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'There are thorns in the forest': individuality, social context and reflection in diversity work.

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COMPULSORY DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

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'AWAKE'

Awake,
Shake dreams from your hair
My pretty child, my sweet one
Choose the day and choose the sign of your day
The day's divinity
First thing you see

Choose, they croon, the Ancient Ones,
the time has come again
Choose now, they croon,
Beneath the moon,
Beside an ancient lake.
Enter again the sweet forest,
Enter the hot dream,
Come with us.
Everything is broken up and dances.

(Morrison, 1978)

Abstract:

This thesis explores the attitudes and approaches of a group of South African diversity practitioners on the connection between individual, body and society in their work. Contrary to the theory to have emerged from the modern Western academy which has valorised the rational, self-contained individual, critical contemporary literature argues for the importance of social context when working towards social justice. This project sought to establish where diversity practitioners position themselves in terms of their understandings of this issue in their social change work. Taking a qualitative approach, the semi-structured interviews were carried out with ten diversity and intercultural workers during 2010 to 2011, in order to explore how the individual is approached within current diversity practice. Data was analysed using narrative analysis, which looks into the stories told about what it means to work within the field of diversity work, and to explore what it means to be an individual in an unequal world. The findings suggest that it is only by seeing the individual as shaped by society or culture, and examining the impact of history on present day situations that helpful transformation work can take place, and that practitioners themselves are actively constructing such narratives about their profession.

Chapter One: Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to explore the approaches of a group of practitioners to what it means to be an embodied individual within a social environment, and how the various politics of difference play a role. This thesis takes a critical perspective, looking at the construct of individuality and how it is used as a means of denying, oftentimes, the very relevant experiences of exclusion or marginality, based on concepts of individual responsibility to overcome hurdles by adaption to mainstream views.

My thesis was inspired by a workshop held for diversity practitioners in Cape Town, where the focus was on race and shared experiences around this topic. At this workshop, a 'coloured' woman expressed her upset at being ignored within shopping centre spaces by fellow participants, even after she had experienced shared emotional connections with them. It was her belief that she had been ignored because her fellow participants were 'white' people who would only recognise fellow 'whites' in the shops. Although we cannot know what happened within this interaction, her comment, and the pain associated with it, were shot down by a fellow participant (and diversity practitioner) who argued that perhaps this woman 'may not have made much of an impression'.

It was clear to me that discomfort around the topic of social injustice and inequality is common. Steyn (2001) argues that coming to terms with past privilege means working meaningfully towards the recognition of the political aspects of identity which lead to inequality, and our own views of what we perceive to be normal within society. Taking a blind approach to race, gender, sexuality or disability often means seeing no evil, hearing no evil and therefore refusing to admit that any evil exists (Gobodo-Madikizela, 2003). While working within the field of diversity and intercultural communication, it is vital that practitioners acknowledge the difficulties experienced by people considered to be 'other' or less worthy to society rather than outrightly dismiss alternative views due to personal discomfort (Kersten, 2000).

After witnessing this interaction, I chose to explore the means within which the construct of the individual is used as an ideology which turns a blind eye to oppression within our society rather than a source of agency and personal freedom. The upshot of this exploration has been that the individual needs to be viewed not alone, but as a part of a social system which exists within time and space, and so it is only when we view a person within the complexity of his or her social environment that we can fully understand his\her positionality and experiences of life. This is not to deny the agency available to individuals, but points out that emphasising agency alone places a burden on a person without due acknowledgement of a greater need for social change (Bordo, 1997). The question then arose, to what extent is this understanding embodied in the work of those who work at a practical level with bringing about a more socially just society from within organisations?

As part of the DEISA (Diversity and Equality Interventions in South Africa) project, this research looks at how the construct of individuality is addressed or worked with by diversity practitioners working on a practical level within social institutions. The business case for diversity is well known; it focuses on how diverse staff within the business world increase profits, and offer opportunity to expand into new markets (April, 2008). Brown (2009) explains that when people feel safe to explore ideas and express them, creativity thrives and innovation is able to take place. As CEO of innovation and design firm IDEO, Brown (2009) explains that companies who value staff and create conditions where each member of staff feels free to have a voice are in the strongest position to come up with creative ideas and concepts. This thesis offers a critical take on the business case.

Brown (2009) explains that multiple viewpoints and perspectives are not the obstacle to innovation, but instead offer more pieces of the puzzle so that a clearer picture can be deciphered. In order to offer up a new idea or solve a problem, openness to new voices is essential. Although our social world has been designed according to hierarchy and power (Foster, 2004), Brown (2009) argues a need to move into a culture of exploration and appreciation, stating that companies who do so will have staff who are more engaged. People who are able to show their potential, utilise their creativity and who feel valued for their contributions will not give up this experience easily. In a working environment where

inequality is rife, and 'other' people often feel that they have more potential than is currently utilised within companies (April, Dreyer & Blass, 2007), and who therefore often seek out alternate employment, the opportunity to contribute will create a refreshing change.

Belonging depends on a culture of trust (Brown, 2009). This means that management trust staff is productive, and staff believe that management are interested in the unique perspectives offered up. When trust flows, people are able to be bold rather than timidly trying to fit into dominant social norms (Brown, 2009). Brown (2009) explains that a culture of inclusion does not depend on fighting off 'them' to preserve 'our' beliefs. Neither does it mean 'we' will speak on behalf of 'them'. Instead, all people have to be given a voice so that choice is made possible.

This means not just looking at Employment Equity policies, or counting up numbers of people as defined by body shape, skin colour or disability, but instead exploring how work actually feels (Hicks-Clarke, 2000). It means working on policies and strategies which enable people to belong (Hicks-Clarke, 2000). Brown (2009) argues that as western people, we have been caught in a competitive web, where only those on top of the pyramid are able to share what they think and who they are. Kersten (2000) would add to this by explaining that hierarchies of difference create a dominant culture where people believe that fitting in with dominant norms is vital. Within South African society, achieving a sense of equality and a climate for diversity has shown itself to be somewhat problematic (Kelly, Wale, Soudien and Steyn, 2007, p.10). Staff turnover remains high, white males dominate the boardroom, and women and black professionals frequently reach a glass ceiling. Further, inequalities related to sexualities, disability and religion remain deeply entrenched and sometimes unspoken (Kelly, et al, 2007, p10).

Due to the high levels of inequality still present in South African society, it is vital to see a person in the context of social and environmental conditions in order to understand the challenges faced by marginalised groups of people, rather than to blame individual inadequacies and faulty thinking for lack of adequate 'achievement'. Bentley and Habib (2008) argue that there is a strong form of resistance to equality in South Africa, and that

the colour blind approach, which argues that South Africa already has equal opportunity, and that the government should not work towards addressing inequality between citizen groups, is well known. This perspective is hostile to factors such as employment equity and affirmative action. If society remains colour blind, however, inequalities will continue to reproduce themselves (Bentley & Habib, 2008).

Although legislation governing affirmative action exists within our society, this legislation governs employment options only, and does not touch on the atmosphere at work or the resistances people live with within a work or social environment. De Wet (2007) explains that simply allowing 'black' people into the work environment is not desirable. Allowing people into the workplace based on 'race' or 'gender' is not enough if it means ignoring the identities of our work force, insisting that people fit in with 'white' norms (de Wet, 2007). Faull (2008) adds that sometimes affirmative action is destructive if it treats people as merely numbers or tokens who are representatives of groups rather than as individuals, placed within uncomfortable social situations which remain un-addressed. Faull (2008) gives the example of 'black' men at a police station in Paarl, who are seen as a threat to police men of different 'race', based on affirmative action policies. 'Black' police men are denied freedom of language, and unable to transfer away from the station for a certain period of time, even if they should wish to do so. Alarming, but probably not surprisingly, the police station had a high suicide rate amongst 'black' police men (Faull, 2008).

Clearly, the need for diversity within the work environment goes beyond the legal argument, and beyond mere tokenism. We need to look deeply into what it means to be an embodied individual, and what this means to a sense of belonging, should we wish to acknowledge individual or group need for equality and comfort within the workplace. This means exploring the ideologies and grids of power within our society and deconstructing them in order to reveal their influences upon people. This takes us into the realms of our personal identities and lives, forcing us to acknowledge our own pasts and explore how they have shaped the present, how we have been positioned, and where we need to reflect in order to grow and work towards transformation on a deeper level.

Steyn (2005) argues that South African society in particular has been based on the perspective that people who deserve opportunity or voice are those who 'think like us'. South African society, divided by 400 years of colonialism and power, is in a post apartheid era. Our society is still effected by huge inequality and power differences (Foster, 2004). However, acknowledging the differences and inequalities which exist means looking at differences which exist between people through a new paradigm.

I argue that very different and fragmented lenses have been used to look at people within our society, with bodies separated from mind, and individual from society (Foster, 2004). This separation means that the individual is seen to be determined by his/her thought process alone, and any difficulties experienced by the person are seen to occur as a result of faulty thinking or instability which is the individual's responsibility to correct (Foster, 2004). At the same time, individuals are judged and categorised as bodies, which are seen through a stereotypical lense. Ratele and Shefer (2003) explain that bodies are seen to be both invisible and essential truth tellers of who a person really is. Exploring the myths which exist around bodies is vital, if we are to truly see the difficulties people face while interacting as embodied beings.

With these thoughts in mind, the thesis seeks to understand whether, and how, practitioners engage with these problematics.

Thesis overview

This study takes a qualitative approach, exploring how diversity practitioners work with the concept of the individual and how they approach the connection between individual, body and society. For the purpose of this study, markers of difference such as 'race' or 'gender' are considered to be socially constructed rather than scientifically established. However, the realities that these markers have produced within the social world are considered to be tangible.

Although this study looks at factors such as race or gender, it does not aim to entrench

categories, but instead aims to raise consciousness around inequalities already in existence. Speaking of categories as though they do exist does however raise an enormous paradox. Only through dialogue is it possible to elevate awareness of the impact of these categories on people's lives. However, the very talk of categories confirms the seeming reality of constructed differences. Holding this paradox consciously is part of work of those who engage in diversity practice.

The literature seeks to establish the theoretical underpinnings of the study. It begins with an explanation of why an exploration of the 'individual' is important. The invention of the self-contained human being, who came into existence during the time of the enlightenment, is explored. Social hierarchies and comparisons are also raised in this section. A discussion of social constructionism and discourses, or social conversations follows.

The idea of the social individual is then extended to include bodies, and the way that bodies thrust the individual into a political world which shapes interactions and options, producing (or alternatively shielding a person from) identity threat. The meanings bodies are given in society is explored as well as the ways bodies are used to grant agency to a person. Once bodies and agency have been explored as political, the literature moves into the valuing of difference, and the need to look at people in a way which transcends group membership. The literature then draws on the work of Gergen (2000), who explores the importance of new possibilities in the way that bodies work together. Emotion and expression is then explored as a means of dreaming up a new future.

Finally, the literature focuses on the need for reflexivity within the practitioner's world in order that s/he is able to create spaces for transformation. This thesis draws on the need, argued by Kelly et al (2007) to work beyond the individual in diversity work, linking the person to society in order to offer deep transformation or change. It can be seen as a follow up to Kelly et al's (2007) research, using a more in depth methodology to examine the theoretical underpinnings of the approaches of practitioners, and perhaps on how diversity work is evolving in complexity.

Limitations of this thesis

This thesis is based on qualitative research and aimed to gain an in depth study on practitioners perceptions of working with individuals in an unequal society. This research cannot be applied to populations of practitioners as a whole, but could be followed up with a quantitative study in order to determine if views are consistent. Further, this study took place over a relatively short period of time, and was based on single conversations with practitioners. As ideas change and shift while people interact and reflect constantly, it is possible that a great many of the ideas expressed within the thesis may change over time. As a result, the thesis is merely a starting point for discussion, and does not provide answers or theories on transformation and the best ways to approach it.

Space remained the biggest limitation of this project, and there are topics and narratives which have not been included within the final content. Such topics include the process of forming a new identity when complex world views become understood, something described in detail by practitioners. A further topic which has not been included has been the process of learning to see through narratives of inferiority or privilege, and the difficulties this created within the lives of practitioners.

Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter seeks to provide the theoretical underpinnings of this study, and to provide a context within the relevant literature for the research.

Examining the individual

The construct of 'the individual' is important within the field of diversity. Kelly, et.al (2007) argue that the deployment of 'the individual' can distract from social change in many ways, causing us to have blind spots towards the issues facing an unequal society. However, April and Schockley (2007) argues the vital need to ensure that people become seen as subjective beings, rather than confused with the social myths and assumptions applied to groups. Although these two arguments sound as though they offer different perspectives, they do interlink, and it is the link between social justice and a deep understanding of individuality, which combine to ensure effective transformation (Kelly et al, 2007).

It is social myths which we have created about 'other'¹ people which April and Schockley (2007) and Prasad (2006) argue need to be untangled in order to truly create change or bring about transformation. Diversity practitioners (defined for the purposes of this thesis as people who work towards increasing social justice) look at the social mirrors (Coulter, 1979) we have been shown about 'others' and about ourselves, and raise consciousness

1 Othering refers to the belief that marginalised groups are inferior or deficient. Foucault (1976) argues that inequality is often maintained by power structures which fan out through society, using the divisions of 'race' to divide populations and kill of opportunity for less powerful groups.

around areas of social inequity , and the belief systems which hold these hierarchies of power in place. In order to do this, practitioners deconstruct the discourses (or conversations) which are shared between people, highlighting areas which may create blind spots or silence other conversations or insights concerning what it means to be a person living in our current society.

Why explore the individual?

Sampson (1990) explains that western society views the individual largely as a self-contained being who is seen to be unique and separate from other people. Foster (2004) points out that this person is symbolised by a thought process which operates in a similar manner to a computer. Should problems exist in a person's life, this is often attributed to faulty thinking, which should be corrected. The role of a person living in western society is to gain dominance over his social world. People who are unable to do this are considered to have lost control (Sampson, 1990, Frank, 1995).

Kelly et al, (2007) asserted that the field of diversity practice within South Africa placed a great deal of focus on this bounded individual. This approach to difference was questioned by Kelly et al (2007), who argued that people need to be seen as existing within hierarchical social settings. When these settings are not recognised, stereotypes and inequalities remain unexamined, and people are sometimes defined by the bodies they live within, and the norms they are compared to, rather than as subjective individuals. As Rose (1991) explains, throughout history, not all people have been awarded the privilege of personhood. In the quest for appreciation of difference, it is important to question how hierarchies of power work, and who is given a voice (Foucault, 1970). This is the topic which shall be explored and which the literature will examine.

Foucault (1982) argues that a person does not just exist as a human being within society, but s/he exists as compared to other individuals. People are therefore seen to be, for example, either able bodied or disabled, healthy or ill, male or female. However, if people were just different according to physical characteristics, we could argue that individuals are free to share and engage in dialogue (Foster, 2004). Foucault (1982) argues that

people are divided not only according to difference, however, but also according to structures and very complex power relationships (Foucault, 1976). Within contemporary society, the particularities of our embodiment often determines the way that society is experienced and the type of world a person lives within (Steyn, 2001; Orbach, 2009). Rose (1996) therefore argues that we cannot argue for a universal individualism or equality which applies to all people.

It is not the unique qualities offered up by individuals which places our focus or emphasis on individuality into question (Foucault, 1982). Giddens (1991) argues that all cultures value individuality to some extent. Rather, what we need to question is how the belief in a universal individuality is often used to overlook the struggles people face on a daily basis because of perceived deviations from social 'norms' (Foucault, 1976; Erasmus, 2008a). Otherwise, we risk urging people to accept the cultural norms and beliefs of a dominant group (Prasad, 2006). This sometimes encourages people to adjust to oppressive circumstances (Pretorius-Heuchert & Ahmed, 2001).

How we came to value the self contained being

Parker (1990) argues the need to study the history of any topic in order to truly understand how it has come about and where it would guide us. How did the construct of the rational and self contained individual come about? Gergen (1991) argues that the Enlightenment period gave rise to a belief in the value of science, individuality, predictability and in essence, safety. Positivists (or scientists) worked towards a better world and against the tyranny, superstition and domination of the past (Gergen, 1991).

The individual became a measurable entity. Separated from social context, historical circumstance and bodily reality, the individual became a creature of mind (Foster, 2004). Mind, measurable through science, was able to give insights into what it means to be a person in relation to the world (Rose, 1990). In contemporary times, such as the early 20th century, tests (such as IQ tests) were able to determine any person's limits or potential. However, Foster (2004) argues that when we separate people from social environment, we create deception.

Foxcroft and Roodt (2001) give an example of such deception within a South African context, where the use of intelligence tests on school children, and the inferior results of 'black' children when compared to 'white' children was used to justify separate education. This policy of separate 'development' offered inferior education to 'black' children in order to create a work force which remained largely unskilled. Instead of taking social context into account, understanding that 'white' children had been more familiar with test constructs before taking the test, researchers argued that the test showed an *inherent* lack of academic ability within 'black' children. The belief that intelligence decreased with the increase of skin pigment had its foundations in scientific racism, which aimed to prove, by measuring skull size and brain dimension, that 'white' people were significantly more intelligent than 'black' or Asian people.

Science was used to establish racial hierarchies, to explore differences between people (Foucault, 1976). People become defined a great deal by qualities attributed to physical bodies, which Ratele and Shefer (2003) argue become seen as material realities. Post-modern scholars have come to question scientific descriptions of the individual, arguing that science is not as objective or free of bias as it claims to be (Parker, 1990). Instead, there is an argument which suggests a need for reflexivity with regards to social knowledge.

Exploring the social individual

The self contained individual has come under review by critical theorists. These theorists argue that the perspective that each person exists as an isolated being, and who makes choices by means of individual effort and rational (or sometimes irrational) thinking, is largely a western belief (Hook, 2004). Social constructionists argue that as individuals, we do not exist within a social or cultural vacuum, but share meanings and values (Steyn, 1996) through social conversation (Foucault, 1971; Hall, 1979). These conversations become represented in culture (Coulter, 1979). Film, media, stories, conversations and the actions of people weave themselves into a tapestry which forms culture. Through culture, people learn their own places in the world. Stories are constructed about 'other' people (Steyn, 1996).

Foster (2004) argues that social constructionism draws on a great deal of theory which examines the role of social and cultural factors upon the individual. These theorists (such as Ken and Mary Gergen, Coulter, and Wetherell and Potter) show that the individual is a social being who forms ideas through the presence of others. Therefore, people do not develop in isolation. Instead, the environment we live in and the world around us shapes us (Foster, 2004; Steyn, 1996).

Lacan (Meyer, Moore & Viljoen, 2003) argued that we look at the world around us as young children, and are socialised into our gender by the other who goes before us. Lacan calls this stage the mirror stage and argues the importance of repetition (Meyer et al. 2003). From this, we learn how to behave, which actions are appropriate and where we belong (Nelson, 2001). The individual, then, does not come into being as a complete 'self' whose thoughts are programmed like a computerised system, but learns who he is through the presence of other people (Foster, 2004).

The self emerges through social context and interactions with others. We learn both through the exchange of ideas, and through subtle forms of language such as gesture or performance (Goffman, 1959). It is through the interaction with others that we learn to make sense of our world. Body language within our society is given meaning, and it is only when we understand what is being said that we are able to respond (Geertz, 1973).

Mead (1934) argues that as people we are able to grasp what we see around us, known as 'the generalised other'. Unlike theorists who speak of the dangers of crowds, mobs and groups as regressive (Foster, 2004), Mead (1934) emphasises that we grasp 'the generalised other' or the community around us, and so grasp social values. People who disregard or cannot grasp community values are considered to be deviant.

How we behave towards other people defines our relationships with them. Our ways of behaving towards one another construct the rules and boundaries of everyday life, and it is only when we break these rules and boundaries that we begin to see where they actually exist. This means that people who are privileged enough not to deviate from the

social norms described by Foucault (1976) are often unaware that society discriminates against people constructed as 'other' or deviant. Able bodied people, for example, are often unaware of the lack of easy access to buildings or parks which disabled people struggle with.

Social norms become constructed in institutions such as schools, hospitals and asylums (Garfinkel, 1967; Foucault, 1976; Rose, 1990). However, ordinary behaviour also becomes institutionalised and is made up of rituals which construct and reconstruct reality over and over again (Foster, 2004). We would behave differently to medical students, for example, than we would to hospital patients, even while trying to establish insight into this patient's condition (Frank, 1995; Rich, Simmons, Adams, Thorp & Mink, 2008). The social circumstances people become placed within often define how they will be seen and the meanings they will interpret about themselves and others because of this (Garfinkel, 1967).

Learning from the community which surrounds us is a form of empathy or an ability to walk in the shoes of others, to take an imaginative leap and absorb what is important to the people who live with us (Mead, 1934). We learn helpful things from living within our communities. We also have a need to reflect on what we have learned, what meanings we have taken from our shared worlds

How inequalities are created by social conversations

From social perspectives, a different view of reality is presented to that of the pure individualist theories which dominate. Instead of reality existing inside the minds of individuals, it is seen to be formed by communities. Social conversation explains the world according to stories or myths which are shared between people. Boundaries or rules govern behaviour. However, social opinion is sometimes not fixed, but variable (Gergen, 2000).

Goffman (1959) argues that we present ourselves as though on stage, adjusting ourselves to the social circumstances which surround us. Conversations are heavily managed. Self is primarily formed through dialogue, and what may seem to be a completely natural or fixed reality to us is often the result of years of interaction (Foster, 2004). Fair conversation has mutuality, and all people involved are able to talk and respond (Gergen, 1994). Fixed rules in conversation or silent topics limit who can speak (Parker, 1992). When a culture is not understood or given a voice, conversation is not possible (Geertz, 1973). People with higher status often control conversations. Age, race and gender play a role in who can talk (Erasmus & de Wet, 2003). Analysing what is said within conversation, who it includes and who it excludes is vital when examining who we are, where we come from, and the stories we tell ourselves about 'other' people (Hook, 2004).

Looking at 'other' people through social conversation means looking beyond one definition of who we are, and examining how we perform in the social environment, and what the social environment allows us to become (Nelson, 2001). This is the factor of identity which is so crucial to post-modern thought. Fanon (1976) argues that we show different aspects of who we are, often based on dominant culture, and that subordinated groups of people often show public alignment with social norms, despite holding different beliefs on a private level.

Social circumstance impacts on social freedom in relation to identity. Naber (2008) explains that after the 9/11 bombings of the Twin Towers in America, Arabic people in America were suddenly pushed into the forefront of national awareness. Previously seen to be an invisible group in America, Arabic men were suddenly an essentialised group of fundamentalist beings who were a threat to the American people. Arabic women were seen to be passive victims of a dominant masculinity. Sometimes people who were once given great value according to identity are suddenly thrust under suspicion and distrust. Muslim people in America began to fear attack after very suddenly becoming constructed as a threat or danger to American citizens.

This example shows the danger of constructing social categories, where groups of people, seen to be good or bad, can be compared based on physical appearance and way of dress (Zimbardo, 2007; Wetherell, 1996). Once social categories come into existence, power relationships or hierarchies form. Wetherell (1996) argues that it is the permeability of category boundaries which maintains group identities. It is very difficult to change race or gender, which means group categories become seen as more or less material realities (Ratele & Shefer, 2003).

Thrust into a web of meanings: the embodied individual

The boundaries associated with social identity become policed and upheld by social myths which are not easily disputed (Wale, 2010). We have symbolic ways of dressing or talking (Dolby, 2001). Skin colour provides a social boundary, as was shown in the movie, *Skin*, where Sandra Laing, born into a white South African family, was denied education in a white school because of her 'coloured' appearance (Fabian, 2009). Body shape also forms social boundaries (Gergen, 1994). Boundaries are not only physical things, however, but symbolic or shared meanings which exist between us, and therefore discursive (Erasmus, 2008a). Boundaries create barriers between us. They become grounds for inclusion or exclusion in terms of prejudice or discrimination.

Although the concept of the personality and the liberated individual teach us that we can imagine and achieve our dreams (Rose, 1990), Ratele and Shefer (2003) argue that as within our current society, our bodies are seen to be material evidence of who we really are, and paradoxically invisible at the same time. Wetherell (1996) argues that our current society has placed such emphasis on physical appearance, in the form of race or gender, that we often associate internal characteristics with hair type or skin colour. These beliefs or viewpoints are used to judge 'other' people. However, they are also sometimes internalised by 'other' people. Steele (2010) explains the internalised beliefs 'black' students and women sometimes have about factors such as intelligence (black students) or maths ability (women). These beliefs may result in underperformance due to high anxiety in assessment situations.

Early work on the social individual didn't focus a great deal on power strategies which have been constructed around embodied individuals. Parker (1990) argues that liberation psychology, with its focus on the women's movement and racial classification came to attention during the 1970s, and then became re-marginalised as the rational individual re-emerged as the dominant model of viewing people. The critical perspective, Parker (1990) argues, remains in the side lines. Dominant writing on the individual focuses on the rational self, ignoring the politicised nature of social context, so that we see the individual with what Steyn (2001) calls the colour blind approach.

Foster (2004) argues that the separation between individual and body creates a deceptive picture of what it means to be a person in society. The separation between body and mind, Bohan (1997) asserts, came about when Descartes declared "I think therefore I am". Mind was seen to be superior to body and rationality was valued (Ratele and Shefer, 2003). Body is a very visible dimension to any person. However, Ratele and Shefer (2003) explain that although bodies are seen to be material entities which depict essential truths, their role in social structure is often ignored. This allows discourses of marginality and exclusion to continue.

Gergen (2000) and Orbach (2009) explain that bodies may be born with natural or genetic features, but it is the way they are treated by culture which determines what we are able to become. Steele (2010) provides the example of a writer who was born into a 'black' family, but who was able to pass as 'white', vastly improving the opportunities and doors open to him. These doors did not open based on talent or previous privilege, purely on perceived body type. Routes are plotted and opportunities accessed or denied based on how well a person is able to fit into the social norms present within society. Ratele (2006) explains that social norms at present favour white, able bodied and heterosexual males. With this insight, it makes sense that white men currently dominate top management positions (Kelly et al, 2007).

Ratele's (2006) emphasis on social norms ties in with Foucault's explanation of biopolitics. Foucault (1976) explains that people are political beings, products of the powers which intertwine within our lives. To express the full impact of such power within the lives of

people, Foucault uses the concept of bio power or biopolitics (Hook, 2004). Biopolitics means that the government within society is given the responsibility of ensuring the well being of its people. Our physical health becomes connected to government policy, and those with power within a community benefit the most, while others are metaphorically killed off (Foucault, 1976).

Within the rise of democracy biopolitics exists as a way of maintaining life. This power exists at state level, but fans out, through social institutions, welfare funds, medical institutions, social policies and knowledge produced within society. For practitioners working within the diversity industry, it is important to focus on how knowledge production and re-production is constructed along physical lines, and how knowledge can divide populations into hierarchies (Foster, 1991). The function of racism is to divide populations (Foucault, 1976).

An extreme example of biopolitics is given in the Nazi state, where the power to take life involved the fabrication of a hierarchy of race. Jewish people were constructed as 'other', greedy and degenerate people who were forced to wear stars as visible identity markers, could not study at higher institutions of learning, and eventually were re-located into ghettos across Europe before being nearly annihilated (Foucault, 1976).

Goffman's (1963) work on stigma highlights our tendency to view certain bodies negatively. Importantly, Goffman points out that just being associated with a person seen as stigmatised is seen to result in stigmatisation through association, although to a lesser extent.

Gergen (2000) points out that when we see bodily characteristics as 'real', or essentialised, we limit all other possibilities or aspects of a person. Recognising that bodies are shaped by social and cultural dynamics means there is always the possibility for social change to provide new opportunities. Bohan (1997) provides an example, arguing that if we fail to look at the social circumstances impacting on women's freedom within our current society, and instead teach women how to behave assertively, we see women as responsible for combating gender related violence alone.

According to Steyn (2001) the very fact that we are embodied means that we become thrust into social reality. This reality produces doubt and uncertainty as we strive towards social norms. Although bodies are seen to be material realities, Orbach (2009) explains that as physical images of western women have reached different parts of the world, women in the Philippines are going for operations which change the structure of their eyelids in order to meet the western norm. In South Africa women have used skin lightening creams which damage their faces in order to replicate 'white' ideals of beauty, and women with curly, sort hair face a great deal of shame or uncertainty about whether extensions or wearing a weave are a source of self-expression or a quest towards adherence to the social norms of beauty. Physical appearance, dress, language and ideals of beauty are adapted to suit western dominance (Orbach, 2009).

Living within a world where bodies become regulated and controlled means that social structures and spaces are often arranged around 'normal' individuals. Swartz (2010) explains that he was unable to invite disabled speakers into his university department due to lack of access for example, but this is not questioned because able bodied people are not aware of the lack of easy access. Lack of access for disabled people, however, means that city spaces such as a campus, shopping centre or stadium may become out of reach.

The role of agency

Turner (2008) argues that when we only look at the way that bodies are governed by society, we often overlook agency and freedom of choice. Giddens (1991) explains that although feminists were restricted by the lack of work and opportunity for women within the workplace, the simple act of walking out of the door and finding work defied the social norms of the time. With this example, Giddens (1991) is describing 'performing' bodies, or the opportunity to re-invent ourselves and challenge the social norms which may inhibit us.

Butler (1993), in *Bodies that Matter*, explains that we perform social norms such as gender roles, but the performance is all that there is to gender. So too, we can give performances which mock the social norms of the time.

Performing bodies do not only bring about agency though, but sometimes unwittingly maintain social norms. Comyetz (1994) discusses the use of fashion as a means of breaking away from prescribed identities. Japanese students in this article identify with 'blackness', wearing masks and dressing in hip hop clothing which is linked to 'black' American culture. In this way, clothing is being used discursively, as a text which sends out a message (Parker, 1992). It is the sexuality of 'blackness' Comyetz (1994) argues which is enacted and adopted by Japanese youth. The discourse of 'race' is reawakened through hip hop fashion, and the message sent out hooks into the discourse of 'black' sexuality which meta-discourse has declared to be rampant, or negative (Fanon 1967).

The view of the heightened sexuality of 'black' people is a racial construction or myth which has gained wide acceptance within contemporary society (Wetherell, 1996). Ratele (2006) argues that this maintains the inferior position of 'black' people within our modern society which values rationality.

Hyper sexuality as associated with black bodies and adopted by Japanese youth, is connected with fashion rather than a socially inscribed body. While playful and possibly powerful, dress is something which can be changed or discarded at will. However, these stereotypes recreated in Japanese society through the globalization of fashion and a culture of consumption are stereotypes which have historically been oppressive and even dangerous to 'black' people (Hook, 2004).

Destabilising the social norms which dominate is perhaps easier within our contemporary times. Science and rationality, although highly valued, also cast doubt on what we take to be reality, Giddens (1991) explains. With new information disproving previous hypothesis, our world is less certain than we previously believed. This creates greater opportunity for re-inventing ourselves (Rose, 1991). However as Orbach (2009) notes, due attention needs to be paid to the discourses which currently exist around bodies in our society in order to bring the inequalities and limits which do exist at the moment to our attention.

Although resisting inequality is a beneficial goal within our world, this resistance is unhelpful if it maintains inequalities or stereotypes. Creating change within our society is not so much about reversal of hierarchies (Comyetz, 1994), but instead about challenging power relations in order to increase social justice. We must refuse to recreate stereotypes when working towards freedom. Although bodies are able to perform agency (Giddens, 1991), we need to consider the impact of what we do when we live out agency. We need to anticipate how our actions evoke oppressive discourses even as we continue to resist the hierarchies imposed by the dominant culture.

Transcending group belonging: a deeper appreciation of difference

Modernity and scientific racism sought to study people and fit them into categories or groups. Goldenberg & Goldenberg (2003) explain that groups of people were often studied by outsiders who did not understand a culture well enough, and who were not aware of the meanings and subtleties within a culture. Therefore thin descriptions or narratives were imposed upon out-groups of people by dominant groups. Sometimes people adhered to these beliefs or narratives, absorbing them in ways which are seen to be oppressive (Fanon, 1967).

The result is that groups of people were seen to be homogenous beings. Gergen (2000) argues that this 'realist' or essentialist description of groups is an extension of the western definition of the 'individual'. Groups become defined by limited 'truths' which ignore the cultural and social contexts which define people. These truths block alternative ways of looking at a situation (Gergen, 2000).

This argument extends to solidarity groups (Gergen, 2000; Swartz, 2010). Feminist groups, for example, while focusing on the role of women, have been accused of focusing attention upon the difficulties experienced by white, middle class women. Black women's needs and roles within the women's solidarity movement remain largely unrecorded and unaddressed (Gergen, 2000; Segal, 1999). Where a group speaks out for one person, another's voice goes unheard. This is why the recognition of inter-sectionality or multiple aspects of identity is regarded as crucial (Grillo, 1995). Only when all aspects of

a person are taken into account is it possible to see the complexity of identity. A woman who is acknowledged as 'black', a musician, a mother, a daughter, a writer, and middle class, for example, will be positioned differently to a working class 'black' women who is a single mother, a waitress, and a provider to her extended family.

Swartz (2010 p. 70) explains this clearly:

... I am, of course, sometimes seen as no more than the representative of a group – as for example, a white able-bodied man. But because I come from a powerful very visible group, I am given more chance to be seen as me – I don't have to fight to show that I am quite different from many white able-bodied men, as I am allowed to have an identity apart from just my white able-bodied maleness.

This statement provides an example of the essential awakening to the powers and privileges which shape our lives (Turner, 2008). Erasmus (2008a) too expresses the vital need to explore social inequalities while working against the re-construction of 'race' groups which separate people from one another, so that group members become defined by a single identity. She argues for the exploration of social relationships and the limits and possibilities which exist within these social contexts, rather than an exploration of assumptions based on 'body type' (Erasmus, 2010). In doing so, Erasmus (2010) asks us to explore race as a social construct rather than a grounded reality. This would enable us to look for new possibilities for social change, rather than focus on the limitations which exist at present.

New possibilities

Gergen (2000), like Erasmus (2008b) argues that focusing on the divides between us reconstructs divisions. Raising consciousness in areas where divisions are already present is important if growth is to occur, and Steyn (2001) argues that power centres take emphasis away from inequalities by casting attention onto the margins and accusing 'others' of being inadequate.

However, Gergen (2000) argues that focus on social inequalities and the rights talks which result from this has impacted upon social change by producing rebuttals. These include arguing that people who have 'failed' to manage are making excuses for irresponsibility. Talk of hardships is compared to 'sob stories' devised to elicit sympathy. Once more, discourse becomes about 'us' versus 'them'. Gergen (2000) argues that deconstructing social norms is not enough. Instead we need to explore a means of *reconstructing* new possibilities, creating space for innovation and transformation.

Gergen (2000) argues the importance of relational politics which moves beyond the notion of the group as 'individual', deserving of rights, filled with good or bad intentions.

As we regard the ways within which we are interrelated, the face of humanity prevails and constructed differences become blurred (Gergen, 2000). As interdependent people, we are faced with past difficulties such as unequal educational and occupational opportunities, health difficulties related to poor housing and sanitation or high levels of crime and violence against women and children, which have become 'our' problem. Gergen (2000) calls for a need to move beyond an individual focus on 'rights' and towards a focus on 'responsibilities'. Moving past blame towards a search for solutions (rather than turning a blind eye to inequalities) is a goal which may bring more productive results.

Instead of focusing on differences, Gergen (2000) argues the need to alter the relationships which exist between us. We cannot carry on in our attempts to win at the cost of each other. Instead of focusing on what it means for individuals or groups to change 'their' ways, a focus on co-operative possibilities (such as envisioning a society where more people are given rights, and assessing the policies which would put these possibilities into place) would be the goal. The focus shifts to acknowledging our responsibilities towards the other, rather than focusing only on individual rights (Haraway, 1988).

Appreciative Inquiry is a method which Gergen, Gergen and Barrett (2004) describe as helpful in bringing about social change between groups of people who are engaged in hostile combat. Appreciative Inquiry was introduced by David Cooper Rider, and focuses

on positive aspects within an organisation while working towards change. Focus is on innovation and possibilities rather than problems and difficulties. Although Appreciative Inquiry has been accused of ignoring difficulties or struggles, focus is on moving forward. Once a problem has been defined, people within an organisation are guided, through the use of language, into recognising areas which are positive, or where successes have been recorded, for example, in gender relationships or inter-racial management teams (Thatchenkery, 2007).

The argument makes a case for positivity and optimism in order to appreciate that which is possible. In the dream phase, workshop participants brainstorm and visualise a future where the goals or needs of teams or groups of people may be met to a greater degree. Creativity is encouraged, with teams encouraged to draw or write poetry in order to come up with plans for a brighter future. Once dreams are recognised, steps are taken to implement these policies. Workers within the organisation are asked to break these dreams down into achievable steps, discover what is already available, and assess what is needed to ensure positive change. Delivery means putting the plan into action (Thatchenkery, 2007).

Beyond the rational individual: dreaming, poetry, art and story telling

While appreciative inquiry uses dreams to search for new possibilities, Baloyi (2008) argues for the value of story telling or dreaming as recognition of African healing or facilitation methods. Although western knowledge has dominated with individual discourses of facilitation, Baloyi (2008) argues that the story telling of African people, although not given scientific value, adds an African voice to current techniques.

African stories would offer a greater degree of inclusion to healing practices, ensuring that African knowledge is neither ignored, nor placed on a hierarchy, where western science is seen to be superior. Using only western facilitation, Baloyi argues, means imposing outside views of the world onto African people. African stories connect people to history and give value to a heritage which should be viewed with pride rather than shame. When African stories are used, this adds value to a healing community or workshop, adding a deeper social influence and connecting the past to the present (Baloyi, 2008).

Carrol (2005) explains that it is not only story telling which adds value, but the creation of stories or poems. Poetry, Carrol (2005) explains, is often a means of giving voice to extreme experiences which evoke deep emotion. Frank (1995) explains that sometimes, when experiences are very disturbing, there are no words or narratives to explain what is happening. Only by going back and picking up the pieces of a story are people able to connect the past to the present (Frank, 1995). Carrol explains that poetry often offers voice to experiences not easily accessible through every day language. Poetry gives space for the unspoken to be put into words, rhythm, metaphor or tone, and often resonates on an emotional level with communities of people who have been through similar experiences (Carrol, 2005). Poetry is a means of evoking visions, or accessing wisdom, in order to create dialogue (Carrol, 2005). In this way, an experience may become more whole or accessible.

If poetry describes an image, then it follows that drawing or painting an image allows for freedom of expression. Colour, movement, imagery or action allows for putting across ideas or experiences to a viewer without the limits of rationality. Johnson (1990) explains that the shamanic healer or tribal healer uses imagery, dance and song in order to build communities and offer flow to situations which result in disharmony or blocked 'energy'.

Although the rational world has placed African knowledge into a category of second degree knowledge, and with it, the world of emotion and intuition (Baloyi, 2008), it is helpful to look at a quote in Arida (2008, p 291) concerning an American Indian, who explains that when he is speaking English instead of his own language, "he is being forced to interact with a world of objects, things, rigid boundaries and categories in place of a more familiar world of flows, processes, activities, transformations, and energies." Science and rationality may explain the world, but this does not mean it is the only way of describing what is seen.

The rational individual and emotional context

Shamans and healers see emotions as belonging to communities of people (Bucko, 1998).

Zorn and Boler (2007) explain that in western society, however, emotion has been highly individualised and seen to exist within people, based on thought and interpretation of the environment. Emotion, and particularly emotion as regulated for the corporate world, has been ascribed a value or quotient (EQ). Boler (1999) explains that this emotion has been divided into categories of 'good' or 'bad' which have not been given gendered or cultural context, but set rules or regulations which are used to judge or ascribe qualities to the individual. Although women have long been considered emotional beings, EQ focuses on the qualities of 'white' men, Boler (1999) argues, and values optimism and empathy, while casting anger and anxiety out of favour.

Cultural context may create a sense of shame or feeling of inadequacy in groups of people based on social position. Therefore Zorn and Boler (2007) argue that there is a need to view emotional experiences in terms of contexts of power and privilege. When looking at emotions, we need to look beyond merely what an individual is feeling, and explore who has the power to judge emotions, silence emotions or define the experience of another (Zorn and Boler, 2007, p 148). Looking at emotions in the context of community is important in order to understand the complexity of emotional experiences.

The reflexive practitioner

Kelly et al (2007) argued that the responses their questionnaires suggested that the contemporary critical theory which has shaped this literature review would be unlikely to inform a great deal of diversity practice. Kelly et al's (2007) study explains diversity practice as a Rubik cube, and states that the dominant perspectives on managing diversity do not take into account social or political context, thereby closing down social transformation.

Working with a reflexive framework of understanding presents a very real challenge to the practitioner. As a member of both society, social groups and as an individual, the practitioner has been exposed to social discourses which influence ways of viewing the world. Practitioners are social beings too. The rules, norms and conversations which define reality, have been part of the diversity practitioner's life. This sometimes leads to a belief in essential truths.

Furthermore, the role of the practitioner is a powerful one. By definition of profession, practitioners belong to a social group which is not homogenous, but one which shares the overarching goal of seeking social change. While performing as professionals, practitioners are deemed to be experts in the field of diversity. Practitioners are able to facilitate change by creating space for alternate views and voices. Alternatively, they can inhibit change by believing in a single worldview (Gergen, 1994).

It is only by constantly re-viewing the world as it is presented to them, as Swartz (2010) suggests, 'making normality strange', that diversity practitioners are able to question the discourses or narratives they have learned or absorbed. Lifschitz and Oosthuizen (2001) explain that challenging social norms (such as the belief that people are self-contained beings or that race or gender defines how a person should act) is not an easy thing to do. Seeing the social norms, rules and inequalities is harder for those who have been privileged by the system, whilst celebrating their own achievements as the sole result of individual effort and merit (Burnett & Kettleborough, 2007).

As practitioners open their eyes to the realities of 'other' people, and the voices which present new stories and new views of reality, they are sometimes thrust into self doubt (Steyn, 2001). When they are no longer blind to alternative realities or experiences of the world, they subsequently learn to become more accepting of new possibilities and interpretations of reality. The realisation that they do not hold the only truth dawns upon them. Learning to listen and to take an imaginative leap into the world of new perspectives means increasing our views of the world we see around us (Steyn, 1996).

However, as practitioners there is a vital need to continuously challenge understandings of truth. Lifschitz and Oosthuizen (2001) argue that within present day South Africa, *all* people within our community need to be free to have a voice and to engage in dialogue. In order for this to occur, practitioners need to embrace the crisis which is evoked within them when questioning the established culture. Lifschitz and Oosthuizen (2001) argue that these crises occur when we move away from rigid thought patterns which dominate our belief systems, questioning the meanings and understandings we had about our world. When we explore the fissures and the silences, the complexity of our social world is revealed.

Change cannot exist within a context of safety. Lifschitz and Oosthuizen (2001) explain that when people such as those engaging in diversity or intercultural work try to curb the crisis rather than explore a way through it, they ensure the status quo remains as it has always been, maintaining old identities, norms and values. By avoiding the need for reflecting on their own roles or relative privileges, practitioners are also able to avoid the need for personal transformation in a world structured by vertical hierarchies (Foster, 2004). This allows dominant arguments to maintain authority (Foucault, 1971; Lifschitz and Oosthuizen, 2001; Shepherd, 2007).

Kelly et al (2007) highlights the need for diversity practitioners to recognise the reciprocal interaction between social context and the discourses which regulate experience (Frankenberg and Bhavani 1993). Various discursive lenses are used to view ourselves and the worlds we live in (Steyn, 2001). This means that although meta-discourses or narratives are available, there are alternative perspectives to explore and new possibilities open to discussion. Alternative discourses plant the seeds for change (Steyn, 2001).

There is a need to interrogate the cultural practices, historical perspectives and social myths which shape how the individual is perceived and experienced, as well as able to experience, social life. Exploring the past helps to establish where we come from, in order to understand the present and create a new future, which is always possible (Steyn, 2001).

Perhaps the most common thread running through narratives of individuals and social groups is the need to recognise the complexity of the social norms running cobweb style through contemporary society, instead of reducing individuality to reductive solutions (Lifschitz and Oosthuizen, 2001). Perhaps we cannot change bodies but we can change the meanings we give them, the limits we place upon them, and the discourses we use to explain them (Dyer, 1997).

Chapter Three:

Methodology

This chapter explores the research methods, data collection techniques and methods of analysis used to interpret practitioners' stories of their work.

My role in the research process:

Having had the privilege of co-ordinating the Association of Intercultural and Diversity Practitioners of South Africa (ADIPSA) while finishing my thesis, I began to see the world of diversity open up in front of me in a very practical way. As feminists argue, the personal is the political. Diversity work extends into all aspects of our world and society. People in all areas and sectors of society wish to build bridges which create new spaces for all people to be heard. As a result, I have learned more deeply of the importance of questioning social norms which have been used to design education programmes, healing systems, diversity interventions, social development projects, and the urban spaces people live and work within, to name a few.

As Foucault (1976) argues, social norms spread out, cobweb style, into many cells of life, including education, the law, business, the social spaces we are able or unable to inhabit, and the physical world of our own bodies, which interact with the world around us (Steyn, 2001). No aspect of life excludes the need for reflection and sensitivity, and this is particularly true in our globalized world. Perhaps the best definition which can be given to a diversity practitioner is described by Swartz (2010) as a person who has the 'ability to make normality strange'.

Through the course of my thesis I have discovered that diversity work, and the process of carrying out this work, is something which constantly changes and evolves. No one way of thinking remains static, and thoughts and ideas shared and recorded reflect only the views of the moment. Practitioners share their own reflections on their work and the ever-evolving process of questioning their experience while working. This thesis, however, remains frozen in time, and as such is a starting a point for conversation rather than a set answer or method of working. Perspectives shift and change as each new question is asked, and each new viewpoint offered (Gergen, 1994).

As a white woman in a social world, I have power and privilege which brings its own perspectives and oversights. As the person with the final recording voice, and the author of this thesis, my own perspectives of the world will influence that which is written up, and how voices given by the respondents have been interpreted. My thesis is, however, balanced by the perspectives of my thesis support group, made up of a diverse group of students, and my supervisor who has guided and added to my understanding and to my literature selection.

This thesis took place during a time when I was questioning on a very deep level the world around me and the constructions and narratives or discourses which had explained 'other' people in relation to myself. As a white woman and an immigrant to South Africa from the North East of England, I have biases and limits which may impact on writing up my thesis, but which I have hoped to limit through openness to new ideas. These biases are created by my own background.

I come from North East England. My father is from an Irish heritage, considered 'other' in England. My family had a very different standard of living in South Africa and I was aware of the privileges which came with being a 'white' person, because they had not existed within my life before immigration. My father was offered the opportunity to develop a profession within South Africa, which he did. I grew up in a capitalist and individualist system which taught that hard work and effort would bring results.

The contrast between life in England, to a life of far greater privilege, and an awareness of my family roots has meant that I have learned to recognise some of my privileges. As Grillo (1995) explains, the recognition of privilege is important because failure to do so leaves inequalities hidden from view. I am a woman, and in this way am aware of some of the struggles, dangers or difficulties men are not aware of. However, the privileges of my 'white' identity have left me deeply unaware of the difficulties faced by the majority of 'other' people in South Africa. This awareness is something I have to learn and be open to on a regular basis.

My honours thesis on xenophobia in 2008 brought an intense and very painful awareness of the difficulties experienced by SADC students at UCT and within the greater Cape Town and South African context as a whole. My own foreignness remained invisible and this gave me a safety not open to 'black' foreigners from Africa. There are a great many areas of my privileged existence that leave me unaware of the difficulties faced by 'other' people. I cannot speak for people who have experiences very different to my own and should not (Grillo, 1995). I hope that multiple voices will add depth and cover my blind spots.

Learning within the world of critical diversity studies is on going, and I have learned that the most helpful way of approaching the work is to not hold my own viewpoint as the only one. The insights and perspectives shared while taking part in this project have taught me a lot. Critical diversity studies has been a choice for me, and it has helped me to gain a deeper understanding of the world around me. I realize however, that this too is a privilege. The very choice to engage in work which focuses on social justice leaves me free to abandon the difficulties or frustrations of opposing social norms or discourses, should I wish to. This is not true for a great many people who battle the system on a daily basis.

The voices of the practitioners offered new insights and perceptions and shifted and changed the literature I looked at to explore my topic. In that sense, myself, my supervisor, and the respondents to my research have shaped this thesis. This thesis has been both the birth place for new ideas and something which I have constantly re-viewed and reflected upon (Gergen and Gergen, 1991).

As the author of this thesis, and the co-ordinator for ADIPSA, I have a degree of power which may have impacted upon what was shared. My role, however, was of facilitator who set up talks or discussions given by members of ADIPSA. I did not take an expert role myself. Power is always relative and when talking to practitioners, my student status as inquirer rather than expert was made plain. I tried to reduce power inequalities by sharing my own desire to break into the field of diversity work, and my reason for

studying for my degree. The practical experience and knowledge of practitioners gave them a sense of authority, and they often advised me how to break into the field, and gave tips on how to work more effectively. I learned for example the value of humility and the importance of truly listening. The creativity and determination practitioners bring into the work has been inspiring.

The academic world taught me to think, to question and to explore. However, the practitioners who took part within this project showed me that learning is dynamic and constantly evolving. My education, which I once believed an ending to a journey, has revealed itself to be only an introduction to a path which needs to be constantly grappled with and reflected upon, but which has added a new dimension to my life.

Research Method used

This thesis used qualitative research methods in order to explore the subjective experiences of participants. In-depth interviewing was chosen to collect rich descriptions on the topic from the perspective of respondents. The aim was to access the views and perspectives of diversity practitioners with as little influence as possible. Qualitative research focuses on the particular (ideographic) and takes an inductive approach, which means it immerses itself in the data. This method of research is cyclical, influenced by answers found, and looking for common concepts. Data has been analysed using narrative analysis, which looks into the stories told about what it means to work within the field of diversity work, and to explore what it means to be an individual in an unequal world (Babbie and Mouton, 2001).

Limits of research

This research is not a quantitative study using large numbers in order to study a hypothesis. The qualitative method of study is not formalised and is not considered to be reliable, or easily repeated in its exact shape and form. Knowledge cannot be generalised to populations of practitioners as a whole. However, quantitative research could be carried out in order to see if findings may be similar across populations (Babbie and Mouton, 2001).

Gergen, Gergen and Barrett (2004) explain that language is communicated, not only through the use of words, but also through expressions and tone. This thesis relies only on written language in order to put across the messages of practitioners interviewed, and may therefore lack the emphasis, emotion, pauses and animation which add richness to information as it was communicated by practitioners. Some topics have been left out due to space constraints.

Sample Used

Data was collected from a group of practitioners who wished to contribute to or join ADIPSA. The group of practitioners interviewed are mostly people who responded to the Intercultural and Diversity Studies (INCUDISA) website or blog. INCUDISA is a research unit, headed by Melissa Steyn, which was originally set up at the University of Cape Town (UCT) in order to research topics of critical diversity and to challenge ideas about difference through research and education. INCUDISA was officially dissolved at UCT at the end of 2011 and is to be relaunched at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg.

Adipsa forms a branch or leg of INCUDISA, and grew out of a project launched by Melissa Steyn which, alongside the DEISA project, sought to research diversity interventions happening within South African organisations, in order to establish criteria for effective practice. At present, diversity work within South Africa is not linked to an accreditation system, and standards are difficult to maintain. ADIPSA aims to offer accreditation to practitioners and maintain an industry standard of practice. The body further offers a space for people practicing diversity work to meet, engage in dialogue on diversity work and interventions offered, learn, and sometimes form partnerships with one another. Membership of ADIPSA is free to all people wishing to attend and participate.

I came to co-ordinate ADIPSA because of a scholarship I received through INCUDISA for my MPHIL in diversity studies, based on my choice of research, which fell under the Diversity and Equity Interventions in South Africa (DEISA) project co-ordinated by

INCUDISA. Co-ordinating ADIPSA helped me to both understand more thoroughly the ways in which diversity work was being carried out within South Africa, as well as connect to practitioners who were undertaking this work.

Most of the practitioners who joined ADIPSA had viewed (or experienced) abuse of power first hand, and wanted to approach new ways of working towards social justice. Some of the respondents were older people who had a vast history of working with power abuse, and some were newer graduates who wished to explore new ways of evoking systemic change. However, the content of the blog may have affected the results of this project. The INCUDISA website¹ was set up by the research unit, which also coordinated postgraduate programmes in Diversity Studies at the University of Cape Town. Respondents resonated with this approach to diversity.

A diverse range of people has therefore been included in the research results, based on age, gender, race and level of qualification in order to explore a collection of voices and the difficulties or common experiences of practitioners in order that no one viewpoint takes precedence. Demographic data such as age and profession of each practitioner has not been shared in order to protect confidentiality of participants involved (see ethics). Although the sample of practitioners is small (ten practitioners contributed to this study), qualitative research emphasises the depth of the knowledge rather than a wide number of research respondents and generalisable results.

Data collection

Data was collected through ten in-depth individual interviews in order to gain insight into the practitioner's approach to diversity work. Questions were minimal, in order to enable freedom of conversation as far as possible. Practitioners themselves largely directed the conversation. However, it has to be acknowledged that the question shapes the response, and the listener, through affirmation or negation, also influences what has been shared. Interviews were conducted in spaces chosen by the practitioners, in order to ensure the

1 Incudisa website link: incudisa.wordpress.com

greatest degree of comfort, and lasted approximately 50 minutes each. The practitioners first spoke of their interests in diversity work in order to create a sense of ease, and I shared my own hope to break into the field of diversity, and my status as student in order to aim for greater equality within the conversation (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). Interviews were carried out during 2010 and early 2011. All practitioners who were approached for interviews responded positively.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed according to standard academic practice. In order to understand the data, journaling was used. This was done to try and make sense of the ideas as they were emerging and being explored. Journaling further helped me to understand my own thought process during the times of data analysis, so that I was able to reflect on my own ideas, ask questions and explore new insights during the process of recording or writing up research. The research process is cyclical, and dated and recorded data helped to explore the relationship between information, literature review and my own interpretations and insights. Recording data in the form of journaling was helpful in sharing data with my support group and supervisor, to seeking alternate insights (Fielding and Lee, 1998). Sharing helped me to both distance myself from the text and engage more deeply with the social world.

Data Analysis

Data analysis examines the narratives or stories practitioners use to explain their work and their approach to the individual within diversity practice. Constructionism argues that language is used, not to establish theory or confirm objective knowledge, but instead focus on the ways that people construct knowledge on a topic such as 'the individual'. Language is not treated as a fact, but instead is viewed as possibilities or ways of talking about a topic. Constructionism focuses on the social rather than individual meanings which are embedded in language (Terre Blanche and Durrheim, 1999).

Holding the perspective that reality is co-created between people, texts or languages used to explain the world are generated, not from individual minds, but from the public sphere. Meaning, taken to be private thoughts on a topic, originates from public discussion. People take on perspectives which are made open to them (Gergen, 2000). As Vygotsky explains, everything that is within us was once a part of the social world (van Vlaenderen & Neves, 2004, p. 434).

Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) explain that language constructs a particular manner of viewing the world. However, while groups of people may be studied Gergen, Gergen and Barrett (2004) explain that when studying dialogue, it is important to remember that no one voice exists for a single group of people. Therefore, no single voice will represent 'the diversity practitioner'. Groups are made up of heterogeneous people who offer views which sometimes contest one another, or at least offer different perspectives. These perspectives are important to discuss or explore, in order to ensure that the most powerful person within the group is not the only one who has an opinion (Gergen, 2000).

Practitioners however, share the stories (or narratives) that they have constructed around what it means to be a diversity practitioner within contemporary South Africa. Sandelowski (1991) explains that narratives are constructed within the present in order to explain the past. Frank (1995) however, explains that each story or narrative paves the way for future narratives. This is because thoughts are received and given meaning by people who listen to them, evoking a response, and so shaping further thought.

Gergen and Gergen (1983) explain that for an individual who lives within a social context, telling stories is an active way of connecting different parts of the past and placing them together to form a story. The social context and the narratives which are told within the social arena provide the individual with a great many stories or discourses to draw from, and these stories will be presented as a way of making sense of life. The stories which are chosen will always leave out other views or perspectives.

When using discourse analysis, Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) explain that there is no single way of identifying discourses within texts. Immersion in a culture of critical

diversity studies helps to understand the way that discourses are used to present political ideologies around embodied beings. This is because the culture encourages reflection on the way that discourses are constructed around issues of difference, in order to present meanings or realities to the world.

However, Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) explain that in order to explore social meanings, searching for binaries (or the other side of the story, which is not present), helps in deconstructing discourses. Exploring who is talked about helps in analysing discourses. Furthermore, the text or an interview has an author or a listener, who are relating on a topic using common language. Research respondents in this interview process were diversity practitioners and I was a student of diversity studies, so within the interviews there was the belief that we were speaking a common language, and had understandings of each other, and a common perspective or view of the world

My approach to this project was circular, with practitioner insights guiding me to explore the literature on social narratives, and the literature giving insights into stories practitioners were sharing. Focusing on dialogue or texts used by practitioners was imperative to this project.

Search for metaphors and repetitive words was helpful in order to identify social discourses. However, this search was not only to explore themes. Instead, it was vital to explore what these themes meant in the wider world of diversity practice and in relation to individuality in particular.

Themes were explored through reading through the transcripts and immersing myself in the data and the overall stories the practitioner was telling. This approach is based on grounded theory¹. However, I wanted to look at how practitioners' stories related to the larger social world and critical diversity literature. This would fit into the hypothesis of

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Grounded theory is a method of data analysis in which the researcher aims to look at the information from the ground up, without using a hypothesis. The researcher reads through the data, and identifies codes or themes present, in order to establish categories of data. These categories are then used to explain the topic and establish insights. Strauss and Corbin explain that the process of research is cyclical, with data influencing theory and theory influencing data. The process is seen to be complete when theory and data no longer influence each other (Kelly, 1999)

Miles and Huberman which argues that qualitative research may be given direction before field work begins (Fielding and Lee, 1998).

Using coloured highlighter pens and pencil crayons, I searched for repetitive themes which existed within the transcripts, colouring re-emerging themes in a selected colour, and selecting visually the themes which stood out. Fielding and Lee (1998) explain that theme selection means breaking open the text. I broke open the text by cutting up the transcripts according to colour highlighted codes. This highlighted the themes which were shared between practitioners. I then explored the patterns of text boxes and how this related to the literature and the context of critical diversity practice. This process was circular, with the literature assisting with narrative context and narratives informing further literature to be explored (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). As patterns emerged between the data and the literature and the research project started to take shape, I selected practitioners' voices which were most suitable for articulating the relationship between narratives and social context, and copied these into a journal. The rest of the transcripts were destroyed.

This thesis was bound by space constraints, and so has been shaped according to two chapters. Thirteen narratives fit into these two chapters, selected because they spoke best to the critical diversity literature which informed the context of the project. Recognition of social injustice, recognition or privilege (or lack thereof) and shifting identities have been touched on briefly, but could have been chapters within this thesis, were space not limited.

Ethics

All of the people who participated in this research project did so voluntarily, and people were free to withdraw their participation at any time. No coercion or pressure was placed upon any participant. Participants were free not to carry on sharing, should they feel uncomfortable. The topic was largely shaped by practitioners themselves. Confidentiality has been maintained by not revealing the identity of any of the participants, and

pseudonyms have been given to participants in the findings chapter. However, practitioners are a part of a community of diversity practitioners within South Africa, and if similar knowledge or views are shared with each other, total confidentiality may be difficult to maintain. No deception was involved in this study, and participants were aware of the topic of this thesis. It was the aim of this thesis to provide no harm to participants involved. It is possible that participating in this study evoked new questions or viewpoints which left old narratives incomplete. However, sharing and discussion is regularly undertaken by ADIPSA, and practitioners are welcome to attend freely, and to explore questions and viewpoints or perspectives offered by others.

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Chapter 4

Findings: the individual and the social

The key finding highlighted in this chapter is that the respondents in my study do not look at the individual as a self-contained being who exists in isolation of the social context. Practitioners have reflected on social norms, questioned traditions and shared new insights and meanings with the people they have worked with. This chapter focuses on discourses raised by practitioners which question the role of the individual:

The social perspective:

All practitioners argue that focusing on the individual alone is not enough when working towards change:

"...all the focus on the individual...has been used for decades now...it's is not enough....focus needs to be on more than the individual...on people, who they are, how the environment works for them, how the environment impacts on other people...it has to be more than just the individual." (Daniel)

Daniel explains that although the western world has focused a great deal on the individual and his/her ability to go out and achieve, this is not enough to bring about a sense of social justice. In a world where the ideologies of war bring about genocide to groups of people considered 'other', where rape and abuse against women and children is prevalent, and where racism has dictated the structure of society, and unemployment and poverty prevail, focusing on the unique personality traits which exist between people is not enough to bring about change. It is only when we see the world as it exists around us, and view the social environment and how it affects groups of people according to 'us' and 'them' status that we are able to see the work that needs to be done to bring about social change. Like Foster (2004), Daniel critiques the deceptive view that individuality can be focused on outside of social context, historical circumstance or contemporary social environment. He argues that individual discourses which focus on personality traits alone are too limited to bring about deep change.

Walter discusses the need to recognise privilege within an unequal social environment. He explains that the way that we talk or construct language about what it means to be human opens or closes doors or routes for people to follow based on physical body or identity.

"There are people who talk about love for all of humanity but...it has to go deeper than that. We are a human family but see how women are treated, how people of other cultures are treated, with all of the emphasis on western, masculine energy...if you turn a blind eye to that you don't learn to treat people better.."

Walter argues that we cannot simply see ourselves as individuals in a level playing field. His discussion focused on his frustration with the colour blind community who speak freely of shared humanity, without recognising the role inequality plays in creating hierarchies of power. His frustration at the lack of value given to 'other' people runs deeply through his interview.

Talk of a common humanity is valuable, and Walter acknowledges this. However, he argues that until people with privilege are willing to acknowledge this privilege, there will be no motivation to work towards deep change (Grillo, 1995). Walter argues that responsibility lies on the privileged to work on recognising marginalised positions and voices, in order to prepare the ground work for deeper respect.

Walter's statement offers opposition to the tendency for a culture of privilege to detract attention from a powerful centre by pointing out the faults of those on the margins (Steyn, 2001). Instead of arguing for people on the margins to do the race (or gender) work (Erasmus & de Wet, 2003), Walter's discourse argues for people in privileged positions to firstly take this privilege into account, and then work towards social justice rather than be persuaded that discrimination exists. The liberal, capitalist argument, which declares an equal playing field, without recognising the work that needs to be done, provides resistance to social justice work and Walter argues that there is a need for to a shift in focus.

Discourses on systemic discrimination vs. hard work and merit

Benjamin too explores the discourse of systemic inequality over and above individual efforts in determining opportunity. He offers an alternate view to the commonly held belief that achievement is based on individual merit and its accompanying belief that poor people are lazy (Foster, 1991).

"It (structured inequality) was about wealth and the economy, a modern form of slavery where there was a need for the majority to work for very little for the needs of very few, the few being those at the very top of the system...the system created a lack of skills...it set out with an urge to destroy all that was in its path..."

Benjamin's discussion on systemic inequality disputes the capitalist belief that those who work the hardest are most able to achieve high positions within society through individual effort. When looking at achievement by means of hard work, the high value placed on rationality, or brain work over physical labour, means that financial rewards and top positions are given to those who are considered to be more rational than physical. This fits in with Ratele and Shefer's (2003) argument that the minute focus is given to bodies, people are given a reduced status within society.

Anita, too, challenges the discourse that hard work equals success, explaining that people who need the most in order to have access to equal opportunity are often given the least:

"Often the people who need things the most get left out the most. They get the least. And that is how the system maintains itself. The economic middle class sometimes don't see what vulnerable people need..."

Anita explains society as a system which resists transformation. She draws on explanations of a world where the needs of the poor or the vulnerable are ignored by the needs of people with power or privilege. People who labour all day for minimal pay work hard, but this work is not associated with high financial reward, social status or privilege.

Anita's argument fits in with Steele's (2010) argument that people who are not prejudiced by the system often have no idea of the restrictions the system imposes upon those who are most vulnerable. Garfinkel (1967) too explains that although the system is made up of norms or boundaries, people are only aware that these boundaries exist when coming up against them.

An unequal system which deprives a great many people of equal opportunity has disguised its role in inequality by arguing that 'people who work hard achieve results.'

Discourses on social responsibility

Anita uses the discourse of responsibility to see 'other' people as human beings with needs, rather than as a threat:

"...in our society, if we focus on fulfilling the needs of the most vulnerable, then we meet the needs of everyone...the focus needs to be on the interconnection between us rather than the isolation. We need to focus on how levels of vulnerability interlink. If we create safe spaces for children, then women will feel safe..."

This argument asks us to look at people as connected beings who live within a social world. Anita goes beyond the discourse of the self-contained individual as a bounded being who exists in order to gain dominance over his/her social world (Sampson, 1990). Instead, she values beliefs which state that we live within the world as interconnected, social beings (Levin, 1992). Sociological arguments express, for example, that the gap between rich and poor grows, and the gini coefficient (or the figure given to the measure of the gap between rich and poor) increases, violence within society increases (Foster, 2004). A decrease in this gap would result in a safer society for all people. Anita argues that focusing on those who are most vulnerable means improving the lives of all people.

"...we need to acknowledge all the parts of the whole...the rights and responsibilities we have as citizens and the knock on effect. In modern times we

forget we have any responsibility, that any vulnerable part of society needs more attention..." (Anita)

Significantly, however, Anita focuses on the importance of responsibility, and this brings into conversation the work of Haraway (1988) who states that we live in a world where the boundaries of the individual and the social are blurred. People shape the world as the world shapes and defines people. As citizens, we have rights and responsibilities for maintaining that world. Foster (2000) too explains that civil society plays a role in ensuring that the needs of the vulnerable are met. Passing the responsibility onto government means overlooking community or corporate responsibility in contributing to reduction of inequalities.

Benjamin too describes the role civil society can play:

"It's possible to give in the form of social responsibility, which adds meaning to people's lives. Making provision either through corporate responsibility or in the NGO sector for poor communities is a way of providing opportunity or meeting the needs of people in poorer positions..."

This argument goes beyond the role of the individual in society, and precedes a step further than arguing for the recognition of responsibility. Benjamin argues that if people were to look out for their fellow man, life would be more meaningful. This discourse challenges the discourse of competition which argues that gain for one person means a loss to another. Instead, as the Chinese proverb explains, "The scent of the flower lingers on the hands of the giver." Competition is seen as less rewarding than co-operation.

"...if we embrace the idea of ubuntu over the western ideas of individuality, then we come together and have more power over a situation..." (Benjamin)

The concept of ubuntu, or the African belief that 'I am a person through the presence of other people.' offers a similar perspective to social constructionism, or the belief that we learn about, become human, and experience humanity from each other (Hook, 2004).

Common humanity is valued over and above success, achievement, dominance or economic ability in the concept of ubuntu. Benjamin argues that values shown through ubuntu offer greater power, because it is only when people come together as one humanity that progress is able to take place.

Ubuntu challenges the division western society portrays between individual and community. However, Khoza (1994) points out that ubuntu cannot be used in a manner which creates essentialist communities, where subjectivity is denied. Keevy (2011) argues that South African feminists do not see ubuntu as recognising the rights of all people, but claim that ubuntu is patriarchal and disregards the rights of women.

The above perspectives fit in with Swartz's (2010) argument that when groups come together, a true value of humanity means acknowledging all voices rather than viewing a single voice to be representative of a group as a whole. Molefe (2011) acknowledges that entering into relationships with community may involve loss of individuality, but argues that most of the time; people enter into groups or relationships which make their lives better. A marriage, school or church group, for example, provides opportunity to join a wider family or community. Ubuntu, like all concepts, can be idealised. Recognising inequalities when working towards social justice is important, no matter which philosophy is used.

The concept of ubuntu, alongside social constructionist thought, argues that group membership is helpful to building up community and creating a sense of social justice, that people develop because they are members of a community (Hook, 2004, Gergen, 2000).

Mead (1934) explains that an individual develops because s/he is able to absorb and understand the beliefs of those people who exist around her/him, and that an ability to take on different social roles assists with the development of empathy. Mead's (1934) argument fits in with the concept of ubuntu, explaining that we need other people in order to build a society which values humanity. Unlike the discourse of the self-contained individual, there is no need to define the self by means of levels of power over 'other' people, but instead the value of humanity is learned through the presence of other people.

Recognition of social norms and myths

Kelly et al, (2007) explains that focus on the individual alone when conducting transformation work is ineffective. This is because divides between body, individual and the social world have been constructed through science and rational thought (Foster, 2004). Failure to address the social constructions and myths which have created pictures or stories about other people allows inequality to continue (Kelly et al, 2007).

Jeff explains:

"Looking at the danger of prejudice means exploring how it becomes entrenched. It becomes based on social rules or norms. We challenged those norms. They become used in everyday conversation...I talk about racism and power. Racism without power is prejudice. Racism which has become entrenched in social rules restricts people's lives."

Jeff explains that to look at prejudice out of social context means limiting it to an attitude or psychological discourse which belongs to the individual alone. Foster (1991) explains that the dialogue of the individual racist is not helpful to bringing about transformation, because the individual racist alone, out of social context, is seen to be pathological (Foster, 1991) or part of a lunatic fringe who are afraid of the unknown (Harris, 2002).

Jeff explains that power is constructed through social norms or discourses which become widely accepted, and so extend beyond the individual mind and into the structure of society and into social conversation, so that racism becomes normal. Jeff argues the importance of recognising that the myths and narratives which are shared between people, and the rules and laws which structure society have to be recognised before effective transformation work can take place. Focus on the individual mind alone resists transformation and social justice.

Leilah, too, shares the way that talk introduces norms which may not be a reality at all, but are accepted to be so:

"Race is one of the biggest myths any person could have created...most of us are from mixed heritage anyway, when we look far enough back... There are no pure people...All this talk of pure people...trade routes have been in existence forever. People travelled, they learned from each other...tribes of people moved around. Where are the pure people?" (Leilah)

Leilah too focuses on the role of social myths in constructing reality. She explains that although 'race' is a social construction or discourse, people believe 'race' to be a social truth. Here she argues against essentialism, or the perspective that a single group of people are an extension of a single individual (Gergen, 2000). Shared constructions or discourses extend beyond the power of any one person to create or maintain as powerful, dominant discourses or norms (Foster, 1991). However, when 'common knowledge' remains undisputed, social myths or discourses which lead to discrimination remain unchallenged and are maintained by society, and by people who have an interest in ensuring that these discourses retain dominance. Challenging (and pointing out) hidden norms means working beyond the individual level. Benjamin explains this clearly:

"Focus has to be on the system, changing the system. People say that this is radical or subversive, but often those people are privileged. The people who really need change to come about often do not fit into the system anyway. Working outside of what is normal is what they do on a daily basis. You find those people are not the ones to question change."

Change is welcomed by those who need it most and resisted by those who wish to maintain the system. Burnett and Kettleborough, (2007) point out that even the most empathic person often does not see the need for change if the system has worked on his/her behalf. When people believe that they have achieved well based on hard work and talent, it is very difficult to dispute a system which seemingly works, when this belief is circulated and reproduced between people in western, individualistic societies (Gergen,

1991). However, people who live with disempowerment or discrimination on a daily basis, and who carry the weight of systemic inequality are often most aware, and most embracing of a need for change (Goldberg, 2004).

Anita provides an example of how physical spaces are centred on able bodied people, viewed to be 'normal', limiting people with disabilities or health difficulties:

"There is a lot of inequality and vulnerability...I think that people who don't have access to transport or freedom of movement are very vulnerable. The city suddenly becomes very restrictive if you don't have freedom of movement. There's so much that healthy or physically able people take for granted..."

Anita explains that social norms do not exist in the minds of individuals but become constructed within the physical world which is shaped around us. As Foucault (1976) explains, power is not easy to pin down, but is dispersed through the construction of norms which shape a web of different systems or social structures, including cities which have been designed around 'normal' bodies. These designs restrict the movements of people who are not 'normal' or able-bodied. When Swartz (2010) explains the importance of making normality strange, he questions the way that myths or constructions about bodies or social norms become seen to be the only option, killing off opportunities for 'other' people to move freely in urban spaces.

What is emphasised by practitioners is that change needs to take place on deep levels. Political correctness or focus on the uniqueness of the individual or personality traits alone is not enough.

Daniel discusses how those silent voices or discourses which remain unheard need to be explored in order to bring about transformation. Change is systemic and aims to include all voices. It only happens when space is made for voices which remain unheard:

"...the real work is in understanding that there are parts which are missing in the work that has been done, and exploring what those parts could be..." (Daniel).

Searching for stories which remain hidden and untold should form a vital part of diversity practice. In the focus on the western individual, stories of history, social context, embodied reality and intersectional realities are hidden or silenced. Work which focuses on the bounded individual silences the unresolved tensions between individual and society, between body and opportunity and between hierarchy and an increase in social justice.

Discourses on Agency

Agency means that the individual has a capacity to act within the social system, and is therefore able to bring change (Giddens, 1991). Giddens (1991) argues that after World War II, when women were isolated in suburban homes, they walked out of the door and found work placements within environments which had historically excluded or remained hostile to women. Although they still struggled with having to fit in with masculine norms and a system which did not readily adjust to the needs of women, leaving home was a beginning. Discourses of agency go deeper than an exploration of social inequality, exploring the ability to respond to a situation or circumstance in a manner which challenges social norms.

However, sometimes practitioners argue that agency is the ability to adapt, rather than the ability to create new discourses or to resist a situation which has created massive power imbalances.

Anita explains an ability to adjust or make the most of a situation of poverty:

"People are capable of so much, and this is the other side of vulnerability. I have learned never to underestimate the courage of people, and the way that they are able to adapt. I remember research .. a family was living on the banks of a river, where people would do their washing. The family had no privacy, no income, but they set up a stall providing themselves with employment. Later they didn't want to move...I remain respectful of how resourceful people are..."

Benjamin explains that agency is about looking towards spaces where greater equality can be found:

"Discussing and seeding ideas for change and for future paths provide opportunities or alternatives which people will take up and work with...people who live outside of the system won't fight change..."

Agency requires a great deal of creativity and courage on behalf of the person who faces disadvantage. Although all people are capable of acting with agency, and do so on a regular basis, the discourse of agency does place the burden of responsibility on the shoulders of a person already in a disadvantaged position. Working towards social change remains vital in providing opportunity for a great many more people. The family in the example provided may have benefited from the fight for equal access to sanitation, and discourses which created a break down in social hierarchies, even while making use of the resources available to them.

Working with meta-discourses and the need for communities of practice

Practitioners recognise the courage it takes to work against meta-narratives, because they too face challenges and a great deal of resistance when trying to provide alternatives to the 'norm' or 'common knowledge' in society:

"It takes courage to create change, and to follow your belief (in the need for social justice) isn't easy because there is so much resistance..." (Daniel)

Daniel emphasises the importance for practitioners to share with one another, supporting each other and sharing progress in order to bring encouragement and new insights:

"It's important...letting people know the change that is happening, the momentum increases when we share, build connections and see others like us..." (Daniel)

Walter too expresses a need for other people:

I try to create a community, even an online community, people to bounce ideas off and reflect off...otherwise sometimes you feel as though you are holding the work on your own..."

Working towards social justice means challenging norms and meta-discourses. Practitioners explain that trying to manage as an individual alone is very difficult, giving value to organisations such as ADIPSA, who work towards sharing knowledge and informing practice. This is particularly helpful because practitioners come from different interdisciplinary backgrounds and use different tools. Sharing a variety of perspectives helps to increase knowledge, and offers support.

When practitioners work beyond an individual level, working towards social justice by viewing the social context, this often results in rejection:

"Seeing things from a different perspective...that's hard, because what you stand to lose, because you are going against your peers and your mentors...you want the bonds...but you can't continue the paradigm, even if they believe it is right for them..." (John)

Practitioners explain that although meta-discourses or narratives exist, they are not the only way of viewing life. No one discourse is the only "Truth" or the only perspective, and finding people who take a similar viewpoint offers strength and an ability to share. Practitioners from privileged positions who wish to work against 'common knowledge' have been seen as race traitors who threaten privilege and established social norms, people who are not sensible or people who are going in a dangerous direction (Steyn, 2001).

Practitioners such as John, who wish to deny discourses stating his own inferior identity and challenge the superior discourses of a more privileged group, have also come up against challenges. This means fighting against his own internalised oppression and rejecting or challenging what he has been taught about himself in order to see the value in his own identity.

Ghost selves and spectres: how history shapes the present

Post-modern thought looks at reality not as fixed, but as a set of possibilities which come about or are limited due to socially constructed norms. When 'common knowledge' is used to limit people, social discourses such as 'race' or 'gender' may not exist as essential truths, but they become seen as truth, and society is often arranged or constructed around these truths (Thomson, 2006). Post-modern thought argues that the past shapes the present, and historical context plays a very vital role in how reality is seen (Gergen, 1994). Gergen (1991) explains that with social constructionism and an understanding of reality as co-created, comes a question of 'ghost selves' or a question of what might have been, had only circumstances been different. Which routes would have opened up, had the historical roots or contexts of life been different?

Shepherd (2007) argues that when ghosts or spectres are raised up from the past, history has remained unresolved. Addressing the past and pointing out the impacts it has had upon 'other' people is so much more important than pretending it does not exist. When people have experienced abuse, when their opportunities have been killed off through myths or discourses which exist around bodies, or they have had limits placed upon them, validating the narratives or stories which tell of this experience is important. John explains that his understanding of history came from the realisation that limits to his own identity and the possibilities denied to him were structurally defined:

"I wonder who I could have been if these norms didn't exist, if there were not limits placed upon me by other people? I wonder how I would have looked at life. What courses would I have studied, what potential would I have had? What relationships would I have experienced which were closed off..." (John)

Kelly, et al (2007) argues that when practitioners work towards transformation, stifling narratives of blame or resentment cannot be an option. The haunting narratives of structural inequality are a reality to the majority of South Africans. Diversity work means

examining how the past has shaped the present. Looking at the individual outside of historical context means a lack of acknowledgement of this.

John explains that the past cannot be denied but future possibilities can be explored:

"You can't go back and change the past ...but I can make the most of the opportunities which are offered now. I am not angry, but I know that I have to make no excuses for how I can live now. I think my choices, if the past had been different, would have been so different. I feel so much joy at the potential open to me now. You feel your whole life is ahead of you, not held down. There is so much more to experience."

John uses the discourse of individual responsibility for grasping hold of the opportunities open to him at present, but acknowledges the change in social structure which has brought about these changes. He explains that he is not angry about the past, because he has chosen to grasp hold of the present and live to the best of his ability. However, as Gobodo-Madikizela (2003) explains, letting go of blame in order to move forward is not something which should be forced onto people who have suffered discrimination or hardships. Instead, in a situation where choice and control has been seized from a person, or groups of people, refusal to forgive is often the only power the person has in the present. Ignoring the relevance of the past in order to 'move on' is not something which should be forced upon people.

Co-creation, and alternate possibilities

Acknowledging the past means recognising the importance of possibilities for a better future. Practitioners explained that bringing communities together is perhaps the most helpful in exploring new possibilities. This is because the western belief in the self-contained individual often results in isolation and the perspective that problems belong to the 'self' alone. In a world where we are taught to maintain control, or at least conceal the fact that we have lost control, this can result in further withdrawal or isolation (Frank, 1995). Problems related to social circumstances, gender or race may be labelled as

individual difficulties, rather than understood to be common problems (Bordo, 1997).

Lena explains how setting up women's groups helped women to realise shared problems rather than judge themselves to be inadequate human beings:

"People become isolated from each other and problems seem to belong to them. We ran a group for women to come together...a space away from home...first they shared ideas. They started to look out for each other and gave ideas of resources and realised their own shared problems. They used agency and community facilities and started meeting for support..." (Lena)

Lena explains that the women she worked with were isolated. Hayden (2008) explains that the suburbs contributed to the isolation of women, who, until the 1970s, worked from home while men went to work. Suburbs were designed to accommodate male headed families (Hayden, 2008). The space between homes and the requirement for cars and parking meant isolation of neighbours from one another (Brain, 2008). Brain (2008) explains that while traditional neighbourhoods were focused on walkways which crossed in grids, the village green and community shops, suburbs isolated people through barriers between street and home, wide roads designed for cars rather than pedestrians, and lack of meeting spaces.

Hayden (2008) cites Elizabeth Gordon's explanation during the 1950's that suburbs were designed to increase a sense of individuality and create a barrier to communism by encouraging private ownership of land. Early suburban design also aimed to provide a sense of utopia by providing a class boundary between rich and poor (Arnstberg, 2008).

The structure of the suburbs isolated women from each other. The individual alone may take on the burdens of his/her problem, sometimes trying to adjust to oppressive circumstances (Pretorius-Heuchert & Ahmed, 2001). However, people who gather together and share are able to gain insights into how a problem or difficulty may be shared, and pool together resources to search for solutions (Steele, 2010). Herman (2001) explains that feminism began with the sharing of women's stories, and an

understanding that incest and abuse were shared problems. People who remain isolated and fragmented from one another may focus on self improvement or on overcoming difficulties, without realising it is the system, rather than themselves, which needs to change (Bordo, 1997).

Anita explains that isolation between women and community is dangerous as it leaves women vulnerable:

"There are perceptions about how things really are, and acknowledging them as perceptions means that they can be changed...like the idea that it is for women to stay behind closed doors...when a lot of rapes happen behind high walls when women are alone and completely vulnerable. Making a community safe for women or for families means increasing the presence of people, isolation is terrifying..."
(Anita)

Anita discusses the burden of responsibility which is placed on women to prevent rape from happening. She describes rape as an archetypal crime of power which holds women hostage (and therefore vulnerable) in isolated positions. Again, the discourse of communal responsibility is raised, this time for keeping women safe. Anita argues that the protection of women is a community responsibility rather than an individual burden:

"It is about the power of the public gaze...people don't do bad things when they believe they are being watched...there is a need for the benevolent eye to keep women safe, so that the numbers of bad people are far outweighed by the number of good people...when people are seen to be responsible for their own situations, there is no sense of public duty and communities break down..."

Anita argues the need for urban planners to work with communities in order to reduce isolation or danger to groups of people, including women, poor people and homeless people, recognising that communities need to work for all people who live within them.

She explains the dangers of looking at communities and individuals to be separate to each other, which is one of the binaries presented by modernity.

When women belong to neighbourhoods or communities where other people are present, walk the streets, congregate in squares or shop together, meet in the streets or overlook each other's homes, a benevolent or caring eye is provided (Brain, 2008). Instead, suburbs create isolation. When communities monitor behaviour, this very monitoring is very often enough to control behaviour (Foster, 2004). In an individualised society, however, women are given the responsibility for their own safety, and community responsibility has broken down (Bordo, 1997). Acknowledging the need for social change provides an alternate perspective to beliefs around rape which argue the need for women to remain cautious in public spaces. Although this is perhaps important as the situation currently stands, Anita places the responsibility for women's safety firmly onto the community as a whole rather than on the shoulders of women.

Greig (2002) explains violence against women and children (and against other men) is not related to internal characteristics within people, but to social structure, power relations between genders and hegemonic definitions of masculinity. Exploring the importance to work on social structure, including the structure of space and how gender relationships are inter-twined with space and perceptions of normality, is vital in understanding gender based violence. Academics such as Kopano Ratele are exploring the role masculinities play within gender related violence, and knowledge has been transferred to NGO's within South Africa, including the Rape Crisis Centre, are doing a great deal of work to break down gender myths when it comes to rape or violence against women.

Benjamin (below) explains that a belief in the individual as separate from others, and the distrust which comes from being treated badly by people or groups with a greater degree of power not only disconnects us from the shared nature of a problem, but prevents a shared search for solutions. Benjamin's perspective has been written about from an academic perspective by Patricia Hill Collins (1998), who argues that when groups come together without comparison or distrust, but with the ability to validate each other and

share different perspectives, recognising that all the parts make up a whole, transformation takes place. Hill Collins (1998) argues against placing oppression on a hierarchy which can be compared, and instead asks that stories be used as puzzle pieces to fit together, presenting a bigger picture of society:

"People who talk and share seed ideas. What have we learned about ourselves? What are humans really like? ..." (Benjamin)

This shared search for solutions is explained by Gergen, Gergen & Barrett (2004) as the ability to co-create or to invent new worlds and new possibilities together. Co-creation is a very vital part of transformation, because it means going beyond the 'us' and 'them' categories, where people oppose one another, and towards new possibilities.

Byron describes this process in more detail:

"Only when people come together can we change consciousness. Being alone, thinking about problems isn't bringing solutions...We need to connect people so that people can live with dignity...focus should be on how we can increase positive spaces, where people come together to share. This is the future. It is about what can be re-imagined. It is about giving and re-imagining instead of going back."

Benjamin and Byron explain the need to work together. Brown (2009) emphasises the importance of multiple perspectives and marginalised positions in particular, in order to stimulate innovative conversation which leads to maximum creativity. Trust and mutual respect is vital if all members of a group are to be given a voice.

In order for exploration of new possibilities to occur, Gergen (2009) explains that it is best to work towards future goals than resist or fight off conversations or discourses which present a challenge. Byron explains that focus to maintain a single perspective or theory holds back an exploration of future possibilities. This discussion brings theories of intersectionality into practice, arguing that people exist as more than a single identity or essential group, but instead are whole beings who are greater than the sum of their parts

(Nash, 2008). Only by exploring the relative nature of power, the shifting social environment, and multiple views or perspectives, are we able to create social transformation. Multiple realities exist within each present moment and Byron argues that we need to recognise new possibilities in each moment in order to move them into the future:

"We get stuck on the idea of 'truths' and endless debate about theories rather than allowing spaces for different and new ideas..."

Byron argues the need to approach a problem from the perspective of what is currently working well, alongside accessing the dreams and visions for desired change. The goal is to help people work out what they would like for the future and the policies or strategies which need to be put into place in order for these dreams to occur. This viewpoint is based on Appreciative Inquiry, which has its roots in post structuralism, where language is seen to construct reality. Within diversity practice, exploring language is vital because it helps to get to the roots of social myth, rather than acknowledging individual perspectives. Parker (1992, p. 5) explains that once we start to look at what text means, we are working beyond the realm of individuality, and into the world of possibility, because language exists between individuals. Language therefore helps construct and re-construct reality, as language is constantly in flux, rather than unitary or fixed (Burman and Parker, 1993). Ultimately, Appreciative Inquiry seeks to work against resistance to change, by constructing practical questions which ask divergent groups to search for positive circumstances and solutions within the past in order to extend these into the future.

Looking for the strengths within a situation helps with creating new solutions to current difficulties. A great deal of sensitivity is required on the part of practitioner's, as it is believed that questioning or probing for solutions shapes the responses offered (Thatchenkery, 2007). Gergen, Gergen and Barrett (2004) explain that Appreciative Inquiry is particularly helpful in situations where people are engaged in hostile combat.

Daniel explains how new possibilities and shared perspectives are vital because working on difficulties or solutions without a variety of different positions feels limited:

"Imagination becomes confined and trapped into a boxed structure which stops us thinking freely because the system appears to be so big..."

However, co-creation does not lead to idyllic answers and solutions which cannot be questioned or explored on deeper levels. Benjamin explains that constant reflection is vital, and practitioners need to hold a constant awareness of power and its many disguises:

"Change takes time...there is no instant switch over...and there are always problems...we cannot look at new ideas and believe they have utopian qualities...new discourses bring new difficulties...it's a constant process of reflection...because discourses shift and change all of the time, and we need to explore how power can hide in order to maintain itself..."

As Foucault (1976) explains, power cannot be fought or grasped from one group of people to another, but is hidden, shifting and transforming itself in order to remain hidden. Constant reflection on the part of the practitioner is vital if change is to occur in helpful ways. Reflection happens as a result of community support, but the process also requires a shift in identity within the life of the practitioner, who is required to challenge his/her beliefs on a continual basis. Bennet, (1993) along with Lifschitz and Oosthuizen (2001) explain that a crisis often results in the life of the diversity practitioner, who learns to adjust to multiple views of reality. This crisis brings transformation, and the practitioner is encouraged to go into the crisis in order to be able to work in a more helpful manner. This brings me to Chapter 5 of this thesis, which explores the reflexive practitioner.

Chapter 5

Findings: Reflexivity and the practitioner

The key finding of this chapter is the need to reflect on social norms in order to hear multiple perspectives. This chapter examines how practitioners have questioned their own role in both shaping and being shaped by social context, and how this influences the work they do.

New perceptions and the role of listening.

Steyn (1996) explains that perhaps the most beneficial quality within diversity or intercultural work is reflexivity, or the ability to self-reflect and look at how we live within our own stories, and the discourses and beliefs we hold to be reality. It is only when we are fully able to reflect on the culture we live within and understand that not only does it not exist as the only way, but that other perspectives also offer value, that we are able to learn and grow and offer space within dialogue to others (Steyn, 1996).

Walter explains that listening is the first step towards helpful space facilitation and explains how truly listening evoked his own transformative process:

"Listening was hard for me at first. I listened, but I didn't really hear what was being said. I adjusted the words within my own head, and I heard something different. My own interpretations, which made it easier for me to digest what was being said...that fitted in with my own way of thinking at the time...I became aware of what I was doing...and I had to correct myself, to say 'that was not what he was saying'..."

A willingness to listen and to hear what is being said is the first step in effective diversity work. When we hear voices which go against the norm without trying to fit the knowledge gained into our current constructions and belief systems, we are sometimes forced to question our own beliefs. Walter explains that this was not easy:

"I realised one day, I was trying to control everything, I was interpreting everything through my own eyes, and trying to keep my own outlook on things...and when I realised what I was doing, I was devastated. I was the facilitator, I was the one who wanted to give people space. First I tried to deny it to myself...then...I didn't say anything, I let other people take the space, people were asking me why I was so quiet...I think it is something western people have to learn though, to stop controlling things and to stop working from our heads alone. It's something to do with our value of masculine energy. We have to learn to just feel and allow other people their stories."

Walter explains the crisis described by Lifschitz and Oosthuizen (2001) when faced with a world which no longer fits in with the past knowledge and theoretical constructs a person has always relied on. Lifschitz and Oosthuizen (2001) argue that it is the crisis itself which brings about change and transformation. The only way to resolve the crisis is to work through it, understanding the connectedness of people and the way our identities relate to a wider world. Walter has used this crisis to question the world on a deeper level and to encourage other people to do the same:

"I explain to people that it's important to go with what we learn, what this work can teach us. I say 'let go', go with the knowledge it brings, the world which exists beyond our social norms and constructions. When you go there, you loose the fear, you loose the distrust, you feel the possibilities of something new. Embrace the insights...the insights are important...but you have to work at it all the time...there are no magic answers...you have to work constantly at integrating what you learn..."

Walter's example speaks to the breaking of binaries between individual and social world. He is both a part of the world which has shaped him, and an agent who is able to respond to this. He is at once a separate person and part of a community. Lifschitz and Oosthuizen (2001) explain that many practitioners feel safer drawing on set theories or explanations for what is happening within the world. However, the exploration of the

interconnected nature of humanity means taking a greater responsibility for our own roles and the spaces we inhabit within a bigger reality. We no longer remain individuals who see the world through a set, singular perspective.

Walter, however, describes how coming through the crisis has set him free from stereotypes and fears which once confined him. Although working through crisis was difficult, and although the work does not stop, Walter feels more complete. He explains that he is able to feel more deeply, and with less distrust and fear, he has something more meaningful to offer his clients. 'Other' people are interesting to Walter, and he is able to share and explore ways of looking at the world which were not previously open to him, but which he finds beneficial.

Letting go of the expert role

Allowing spaces for people to truly listen and be heard means a willingness to go beyond set theories or belief systems which have previously made the world safe (Lifschitz and Oosthuizen, 2001). This does not mean that the practitioner's training or knowledge is not relevant, but it means that s/he would explore a situation from the ground up, rather than from the top down (Gergen, 1994). This would allow for insights or knowledge offered by people within a community or organisation in order to get a more complete picture of what is happening within the social context (Gergen, 1994). Anita explains the value of respecting the intuition and of emotion offered by participants in order to create sensitive spaces. Her perspective of emotion is seen to be evoked through context rather than exist within the individual (Boler, 1999):

"I hate it when people use this technical language because the people they are talking to don't understand what is being said. We have the theory. Most people don't have this but they know by intuition what feels right or wrong...theories change, knowledge changes...the easiest is to think about how you would feel in a situation 'other' people face.... If you would feel uncomfortable, then 'other' people would feel uncomfortable too..." (Anita)

Anita's point aligns with Gergen's (1994) argument that technical language and expert insights reduce the ability of lay people to take part in a conversation. She uses the same argument Giddens (1991) uses to explain the instability of modernity, with scientific hypothesis being disproven at a rapid rate so that new knowledge is constantly replacing old, and requests a return back to a common and shared humanity as a means of relating. She argues that if we are able to see other people as fellow human beings, we would be able to create spaces for interaction that do not polarise groups or marginalise people.

Anita's argument on technical language is backed up by Benjamin:

" We need to explore the role of technical language and the meanings given to words and how they discriminate...how does exclusive language relate to privilege? There is a need to make ideas less abstract and more accessible..."

As Fanon (1967) explains, leaving ideas in the intellectual realm prevents dialogue with people who live on grass roots level. When value is placed on individuality, the expert, or individual who gives insights is highly valued (Gergen, 1991). Gergen (1994) and Parker (1990) argue that when a practitioner uses technical language and constructed theory to relate a problem to a situation which occurs, it means setting the 'expert' on a hierarchical level which excludes the majority of the participants. Hook (2004) explains that expert knowledge always leads to power within relationships, as expert worldviews are often given power over the voices of others. This gives the expert the ability to gloss over certain voices and perhaps collude with other voices. No one voice is free of bias, and no one voice offers objective knowledge (Hook, 2004).

Lena explains that searching for meaning from other people and allowing questions to formulate themselves is more important to her as a facilitator of change, than trying to provide answers:

"Active listening is important, a part of the transformation process...bringing questions into form and searching through the life of meaning which is offered up,

rather than offering the meaning of life...I think consciousness raising is...about creating space for dialogue, reflections, connections, empathy, problem solving, sharing and caring..."

Finally, Walter expresses caution about the expert in the world of intercultural work:

"These days I have a great deal of respect for, and learn from, people who work with gentleness, with humility, with feeling...but this expert...'I know what you should think'... approach, I listen to that and I think "No!"

Expert knowledge can be very helpful, and sometimes enables a practitioner to guide hunches which are difficult to express through language, or to add an alternate view to a conversation (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2003). However, practitioners argue that working respectfully means refusing to force a single view of reality onto people. When working as skilled practitioners, it is important not to present single views and interpretations as essential truths.

Lena's belief in evoking questions and exploring meanings to assist transformation offers a helpful approach to making normality strange (Swartz, 2010). Constant insights and reflections from minority voices are needed to connect the individual to the social environment (Gergen, 1994) and to ensure that questions are raised about that which is often seen to be the "normal" or ideal way of living.

Valuing difference

Walter expands on why it is so important to listen rather than rely solely on knowledge and insight which has been theoretically attained:

"...We have to be willing to learn from 'other' people. Why do we think we have nothing to learn? There's a lot of arrogance in believing we, the people with western beliefs and education, are the only ones with the answers."

Walter argues that in order to bring about transformation or change, we have to move beyond the liberal belief that other people are just like us. Instead, he argues, we need to engage in multiple views of the world which exists around us, going beyond a single perspective or a hierarchy which declares knowledge to be valued according to its adherence to western norms as others have argued (Steyn, 2001; Baloyi, 2008).

As an intercultural practitioner, Walter argues that diversity work becomes inclusive only when African or indigenous knowledge is given equal value. He argues against upholding western knowledge as superior and de-valuing knowledge or facilitation techniques used by 'other' people. His comment that only giving value to western knowledge or views represents a cultural 'arrogance' fits in with the work of Steyn (2001) who argues that in order to maintain a power, the value and offerings of 'other' people need to be negated. Colonialism used western knowledge as a means of oppression, declaring that 'black' people were so inferior, and had so little knowledge or insight that they had to be placed under western guidance in order to 'develop' (Baloyi, 2008). Walter asks that we question the imperialism of western knowledge, and the single, individualised view of the world it offers, disconnected from history or the norms or discourses which uphold it.

Jeff too expressed the importance of valuing difference when looking at his work and where he started out. He explains the importance of recognising cultural imperialism, and the desire to make 'them' like 'us', which he now describes as a form of racism in itself:

"We thought we were being helpful, we thought let's show 'them' what to do, let's show them how they can act like 'us'. Can you believe that?"

Bennet (1993) explains that recognising a common humanity is often far easier for people than a value of difference. However, de Wet (2007) explains that the very valuing of difference is essential if people are to feel accepted and valued in an organisation or space. People who feel they have to hide who they really are in order to adjust or fit into a space do not feel a true sense of belonging.

This is why exploring the benefits or negative impacts of social norms on all people within society is so important, and this is why, within the world of diversity work, allowing those people who hold insights or knowledge about a situation share how this situation impacts upon them, is far more vital and important than sharing theories or academic knowledge which workshop participants cannot relate to (Grubbs, 2000).

Ultimately, the purpose of diversity work is to allow more voices to speak. Questioning the structures of power which blocks some people from sharing their reality and truth is so important. We cannot assume a singular perspective or worldview is the only way to interpret a situation (Parker, 1992). Practitioners need to recognise the courage and the trust it takes to speak out against social norms, and offer respect to those voices who do show an alternate perspective, even if this perspective is new to the practitioner.

Aside from cultural difference, Leilah explains the importance of recognising difference between groups of people said to be homogenous or the same:

"People spoke about black people, white people, white people are saying these things, blah, blah, blah...but I like the idea of discourses of whiteness, blackness. You can talk to so called 'white' people and what they tell you can be African. Black people can be prejudiced against other black people because they absorb these...stories about how white is superior and they want to be accepted. You have to look at the discourses people have tuned into and explain where they come from. You can't see a white voice, a black voice..."

Leilah's argument fits in with the literature by Gergen (2000) and Swartz (2010) who argue the importance of recognising that people are not homogenous beings based on group membership. Gergen (2000) explains that seeing groups of people as merely an extension of a single entity or voice is an extension of the argument of individuality which dominates western society. People within groups offer unique voices and ideas which are subjective to each person. Stereotypes which make assumptions according to bodily status recreate categorisation and affirm the belief that bodies represent the views and beliefs of the people who live within them (Ratele and Shefer, 2003).

Jeff sums up the need for appreciation of difference by introducing the topic of love:

"People talk about managing diversity, but I don't like that statement. Managing sounds like something you have to put up with and set into place. I like to talk about valuing or appreciating diversity. I call it love, a spiritual approach. It doesn't always fit in with corporate beliefs but I do it anyway."

Erasmus (2008b) agrees with Jeff, pointing out that when we see a human face behind a body which has been stereotyped, and we are willing to address the difficulties faced by past injustices, then we are working with a political love for humanity. Erasmus (2008b), emphasises the effort taken to fight for equal rights for all of humanity and declares this effort 'love'. Although no one person may achieve every goal s/he wishes to work towards, the very attempt is what drives critical diversity work and practitioners.

Questioning knowledge and the use of stories and metaphor in the African context

Appreciating difference involves exploring the dominant knowledge systems which inform the paradigms through which we view the world. As Parker (1990) explains, knowledge is never without bias. Fanon (1967) explains that knowledge shared within the cobweb of social institutions, such as schools, the business world, welfare policy or the legal system often represents the dominant culture. Stories and songs from other cultures represent an alternate form of knowledge which allows people to share and grow. Zuki explains that African heritage and worldview is largely absent in mainstream education, but stories and poetry allowed her to view the world through different eyes, and provided her with an alternate education:

"To understand African theory, it's not really present, you have to look in poetry, in story telling...the poets, when I was young, they were also activists and this is where I learned a lot...but there was not space for this knowledge to be part of the mainstream education...there are tribal stories which came from long ago, but, for

example, South African history began with white people...some but not a lot of African theory is recorded..."

Steyn (2005) explains that in order for a group of people to remain subjugated, hierarchies of power between groups must seem natural. Knowledge production upholds the rights of the privileged groups of people. This view is supported by Baloyi (2008) who explains that although western knowledge claims to be universal, it has in fact squashed the knowledge which African people have, and relegated this knowledge to 'second class knowledge systems' (Baloyi, 2008, p12). Baloyi (2008) argues that knowledge should extend from all branches of the human family, and called the silence of African knowledge 'epistemicide'.

As Biko (1978) states, "the most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed." It was only by negating the power of African knowledge, and filling African people with a sense of shame at 'their' inferiority that power could remain hidden. Colonialism declared those it dominated inferior and taught the values of colonialism through (mis)educating the oppressed (Steyn, 2001).

A great deal of African knowledge has been shared by oral tradition (Baloyi, 2008). Knowledge expresses heritage and is passed onto future generations through song, stories and games. To disregard this knowledge is to separate people off from core values and experiences (Baloyi, 2008). The richness of inter-cultural knowledge needs to be shared to deepen and widen currently recognised knowledge (Baloyi, 2008).

Walter has explored the importance of sharing traditional stories to create inclusion and explains that stories add great value:

"The (traditional) stories which do exist are beautiful, and they have metaphor to them as well. There's the stories of the mermaids, who represent a feminine energy which cannot be possessed by men. I think it's important to find ways of working with them (stories)..."

Walter explains that stories and imagery are helpful as metaphors in order to guide people on working together respectfully, and sometimes help to get to the heart of the matter in more intuitive ways than complex theory:

"Imagery can be very symbolic...there's the symbol of thorns in the forest...if you stand on them, they prickle your feet...you have to be careful...but thorns are there to protect the plant so that it can survive. We can't expect the thorns to move, so we have to find ways of walking which look after both ourselves and the plant...we can change how we interact...if we stand on something, let's explore it, let's treat it with respect..."

Thorny tales and painful reactions provide a suitable metaphor for diversity work, where feelings of guilt, anger or discomfort are common. This metaphor can be examined on multiple levels. Firstly, it emphasises the difference between oppression and pain. To stand on, or have the power to squash, is very different to feeling pain because of a sharp reaction from 'the other' who fights back (Boler, 2004). Boler (2004) argues that norms which emphasise the value of masculinity, for example, may cause pain to men, but this pain is different to systemic oppression, which as Foucault (1976) explains, kills off opportunities for those who do not meet these norms. Sometimes discussion becomes distracted when the focus shifts to feelings of pain or guilt as individual circumstances rather than the oppressive circumstances which threaten the survival of 'other' people. Walter argues that we need to question where and how we walk through life, rather than become distracted by individual emotion.

Secondly, like Boler (1999), Walter argues that emotion or feeling should not be viewed out of its social context. Using metaphor, he explains that when communities of people experience oppression which evokes a sharp response, this emotion should be acknowledged within its context, and not defined by rationality and science as an individual feeling which is judged to be either appropriate or inappropriate (Boler, 1999).

On an additional level, Walter speaks of a journey or exploration (going into the forest, into unfamiliar territory) which may lead to painful encounters felt by the practitioner. He

asks that the practitioner recognise his/her own privilege, and respect the stories and narratives which come from 'the other', examining his/her part played by context in the painful reactions and emotions which emerge. The narratives or stories behind the pain need to be explored or understood, so that people with positions of privilege or power can stop standing on or oppressing 'the other'.

Acknowledging that narratives which bring pain or discomfort within the practitioner have a right to be heard *and* treated respectfully is perhaps the very core of diversity work. Cutting out conversations which a practitioner does not like or feel comfortable with (or worse, blaming these uncomfortable emotions on faulty individual thinking) is not helpful in creating a safe space for all voices to be heard in order to bring about transformation or change (Zorn & Boler, 2007).

Benjamin adds that we need to add stories and poetry, because they are often missing from mainstream capitalist life, and offer new insights on values or beliefs which may matter to people outside of a strictly work orientated environment:

"Value isn't given to that which isn't regarded as productive. Sharing of poetry, song, stories or creativity isn't highly valued...it's important to explore value systems that don't depend on trade..."

Stories, poems or aspects of identity which have not been considered 'productive' have been excluded from mainstream capital life which focuses on individuality over community, expression and heritage. Benjamin explains that capitalism negates the value of African heritage which is expressed through story, intuition and song. An interactive work environment, rich in community heritage provides a juxtaposition to dominant narratives of the rational individual who works hard in order to achieve.

Stretching perspectives: beyond the rational

Daniel argues that art and stories can be used to bring about change, fitting in with Frank's (1995) perspective that stories and language are healing because they are creative, connecting present to past and plotting a future:

"Culture is so often expressed through art and song, working creatively brings life and expression. Beauty and expression...it goes beyond the 'us' and 'them' categories of difference...visualisations, dreams, are a way of building trust...and we can resonate with the emotional value which goes beyond consumption or productivity...."

Recognition of the value of emotional expression goes beyond the strictly intellectual masculine norm which has been so valued in modern society (Gergen, 1991; Foster, 2004). Wetherell (1996) explains that the world of emotion, intuition and creativity has largely been attributed to women and children, and seen to be inferior to rationality (Foster, 2004). Exploring ways to work which go beyond hegemonic masculinity is a helpful way to work outside of widely accepted social norms (April, 1999).

Byron sees stories and creativity as the foundations for growth and innovation. In order to create change or move into new spaces and stages of development, a creative outlook has to be taken.

"If you ask people to imagine or dream up situations they would like for themselves, the answers are not too different, and it brings a form of common ground to work with...then we can build ways to make these spaces come into existence. Stories and visions, art, drawing, creativity, take people out of a rational state of mind which sometimes just wants to resist anything...there are many ways of breaking through perceived differences..."

Practitioners have broken through the belief that the rational individual contributes the most by exploring alternate means of expression and communication which sometimes

goes beyond the limits of talk, offering greater freedom in the form of art or play (Brown, 2009). Lifschitz and Oosthuizen (2001) explain that there are many ways of communicating, and that perhaps the worst possible belief for us to hold onto is the belief that as intercultural beings, we just cannot communicate at all.

Creative communication offers new insights or knowledge which provides great value to practitioners as an alternate source of information. Further, music, art and stories provide insights into the cultural mirrors created by people from respective belief systems. Creative communication allows a platform for sharing to take place, and for questions to arise.

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Chapter 6

Conclusion

Five years after the research carried out by Kelly et al (2007), this study shows a different picture that emerges on the basis of in depth interviews with those who conduct diversity practice in South Africa. The findings within this research project indicate that practitioners are more consistent with contemporary critical literature, which questions the role of the rational, self-contained individual, and seeks a wider understanding of what it means to be human both within South Africa and globally. The literature explores and questions the social norms and stories which define the individual, and encourages both the questioning of social norms and the exploration of new possibilities or narratives within the worldviews. This is indeed what this project reveals about the approach of practitioners in relation to their clients.

The role of bodies was discussed in addressing the vulnerability of women, children, 'black' people, poor people and disabled people. The power held by those people who are privileged within, or who hold power within society was engaged with. A good understanding of the need for deep transformation or radical change is described.

Within this study, practitioners showed a great level of diversity literacy. They had insights into privilege, argued against essentialised identities, discussed intersectionality and identity, and brought transversal politics into dialogue. The built environment or spaces which people live within has been questioned. Practitioners work beyond exploring inequality and work towards deeper appreciation of difference. There was a very deep reflection on knowledge, and the use of African knowledge in order to create inclusion was discussed. Quite profoundly, there is an awareness of the difference between pain and oppression, and a need to treat both categories with respect while working towards change. Academic theory and creativity combine as practitioners explore innovative ways of working within the field of diversity practice. This small group of practitioners bring different skills into the work and have different tools or techniques for working, and sharing this knowledge with each other would deepen understanding and enhance insights.

Exploring diversity practice through language and discourse unravels hierarchies of power and oppression, tying the individual into the social system. However, language remains dynamic, revealing the transitions and shifts which remain possible for a deeper sense of social justice within South Africa. Diversity practitioners recognise the need for social transformation. The histories, identities, and new worlds which are currently silenced or ignored remain possibilities when focus shifts away from the bounded individual and towards the contexts or realities presented to be the only option.

Diversity practitioners within this study are comfortable drawing attention to topics which have sometimes been avoided within diversity work, such as privilege, social responsibility, race, gender, social inequality, marginalised knowledge, and a need to break down essentialised identities. Practitioners look at a need for deep social transformation, and acknowledge the role of emotion, creativity and story telling as a means of facilitation or healing. Imagination, creativity and possibility have been explored.

However, the difficulty of working with a strong resistance remains. Exploration on resistance and effective ways to manage powerful narratives of systemic inequality, and a toolkit for deconstructing power would benefit practitioners, who sometimes feel demotivated or overwhelmed by the work.

There is a need for diversity work to remain monitored or evaluated within South Africa in order to continue the exploration of changing discourses and narratives, and the manners within which power remains slippery. Areas of strength and weakness within diversity practice are important to assess in order to offer insights or assist with effective practice. Although people who work against social norms and hegemony would perhaps seem reluctant to remain a part of a system which aims to declare conditions or pointers for practice, the opposite has proven to be the case. Practitioners have expressed the value of sharing and connecting with others involved within the field, and argue the importance of a community of practitioners in order to create an awareness of tools, techniques and alternate approaches to the field.

Organisations like ADIPSA, who provide a means of sharing and learning offer great value, and the connection to INCUDISA means that practitioners within this study may be given access to diversity literature. It would be helpful if ADIPSA would be extended to an online community, which offers updated information, sharing, discussion and assistance. ADIPSA has in the past provided an opportunity for practitioners to share information and learn from each other, providing a system of support and motivation.

There are a great many areas within this study where diversity practice and the academic world intersect, offering practitioners tools or insights for helpful practice. These tools and techniques allow practitioners to tread carefully, or work sensitively with the thorny issues of diversity. Unlike Kelly et al's (2007) study, where context was largely missing within diversity practice, this follow up study, using in depth interviews, shows a different picture. It points to the inclusion of social context within the world of diversity practice. This group of practitioners does not agree that the individual exists outside of social context, historical circumstance or relationship with others. Instead, practitioners argue the need to explore social norms in order to practice diversity work in a helpful manner. Practitioners also speak of the possibilities of extending diversity practice beyond western and rational facilitation techniques, using factors such as story telling, art, imagination and a democratic acceptance of multiple perspectives in order to work beyond western norms.

Diversity work within South Africa remains largely unmonitored. In order to ensure an awareness of critical diversity literacy, as practitioners within this study have used within their social change work, it is helpful for the continued work towards standardisation of practice take place. It is further helpful for diversity practitioners to look beyond the inequalities which take place at present and towards a greater appreciation of different voices and world views, working inclusively in order to ensure that western world views do not become forced upon African people.

This study points to the helpful nature of sharing academic theory through organisations such as ADIPSA, and possibly points to the progress which has been made within the field of diversity practice within a small sample group.

Areas for further study

This study has limited scope, exploring a small sample of practitioners and their responses to the discourse of individuality and the need for social change. However, an unexpected finding was the practitioners' need for support and assistance, and the difficulties encountered while practicing the work. The Pandora 's Box of diversity work and how to work as a very limited human in a vast social system, alongside the exhausting nature of the work itself may make a helpful topic for further study into the resistances and rebuttals which maintain social norms, and shared tools on how to work with these resistances.

The creativity and alternate methods of communication in diversity work could be further explored as a way of working against dominant texts or discourses, as could the value of African traditional knowledge and poetry as alternatives to western knowledge or theory.

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A p e n d i x 1 : L i s t o f q u e s t i o n s :

1. How did you start working as a diversity practitioner?

2. How do you look at the role do you think the individual plays in your work?

3. When you look back at how your work or your ideas have changed, what do you see?

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