehead, 1999).

The creativity argument is based on the idea that differences in perspectives and paradigms should improve the level of creativity within organisations. Similar principles apply to the problem-solving argument where it is understood that heterogeneity in decision-making and problem solving will result in better solutions to organisational problems (Carr-Ruffino, 1996; Copeland, 1988; Cox & Blake, 1991).

The systems flexibility argument is based on the idea that a multicultural model for managing diversity means the system will be more fluid and less determinant and standardised. Increased fluidity will lead to increased flexibility in adapting to environmental changes (Carr-Ruffino, 1996; Cox & Blake, 1991; Kanter, 1991).

Crockett (1999) and Rice (1994) propose that the arguments for managing diversity are many and varied. The key arguments maintain that the world's and individual country's labour pool are invariably changing and in order to be successful in this constantly changing climate it makes sound economic sense to create diverse workforces that reflect these demographic changes.

Research conducted by Bartz et al (1990) shows that effective management of workforce diversity will result in improved output, delivered in a more timely manner because the assets of employees will be more comprehensively utilised.

The importance of managing diversity from a business perspective is captured in the following quotation: "Any business that chooses to ignore the advantages that a diverse work force provides, does so at its own risk. The risk of limiting the pool of talented people...of losing the dynamic synergy that a diverse work force provides...and of alienating customers." (Walters, 1995, 497).

1.2.3 EFFECTIVE DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT

A second key area in the literature on managing diversity is research and writing on how to go about managing diversity effectively. There are a large number of attempts at devising a perfect model for managing diversity. For the purposes of this literature review a limited selection of these attempts will be presented. They have been chosen because they are representative of the kind of work being done in the area.

Thomas (1990) argues that managers need to analyse and revise their assumptions and systems in order to cater for a diverse workforce. Learning to manage diversity is a change process, and the managers involved in that process are change agents. There are no rules on the rights and wrongs of managing this change process but managers are encouraged to work with their employees to find new solutions to new problems. In order to manage diversity, managers must ensure diversity at all levels of their organisations. If organisations lack diversity, affirmative action is the process to readdress the problem.

Thomas (1990) highlights ten basic guidelines designed to achieve satisfactory performance from a new diverse workforce. He highlights the need for managers to clarify their motivation behind learning to manage a diverse workforce. He suggests that sound business reasons should inform managers' motivation to manage diversity. Thomas (1990) argues that managers need to develop a vision of workforce diversity, which is grounded on an image of fully tapping the human resource potential of every member of their workforce. Assessing the nature of one's organisational culture and its openness to increased diversity are critical in attempting to effectively manage diversity.

Walters (1995) reinforces Thomas's (1990) guidelines by identifying four critical areas that need to be incorporated into one's management style in order to effectively manage workforce diversity. Walters (1995) bases these critical areas on the assumption that managing change and workforce diversity are difficult and time consuming tasks. The critical areas identified are designed to increase the possibility of successful diversity management. These areas are (1) commitment towards creating a diverse workforce, (2) recognising the strategic context of workforce diversity, (3)

establishing processes in order to make necessary changes to the constellation of the workforce and (4) evaluating the successes and failures of diversity management.

Both authors identify principles and areas of concern that if ignored could result in the challenges associated with diversity becoming divisive within organisations. The guidelines aim at helping organisations tap into the advantages of diversity. They recognise the positive effects of workforce diversity not only for the internal organisational system, but also for the system's relationships with its markets and customers.

Ernest H. Drew, the CEO of Hoechst Celanese, the chemical giant, is quoted in Rice's (1995) article outlining key variables in effective diversity management. Drew expands on the above guidelines by emphasising the direct benefits of diversity to business. These variables include attaining the commitment from senior leadership to increase workforce diversity and learn to value it. He advises that diversity should be treated like a strategic business objective. He argues that effective diversity management involves adopting a plan for addressing the concerns of white males within organisations to avoid unnecessary fear or feelings of threat. In order to create an ethos of equality within the organisation, management needs to scrutinise compensation systems and career tracking procedures in order to guarantee the perception of fairness. He argues that training in diversity management is essential but that organisations must be wary of charlatanism or consultants offering quick-fix solutions to creating harmonious workforces in the context of workforce diversity.

Carr-Ruffino (1996) approaches the subject from a different perspective. Instead of emphasising the benefits to business, she emphasises the social importance of effective diversity management and establishes a set of guidelines that are aimed at improving employee quality of work-life.

Rosmarin (1992) argues that to meet the contemporary challenges of a diverse workforce in South Africa, employers need to develop a greater appreciation of diversity and develop ways to affirm diversity within their organisations. Rosmarin (1992) suggests a generic implementation process for managing diversity which involves challenging one's paradigms, conducting a diversity audit, clarifying

motivation, objectives and gaining buy-in, developing a participative strategy, implementing an action plan which is logistically feasible and appropriate to the nature of the organisation and generating flexible systems for maintenance, monitoring and evaluation.

A study designed by Kemp (1998) with the purpose of creating a model for the interpersonal competencies for the management of diversity showed that managing diversity goes beyond cultural diversity and is essentially about managing individuals. The results of the study indicate that although interpersonal competencies are important for the successful management of diversity, other factors also come into play. The research demonstrated that more traditional labour relations competencies associated with the formal and collective aspects of the employment relationship are key considerations in developing a model for interpersonal competencies to manage diversity in South African organisations (Kemp, 1998).

The models of effective diversity management are founded on the belief that managing diversity provides a unique opportunity to optimise all members of the workforce and enhance quality (Dobbs, 1994). They differ in the specifics but share many of the same variables and suggestions.

The majority of writing on the subject suggests that there is one formula or model to best manage workforce diversity in organisations, and offers specific programmatic solutions to the problem (Dass & Parker, 1999). A more recent approach suggests that there is no single best way to manage diversity but rather an organisation's approach to the issue depends on the degree of pressure for diversity, the type of diversity in question and managerial attitudes (Dass & Parker, 1991).

Dass & Parker (1999) present a framework that links executives' perspectives and priorities to managing workforce diversity, organisational conditions and performance. The framework is based on the assumption that every organisation is faced with a number of unique pressures, which in combination influence the perspectives of management, their priorities and strategic responses. Congruence among diversity pressures, managerial perspectives and strategic responses is predicted to improve organisational effectiveness, whereas a mismatch might result in

economic and non-economic costs (Dass & Parker, 1999). Research indicates that the best response to managing workforce diversity is particular as opposed to universal.

SECTION THREE: FOCUS OF CURRENT RESEARCH PROJECT

1.3 AIMS AND JUSTIFICATION OF CURRENT RESEARCH

The following section provides a series of arguments for the research and attempts to clarify its objectives.

There is a substantial and fast growing body of evidence that highlights the explicit connection between how organisations manage their staff and the economic results achieved. Some research has found strong causal links between investing in employees and stock market performance (Pfeffer & Veiga, 1999). Companies which place workers at the centre of their business strategies tend to produce higher, long-term returns to shareholders than their industry peers (Blimes, Wetzker & Xhonneux, 1997). Throughout the world, closer attention is being given to the significance of the individual in organisations and society (Rosmarin, 1992). The work on diversity like managing diversity and valuing diversity supports the idea that the individual's contribution to an organisation should be appreciated (Rosmarin, 1992).

An organisation achieves competitive advantage by using people successfully, drawing on their expertise, capacity and ingenuity to meet defined objectives (Price, 1997). People management involves balancing the needs of an organisation's human resource with those of the organisation itself, while at the same time taking people's feelings and emotions at work into consideration (McKenna & Beech, 1995).

The primary objective of human resource management is ensuring the achievement of organisational goals by managing the organisations' most valued resource, its workforce. In organisations that are embarking on workforce diversification a number of changes take place in the make-up of the workforce and these changes have implications for the way the workforce is managed and the way the working environment is perceived. In order to effectively manage diversity one needs to have a

real and informed understanding of what the experience of working in a diverse workforce involves and what consequences or implications it has for individual workers.

While management is responsible for motivating staff, they are equally responsible for the quality of their employees' working lives. The current research is of value because it attempts to reflect the perceived nature of the working environment of people working in a diverse workforce. Employees are entitled to a meaningful work experience. Workforce diversification alters the experience of individuals accustomed to working in homogenous workforces. How individuals understand these alterations and how they impact on the individual's experience of work and work life is a key objective of this study.

The current research project focuses on the experience of the actual workforce in the process of change and diversification and attempts to assess the realities of workforce diversity for the people working within it. The research can add value to the area and enhance our understanding of how to manage the challenges of workforce diversity by first understanding what it means to the people it involves. The research is situated in the centre of the interactionist model as it explores the subjective experiential forces at play there.

The aim of the project is to construct a model to explain the experience of working in a diverse workforce. The aim is to investigate diversity from an individual, subjective perspective. This project aims at uncovering the meanings ascribed to the experience of working in a diverse workforce.

The project entails uncovering how individuals understand the experience of working in a diverse workforce. It is based on the assumption that to effectively manage diversity one needs to understand what the experience means to the individuals who live and work within diversity. Research demonstrates that in most inter-cultural settings, differential rank is given according to stereotyped notions about the attitudes and behaviours of different groups (Human, 1995). The project attempts to unpack some of these stereotypical ideas and assess how they impact on people's experience of working in inter-cultural situations.

Workforce diversity involves people having to come to terms with a changing workforce. It is about learning to understand cultures, one's own and others' (Carr-Ruffino, 1996). It affects individuals personally in that they have to start learning to handle their prejudices and to work with people they may be unfamiliar with (Carr-Ruffino, 1996). It requires that individuals look at the myths and stereotypes they have about different groups, be it gender or racial stereotypes. The experience could be about a variety of things for individuals. The current research project is designed to assess what those things are. The research can contribute a theoretical basis on which management can build their diversity management programmes or develop responses to the issues that diversity creates for employees.

Managing diversity has proved a complex and difficult task. This is partly related to the fact that each individual is complex and that social identity is convoluted, dynamic and changeable (Price, 1997). Individuals from differing cultural backgrounds may share much in common on some social variables and differ greatly on others. It is important to understand the kinds of meanings individuals attach to workforce diversity and the impact of how they make sense of the situation on their behaviour in order to manage it.

Having reviewed the literature on diversity it is apparent that the majority of research and practice is focused on what managers need to do to maintain a viable and efficient workforce amidst rapid and significant changes. In a review of the worst diversity practices Frost (1999) claims that current diversity best practice research fails to collect data from all levels of the organisation. Collecting information exclusively from managers or human resource practitioners is insufficient if one wants to formulate effective responses to workforce diversity. This documented paucity of information from other levels of the organisation is a key justification for the current research and its focus on the subjective experience of employees.

Managing diversity is a process designed to create an organisational environment and culture which does not attempt to control or contain diversity, but allows individuals to perform to their potential. Rosmarin (1992) argues that an awareness of the differences between people will assist organisations to meet their market place needs.

The current research goes beyond the assumption that being aware of the differences between people is important, to developing an understanding of what the experience of working in a diverse workforce means to individuals.

One of the aims of the current research project is to ground the research process within a sound methodological framework and contribute to establishing a deeper theoretical foundation to the subject of workforce diversity. The prevailing state of theoretical knowledge and research on workforce diversity is problematic. The majority of work that has been done in the area has been conducted by practitioners, resulting in a lack of academic clarity or theoretical grounding (Nkomo & Cox, 1997).

Despite numerous and varied attempts at managing diversity, rarely have these efforts had substantial impact on organisational effectiveness (Thomas & Ely, 1996).

Research shows that two perspectives have guided most diversity initiatives: the discrimination-and-fairness paradigm and the access-and-legitimacy paradigm. The former is based on creating equal opportunities within organisations, and the latter is based on the principles of acceptance and the celebration of differences. Both perspectives have merit but are limited in their capacity to extract the real potential benefits from a diversified workforce (Thomas & Ely, 1996).

A third paradigm is suggested called the learning-and-effectiveness paradigm, which incorporates aspects of the first two paradigms but goes further by concretely linking diversity to approaches to work. The underlying understanding of diversity that informs this paradigm is that diversity is the varied perspectives and approaches to work that diverse individuals bring to their organisations. The paradigm focuses on how members of an organisation actually do work, how they design processes, reach goals, frame tasks, create effective teams, communicate ideas and lead (Thomas & Ely, 1996). When given the opportunity members of diverse groups can help companies develop and improve by challenging basic assumptions about organisations' functions, strategies, operations, practices and procedures. And in doing so, individuals are able to bring more of their whole selves to the workplace and relate more coherently to the work that they do (Thomas & Ely, 1996).

Thomas & Ely (1996) argue that organisations need to take a more holistic view of diversity, which sees it as providing a fresh and meaningful contribution to the nature of work and the workplace. Organisational leadership needs to change its behaviour and attitude towards diversity in order to reap the powerful benefits that a diverse workforce can generate. Taking a learning-and-effectiveness view of workforce diversity will result in increased profitability but, equally importantly, it will result in increased organisational learning, creativity, flexibility, organisational and individual growth and facilitate rapid and successful adjustments to market changes.

To shift organisations made up of diversified workforces to embrace this new paradigm, organisations need to make a high-level commitment to learning more about their internal and external environment, organisational structure and task.

The current research project is in line with the learning-and-effectiveness paradigm for understanding workforce diversity in that it focuses on developing a deep understanding of the experiences of diverse individuals in a diversified workforce. It emphasises the importance of the individual's experience of work. It attempts to make sense of the different perspectives and approaches to work and work life. It places the individual at the centre of attempting to understand workforce diversity and how to manage it. It is designed to understand workforce diversity from the subjective perspective of the individual.

Organisations worldwide are struggling with managing increasingly diverse work groups (Price, 1997). The research project aims at facilitating better understandings of the experience of workforce diversity, understanding that might facilitate better management. In order to reap the benefits of a diversified workforce it is essential that managers understand the real problems, issues, challenges, attitudes, behaviours and perceptions of their staff. This research aims to develop a model that captures the key elements that make up the experience of workforce diversity.

CHAPTER TWO - SETTING THE CONTEXT

The following chapter offers a brief description of the context of the research project. Section 2.1 outlines the broader societal context in which South African organisations are operating. Section 2.2 describes the case, beginning with an introduction to the committees of Parliament and moving to an explanation of the committee section, the actual site of the research. Further discussion related to the context of the research and the generalisability and applicability of the results will be discussed in the methodology section of this document.

2.1 BROAD SOCIAL CONTEXT

South Africa's first democratic election held on 27 April 1994 marked the end of an age of international isolation and the enforced partitioning of South African society (Shaw, 1997). The South African population and the society in general are attempting to deal with the devastating repercussions of Apartheid and Apartheid legislation. The repercussions include a fragmented and divided economic and social order with huge divides between white and black, rich and poor, and educated and uneducated (Shaw, 1997).

The political transition and the negotiation of the current Constitution have produced a radically new context within which South Africans and South African organisations operate (Finnemore, 1998). Workplaces are microcosms of the general society and yet have their own particular mixture of cultural influences and practices. South African workplaces and labour relations had been seriously affected by Apartheid. Some of the consequences for South African workplaces involve deep racial divides between skilled and unskilled workers, gross wage gaps, poorly educated workers, lack of training and personnel development, authoritarian management styles and deficit protection for the most vulnerable employees.

South Africa's historical context and sudden change has resulted in new workplace demands such as affirmative action and the need for greater workforce diversity

(Finnemore, 1998). Factors like increased worker participation, gender equality, demands for the legitimisation of religious and cultural customs - such as recognition of traditional healers - contribute to the need for wide-scale organisational change. These factors are the products of social change. Social change provides organisations with new internal and external environmental demands and agendas (Brotherton, 1999). Workforce diversity is a manifestation of social change.

With the transformation of South Africa towards democracy a new set of legislation has been promulgated to ensure this transformation, like the Labour Relations Act (66) 1995, the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, the Employment Equity Act (55) 1998, and Skills Development Act.

The Employment Equity Act (55) of 1998 has direct relevance to the issue of workforce diversification in South Africa. The primary purpose of the Act is twofold. Firstly, it aims to attain equity in the workplace by advancing equal opportunity and fair treatment in employment through the eradication of unfair discrimination. Secondly, it attempts to create equity by implementing affirmative action measures to redress the disadvantages in employment experienced by designated groups (Finnemore, 1998). The Act has massive implications for South African workplaces, many of which will be embarking on workforce diversification in order to comply with the requirements of the Act.

In the process of locating a site for this research in 1996 it became apparent that the researcher was going to struggle to find a workforce that was adequately representative or diverse. The research commenced long before the Act was promulgated and at the time most organisations that were investigated as potential research sites did not demonstrate diverse or diversifying workforces. The researcher contacted a number of large organisations and interviewed various people in an attempt to identify an organisation that had begun implementing an equal opportunities selection programme. In 1996 the organisations approached were still anticipating the equal opportunities legislation as opposed to formally initiating affirmative action in their organisations.

The committee section of the South African parliament was chosen as the research site because a year earlier they had initiated a huge recruitment exercise, hiring between 30 and 40 new staff members. Their hiring policy emphasised achieving diversity amongst their workforce.

Diversity as understood in the context of this research involves racial and cultural difference. Initially the researcher's definition of diversity included gender differences but this factor did not commonly emerge as an element in the participants' understanding of diversity. It became increasingly apparent that gender differences were not understood under the umbrella of workplace diversity in the case, nor in the majority of literature reviewed on diversity. Diversity is also understood as an ongoing process as opposed to an end state achieved through affirmative action policies. The research refers to workforce diversification indicating the fact that the participants are working within a workforce in the process of diversifying.

2.2 BACKGROUND TO THE CASE

2.21 THE COMMITTEES OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN PARLIAMENT

The South African Parliament is made up of two Houses: The National Assembly, which consists of members of the parties elected in the recent elections and the National Council of Provinces (NCOP), which consists of representatives from each province and the South African Local Government Association.

The National Assembly and NCOP are divided into Committees. Committees in Parliament are responsible for processing, discussing, changing and rejecting bills (draft laws) that come from the Cabinet. Parliamentary committees play a key role in the process of building democracy and public involvement in Parliament. In the National Assembly these committees are called Portfolio Committees and in the NCOP they are called Select Committees. The National Assembly has a committee for each Minister and government department, while in the NCOP each committee deals with several government departments.

Committees are responsible for discussing draft laws, consulting with the public, and holding government accountable for bills passed and laws made or changed.

2.22 THE COMMITTEE SECTION

The committee section is made up of committee clerks or secretaries who service the parliamentary committees. The committee clerk's job is to give administrative and secretarial support to the committees.

The clerk is responsible for organising meetings, workshops, overseas trips, writing reports, conducting all the paper work related to the committees, writing up minutes, giving notice of meetings, and liaising with the public. The committee clerks also act as advisors to the committee chairs and members of parliament on points of law and correct procedure.

Prior to 1996 the committee section consisted of approximately twelve committee clerks. After the 1995 election the staff component increased to approximately forty junior committee secretaries to accommodate the new demands of a significantly larger Parliament. Before 1996 almost all the committee clerks were white and many of them had worked for the organisation for five years or more.

The policy underlying the recruitment process beginning in 1996 was to ensure a ratio of 50% men and 50% women. The process also operated according to affirmative action principles.

At the time of the research the committee section consisted of thirty-one committee clerks, four senior committee clerks, two assistant heads, two deputy heads, one executive secretary, a section head, six typists and twenty administrative assistants.

CHAPTER THREE - RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study involved a qualitative investigation into the experience of working in a diverse workforce. Qualitative Research often involves the use of an array of strategies and methods to gather and analyse a variety of empirical data (Coffy & Atkinson, 1996). The intention of this chapter is to outline and discuss the qualitative approach, research strategy and techniques that were employed in this research process.

The following chapter is divided into three sections and a number of subsections. Section 3.1 introduces the research paradigm in which the research was conceived and contextualised. Section 3.2 outlines the research methodology and techniques. Section 3.2 is divided into the following subsections: 3.21 sampling, 3.22 data collection and procedure and 3.23 data analysis. The data analysis subsection is broken down further into sections dealing 3.231 data reduction, 3.232 data display and 3.233 conclusion drawing and theory development. Section 3.3 addresses the issue of researcher bias and discusses the issues of reliability and validity in relation to the research project.

3.1 THE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH PARADIGM

The first step in the research process involved assessing what data was wanted and then how it was going to be collected. In answering the latter question the researcher initiated the research process by making an explicit statement about the kind of research she was conducting and the kinds of results the process would produce. Qualitative data analysis was chosen, as it is congruent and appropriate with the research problem. Qualitative data analysis manages meaningful talk and action (Coffy & Atkinson, 1996). Meaningful talk and action are the shared characteristics bonding all qualitative data types and analytic approaches (Coffy & Atkinson, 1996).

One unifying theme of qualitative research is its interest in how individuals ascribe meaning to their acts and problems and what those meanings are, thus making it the most relevant research paradigm for this project. This project aims at uncovering the meanings ascribed to the experience of working in a diverse workforce. It aims at

uncovering how individuals understand the experience of working within a diverse workforce.

Within the qualitative research paradigm analysis should not be regarded as a discrete phase but as a reflexive activity that should inform data collection, writing and further data collection. This cyclical process is one of the challenges of working within this research paradigm (Coffy & Atkinson, 1996).

Qualitative data provide a source of grounded information. The data provide rich descriptions and explanations of processes in identifiable local contexts (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Qualitative data promote investigations beyond initial impressions. There is a quality of certainty in the findings of qualitative studies in that they present the subjects' words to express meanings and offer real, in-depth meaningful information (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Qualitative research is conducted through protracted and direct contact with a given situation; a situation reflective of the everyday experience of the research subjects (Tesch, 1990). Qualitative data attempts to represent a systemic and coherent picture of the situation. Data collection focuses on the perceptions of the local players from the inside (Tesch, 1990).

The qualitative approach with its emphasis on 'lived experience' is inherently well suited for locating the meanings individuals ascribe to events, processes and structures of their lives, their perceptions, assumptions, prejudices and presuppositions (Van Manen, 1977). The qualitative approach is also well suited for the discovery and exploration of new areas (Miles & Huberman, 1994). As discussed in chapter one, a thorough literature review of the research and writings around workforce diversity highlighted a number of conceptual and theoretical gaps in our knowledge of the phenomenon. A qualitative research strategy was adopted as the most effective strategy to contribute original work to the field of workforce diversity and simultaneously confront some of the gaps in our understandings and conceptualisations of the field.

3.1.1 CASE STUDY METHOD

The research strategy used in this project took the form of an extended case study (Yin, 1984). A case study research strategy can be understood as an action plan which helps the researcher move effectively from point A to B (Yin, 1984). It lays out a blueprint for the study. A strategy or conceptual framework is important in order for the logic of the study to be defensible.

Case study methodology is used for a number of reasons: (1) to explore new areas and issues where little theory is available or measurement is unclear, (2) to describe a process or the effects of an event or an intervention, especially when such events affect many different parties and (3) to explain complex phenomenon (Kohn, 1997).

Although typically associated with exploratory research, Yin (1994) argues that the methodology is equally powerful for explanatory purposes because of its ability to answer how and why questions. Case studies can be explanatory or causal, descriptive or exploratory or a mixture of these (Yin, 1984).

A case can be understood as a phenomenon of some kind occurring in a bounded context. One of the greatest challenges of working within this methodological strategy is defining the case or 'bounding the territory' (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

As one of the first steps in the study the researcher needed to establish what the case was before embarking on the project. The focus of the study is committee clerks. The boundary of the case that is made up of the setting, concepts, sampling etc. is the committee section in general. The boundary of the case was further established through sampling operations that will be discussed later.

The case study research strategy and qualitative data collection are tools used to extract data that is rich, to develop thick descriptions that are graphic and realistic and contained in a real context. (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The research project attempts to explain and explore individuals' experience of working in a diverse workforce.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, this study was conducted in the Committee Section of the South African Parliament. It focused specifically on committee clerks or secretaries.

The unit of analysis in this project is the parliamentary committee clerks exclusively, as opposed to the entire committee section. The researcher chose this approach over an embedded case study analysing the whole committee section with different units of analysis because the other occupational groups within the section do not display the diversity of the committee clerks. Furthermore, by introducing numerous units of analysis the research aims would have had to shift to accommodate and account for extraneous variables. An extended case study was chosen to ensure a degree of commonality and consistency amongst the subjects.

This research project attempts to develop an understanding of the experience of working within a diverse workforce. The research is both descriptive and exploratory and is designed to generate better understandings of the actual experiences of working within workforce diversity.

This research strategy consisting of the case study method, qualitative tools and techniques facilitates abductive theory building (Blaikie, 1993). Abductive research strategies provide an alternative to the linear logic of inductive and deductive research strategies.

Abduction is the operation used to produce social scientific accounts of social life and lived experience using the concepts and meanings used by social actors, and the activities in which they engage (Blaikie, 1993). Abductive research strategies are based on cyclic or spiral research processes appropriate for theory construction in Interpretive social science (Blaikie, 1993).

The process of researching the experience of working in a diverse workforce is contextualised in Interpretivism. Interpretivist research is interested in meanings and interpretations, the motives and intentions which individuals employ in their everyday lives and which inform their behaviour and which places them in the central position in social theory and research. According to Interpretivism, the social arena is the

arena perceived and experienced by its members, from the 'inside' (Blaikie, 1993). It is, therefore, the social scientist's responsibility to explore and explicate this 'insider' account.

Abductive research recognises a number of layers in the research process. *Everyday concepts and meanings* provide the basis for *social action/interaction* about which *social actors can give accounts*. From these accounts *social scientific descriptions can be made* from which *social theories can be generated* or understood in terms of *social theories or perspectives* (Blaikie, 1993).

The principle of abductive reasoning was applied in the way the researcher approached the interviewees to uncover the nature of their experience of working in a diverse workforce. The aim of the interviews was to extract the everyday concepts and meanings they attach to their work experience and which define the nature of their social interaction in the context of workforce diversity. With this information develop a theoretical model to facilitate understanding of the experience of working in a diverse workforce.

Qualitative methods of data collection and analysis are used because the researcher recognises them as the most appropriate for collecting data in naturally occurring settings, and from ordinary events in our social worlds (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The case study method allows for 'local groundedness' (Yin, 1984). It allows the researcher to collect data in close proximity to the given situation or context. The emphasis is placed on a specific case, a focused and bounded phenomenon embedded in its context. Unlike experimental or quasi-experimental designs, the influences of the local context are not eradicated but factored into the research questions and process. In extracting qualitative data the potential for exposing latent, underlying or non-obvious but critical issues is strong (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The following section outlines the method and techniques used in the research process.

3.2 THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING THE CASE STUDY

3.2.1 SAMPLING

Qualitative researchers tend to work with samples of people, situated in their context and researched in-depth (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The sampling technique used in this project is within-case sampling and the sample chosen for this research can be described as *purposive* (Kuzel, 1992; Morse, 1989). This choice of sampling was considered appropriate because of the bounded nature of the case study and because social interactions and processes have a logic and coherence that cannot be adequately represented through random sampling techniques.

Sampling in this study was also theoretically driven (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The selection of informants was driven by conceptual questions and not out of a concern for 'representativeness'. In attempting to establish an understanding of the experience of workforce diversity, numerous instances of it need to be investigated. The sample was chosen in order to discern the experience of workforce diversity; it was used to establish the conditions under which the construct operates. The sample was not chosen in order for the results to be generalised to other settings.

Within-case sampling is usually iterative in that the researcher observes, talks to interviewees and collects documents throughout the research process and this process leads to new sampling decisions and new observations. At each stage of the research process the researcher is making sampling decisions in an effort to refine emerging patterns, highlight disparities, and recognise exceptions (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

At the time of data gathering the committee section consisted of thirty-two committee clerks. The researcher initially attempted to get a hundred percent participation. The sample used was a non-random convenience sample because a number of clerks were on leave, on extended overseas work exchange trips and some people declined invitations to participate in the research. Most of those who declined to participate gave heavy workload as their reason.

The convenience sample consisted of twenty participants, eleven women and nine men. Their ages ranged from twenty-four years old to forty-five years old. As

diversity is the subject under investigation it is important to articulate the racial composition of the sample. The sample consisted of four white women, one white man, three black women, six black men, one Indian woman, two coloured women, and three coloured men. The majority of the participants are either practising or non-practising Christians from a variety of denominations; one of the participants is a Hindu and three of the participants are practising Moslems.

3.2.2 DATA COLLECTION AND PROCEDURE

3.2.2.1 INTERVIEWS

Interviews are a well recognised and principle source of case study information (Yin, 1984). The data was collected through open-ended, semi-structured in-depth interviews. Interviews of this nature were chosen because case studies are generally about social interaction. Social interaction which needs to be reported and interpreted through specific interviewees (Yin, 1984). The interviews were audiotaped and transcribed to provide an accurate rendition of the information exchange.

Interviews ranged from forty minutes to an hour and thirty minutes. The researcher had numerous lengthy, informal conversations with many of the interviewees and rough notes and memos were drafted on this information. The questions in the interview centred on the interviewees' perceptions and understandings of the experience of working in a diverse workforce.

The process of in-depth interviews involved listening attentively to the subjects, and attempts at empathetic understanding and reflecting on preconceived perceptions about the situation. The process involved probing the subjects for descriptions of the experience of working in a diverse workforce.

The researcher engaged in memo writing throughout the processes, reflecting on herself as an active agent in the process in order to be mindful of her preconceptions that might bias the data. This process of self-reflection was critical, as the primary task of the study is to explicate the ways in which committee clerks understand, account for, manage and experience workforce diversity and explore the meanings they attach to the experience.

3.2.2.2 DIRECT OBSERVATION AND DOCUMENTATION

Other means of gathering data involved direct observation and the analysis of relevant documents. By conducting the interviews 'on site' the researcher created opportunities for direct observation (Yin, 1984). Observing the organisation at work facilitated the researcher in developing a coherent understanding of the context in which the research took place. These observations played a supplementary role in the research process.

Observations can range from formal to casual data collection activities (Yin, 1984). In this research observations were casual but of great value in developing an understanding of the organisational dynamics, ergonomic issues and environmental conditions within which the committee clerks work. The observational data was useful in supplying supplementary information about the phenomenon being studied. The observational data contributed to the researchers understanding of the context of the case study, but was not included in the analysis process.

The analysis of the interviews is designed to outline the regularities, patterns in conceptualisations, identification and categorisation of characteristics and the exploration of their connections. The research aims at developing an understanding of the meaning of the individuals' work lives in the context of workforce diversity.

To conclude this discussion on data gathering and before moving on to a discussion of the analysis process, the next section briefly confronts some of the issues around the researcher in the qualitative research process.

3.2.3 DATA ANALYSIS

The strength of qualitative research and qualitative data is dependent on the competence with which it is analysed (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In assessing how the data was going to be analysed the researcher investigated a number of options. While there are procedures for analysing case study evidence, the literature in this regard is somewhat vague. Most of the procedures identified are similar to general qualitative data analysis procedures. These procedures typically involve examining,

categorising, tabulating or otherwise building evidence to deal with the initial proposition of the study (Yin, 1984).

The researcher decided that a broad analytic strategy was needed, a strategy that highlighted what was to be analysed and why. The data in the study were analysed using a variety of qualitative data techniques appropriate for texts of transcribed interviews. The analysis process can be broken down into (1) data reduction, (2) data display and (3) conclusion drawing and verification (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

3.2.3.1 DATA REDUCTION

Qualitative data analysis usually begins with the categorisation of primary themes and patterns (Coffy & Atkinson, 1996). This process often involves coding the data. Researchers working within the qualitative research paradigm are required to organise, manage and recover the most meaningful segments of data. A popular method of doing this is by ascribing tags or labels to the data, based on particular concepts and constructs. By labelling the data one is reducing into manageable data sets that or analysable units by producing categories with and from the information collected. This process of coding involves creating concepts from the data (Coffy & Atkinson, 1996).

Coding should not be regarded as analysis in and of itself but rather as parts of the analytical process. There are a number of coding practices and techniques. Their underlying purpose is to establish links of various kinds in the data. Coding links various portions or examples in the data. Coding connects those sections of data to generate categories of data that can be defined as sharing properties or components. They are defined as referring to or relating to some specific topic or theme. Coding connects all those fragments to a specific idea or concept. These concepts are generally interconnected and related to one another.

Coding involves the employment of technical coding skills but the real work in coding rests in identifying and thinking about the connections that are being made. The substantial analytic work involved in qualitative data analysis lies in how the codes are used and what relevant concepts are identified by the coding process (Coffy

& Atkinson, 1996). “Codes represent the decisive link between the original ‘raw data,’ that is, the textual material such as interview transcripts or field notes, on the one hand and the researcher’s theoretical concepts on the other.” (Seidel & Kelle, 1995, 52). Researchers use qualitative data to think with, in order to create thoughts that are meticulously and closely linked to the data.

Coding is as much about reducing and simplifying the data as it is about complexifying it. On the one hand data is reduced to manageable analysable units and on the other hand it is readied for development, transformation and reconceptualisation.

The researcher followed Seidel & Kelle’s (1995) description of the process of coding data. She undertook three key operations in the coding of her data. She began by (1) identifying relevant phenomena in the transcripts, (2) highlighting and collecting examples and instances of these phenomena and (3) analysing the phenomena in order to discover commonalities, disparities, patterns and configurations. Working through the interview transcripts repeatedly the researcher used a variety of multicoloured pens to identify relevant and repeated phenomena. Using computer technology and through manually cutting and pasting, the researcher began to collate examples and instances where the participants discussed common phenomena. The researcher developed a series of files, which were made up of similar examples, and these were analysed in order to discover commonalities, discrepancies and relationships.

Coding was employed as a heuristic device, in that ascribing codes in order to identify and rework the data allows the data to be thought about in innovative and creative ways. Data reduction is used as a means to data expansion. The data was coded in order to open it up and investigate it in more analytical depth. Coding was designed to allow the researcher to move beyond the data and attempt to think with it creatively, thus facilitating theory and/or framework development (Coffy & Atkinson, 1996; Strauss, 1987)

The analysis process of this project began with coding as an effective way of labelling and retrieving the relevant data, data specific to the interviewees’ experience of working in a diverse workforce. The researcher worked inductively by using the

transcripts to prompt empirically inspired labels, thus allowing the codes to emerge from the actual interviews. The codes chosen are semantically related to the clauses they represent. Once the codes were identified they were operationally defined.

Coding involved naming phenomenon in the data. The next task involved outlining patterns and regularities in credible ways (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This was done using pattern coding. Once the codes were identified the researcher attempted to introduce explanatory or inferential codes that captured an emergent theme, structure or explanation in the data. First level coding categorises and summarises the data, pattern coding or second level coding involves clustering the categories into thematic sets or constructs (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Pattern coding is a way of further refining the data into manageable analytical units. Working with pattern coding compels the researcher to generate cognitive maps and conceptual frameworks around the research area. Pattern coding involves playing with data as loosely bound 'chunks of meaning' (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The researcher needs to be flexible about these patterns or 'chunks of meaning' and allow them to evolve and change as the research progresses.

Pattern coding facilitates qualitative data analysis in that the process builds the logic to the results which emerge. The themes that are generated are located in patterns of codes and these codes have emerged directly out of the data. An integral part of the data analysis of this project has been the mapping of various patterns and assessing their connections. The outcomes of this process can be seen in chapter four, which presents a representation of the research results.

3.2.3.2 DATA DISPLAY

The next phase in the process of analysis involved data display. Data display involves describing data in a way that makes complex phenomenon comprehensible (Bernard, 1988, cited in Miles & Huberman, 1994). Through display the researcher can begin to explain the data and develop theoretical propositions about it. This is represented in more detail in chapter four, which deals with the results of this research, but the process and logic behind data display will be briefly outlined in this section.

Data display is a critical aspect of analysis. (Miles & Huberman, 1994). It involves organising the data in such a way that the researcher can make descriptive and explanatory conclusions about phenomenon in bounded contexts like this case study.

This research was designed to explore an aspect of the diverse workforce from a new perspective by looking at the subjective experience of working within a diverse workforce. The research seeks to develop theoretical propositions about this experience. Developing explicit theory out of the data involves identifying groups of concepts that are organised in some form. Theory development operates on a number of levels from so-called grand theory to middle-range concepts (Wolcott, 1992). It is the aim of this research to develop some explicit theoretical statements about the experience of working within a diverse workforce.

The process of data analysis involved building a theoretical model to represent the experience of workforce diversity by outlining key variables in the data and demonstrating their connections and how they impact on one another. The process followed is similar to that outlined by Gheradi & Turner (1987). The process began with the texts or transcriptions and the researcher experimented with coding categories, moved to identifying themes and major trends in the data, clarified these themes through further data collection, defined the structure of the results and synthesised the data into an explanatory model.

Data display involves presenting the data in a visual format that represents the evidence systematically. Systematic data display is important because it is difficult to analyse lengthy unreduced tracts of texts. Furthermore, unreduced text flow in a sequential order makes it hard to analyse more than one variable at once. Display is critical if one is to extract valid conclusions and if the results are to be used constructively (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

3.2.3.3 DRAWING CONCLUSIONS AND THEORY DEVELOPMENT

Making fitting conclusions from the displayed data and confirming the legitimacy of these conclusions requires the use of a number of analytical techniques. These

techniques range from extracting meaningful chunks of data to looking for patterns, to assessing comparative and contrasting information, to illustrating relationships and developing viable understandings. Analysis at this level involved identifying discrete variables and establishing the relationships between them. The model presented in chapter four is the result of the utilisation of a combination of analytical techniques. The model represents the clustering of variables that share similar characteristics and operate at the same level. The model contains metaphors that act as 'partial abstractions' of the raw data. Metaphors have critical relevance in the development of theoretical propositions (Miles & Huberman, 1994). They are used in the model to summarise a number of related particulars into a single general statement that captures their underlying meaning.

The analysis process involved counting the frequency of instances, ideas, perceptions, attitudes and feelings of the experience of working in a diverse workforce. Counting these frequencies was used to increase the reliability of the results. Counting revealed general themes representing the experience of working in a diverse workforce and proved a useful check against researcher bias. The reliability and validity of the research is enhanced because the results are grounded in regularities and shared patterns of understandings.

The final step in the analysis process is the development of conceptual and theoretical coherence of the emerging results. This process involves inferences and discussion of the data and is represented in chapter five of this document.

Using metaphors and the interrelationships between the variables the researcher developed constructs and from the constructs developed theoretical propositions. This process of theory development involves defining discrete results, relating results to one another, labelling the patterns and matching corresponding constructs to the results (Furman, 1990).

The primary motivation behind the analysis process has been the generation of results of a high standard; a standard where the results represent explanations and analyses which are valid in the context of the case study, reliable, reasonable, confirmable, useful and empowering. The key challenge is to create results that are useful and have

meaning within and beyond the case study. It was essential to meet this challenge to justify the time, energy and resources expended throughout this research process.

“The major justification for the research enterprise is that we have the time and the skills to develop approximations of the truth that have a firmer warrant than common sense.” (Firestone, 1990, 123).

3.3 TACKLING QUESTIONS OF BIAS, RELIABILITY, VALIDITY AND GENERALISABILITY

The following section will briefly discuss the issues of bias, reliability, validity and generalisability of the research process and findings.

3.3.1 ENSURING RIGOUR AND RESEARCH QUALITY: THE INFLUENCE OF THE RESEARCHER

A common problem of working within a qualitative methodological framework is the issue of researcher bias impacting on the results of a study. Researcher bias is concerned with how the researcher affects the case and the information emanating out of the data-gathering procedure.

The researcher attempted to minimise researcher bias by continuously reflecting on her role in the research process and attempting to monitor and account for the emotions that the process evoked that might bias her results.

The researcher followed some of the suggestions laid out by theorists like Bogdan & Biklen, (1992) designed to help researchers avoid bias effects during research. The researcher made her intentions unambiguous to the participants before each interview. She explained who she was and why she was conducting the research; she explained the nature of the project, how she intended to collect data and what she hoped to do with the data once she had collected it. Sticking to a semi-structured interview schedule helped the researcher to maintain consistency among the interviews and improve the reliability of the results.

The researcher also kept extensive personal notes throughout the project where she recorded her experiences of the process separate to the academic exercise that she was involved with. This was done in an attempt to give expression to some of her thoughts, feelings and biases during the project in way that would not influence the academic process.

3.3.2 RESEARCH RELIABILITY

Reliability relates to the question of whether or not the research process is consistent, dependable and reasonably stable over time and across researchers and methods (Anastasi & Urbina, 1997). The key issue of reliability in qualitative research relates to the question of the quality of the research process and if things have been conducted with sufficient care.

Being mindful of the potential problems inherent in qualitative research methodologies, the researcher attempted to maintain a deep level of integrity towards the participants and the subject being researched. The researcher made every effort to ensure reliability by making her role and status in the process explicit from the onset of the data gathering procedure.

The researcher further attempted to achieve reliability by developing research questions that were clear and explicit in their meaning, by ensuring that the design of the study was congruent with the questions being asked.

In relation to the process of analysis, the researcher used a colleague to review and check the coding procedure and process and adequate agreement was achieved.

3.3.3 RESEARCH VALIDITY

Validity in the context of qualitative research involves establishing the truth-value of the work and asking if the findings make sense. The researcher has confidence that the results of this study are valid in that they are credible to the participants involved and portray an authentic picture of the area being investigated.

The research results are in line with Warner's (1991) concept of 'natural' validity in that they are not contrived and the researcher guarded against researcher bias by reflecting on her presence and actions in the research situation.

Work conducted on the 'validity' of narratives emerging from interpretive research emphasises the significance of such features such as 'appearance', 'authenticity' and 'plausibility'. The researcher is confident that the results of the research are authentic and plausible and emerge directly from the information gathered from the participants.

3.3.4 GENERALISABILITY

This issue refers to the transferability of the conclusions of the study, and whether they have any larger import. The question of generalisability becomes complicated by the context of the research. On the one hand the phenomena of workforce diversity in South Africa, with its particular political past, makes the experience of it unique to this country. This uniqueness may limit the generalisability of the results of this study. On the other hand, because of the particular era in which we are living, the issues of affirmative action, racial integration and workforce diversification are high on the agenda, current and topical. The South African context heightens the problems associated with diversity and this makes it a particularly appropriate place to study workforce diversification. Generalisability, therefore, can be considered high as a result.

The researcher maintains that the broad framework of the model and the major themes that were identified will have bearing on, and can be transferred to, other contexts. This transferability is because the results relate to the individual experience of workforce diversity and are tied up with broader generalisable theories on interpersonal behaviour and social psychology. The researcher, however, recognises the enormous importance and impact of the context of this research on the nature of the results.

The objective of the research was to develop an understanding of the experience of working in a diverse workforce. The aims were to elicit deep and rich understandings of this experience as opposed to generating results that could be widely generalised.

The research intuitively believes that the results adequately represent the key aspects of the experience of workforce diversity experienced in many organisations in South Africa grappling with the issues and problems associated with workforce diversity.

The researcher believes that the results and research add value to the discipline of organisational psychology and society in general and have some utility and applicability. Kvale (1989) poses the question of 'pragmatic validity' as a fundamental requirement to the more traditional views of what makes good research. Similarly Lincoln (1990) argues that good quality research should enhance the degree of understanding, sophistication and ability of the participants and stakeholders to take action during and subsequent to the research.

The research and its findings are in line with the above in that they are intellectually accessible to potential users, and once the document has been examined it will be made physically accessible to the participants in the study and other potential users. The researcher plans on developing a workshop around the issues raised in the research, which she believes will facilitate organisations struggling with the experience of workforce diversity and, in so doing, partially fulfil some of the requirements for pragmatic validity as outlined by Kvale (1989).

CHAPTER FOUR - RESULTS

The following chapter presents a thematic analysis of the results of the research. The chapter begins with a graphic presentation of the results. The graphic presentation represents the major themes that emerged through the process of qualitative data analysis of the interview transcripts. The analysis of the interviews resulted in the identification of five major themes and a series of sub-themes related to the participants' experience of working in a diverse workforce.

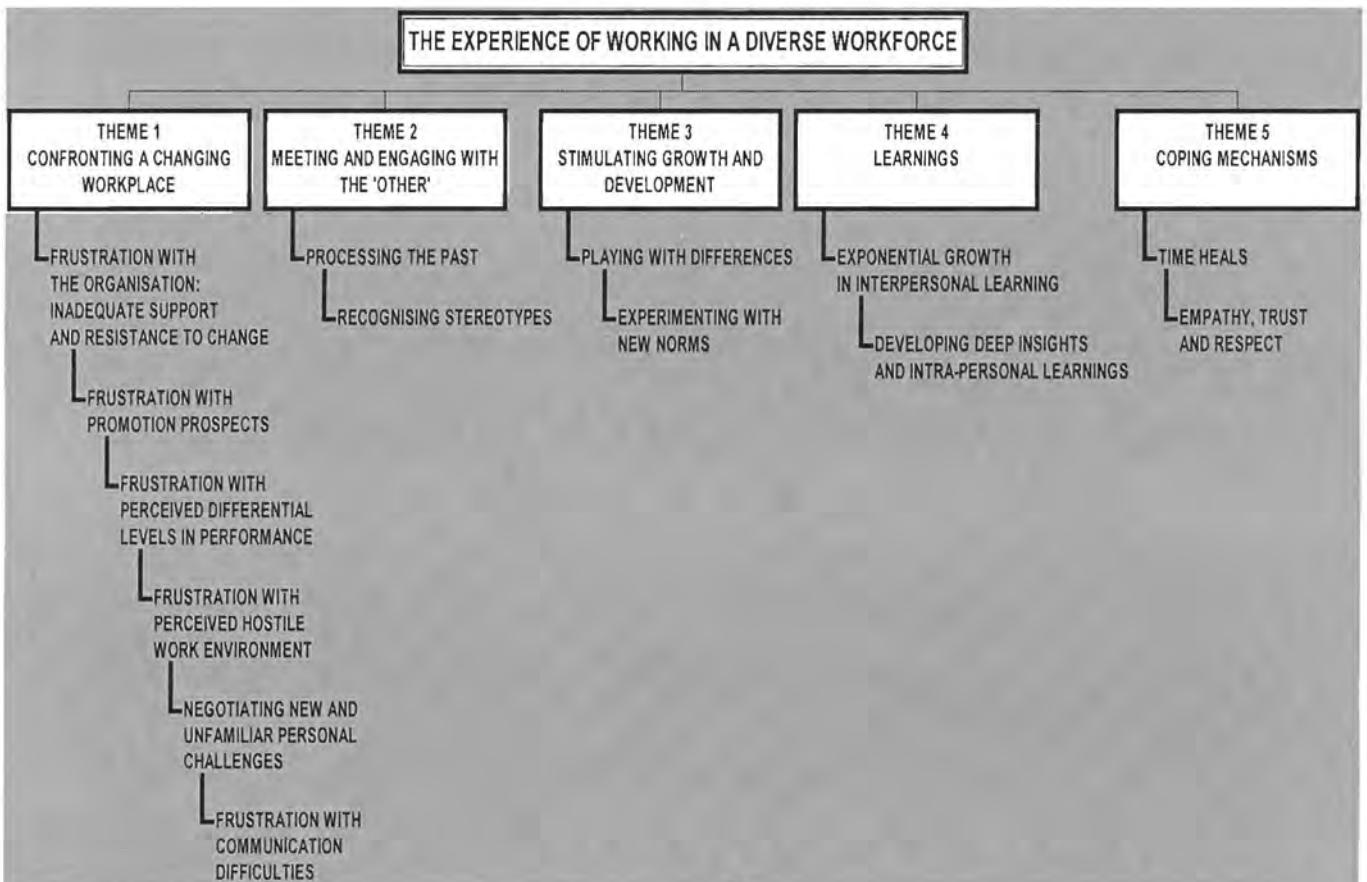


Figure 1 - Diagrammatic Representation of Results

The chapter presents and describes each theme and sub-theme. In the presentation of the results some excerpts from the interviews are used. These direct quotations serve to enhance the readers understanding of the interviewees' perceptions and experiences

of working in a diverse workforce, and to ensure that the study remains true to the lived experience and views expressed by the research participants.

4.1 THEME 1 - CONFRONTING A CHANGING WORKPLACE

A dominant theme discussed by all the participants was that the experience of working in a diversifying workforce means working in the context of massive organisational change. The participants discussed a number of frustrations experienced as a direct result of the transformation of working in a diversifying workforce. These frustrations, in many cases, threatened the participants' quality of work life and their general state of wellbeing at work. These factors have been divided into five sub-themes: (1.1) Frustration with the Organisation: inadequate support and resistance to change, (1.2) Frustration with Promotion Prospects, (1.3) Frustration with Perceived Differential Levels in Performance, (1.4) Frustration with Perceived Hostile Work Environment, (1.5) Negotiating New and Unfamiliar Personal Challenges, and (1.6) Frustration with Communication Difficulties.

4.1.1 FRUSTRATION WITH THE ORGANISATION: INADEQUATE SUPPORT AND RESISTANCE TO CHANGE

The participants commented extensively on their experience of the organisation and how it manages diversity. They commented on how the lack of organisational support for their changing working conditions contributed extensively to their experience of working within a diverse workforce.

They discussed the ways in which the organisation facilitated or inhibited learning around diversity. Many of the participants expressed the fact that they were in some kind of transition but that the organisation was not taking enough responsibility for managing the changes. Many of the participants felt that the organisation was not committed to dealing with the realities of transformation and its implications for their staff.

Many of the participants felt that management and individuals in positions to reflect and act on the changes were ignoring the situation. The general consensus was that management's resistance to change was indicative of the level of complacency

amongst management. A minority of participants felt that management's resistance to change emanated out of fear of an uncertain future.

All the participants commented that the organisation needs to learn to operate in a new environment with new demands and personnel problems. They commented on the fact that the organisation has not adequately confronted the problems associated with diversity. The participants felt that the individual members of the committee section were ironing out problems on their own because of the lack of organisational support. One participant felt that the organisation was attempting to change.

Most participants commented on senior management's lack of expertise in managing diversity and the direct implications of this on them as individual employees. The participants explained that their personal experience of working in a diverse workforce is directly related to how the organisation responds to diversity and how it is managed.

Participants commented that it is difficult to focus on productivity when they are in the process of ironing out cultural differences.

A quarter of the participants felt that the real rifts exist within the workforce between management and staff and this tension overshadows any cultural diversity issues. "I am sceptical of management's commitment to integration. There are moves towards integration but not into an integrated culture. Rather, we must come to understand the dominant way. This is indicative of past power relations."

Almost all the participants expressed concern about management's ability to manage and a lack of confidence in management's commitment to transparency, accountability and representivity. "There is a lack of accountability by management. They unilaterally make decisions and some of them are thoughtless and forced upon us. For example, working hours have just been changed. All of a sudden you are supposed to be here until 18:00 or 19:00 at night and there is no consideration for the people who live, say, in Langa or Khayelitsha or Athlone who rely on public transport to get home. This makes people angry. Management is insensitive to the constraints

and challenges beyond work, constraints that are tied up with race, gender and culture.”

4.1.2 FRUSTRATION WITH PROMOTION PROSPECTS

Some of the white participants explained that with increased cultural, racial and gender diversity within the workforce, the realities of affirmative action in promotion and career advancement are becoming increasingly pronounced. A number of participants commented on the fact that they are frustrated with affirmative action as it is not being managed well and is experienced as a stress factor at work.

For the white participants the general feeling was that due to affirmative action there is no room for upward movement in the organisation. They expressed concern that they would not be promoted to managerial positions and there was no further potential for career advancement in the organisation.

The majority of black, coloured and indian participants felt that systems and processes to effectively implement affirmative action are not in place. They commented on the fact that white personnel are still being promoted to managerial positions.

A number of participants commented that affirmative action compromises their work relationships. They feel that affirmative action is a problem within the organisation: "... it's because it is not implemented well, although they are trying by all means, most senior positions are occupied by white people. And the blacks you'll find only one or two in senior positions. They (whites) are promoting each other because the head is white."

4.1.3 FRUSTRATION WITH PERCEIVED DIFFERENTIAL LEVELS IN PERFORMANCE

The participants spoke about diverse groups having different work attitudes, ethics and behaviour patterns and these differences further aggravating an already volatile situation. Differences in capacity and quality of work cause problems for those that feel judged and for those that judge.

Negative perceptions are founded on perceptions of differences in levels of output, efficiency, work standards, productivity and commitment to work. Participants also described feeling de-motivated by their colleagues' lack of enthusiasm and loyalty towards the organisation. One participant said that he "...would enjoy working in this context more if I didn't need to deal with this, but it is difficult to emphasise productivity when people are trying to work out cultural differences".

Some participants explained that there are enormous and taxing demands on them because there are no longer any "taken-for-granted" in the organisational culture and modus operandi. The rules, etiquette and general organisational ethos are unclear.

4.1.4 FRUSTRATION WITH PERCEIVED HOSTILE WORK ENVIRONMENT

Almost all the participants discussed that at one time or another they have experienced their working conditions as fraught, complex, frustrating, hostile and tense.

All the participants discussed how working in a diverse workforce is traumatic at times. They described sometimes feeling despondent, de-motivated and very stressed attempting to negotiate a heavy workload with interpersonal dynamics related to diversity.

Their experience involves continuously managing their and others' emotions and sensitivities. Across the sample, participants described their work situation as charged with negative emotions describing feelings of depression, despondency, feeling burnt out, devalued, unwanted and negative.

They used similes to capture their negative perceptions of work and work life: "I have felt like I wanted to jump off Table Mountain" and "Sometimes I feel like I am working in a minefield".

Most of the participants felt that racial tensions remain prevalent from all quarters. "There is racial discrimination, it is subtle but there. The old guard don't trust the skills of their black colleagues. That type of thing is very difficult."

A number of the participants felt that the lack of support for new staff aggravates racial tensions in that it confirms racist stereotypes that blacks are not as good as whites. "If a person was helped, they would get it right and it would be fine. People tend to turn simple things into race issues when they should rather empower people to do the work and be able to do the work rather than take the work away. We are thrown into the deep end and had to work to the standard of people who had been here for years and many people thrown into the deep end, set up to fail, the experience is compromised."

A number of the participants felt that the racial tension was a direct result of the head of the section being a white man who promotes white people's interests. Some of the black and coloured participants felt that the racial tension was about the white staff wanting to maintain power.

Some of the participants felt that diversity was not valued by the organisation and that the dominant culture retained elements of white superiority. One black participant said that "there are moves towards integration but not into an integrated culture". Another participant explained that "the environment is conservative and closed. It accommodates diversity in numbers; it does not necessarily allow diverse values to permeate".

4.1.5 NEGOTIATING NEW AND UNFAMILIAR PERSONAL CHALLENGES

All participants referred to working in a diverse workforce as a challenging experience.

Needing to manage a number of new and unfamiliar personal challenges experienced in the workplace aggravates the psychological stress experienced by the participants. All the participants commented on the struggle of discovering ways to get along with new and different people.

Participants explained that they are working with groups of different people and there is little organisational support to facilitate these new working relationships. Many of the participants commented on the difficulties experienced as a result of working with groups of people they have never interacted with on any level before. They

commented on the challenge of working with people with different appreciations, different priorities and points of reference.

Many participants described the challenge of working in ambiguous situations, which are fraught with feelings of ambivalence towards one another. They commented on the fact that the process they are in is a long-term one and that the problems they experience are not easily eradicated.

They described the challenge of learning to work with people who seem very foreign on many significant levels, and the challenge of negotiating new ways of being and new shared social rules.

One participant highlighted the complexity of working with different groups, saying "I can't be friendly just because we work together. That is not enough; it is not going to work. You need to develop an understanding of yourself and your own reactions to difference before you can legitimately overcome barriers between people. You need to be willing to find out about others and be genuinely interested".

The majority of the participants said that they had found it difficult to confront the problems associated with working in a diverse workforce but that they had been obliged to work out ways of doing so. One participant explained that it feels like an enormous "challenge to connect in the context of huge divisions. We need to speak more, uncover and open old wounds, open in order to heal".

4.1.6 FRUSTRATION WITH COMMUNICATION DIFFICULTIES

All the participants mentioned issues of communication as contributing to the psychological stress of working in a diverse workforce. Communication difficulties operate on two levels. They commented on the problems of multiple languages in one workforce and the difficulties caused by not being able to be honest and open with one another.

Language presents problems and causes feelings of isolation and alienation.

Participants discussed having to censor themselves to prevent misinterpretations,

which could be offensive. Most of the participants described how language and the ways in which they communicate are often experienced as problematic.

A problem associated with language is the writing of technical reports. Some of the participants explained that because no assistance is offered to second language English speakers the quality of their reports is compromised, making them look slack or incompetent. This problem then leads to inferences about racial differences impacting on the quality of work and performance.

Issues around language extend to social tensions when conversations are conducted amongst one group in a language that is inaccessible to other groups. One participant explained how "sometimes the language thing gets you down when you are having a conversation and someone comes up and chips in in a language that you don't understand and you are left out".

Many of the participants felt that there is a need for the creation of a working environment which is experienced as safe, where communication can flow openly without fear of being attacked, criticised and misinterpreted. They described their fears of reprisals for being open and honest, but are aware that only once there is open communication can their diversity be effectively managed by themselves and their colleagues.

All the participants mentioned the importance of open communication to facilitate good working relations but described the process of learning to be open as a difficult one. Although they experience difficulties in communication, many of the participants commented on the fact that they believed that negative perceptions get dispelled when there is communication and sensible discussion.

One participant summed up the general feeling around communication by saying that "my experience is that we need to talk to people, need to speak to each other more. Communication is difficult, there are so many things we can't take for granted. People are not always aware of nuances, how messages are sent and received, but the only way through that is to learn to communicate".

Some positive aspects associated with communication were described. Some participants discussed how through formal communication, informal communication unrelated to workplace issues was generated.

4.2 THEME 2 - MEETING AND ENGAGING WITH THE 'OTHER'

A major theme across all the interviews was that the experience of working in a diverse workforce compels the participants to meet and engage with groups of people who are unfamiliar to them. This experience of meeting the 'other' has forced them to reflect on their past experiences, experiences which have fashioned their attitudes and behaviours. This process of reflection has led to questioning some of their premises and understanding of people who are different. This theme is divided into (2.1) Processing the Past and (2.2) Recognising Stereotyping.

4.2.1 PROCESSING THE PAST

Many of the participants discussed how the process of reflecting on their behaviour has often resulted in changes in attitude and sometimes in the actual behaviour. For many of the white participants there is a growing awareness of their isolation and ignorance of the realities of the majority of South Africans' lives and experiences. Some participants described the process of acknowledging and coming to terms with their emotional baggage, anger and pain caused by the ways in which they have been socialised.

Many of the black, coloured and indian participants talked about the struggle to let go of their anger and resentment and acknowledge that their white colleagues may be prepared to move, learn and shift. For all the participants the experience of working in a diverse workforce had been about reflecting on their past experiences, which presents them with conflict and difficulties.

A number of the black participants explained that they need to work through some of their anger towards white people and attempt to recognise and credit the attitude shifts that their white colleagues are making.

All the white participants described how working in a diverse workforce has highlighted how ignorant they have been to the political realities of other racial groups in South Africa. One white male participant explained that "...I had never engaged in politics before. I was ignorant until here, though I couldn't get away from it. I felt left out, shielded from the truth. I experienced huge amounts of anger, and had to learn to understand the antagonism black people have towards me, me as white Afrikaner. I also had to come to terms with how ignorant I had been. I am much more aware of issues".

All the participants commented on the value of being exposed to people who have grown up differently to themselves. The exposure has forced them to reflect on their own histories within a new and more informed context. "We need to say it out loud. We are all prejudiced and we don't realise it. We have grown up with prejudices. I need to recognise the fact that I am privileged, always have been privileged. The importance of this has been brought home to me now. People here have similar qualifications; some have had to fight much much harder for it than I did."

The participants stated developing a real sense of awareness of the realities of living and working with diversity and the need to develop a way of seeing another side of the same history.

The participants spoke about how they have been compelled to make sense of differences on a number of levels. A number of the participants explained that many of those levels are not related exclusively to race, culture or gender. Some participants described how they are recognising commonalities amongst their colleagues that have been masked by obvious differences. "The experience is about getting to know others, teaching yourself. I am Muslim and I have developed a common bond with a deep Christian. The common bond is faith. For example X, he works in this section. He is a white Afrikaner. He looks very stern. He is the sweetest person I know. Our religious values are the same..."

Approximately a quarter of the participants cited personality characteristics as the major source of conflict within the workforce, and stated that personality differences and resultant clashes were much more of a problem for them than issues of diversity.

"Some people you like and some people you don't like. That is more personality. I don't see that in terms of race, but rather personality."

4.2.2 RECOGNISING STEREOTYPING

There is growing recognition amongst all the participants of the causal links in the formulation of their opinions and outlooks and their perspectives on the world. The experience of working in diversity is a reflexive one of self-questioning. In reflecting on their past experiences, they are developing a sense of the others' reality and a greater understanding of themselves. The participants described how they are becoming aware of their own prejudices, stereotypes and generalisations and how these inform their perceptions and attitudes.

When discussing issues around prejudice and stereotyping only one participant discussed this in relation to ethnic group or tribal affiliation as opposed to a race issue. "There are divisions and amongst the workforce, you'll find that if you are a Zulu, even in the working place, the Zulu people see themselves as warriors, as great people and other people they just define them as sort of animals. They call them Animal...Xhosa people go to the initiation school and when they are at the initiation schools they are from boyhood to manhood. Then they feel I am a man. If they are a man then what is a Zulu, they don't go to initiation school. They feel all other people who never went for initiation are inferior. That is how it is. And other Sotho speaking people they are far more, they see themselves as better off, they are a group of people unlike these people they are from Transkei and Zululand because we have been here for quite a long time. We are organised and a little better than them. They think the Sotho people are the best people."

A prevalent aspect of this theme is that across the board participants commented on experiencing attitudinal changes and shifts in their behaviour but that their experiences of diversity remain job and work specific and not enacted at home, in their communities and social lives.

The majority of participants asserted that they embrace diversity at work but not at home or socially, and that they don't think this is problematic nor do they envision the situation changing. Most participants made a clear distinction between home and

community life and work life. A minority of participants expressed experiencing this divide as being problematic. "Our work environment is a microcosm of broader society and there is too much polarisation in both worlds."

The following quotation encapsulates the general feeling expressed about this issue. "That is how it is we have different backgrounds. You grow up in the townships, you prefer to be with township people. Let's say you a white if you ask how will he be spending his weekend he'll be telling that I went up Table Mountain, places like that, or I went hiking somewhere, just to make something different and I'll tell you what now, I was at a shebeen or I was with friends. I enjoyed myself there, you see when we try and talk about our weekends, so there is a difference and it becomes clear, the things that make you happy, to me there are things that might be boring stuff. If you tell me about hiking, it's boring to me."

4.3 THEME 3 - STIMULATING GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

The majority of the participants discussed how the experience of working in a diverse workforce can be enormously enriching and can enhance the quality of their work life. Two sub-themes make up this theme: (3.1) Playing with Differences and (3.2) Experimenting with New Norms.

4.3.1 PLAYING WITH DIFFERENCES

Some of the participants discussed the fact that despite the hardships many aspects of the experience were good. They find aspects of the difference sometimes hilarious; sometimes very interesting and enriching. Across the board they commented on the moments where the experience of working in a diverse workforce is actually an enjoyable and beneficial growth experience.

The experience is also described as one of lightness and reconciliation. A number of the participants described how at times, when people were not being precious about their cultural mores and traditions, there would be opportunities to play with the different cultural concepts and ways of being.

Many of the participants spoke about working in a diverse workforce as a process in which they are trying to overcome difficulties. They emphasised the fact that they are trying and that even though the process can be fraught, real efforts are being made to create new and healthy ways of relating to one another.

4.3.2 EXPERIMENTING WITH NEW NORMS

The participants discussed how they enjoy the process of bridging the divide between the various cultural and racial groupings and experimenting with new ways of being.

Some participants described how diversity brings with it new organisational mores. Old patterns and norms are being challenged and this opens opportunities for greater personal expression at work. One participant highlighted an example of this by explaining that "there is diversity of norms like work dress. We are no longer expected to wear ties and formal suits every day. In the past in the whole of parliament, men were not allowed to walk around in the corridors without their jackets on, it had to be a suit.... And now I wear jeans. That's lekker you know... Also just questioning the way things are done for instance... That was quite a paradigm shift for me... And now it happens all the time, it's not so formal anymore".

The participants described the process of working in a diverse workforce as healing and the information exchange as broadening their perspectives and world-views. Through developing understandings and mutual sharing of cultural information, the meaning of work life is enriched. I feel like I am moving into something new, new ways of being in the world on most fundamental levels. I am not saying things are perfect but we are attempting to get closer."

Many of the participants described how learning to reflect on their own actions highlights that different is not right or wrong, it is just different. The participants described how reflecting on their actions and attitudes has demonstrated the normative judgements and assumptions that they carry in relation to people who are different and do things differently.

All the participants explained how the experience of working in a diverse workforce is about continuous self-development in a number of areas They described learnings

related to developing abilities of adaptation and transformation to new circumstances and reaching a point of feeling at ease with and in their new environment. "I am learning new ways of being like participation management, consultation, transparency. It was different before, I did what boss said, never questioned - this has changed dramatically."

Most of the participants stated that they would not have their workforce any other way other than diverse and that it represents a microcosm for the broader society. A number of the participants spoke about how at work they can experience what it is like working and being as equals in what remains a divided and grossly unequal society. The participants expressed excitement about the possibilities of experimenting with issues and ways of operating at work and then being able to transport the learnings into other aspects of their lives.

4.4 THEME 4 - LEARNINGS

Learning is a major theme across all the interviews. The participants discuss learning that takes place on a number of levels as a result of working in a diverse workforce. The theme has been broken down into: (4.1) exponential growth in interpersonal learning and (4.2) developing deep insights and intra-personal learnings.

4.4.1 EXPONENTIAL INCREASE IN INTERPERSONAL LEARNING

All the participants discussed how through working in a diverse workforce they are rapidly learning about new kinds of relationships and the cultural mores of their colleagues. Most participants described learning through interactions with groups of people with whom they are traditionally unfamiliar. Participants described interpersonal learning as learning about others and in the process learning about other people's perceptions of themselves. "I am learning about other cultures and also learning how others perceive me and my culture. Through this process of learning we are moving into more comfortable spaces and developing trust."

The participants spoke about learning about cultural qualities that they did not know existed and learning to appreciate other cultures through learning about them in greater and deeper detail. "I have experienced working in diverse workforce as

educating and enriching. It has widened my scope and point of view. I am still keeping my Calvinistic background but appreciating, hearing and recognising other ways of doing things, otherness."

All the participants reported that they are learning new ways of communicating. They discussed how they had to work out new ways of conveying information in order to make themselves understood. "... in the past I could just communicate but I need to be more on the ball now. One needs to be aware and conscious of self in relation to others who are not necessarily similar and who don't necessarily have the same taken for granted."

Most of the participants spoke about how they are on an exponential learning curve. Most of the participants experienced this as a positive aspect of working in a diverse workforce.

The majority of the participants commented on the fact that working amongst diverse colleagues shows different ways of looking at the same problem.

Many participants described the importance of attempting to bridge the divides in their workforce by learning to compromise and learning to relinquish the familiar and integrate difference and 'otherness' into their work experience.

4.4.2 DEVELOPING DEEP INSIGHTS AND INTRA-PERSONAL LEARNINGS

Many of the participants described intra-personal learning as a key aspect of the experience of working in a diverse workforce. Intra-personal learning was described as a process of developing greater insight into themselves. The participants described how developing deeper insight involves recognising their limitations and biases. Almost all the participants described working in a diverse workforce as a process of reflection and self-analysis.

Some of the participants explained that working in a diverse workforce facilitates becoming a better person. They attributed this to the fact that one is more knowledgeable and more enlightened as to who one is and how one is perceived.

Some of the participants commented that working in a diverse workforce means having to negotiate feelings in the workplace. "My experience of working in this diverse workforce has made me realise the need to be more aware of my personal feelings at work. Work is not just about bureaucracy and rules. There are complex nuances and the people component has become more significant."

Many of the participants reported how they are developing a sense and capacity to change through learning and broadening their outlooks and perspectives. They described how reflecting on the taken-for-granted ways of being in the world has opened them up to new and different ideas and ways of being.

Most of the participants spoke about how they now question the ways they relate to one another; how they see the world and their opinions of others. In attempting to understand the other, they are learning about themselves. "In this workforce you learn everyday, you grow up a little. You learn that you can't be romantic about the whole thing. I am learning to accommodate and compromise."

4.5 THEME 5 - COPING MECHANISMS

The participants describe as part of their experience of diversity the development of a series of coping mechanism to negotiate the ambiguity of their situation and the resultant conflict that often arises.

4.5.1 TIME HEALS

These coping mechanisms include recognising that with time and practice and learning from mistakes they will relate better to one another.

Some participants explained that with time they envision developing better understandings of themselves, each other and the situation. They referred to working in a diverse workforce as a process that is still very much in its infant stages.

Most of the participants commented that with time they will build trusting relationships with their colleagues.

A few participants likened their situation to that of the general state of things in South African society, saying that it will take generations to iron out the problems in both areas and that one cannot expect a quick fix. “I have my baggage. Don't expect too much from me. Let's see what evolves naturally.”

Many of the participants discussed that while structurally the organisation changed overnight with the large increase of personnel after the 1994 elections, people do not change that rapidly. “You cannot be forced into integration. It is something that will come with time.”

The majority of participants commented that recognising that they were involved in a process towards workforce integration facilitated the way they make sense of, and deal with, workforce diversity and the difficult issues it raises.

4.5.2 EMPATHY, TRUST AND RESPECT

Developing a sense of empathy for the other and their experiences was another coping mechanism described by some participants. Participants explained that with increasing closeness and physical proximity, they are getting to know one another and learning to empathise with each other. “I sense other's pain and painful experiences.”

Many of the participants perceived trust and respect as another key coping mechanism for dealing with difference. The general consensus amongst the participants was that with time they will develop greater understandings of each other and this will facilitate increased trust and growing respect.

Participants described the process of learning to trust and be trusted as often painful and hard. “I have had to work my butt off to develop trust amongst my colleagues.”

Some participants were less optimistic and discussed how the lack of trust compromised their experiences of working in a diverse workforce. About two thirds of the participants described the level of mistrust difficult to manage and emotionally draining.

Some participants commented that they and their colleagues are scared of confronting their feelings at work, and as soon as situations become uncomfortable individuals back out of confrontations and pretend things are normal. One participant said that she did not trust people to be honest.

Most of the participants described the process of developing mutual trust, respect and understandings as one of the biggest challenges facing them in their diverse workforce.

CHAPTER FIVE - DISCUSSION

In order to understand the results of this study one needs to locate workforce diversification in the context of organisational change and development. Workforce diversification involves organisations in the process of organisational change.

Understanding the experience of working in a diverse workforce is, in part, understanding the impact of organisational culture change for individuals in the centre of the change process.

The process of change is becoming a reality for the majority of organisations in South Africa. Political, economic and demographic factors compel employers to create more diversified workforces. With the advent of the Employment Equity Act (55) 1998 and an emphasis on equal employment practices and affirmative action, the racial distribution of employees is set to become increasingly more diverse (Motshabi, 1991). Workforce diversification means organisational change on a number of significant levels. It has implications for the way people work together, the way decisions are made, the way organisations are run, and the nature of organisational culture.

The experience of working in a diverse workforce is made up of a variety of positive and negative aspects for the participants in this study. It encapsulates a full range of human emotions from joy and excitement at bridging cultural divides and learning from different people's different life experiences, to fear and frustration at overcoming past prejudices and negotiating new ways of being in a redefined work context.

The graphic representation of the results needs to be understood as a dynamic model for understanding the experience of working in a diverse workforce. The model represents individuals in the process of adaptation to organisational change. The following chapter will present a detailed discussion and analysis of the results presented in the previous chapter.

5.1 CONFRONTING A CHANGING WORKPLACE

It appears from this finding that the organisation has not adequately prepared its employees for the large-scale changes that workforce diversification entails. The various issues identified within this theme are indicative of an organisation that is failing to manage its diversity and failing to manage the change process itself. The key issues represent a number of frustrations and challenges experienced by the participants as part of their experience of workforce diversification.

The issues that are raised in this section of the discussion and in later sections relate directly to the concept of Quality of Worklife (QWL). QWL describes a process by which the organisation attempts to meet employees' needs by establishing an organisational climate which is responsive to its employees (Robbins, 1997). QWL is an umbrella term that includes a multitude of interventions that have a shared objective of humanising the workplace and in so doing increasing the quality of employees' work life. Organisations that are invested in their employees' quality of work life are concerned about the impact of work on people as well as organisational effectiveness (Luthans, 1992). The following section highlights pressures and tensions inherent in confronting a changing workplace and negotiating the difficult issues that arise in this process which compromise the participants' experience of work and the quality of their work life.

5.1.1 Frustration with the Organisation: the need for organisational learning and managerial support

This finding highlights the relationship between how the organisation manages the diversification process and the experience of working in a diverse workforce. The organisation has failed to take adequate responsibility for the change process or for the impact of diversification on their employees. "Management failed to realise diversity, failed to manage it."

In an attempt to review the worst diversity practices to learn from others' mistakes, Frost (1999) argues that believing that a diversity effort can be implemented without making some employees unhappy constitutes a serious mistake for organisations. By

ignoring the realities and difficulties experienced by their staff, the organisation is fundamentally inhibiting organisational integration and compromising their employees' experience of workforce diversity.

Creating change is always a leadership challenge (Carr-Ruffino, 1996). A primary requirement for managing change is to process one's personal issues around change and facilitate others to work through theirs. The lack of managerial support experienced by the participants negatively impacts on their experience of workforce diversity. Change is intensely personal (Duck, 1993). For change to occur in any organisation, each employee must think, feel or do something different.

Management and leadership is generally accepted as the most critical element in an organisational change effort (Clement, 1994). It is also widely accepted that cultural change or any organisational transformation is essentially a top-down activity (Reynierse, 1994). Management needs to establish the context for change and create and communicate a vision of what the organisation is changing to (Kotter, 1995). Part of the frustration for the participants is that management failed to take clear responsibility for the changes related to workforce diversification.

A key factor impacting on the participants' experience of workforce diversity is the lack of confidence in management's commitment to transparency and accountability to their employees during the process of change.

Duck (1993) argues that in change efforts specifically and in managerial practice generally, management is the message. It is argued that what managers do and do not do communicates a message to staff and therefore open and regular communication must be a priority for every manager at every level of an organisation embarking on change initiatives. It is critical that messages are consistent and clear and that there is room to voice concerns and ask questions to allay fears and anxieties that change evokes for employees (Duck, 1993).

Effecting successful organisational change also requires co-ordination, commitment and competencies (Clement, 1994). Co-ordination refers to the need for key individuals to work together to determine how to manage the organisational change

effort. Commitment refers to selling employees on the changes and facilitating joint commitment to the process. Competencies refer to developing staff in ways that facilitate the learning of analytical and/or interpersonal skills that they will need in the change effort. The results of the study demonstrate that the experience of working in a diverse workforce is compromised by management's apparent lack of commitment to competently managing the changes taking place in the workplace.

5.1.2 Frustration with Promotion Prospects

The participants described how the experience of working in a diversifying workforce impacts on promotion prospects in different ways for different groups. The lack of coherent managerial support and staff communication further exacerbates the fears and frustrations amongst staff. On the one hand white employees feel frustrated about their promotion possibilities in the context of affirmative action policies and an increasing pool of diverse employees to select from. On the other hand black employees are frustrated by the lack of effective systems and processes to ensure equal opportunities within the organisation.

The issue of affirmative action exerts strain on an already vulnerable workforce which is experiencing difficulties with integration. Affirmative action means different things to different individuals. For many blacks it presents a revision of past prejudicial practices and for many whites it has come to represent a new form of discrimination that has the potential to threaten their work futures and quality of work life (Fischer, 1996).

The lack of managerial support compounds the frustrations around employment prospects for the participants and causes tension amongst the workforce. Ill-considered or haphazard affirmative action policies can serve to fortify negative racial stereotypes (De Beer, 1996). A need, therefore, exists for open communication systems to aid employees to understand the rationale behind affirmative action strategies and how these strategies are likely to affect incumbents and their colleagues (De Beer, 1996).

Strategies for managing diversity in the workplace should focus on developing a coherent understanding of the consequences of Apartheid and the effect it had on

white and black employees. This will facilitate effective communication between managers and staff and potentially reduce the level of polarisation in the work environment over this issue (De Beer, 1996).

Affirmative action and managing diversity are closely linked processes. In order to successfully implement affirmative action organisations need to move beyond it to the point where they accept and manage diversity. Affirmative action is a limited strategy and does not address the essential causes of prejudice and inequality (Sonn, 1993). The fears of white employees need to be addressed, as does the nature of the culture of the organisation. Employees need to be sensitised to the changing opportunities and demands in the job market and should be encouraged to alter their expectations accordingly (Fischer, 1996).

Problems with affirmative action and the way it has been implemented and managed have surfaced from a number of sources, business leaders, organised labour, affirmative action appointees and white employees. Across the board in South Africa today, widespread disillusionment with affirmative action programmes exists (Thomas, 1995).

Affirmative action is essentially about righting historical workforce imbalances and creating opportunities in the face of prejudice. In order to overcome some of the negative perceptions towards affirmative action, organisations need to develop strategies to manage it appropriately. Organisations need to create flexible organisational environments, obtain leadership commitment and involvement, set clear standards of performance, align human resource systems with organisational vision or mission and institute evaluative research to monitor the success of the programmes. Only once organisations learn to effectively implement affirmative action programmes can they begin to deal with the greater challenge of managing and valuing diversity (Thomas, 1995).

5.1.3 Frustration with Perceived Differential Levels of Performance

A directly related finding is the participants' frustration with the perceived levels in performance. These negative perceptions follow racial divisions. Some participants

felt that certain cultural groups lacked a clear work ethic while other cultural groups felt that their work was being continually scrutinised and criticised.

An aspect of the experience of working in a diverse workforce involves having to negotiate different attitudes and relationships with work and to the organisation. A diverse workforce means that people have entered into positions from very different educational backgrounds and opportunities, and discrepancies in work and working behaviour are to be expected. These differential perceptions and expectations of performance are reinforced by personal and structural elements of oppression (Robb & Richard, 1997). "To be able to effect real redress and to affirm and manage diversity, a proactive, conscious, sustained and systematic effort has to be made to challenge the status quo which is largely determined by long-term, pervasive effects of Apartheid." (Robb & Richard, 1997, 12).

The frustrations that the participants refer to are related to the problems with hiring black people in positions without ensuring the necessary support, training and infrastructure that assures individual empowerment and organisational success. It sets individuals up for failure, fosters disillusionment with affirmative action and compromises the experience of working in a diverse workforce (Robb & Richard, 1997). Presuming equality without acknowledging the persistent pervasive effects of past oppression contributes to the dissatisfaction the participants experience in relation to the changing nature of their workforce.

5.1.4 Frustration with Perceived Hostile Work Environment

The problems associated with frustrations with perceived differential levels of performance are related to the participants' experience of the working environment, in part, as hostile and unkind. They cite examples of racial discrimination, prejudice and stereotyping, which impacts negatively on their quality of work life. "At times I have felt very despondent and distressed, like no matter how hard I work at it, I will always be perceived as Afrikaans white woman, in a negative sense."

The lack of managerial support was identified as a key factor in the tensions within the workforce. Management's lack of support for affirmative action programmes is posited as possibly the most crucial practical reason why these programmes fail

(Human, 1992). Management either seems to want to appear to be making changes whilst retaining the status quo, or fails to integrate the implications of affirmative action into the strategic objectives of the organisation (Human, 1992). The participants express the fact that the lack of managerial support aggravates racial tensions in that it confirms racist stereotypes that blacks are not as proficient as whites.

Some of the participants discussed how diversity was not valued within the organisation and this lack of respect for diverse cultures contributed to their frustrations. The lack of commitment to cultural integration or creating a truly multicultural workforce was a pertinent feature of the experience of working in a diversifying workforce.

For organisations to successfully integrate diverse cultures the organisational culture must be addressed (Sonn, 1993). Assumptions about values, norms, style and other aspects that make up organisational culture must be re-evaluated to include and represent the entire workforce. The needs, aspirations, and perspectives of the diverse workforce must be accounted for and not denied (Sonn, 1993). In order to meet the needs of a diversifying workforce, organisations need to create supportive environments that are open to becoming multicultural.

5.1.5 Confronting New and Unfamiliar Challenges

An aspect of confronting a changing workforce means that the participants are being compelled to negotiate new and unfamiliar challenges at work. This process of confronting new challenges is made more difficult in the context of a lack of managerial support or neglect in managing diversity. The participants are having to contend with new demands and personal challenges in the context of the workplace and very little of this is acknowledged by management. They are expected to produce and work at a demanding pace but are juggling work demands with an array of issues related to workforce diversification.

A key aspect of these new challenges is having to negotiate many cultures in one workforce. Cultural differences evolve because groups of people develop different values and basic concepts for understanding the world around them and guiding their

actions (Berger, 1996). In South Africa cultural differences cannot be separated from the realities of the Apartheid system and the derisive political, economic and social systems under which different people lived. In this context groups develop intercultural dynamics which inhibit or compromise effective cross-cultural relationships (Berger, 1996).

An emergent theme from the interviews is that an aspect of having to confront a changing workforce has meant that people are being forced to work and interact with groups of people that they have had limited interaction with in the past. Interacting with different people with different understandings, priorities and references is a challenge in and of itself, but combine that with the inequalities within the society which follow racial lines and the interaction becomes fraught and complex.

A number of factors make differences between groups barriers to integration. The psychological processes and defence mechanisms of the individual can result in the mistrust and suspicion of difference (Berger, 1996). Barriers are often fortified by group dynamics. For example, the predisposition for groups to close rank against and stereotype other groups. Barriers are also aggravated due to limited resources where groups are competing with each other for access to and control over limited resources. Problems of differences in language and the ability to communicate with other groups often further contribute to inter-group antagonisms (Berger, 1996).

The complexity of inter-group dynamics within the South African context is far too convoluted to be handled here but it needs to be recognised in attempting to analyse the experience of working in a diverse workforce in South Africa. The participants are negotiating deeply entrenched barriers due to our particular political history.

5.1.6 Frustration with Communication Difficulties

An increase in workforce diversity means an increase in diverse languages and modes of communication. Across the board participants expressed frustration at issues related to problems around communication within diversity.

Difficulties with communication include difficulties with having to negotiate multiple languages in one workforce and the difficulties with engaging in open and honest

conversation when the divides between people are experienced as great. Participants expressed anxiety at engaging critically with co-workers due to fear of reprisals and accusations of racism.

Having to communicate with people whose mother tongue is different to one's own is a reality of working in a diverse workforce. The experience can be derisive and alienating and can inhibit integration. The problem with diverse languages is less about not being understood and more about the fact that language communication always happens within socially defined contexts, resulting in a variety of discourses which reflect positions of power (Dadoo, 1998).

Successful management of a diverse workforce requires managers to handle a variety of variables - one of these relates to language communication. In an investigation into the dynamics of verbal communication within the broad social context, Dadoo (1998) argues that problems associated with unequal social relationships can be mirrored by the nature of verbal communication within diverse workforces, causing immense distress for the workforce. He argues that there is an increasing need for sensitivity during verbal communication in the context of an emerging multicultural workforce in South Africa in order to protect against abuse of power resulting from, inter alia, cultural insensitivity.

While there is a need for sensitivity on the one hand there is also a need for honest and open communication. Part of the frustration around communication for the participants is juggling being sensitive to issues of language and power and wanting and needing to create forums for open communication safe from reprisals. The participants' experience is that colleagues are afraid to communicate openly and confront problems honestly for fear of accusations of racism.

Survey participants in a study conducted by Rosen & Lovelace (1991) reported that increased diversity has led to a variety of problems, and communication difficulties represent the most frequently cited negative implication of diversity. In certain cases, communication barriers refer to misunderstandings between managers and employees, while in other cases the problems are related to the need to translate verbal or written materials into several languages (Rosen & Lovelace, 1991).

The experience of frustration with communication difficulties is related to two levels of discourse, power behind discourse and power in discourse (Dadoo, 1998). Power behind discourse can be understood as linguistic prejudice (Kaschula & Anthonissen, 1995). Linguistic prejudice relates to an individual's choice of a particular language for communication and the way it is used. Linguistic prejudice reveals important information about the interlocutors and the languages they speak. It reveals their social class, the context in which they are communicating, their ethnic group and gender. Individuals are often judged by the language they speak and their accent.

Power in discourse refers to interactions where powerful individuals control and constrain the contributions of less powerful individuals through language. This is evident amongst the participants working in a multicultural workforce and engaging in cross-cultural communication. Some of participants express frustration at the dominant cultural groups' failure to assist them in bridging some of the language barriers, or helping them rework their reports to bring them up to an acceptable standard in a language which is not their mother tongue. Some of the participants describe how their lack of proficiency in English and Afrikaans means that some of their colleagues and management treat them as less intelligent or efficient than their English speaking colleagues.

These issues with communication can be located in the broader South African context in which it is often uncomfortable and hard to communicate and negotiate questions of difference (Pieterse, 1997). Many whites are very concerned about being perceived as condescending, judgmental, culturally imposing or overly western in their thinking and behaviour, while many blacks easily feel inferior in a context that privileges western and white norms. In many organisations these attitudes exist and entrench themselves without being confronted and result in underlying tensions that compromise the efficient running of the organisation (Pieterse, 1997). Such issues are neglected because they are difficult to negotiate but the longer they are left the harder it becomes to work through the misperceptions and problematic mindsets.

There is often general perceptual discrepancies between blacks and whites in relation to interests, world views, conflicting role expectations, definitions of situations,

definitions of quality performance (Watts, 1988). This situation is compounded by communication difficulties. Since the Apartheid system limited casual social interaction between racial groups, black and white employees are not familiar with communicating with one another except on a formal instrumental level at work. Racial segregation has resulted in the potential for both groups to regard each other as one-dimensional human beings with enigmatic perplexing life experiences and feelings. Problems in relating to one another authentically and empathetically are therefore likely to exist (Watts, 1988).

It is apparent from this theme that the nature of communication within the diverse workforce significantly compromises the experience of working in a diverse workforce. Improved sensitivity and greater understanding of the dynamics of verbal communication is essential in enhancing interpersonal relations within a diversifying workforce (Dadoo, 1998). There is no alternative to candid and straightforward discussion to facilitate people understanding their differences, to address particular concerns, and help them to recognise that in dialogue and conversation there is strength (Strenski, 1994).

5.2 MEETING AND ENGAGING WITH THE 'OTHER'

In the context of a changing and diversifying workforce a major issue to emerge from the interviews is that individuals are meeting and interacting with groups of people who are relatively unfamiliar. Two pronounced aspects of this issue emerged involving the participants processing their own personal histories and pasts and beginning to recognise the stereotypes that they have formulated in relation to people of other cultures and races.

5.2.1 Processing the Past

Processing the past involves the participants reflecting on their behaviour towards people who are different from them, and how this process of reflection results in changes in attitudes and beliefs about others.

The experience of working in a diverse workforce means that the participants have to confront the pain and emotional scars of living segregated under Apartheid. For most

of the white participants it has meant reflecting on their ignorance of the realities of the broader population's lives. Many of the white participants, through the process of reflection, have experienced a newfound anger at the system under which they lived. Prior to their workforce diversifying their access to people from diverse cultures was limited. Meeting people of different racial and cultural groups has forced them to process their histories and in some cases process their histories in new ways. "I have had to understand for the first time what people's lives were like during Apartheid, what people went through during the struggle."

For many of the black and coloured participants working in a diverse workforce has meant that they have had to begin to process some of their anger and resentment towards white people. Some of the black participants commented on having to acknowledge the significant attitudinal shifts that some of their white colleagues were making. "I have had to work at letting go of my anger and attempt to look where white people are coming from and the huge shifts people are actually making."

Apartheid has left a legacy of barriers which hinder interaction in the workplace and in society in general (Rosmarin, 1992). These barriers include racism, prejudice, devaluation, stereotyping and negative attitudes towards diversity. This process of reflecting on the past has meant that the participants are beginning to recognise their stereotypes of other races and cultural groups. It has highlighted how many of their opinions are the results of stereotypes and ingrained prejudice and are not based in objective fact. Becoming aware of their own prejudices is potentially the first step towards creating equity amongst the diverse groups at the workplace. "Working in this diverse workforce, I have had exposure to different histories, politics, economic realities. I have come to realise that we might as well have been living in different countries our stories are so vastly different."

The broader racial spread of employees brings vastly different cultures into intimate and continuing contact (Motshabi, 1991). This contact compels individuals to cope with a number of changes simultaneously. Individuals have to examine, re-evaluate and possibly alter their frames of reference, ways of thinking, beliefs, values, norms and behaviours (Robb & Richards, 1997).

5.2.2 Recognising Stereotypes

Processing the past helps individuals gain valuable insights into their intercultural, interpersonal interactions. Reflecting on the origins and mechanisms of one's own racism is essential in overcoming prejudice and stereotyping. The second key issue is recognising stereotypes. This emergent sub-theme refers to the process of reflecting on one's opinions about other groups and recognising how negative perceptions are formulated. By processing the past the participants also process how their ideas and reactions to different cultural groups have been formulated. For many of the participants the process of reflection has resulted in attitudinal changes which have also led to changes in behaviour.

Classically, stereotypes were understood as judgements that are rigid, over – simplifying and erroneous because they are overgeneralisations (Leyens, Yzerbyt & Schadron, 1994). Leyens et al (1994) refute this understanding and argue that if stereotypes are considered part of social perception, they need to be understood as flexible as well as rigid. Stereotyping is not just a list of attributes that apply to social categories; it also serves a social function. Stereotypes function as theoretical naïve explanations of the world (Leyens et al, 1994). These theoretical explanations of the world play an efficient role in ordering people's daily lives but they have to be flexible (Leyens et al, 1994). The participants demonstrate this flexibility. With increased contact amongst the various cultural and racial groupings, certain stereotypical beliefs have been refuted. Through the process of reflecting on the past, the participants began analysing where the beliefs about others came from and how they were formulated.

Due to Apartheid, enforced separation of cultural groups and the propaganda of the state, stereotypes were also confounded with prejudice. Through increased contact and the development of real relationships with diverse groups of people, many of the participants have reworked some of the naïve explanations that informed how they understood different people.

The idea of contact as an attitude-changing mechanism in social psychology holds that increased contact would provide individuals with opportunities to discover that in

reality different groups often share the same basic values and attitudes (Mynhardt & du Toit, 1991). Working in a diverse workforce means sustained contact between different people from diverse cultural and racial backgrounds. This sustained contact typically occurs in a relatively pleasant environment where norms of tolerance apply or are promoted, and individuals in contact situations enjoy relatively equal work status. The experience of working in a diverse workforce where prevailing negative stereotypes are, for the most part, not being confirmed has resulted in a positive attitude change amongst many of the participants. "I have learned to manage moving forward and also manage my own history and baggage, the way I was brought up, the whole system which is deeply entrenched but my friends here are my friends, not my black friends or coloured friends, so that I think is something positive that working here has given me, that is something I would not give up for anything."

Increased contact does not necessarily lead to attitude change. Allport (1954) argued that for positive attitude change contact must take place on an equal-status basis. Equal-status, however, is relatively difficult to achieve in a deeply divided society like South Africa. Fortunately a number of variables can help in creating equal status in contact situations, like the existence of common goals, co-operative interdependence and institutional support (Allport, 1954). From the previous theme it is clear that the participants lack managerial or institutional support but the existence of common goals and the benefits of co-operative interdependence potentially facilitate unlearning negative stereotypes.

While attitudes have shifted through working in a diverse workforce, there has been little integration between cultural groups beyond the workplace. Across the board participants commented on the fact that while they were integrating with people from different races and cultures at work, there is little integration in their lives beyond work. Some participants experienced this as problematic, but the majority of participants expressed being comfortable with the situation. The results indicate that while the participants are attempting to bridge some of the divides at the workplace, they do not translate this experience directly into other aspects of their lives. This failure to generalise beyond the contact situation is one of the weaknesses of the contact hypothesis, which posits that increased interpersonal interaction will impact positively on negative attitudes towards disliked groups (Hamilton, 1981).

Despite being restricted to the working environment, the participants express a growing acceptance of cultural differences. Acceptance leads to behavioural adaptation and altered thinking about that difference (Bennet, 1986). It is this ability to adapt that forms the key to effective inter-cultural communication. According to Bennet (1986), the most common form of adaptation is empathy. Empathy in this context is the ability to alter one's frame of reference in order to recognise and value different perspectives and understandings. This process is apparent in the way the participants describe the experience of meeting and engaging with the 'other'. Adaptation to difference is the ability to act ethnorelatively (Bennet, 1986). This is the ability to act outside one's native cultural worldview and is grounded in the acceptance of difference as a relative process.

5.3 STIMULATING GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

This emergent theme highlights the diversity of human experience. While the participants clearly are struggling with working in a diversifying workforce, they are also benefiting greatly from the experience and even enjoying it. This issue stands in contradiction to some of the issues that make up 5.1 Confronting a Changing Workplace in that it represents the enriching as opposed to frustrating elements of the experience of working in a diverse workforce.

5.3.1 Playing with Difference

The participants comment that despite the difficulties that they confront and the tensions that emanate out of a diversifying workforce, many aspects of their experience are positive and enriching. An aspect of the experience of working in a diversifying workforce is having a sense of humour about the difficulties.

A key aspect of this issue is that it highlights the fact that the participants feel as if they are growing and developing as individuals through the positive aspects of working in a diverse workforce. Through the process of overcoming difficulties and working with the frustrations related to diversity, the participants felt as if they were developing healthier and more functional ways of interacting with one another. "I feel

like I am in the process of knowing and being known, a process of answering and asking questions and dispelling myths.”

Dealing with difference in a positive and open manner is essentially valuing it as opposed to ignoring or suppressing it, and has direct implications for the organisational culture of the organisation. Playing with difference allows the participants to build respect for all kinds of persons and helps develop trust between different groups. Multiculturalism is achieved by hearing and incorporating new stories into the language of the organisation, participating in new rituals, ways of doing things and ways of interacting. Culture change is the basis for all organisational change and sustainable change must emerge from inside the organisation (Carr-Ruffino, 1996). A diversifying workforce will ultimately lead to organisational culture change as the organisation imbibes and integrates new beliefs, values and behaviours.

By playing with difference the participants are demonstrating an appreciation of divergent cultural mores as opposed to merely tolerating them. Appreciation of difference on this level leads to the experience of mutual respect, which contributes to a positive experience of working in a diverse workforce. “I feel a better person because of it. It is good to work with colleagues who are equal to me and of a different skin colour.”

5.3.2 Experimenting with New Norms

Having positive experiences with different ways of doing things and divergent views of understanding the world has led many of the participants to start experimenting
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accommodated because the organisation is necessarily less rigid in an effort to meet the needs of a diversifying workforce.

The participants describe working in a diverse workforce as healing. Working in a diverse workforce helps bridge some of the divides between groups of people that have been traditionally segregated. Despite many things remaining the same outside of the workplace, the participants have managed to achieve some kind of equity at work. The participants appreciate being able to meet people from different racial and

cultural backgrounds on a relatively equal basis at work. For many of the participants this is the first opportunity they have had to interact with and work alongside groups of people who are racially and culturally different to them.

Experimenting with new norms facilitates innovation in organisations (Herriot & Pemberton, 1995). Homogeneity and control are essentially antagonistic to innovation. Working with identity-group difference can contribute to personal growth and development in positive ways and contribute to new ways of working within the organisation (Herriot & Pemberton, 1995).

Experimenting with new norms encourages the participants to expand their awareness and acceptance of cultural and individual difference. It contributes to developing an understanding of the nature and dynamics of these differences. In the context of experimenting with new norms, individuals are given an opportunity to explore ways that difference might be exploited as a workplace asset. Of key importance is that fact that by opening oneself up to different ways of doing things one can build better work relations with people who are different.

To stimulate growth and development the participants have had to actively examine how differences impact on their behaviour. This involves assessing what messages are received which help define a person's worth and self-esteem and what messages and judgements are received about others, specifically those who are racially and culturally different. The process involves self-analysing aspects of one's own belief systems, values and life experiences which are normally taken for granted (Rosmarin, 1992).

Experimenting with new norms involves the participants expending time and energy in interactive forums or circumstances where they are given opportunities to challenge their assumptions about diversity and develop understandings about unfamiliar life experiences.

5.4 LEARNINGS

The concept of learning was raised universally amongst the participants. According to the participants learning occurs across two dimensions: (1) the experience of learning on an interpersonal level, learning from and with others and (2) on an intra-personal level, learning through the process of self-analysis and introspection.

5.4.1 Exponential Increase in Inter-personal Learnings

Most of the participants felt that part of the experience of working in a diverse workforce has been an exponential increase in interpersonal learning. Working and interacting with people from divergent backgrounds has increased their understanding of different people's different perspectives on the same issues. It has also led to learnings about the realities of people's lives and cultural orientations in a more accurate, reliable and valid manner. Individuals are experiencing cultural differences first hand as opposed to learning about them from secondary sources. "You become more informed and get rid of some of your biases and you learn to understand people, they way they are, rather than looking at them from a distance and making assumptions about what you observe."

Learning involves acquiring new understanding (Fiol, 1996). Research in the domain of cognitive and behavioural sciences at the individual level presents this process as involving the acquisition and interpretation of knowledge (Lindsay and Norman, 1977). The process of learning at this level need not be conscious or intentional (Bower & Hilgard, 1981). Nor does the process necessarily enhance the learner's effectiveness or change the learner's behaviour in obvious ways (Friedlander, 1983). Rather, learning involves modifying one's "cognitive maps or understandings" (Friedlander, 1983, 194) and thereby changing the range of ones' potential behaviours (Huber, 1991).

Learning, therefore, may have more to do with a change in one's interpretation of events and actions than with the events or actions themselves. Interpretation is understood as the process through which individuals attach meaning to information (Daft & Weick, 1984). The participants are learning through acquiring different interpretations of new or existing information. This (conscious or unconscious)

process of knowledge acquisition occurring in a diversifying workforce has resulted in the development of new understandings of their surrounding events.

The participants also discuss learning about what other people's perceptions of them and their cultures are about. An outstanding feature of this theme is the experience of developing greater appreciation and respect for difference through learning more and more about different ways of being in the world. The participants expressed the fact that through interpersonal learnings they are devising new ways of communicating that foster equitable and actualised relationships which help bridge some of the divides between groups of people.

The participants are in the process of making sense of a changing workplace and new workplace realities. Lave & Wenger (1990) introduce an approach to understanding learning which describes this process of inter-personal learnings and sheds some light on the participants' experience. Their concept of learning is called legitimate peripheral participation (LPP). LPP is an analytical category or tool for comprehending learning across different social and physical environments. It endeavours to explain learning as opposed to teaching or instruction.

Learning as understood by LPP means becoming an 'insider' in the learning process. Learners do not merely receive or construct knowledge as individuals but learn to function in a community. There are no limits on what that community consists of. The participants working in a diversifying workforce essentially make up such a community, and within that community acquire its subjective viewpoint and learn to speak its language. The participants are not necessarily acquiring 'expert knowledge' in this process of inter-personal learning, but learning ways of behaving and interacting as community members, learning to integrate in a diversifying workforce (Seely-Brown & Duguid, 1994).

"Workplace learning is best understood, then, in terms of the communities being formed or joined and personal identities being changed." (Seely-Brown and Duguid, 1994). The crux of the issue is that learning involves becoming a practitioner, not learning about practice. This is evident amongst the participants where an aspect of

the experience of diversity is this process of inter-personal learning. They are actively involved in learning from being an insider in the process of a diversifying workforce.

Learning is a characteristic of effective organisational change, possibly best understood as a consequence of change (Carnall, 1996). Organisational learning and individual learning involve the development of new and divergent interpretations of events and situations (Fiol, 1996).

The by-product of interpersonal learning is also the sharing of ideas and learning new ways of dealing with problems. An exponential increase in interpersonal learning involves the participants learning different ways of reacting to problems or crises, developing new skills and problem-solving techniques. It facilitates creativity and innovation and allows individuals an opportunity to broaden their knowledge base and tap into a wider variety of information sources.

The value of diversity lies in the richness of ideas and varying perspectives that it brings to organisations (Copeland, 1988). Inter-personal learning is beneficial when creativity, innovation and problem solving are required. "When you are surrounded by sameness, you get only variations on the same." (Sullivan, 1988, cited in Copeland, 1988, 54).

Research on work team heterogeneity confirms the hypothesis that diversity promotes creativity and innovation through sharing ideas and inter-personal learnings (Cox & Blake, 1991). For example, Kanter's (1983) investigation of innovation in organisations demonstrates that the majority of innovative companies intentionally establish heterogeneous teams to generate multiple perspectives in problem solving.

5.4.2 Developing Deep Insights and Intra-personal Learning

As part of the experience of working in a diverse workforce the participants described learning on a deep intra-psychic level. This process involves learning about themselves in the context of a changing reality and working environment, learning about their personal shortcomings and limitations within this change and learning about the value of self-reflection. "It (working in a diverse workforce) gives one the

opportunity to be a better person, to grow better in that you are more knowledgeable, more enlightened...”

Some of the participants felt that through this process of self-reflection they are becoming better, more enlightened individuals. This enlightenment allows them to be open to criticism and engage critically with others. This process of intra-personal learning involves making sense of a new reality. When one attempts to comprehend a new experience or concept, one does so by ascribing meaning to it (Gioia, Thomas, Clarke & Chittipeddi, 1996). The participants’ experience of gaining deep insights and intra-personal learnings is tied up with the process of making sense of their new work reality. In the process of interpreting the events, behaviours and emotions that surround a diversifying workforce they are in the process of making sense of their current situation. This is a valuable and inevitable process as their reality has shifted and their understandings of the nature of their work and work lives must shift to accommodate and be congruent with their new reality.

Implicit in this process of intra-personal learning is having to negotiate the emotions that accompany it. The process means that emotions are likely to be openly expressed at work. The high emotionality of working in a diversifying workforce is evident in all the emergent themes. For example, the process of having to confront a changing workplace, whilst managing one’s work life and attempting to integrate the new demands, pressures and opportunities for growth that workforce diversity present, is essentially an emotive process.

Integral to understanding the experience of working in a diverse workforce is acknowledging the multitude of emotions that it invokes for the participants. The participants describe reaching deep emotional lows and highs. Fineman (1993) argues that emotions are within the texture of organisations yet they are virtually left out of the majority of mainstream texts on organisational behaviour. The intrinsic nature of emotions in organisations is confirmed and highlighted in this emergent theme.

Emotions play a central role in organisational life (Putman & Mumby, 1993). Feelings at work emanate out of human interaction, aid in the construction of shared meaning, build mutual understandings and generate alternative forms of organising. The

changes taking place in the diversifying workforce have brought about new forms of social interactions with new and diverse social actors. Sensitivity to others' feelings in the context of these new social interactions is essential in understanding diversity in the workplace, and may constitute the basis for successful organisational change (Putman & Mumby, 1993).

5.5 COPING MECHANISMS

The last issue to emerge out of the interviews was that part of the experience of working in a diversifying workforce involves developing coping mechanisms to handle some of the difficulties and frustrations that make up the experience.

Organisational change of any kind creates anxiety, uncertainty and stress (Carnall, 1996). Learning to cope with the process of change places a whole new set of demands on the individuals involved. Two key coping mechanisms employed by the participants emerged out of the interviews. The first is the importance of time. The issue of time involves recognising that with time the difficulties and frustrations of working in a diverse workforce might ease. The participants also use developing a sense of trust for one another and growing respect and empathy for difference and different life experiences as mechanisms to handle the tensions inherent in working in a diverse workforce.

5.5.1 Time Heals

The participants felt that while they are struggling with the situation, they recognise and appreciate that in time the situation will even out and improve. Some of the participants acknowledge that with time they envision engendering better relationships and deeper understandings with their diverse colleagues. They highlight the fact that the process is still very much in its early stages and they are confident that in time many of the initial problems will be smoothed out. This knowledge helps them cope with the immediate tensions and stress factors that they are experiencing as a result of a changing workplace. "It takes time for people to get to know one another and, once that has happened, to move beyond perceptions and grapple with the reality and contradictions."

People need time to work through a significant change (Carnall, 1996). Time is even more essential if the change creates problems that need to be handled and solved.

Coping with change relates directly to the previous theme of learning, in that there is a learning-curve effect as individuals improve their performance through learning to negotiate the changing work scenario. Some of the participants expressed the fact that they envision progression as the process of diversification advances, the difficulties get mediated and new shared meanings are created.

5.5.2 Empathy, Trust and Respect

Developing a sense of empathy for others, and dealing with issues of trust and respect further facilitates coping with the difficulties and tensions surrounding working in a diverse workforce. Some of the participants expressed the fact that despite the difficulties and frustrations implicit in the experience of working in a diversifying workforce, acknowledging the fact that every one is involved in the same process and experiencing the same difficulties, helps them to deal with the situation. This recognition facilitates their coping with and enhances the experience of working in a diversifying workforce.

The importance of empathy in aiding integration has been discussed under section 5.2 Meeting and Engaging with the 'Other'. The underlying principle is that attempts to understand another's point of view and frames of reference facilitate communication between groups and promote a sense of tolerance and appreciation of difference.

Empathy also contributes to creating shared meaning of a given situation.

Many of the participants perceived trust and respect as necessary variables in dealing with difference. Some of the participants commented on the fact that the lack of trust amongst the workforce and the lack of respect further compromises their ability to integrate easily in the process of change. The key variable in relation to respect and trust is time; the participants feel that with increased time and mutual interchanges they will develop a greater sense of trust and mutual respect.

The issue of the lack of trust is identified as a key factor in the experience of working in a diverse workforce. Lack of trust compromises the experience and the participants recognise that increased trust and respect would aid them in coping with the changes

and challenges in their workplace.

CHAPTER SIX - LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Some of the issues relating to the quality of this research project, such as researcher bias, research validity, reliability and generalisability have already been discussed in the method section of this document. The following section will briefly discuss two other key limitations of this project.

6.1 Defining Diversity

A key question for the researcher throughout this process has been how to define diversity for the purpose of this study. The researcher chose to define diversity based on how the participants understood the concept but is aware that the nature and definition of diversity remains debatable and is context specific. For the purposes of this research, diversity was defined along the lines of race and culture but the researcher acknowledges that this is a limited and narrow definition, appropriate to the specific case being studied.

Another key concern for the researcher was having to work with a dynamic concept and translate it into concrete terms. Workforce diversification is an ongoing process, not a once off event in the lives of the participants. The research was conducted at a point in this ongoing process. The committee clerks are working in a diverse workforce but they are also working in a diversifying workforce. Workforce diversity is a not just a static state that is achieved through representitivity but is a dynamic process of change and transformation. A key limitation of this study is the difficulty of integrating this understanding of the dynamism of workforce diversity, the fact that it involves an ongoing process, with reporting on the experience of it. By using qualitative research methodologies and techniques the researcher attempted to do justice to this potential limitation.

6.2 The Analytic Mix

High-quality qualitative research entails an interactive combination of two basic understandings of the world, the researchers and the participants. The underlying aim

of qualitative research is to present the real lived experience of the participants. In the process of writing a report and defining the conceptual framework within which the participants' experience is understood, the researcher dictates how much of that lived experience is actually accessed by the reader. In the process of analysing and interpreting the data, through the process of coding, categorising and aggregating information, the participants' voices get diluted. While it is inappropriate to furbish the reader with entire interview transcripts, the researcher must acknowledge that there is always some risk of losing the nuances and richness of the data in the reporting process.

6.3 Further Research Needs

In the course of this research process a number of potential areas for future research became apparent. Firstly, considering the paucity of local or national research into the area of workforce diversification, there is a real need for South African specific research in the area. While there is an abundance of research in the area of affirmative action, there is very limited work being conducted on workforce diversity. The South African context offers a rich site for research into this area due to its current legislature framework and the broader processes of political, economic and social transition.

Secondly, given the time constraints of the current research there is a potential need for a longitudinal study of the experience of working in a diverse workforce to run over a number of years. A longitudinal study would allow the researcher to map the process of diversification and identify the different stages in the process as experienced by the workforce. Due to time constraints a longitudinal study was not viable for the current research, but the researcher recognises the benefits of being able to chart the different stages and different experiences related to those stages within the process of working in a diversifying workforce. A longitudinal study would allow the researcher an opportunity to assess in greater detail and depth the psychological implications of workforce diversification for individual workers. For example, investigating and recording the kinds of personal growth and development that takes place, mapping the nature of the learnings, and looking at variables like stress and work satisfaction in the context of a diversifying workforce.

Thirdly, further research is needed to validate and redefine the model of the experience of working in a diverse workforce to assess its applicability to other cases and to validate its theoretical coherence. Research on different kinds of organisations going through this process would be appropriate. The committee section of Parliament is a unique organisation and the specificity of this case may have impacted on the nature of the results. Future research needs to be conducted in commercial organisations to assess the applicability of the results in this context or to uncover issues particular to the experience in the commercial environment.

Fourthly, cross-cultural studies in this area present further research opportunities. The context in which the research is conducted has significant impact on its morphology. The form of diversity, for example, in the South African scenario is predominately related to issues of race. In other countries the form of diversity may be more closely related to gender differences or religious diversity. While the variables that make up the individual's psychological experience of working within diverse workforces might be similar, the societal context and definition of diversity may highlight different dimensions to the model.

Lastly, while this research has been conducted amongst individuals working in a diversifying workforce, future research should be conducted on diversity in other settings, for example, the experience of attending multiracial and multicultural schools or the experience of diversification for university students. Research of this nature may help in devising programmes and workshops to manage some of the challenges experienced in multicultural settings and highlight the need for cultural sensitivity training in these settings.

South Africa is often described as a multicultural society, but the divides and inequities between people remain entrenched. In order to build a different kind of society, a society that embraces the challenges of transformation and integration, a great deal of further research in the area of diversity is required. Research that helps us unpack the nature of the problems people are confronting in relation to diversity and research that facilitates the development of workable, sustainable solutions to some of these problems.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this research was to develop a deep and rich understanding of the dynamics and realities of working in a diverse workforce. The researcher attempted to develop this understanding by focusing on the subjective experience of working in a diverse workforce. The research is grounded in the way organisational members interpret and make sense of working in a diverse environment. The research aimed at uncovering some of the psychological implications of diversification, focusing on how individuals experience this change process, their capacity to adjust, learn and behave in ways that accommodate a transforming work environment.

Due to the lack of theoretical knowledge and attention paid to the psychological dimensions of workforce diversity, the major thrust and contribution of the research involves portraying how organisational members interpret their experiences and the kinds of meanings they ascribe to them.

The issues raised in this study relate to the individual's experience of work and work life. An underlying issue throughout is that the participants' experience of working in a diverse workforce impacts directly on the quality of their working life. Working in a diverse workforce changes the meaning of work in significant ways. Certain aspects of the experience compromise their quality of work life, like the lack of managerial support, frustrations and challenges, while other aspects enhance their experience of work through developing new interpersonal skills and learnings.

The findings of this study as portrayed in the diagrammatic representation of the results are inter-related and connected in very significant ways. Having to confront a changing workplace forces the participants to engage with people that are culturally and racially different. The nature of the changes on an organisational level are experienced by the participants on a personal level as the process of a diversifying workforce. Essentially the changes involve a process of meeting and engaging with the other, which in most cases leads to a process of personal growth and development.

Personal growth and development is initiated when individuals' beliefs and assumptions are challenged or questioned through interacting with different people from diverse cultures. Differences are highlighted because of the diversity of opinions and paradigms in what was a relatively homogeneous workforce.

Part of the process of working in a changing environment and having to negotiate difference involves learning on a number of levels. These levels include learning new ways of being in the world and more specifically at work. Learning how to communicate and work with different kinds of people makes up a fundamental part of the experience of working in a diverse workforce.

A key variable in this process of confronting a changing workplace is the development of coping mechanisms to handle the emotional, behavioural and attitudinal shifts that need to take place in order to manage the change on an individual experiential level.

It is evident from this study that the experience of working in a diverse workforce is complex and contradictory. Perhaps understanding these complexities will facilitate how workforce diversity is managed in the future and help prepare organisations and individual employees to extract the learnings and benefits from it, while simultaneously coping with the challenges and difficulties.

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APPENDIX I - BROAD INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Please note that this is a broad interview schedule that was used as a guide to facilitate the interview process for the researcher. The interviews went far beyond these semi-structured open-ended questions.

1. Sex
2. Age
3. Religion
4. Duration in organisation
5. How do you understand the concept workforce diversity?
6. Please describe your job and explain how the nature of your work has changed over the last few years?
7. What major changes have taken place in your work environment over the last few years?
8. How have you responded to these changes?
9. Can you describe the experience of working in a diversifying workforce?
10. Can you give examples of incidents or events that highlight this experience?
11. Has anything changed for you personally in relation to this diversifying workforce?
12. In what ways has it altered the organisation?
13. In what ways has it altered your work environment and your work?
14. Do you think difference impacts on behaviour at work?
15. How does it impact?
16. Can you identify positive effects of increased diversity?
17. Can you identify negative effects of increased diversity?
18. Can you think of incidents or events that highlight these negative and positive effects of working in a diversifying workforce?
19. How would you describe the organisational culture of the committee section?
20. What are the major challenges you confront in your job and in your working environment?
21. Is diversity accommodated? How is it accommodated?

APPENDIX II – FIGURE 1

Fig. 1 Diagrammatic Representation of Results

