

A systems psychodynamic interpretation of South African diversity dynamics: a comparative study

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Abstract

The systems psychodynamic perspective has been used previously to report on South African diversity dynamics as studied during various group relations events between 2000 and 2004. The aim of this research was to study and report on the systems psychodynamic diversity behaviour manifesting in a South African organisation during 2005 and to ascertain if and how these dynamics are shifting. A focus group was used and the data were analysed and interpreted from the systems psychodynamic stance. The manifesting themes were hostility between generations, projections around age and gender, splits in race, language and status, and a continuous position of split in the system. When the results of this study were compared with those of previous studies, it was found that many of the previous dynamics were still applicable and were now manifesting with increased intensity. Shifts occurred from a focus on mainly race and gender, towards including age, language and status. Interpretations and hypotheses were formulated around a growing awareness of identity among black employees within the South African economy.

1 Introduction

There is increasing worldwide acknowledgement of the presence and effect of workforce diversity and its dynamics (Abdelsamad & Sauser 1992; Arredondo 1996). Booyesen (2006) referred to the powerful social identity shifts that have already taken place in South Africa since 1994. These include legislation towards empowerment and the assumption of political, economic and social power. Booyesen (2005) provides a comprehensive rendition of the challenges that these changes pose to national and organisational leadership. Against the background of these societal and organisational changes on the macro level, the present study focused on the micro and unconscious behavioural level, in order to understand how organisational diversity dynamics are manifesting in terms of systems psychodynamic behaviour. Focus group methodology was used.

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2 Diversity

Diversity refers to any mixture of items characterised by differences and similarities (Thomas 1996) between individuals and groups that contribute to distinct social identities (Arredondo 1996; Booysen 2005; 2006; Griggs & Louw 1995), such as race, gender, ethnic or cultural background, age, sexual orientation, physical or mental capability, personality, social class, educational level, marital status, having children, living area, upbringing and work and job characteristics (Leach et al. 1995). Diversity is not synonymous with differences but encompasses differences and similarities. In terms of organisational behaviour, diversity refers to every individual difference that affects a task or relationship (Thomas 1996). This means that diversity has an impact on the products and services developed by the workforce, as well as on personal, interpersonal and organisational activities (Abdelsamad & Sauser 1992).

Diversity management is a strategic organisational approach to workforce diversity development, organisational culture change and empowerment of the workforce (Abdelsamad & Sauser 1992). This ideally requires a pragmatic approach in which participants anticipate and plan for change, do not fear human differences or perceive them as a threat, and view the workforce as a forum for individual growth and change in skills and performance, with direct cost benefits to the organisation. Empowerment is seen as the outcome of this process (Arredondo 1996) and refers to a sense of personal power, confidence, positive self-esteem and a process of change achieved in relation to specific goals.

The modern organisation is facing complex challenges (Griggs & Louw 1995), which require a dynamic, interrelated and systemic approach. The implementation of diversity initiatives in the organisation follows a logical sequence (Reece & Brandt 1993), namely education and awareness, capacity building and culture change. This research focuses on the first two steps in this procedure.

Reece and Brandt (1993) refer to the primary and secondary dimensions of diversity.

- Primary diversity dimensions are core individual attributes that do not change, such as age, gender, race, physical appearance or traits and sexual orientation. These shape the individual's self-image and are the filters through which the person sees the world. The greater the number of primary differences between people, the more difficult it is to establish trust and mutual respect. This leads to culture clash, which has a devastating effect on human relations in the organisation.
- Secondary, diversity dimensions such as communication style, education, relationship / marital / parental status, religious beliefs, work experience and income, may be changed or modified.
- The secondary dimensions add complexity to the individual's self-image. The interaction between the primary and secondary dimensions shapes the individual's values, priorities and perceptions. Effective human relations among diverse employees in the organisation are possible when the differences are accepted and valued.

3 The systems psychodynamic perspective

From its conceptual roots in classic psychoanalysis (Freud 1921), group relations theory and open systems theory (French & Vince 1999; Miller 1993), the systems psychodynamic perspective developed into a psycho-educational process of group and organisational consulting. Its primary task is formulated as pushing the boundaries of

group and organisational awareness towards a better understanding of the unconscious, covert and dynamic meaning of the challenges of management, leadership and authorisation (Colman & Bexton 1975; Colman & Geller 1985; Koortzen & Cilliers 2002; Miller & Rice 1976).

This primary task guides the work and role of the group consultant working from a systems psychodynamic perspective, who uses his or her own self, awareness, experience and knowledge as an instrument (McCormick & White 2000) to offer working hypotheses (Lawrence 2000) to the group about the behaviour manifesting in the here-and-now. The working hypothesis is defined as a tentative reflection from a meta-position to serve as feedback to the system in order to stimulate further questions. It also has an interpretive value through its relay of what may be happening in the system based upon the above-mentioned psychodynamic evidence (Haslebo & Nielsen 2000). The consultant is guided by his or her knowledge of the following behaviours:

- the five basic assumptions of group relations, namely, dependency, fight / flight, pairing (and splitting), one-ness or me-ness, and we-ness (Bion 1970; 1996; Hirschhorn 1993; Lawrence 1999; Lawrence, Bain & Gould 1996; Turquet 1974)
- the interrelationships between the technical and social aspects of the group, such as its structures, organisational design, roles and role configurations, work culture and group processes (Miller 1993; Neumann, Kellner & Dawson-Shepherd 1997)
- the relationship and relatedness between subsystems, their representation, the containment of these subsystems within boundaries, the role of mistrust and distrust, the prevalence of paranoid fear and a lack of meaning and hope in the system, the de-authorisation of people in roles and the loss of control (Huffington, Armstrong, Halton, Hoyle & Pooley 2004)
- the relationship between the system as a reality, "the system in the mind" and the system as a totality (group-as-whole), its dynamic movement from basic assumption group functioning and the paranoid-schizoid position towards interdependence, characterised by work group functioning and the depressive position (Colman & Bexton 1975; Colman & Geller 1985; Czander 1993; Gould, Stapley & Stein 2001 & 2004; Stapley 1996; Wells 1980)
- how leadership and authority are psychologically distributed, exercised and enacted overtly and covertly in the here-and-now, in contrast to how they are overtly and formally invested in the there-and-then of the system's official structure (Lipgar & Pines 2003; Obholzer & Roberts 1994)
- the emotional task of the system, which is filled with chaos, a lack of control and difficult experiences such as competition, rivalry, jealousy, envy, hate, hostility, shame, guilt and aggression (Miller 1976; 1993)
- the consideration of attitudes, beliefs, fantasies, conflicts, core anxieties, social defences, patterns of relationships and collaboration, and how these in turn may influence task performance; how unwanted feelings and experiences are split off and projected onto particular parts (individuals or groups who may have the valance for receiving and carrying the specific projections) that contain them on behalf of the system (their projective identifications and process roles as distinct from their formally sanctioned roles); and how work roles are adopted, especially leadership and followership, and social defence mechanisms (Menzies 1993).

Form a systems psychodynamic perspective, it is argued that the anxiety underlying any diverse relationship creates stereotypes and prejudiced attitudes for or against the self.

The underlying behavioural dynamic is one of experiencing the own unwanted parts as denigrating and the idealised parts as unattainable, with the idealised parts being experienced as shame, guilt, envy and rivalry. To manage these feelings, the system splits off these parts and projects them onto and into "the other" - who then represents "the difference". Thus, the other contains the unwanted and/or idealised parts on behalf of the system, until such time as the system becomes brave or strong enough to own these projections and take back what belongs to the self.

4 The focus group

Focus groups are widely used as a qualitative data collection method in organisations (Barbour & Kitzinger 1999; Krueger 1998; Morgan 1998). A focus group can be defined as a carefully planned and organised discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment, by a selected group of participants sharing and responding to views, experiences, ideas, feelings and perceptions (Brewerton & Millward 2004; Krueger 1994; Litosseliti 2003; Morgan 1998; Morgan & Collier 2002). Its purpose is to gain information, perspectives and empirical field texts about a specific research topic. The rationale of the method is to provide a socially-oriented interaction, similar to a real-life situation, where participants freely influence one another, build on one-another's responses and thus stimulate collective and synergistically generated thinking, emotion and experience. The underlying assumption is that the focus group reflects collective notions on interpreting the topic which are shared and/or negotiated by group participants, as opposed to interview data, which reflect the views and opinions of an individual. It is also assumed that group data do not necessarily imply group consensus.

The group typically consists of four to twelve participants. The size of the group acts as a variable in providing many people with limited opportunities to participate, and influences the ease or complexity of the task of managing the event. Focus group data may also be influenced by purposive sampling. For example, biographic and demographic information, such as age, gender and race, level of expertise, class, social-and-economic status and identity need to be carefully considered for group composition. Depending on the key research question, participants are chosen in terms of biographical and demographic variables to create homogenous or heterogeneous groups. The method is applied in the context of the primary task of the research and the aim is to produce field texts and to co-construct meaning. As such it has advantages compared to other data gathering methods, such as interviews and participant observation, in the sense that it offers a more natural environment in which to study behaviour. Technically, the position of the focus group lies between in-depth observation and participant observation (Litosseliti 2003). The group is planned and presented by a moderator whose primary task is to guide the discussion (Morgan 1998). The technique includes using a number of predetermined, well planned and developed open-ended questions with follow-up interventions. The moderator observes the group constantly to ensure that it consistent focuses on discussing the key questions. This role requires planning, management and interpersonal skills. After completion, the data analysis is usually done by means of content analysis.

5 Problem statement, research question and aim

The systems psychodynamic stance and its methodology of intensive and experiential group relations working conferences have been used by various consultants and authors

to study and report on South African diversity dynamics (Cilliers & May 2002; May & Cilliers 2002; Pretorius 2004). These studies reported on the diversity dynamics which manifested during a series of group relations events, presented over six days, between 2000 and 2002. Cilliers and Naidoo (2005a; 2005b) reported on a series of three-day, in-house, organisational diversity events presented during 2004. These studies reported on the themes in the then current South African diversity scenario, namely mainly race and gender, each with its inclusion/exclusion dynamic. No literature reporting on the nature of the dynamics since 2004 could be traced. It is generally accepted that the way in which diversity issues play out in society are very dynamic and therefore constantly changing. It can therefore be assumed that the South African organisational diversity scenario is already different at present from what it was like in 2000 and even in 2004.

The research question being investigated can be formulated as follows: What are the present diversity dynamics manifesting in the chosen organisation and how do they differ from the previous findings reported for 2000-2004, using the same interpretive stance.

The aim of this study was to investigate the systems psychodynamic diversity behaviour manifesting in one large South African organisation during 2005, and to compare the finding with previous findings.

6 Method

6.1 Participants

An organisation with its head office in Gauteng was chosen as an example of a representative of the typical diversity configuration of South African organisations. Twelve participants representative of the primary diversity dimensions of age, gender and race, as well as the organisational variables professional background, organisational level and staff/line functions were chosen as a purposeful sample (Patton 2002). In terms of ethical considerations, permission for their attendance was given by their individual managers and the participants were promised that the personal content of the data collection would remain confidential.

6.2 Data collection

The focus group was planned and the participants were invited to attend the event in a quiet room. All participants arrived on time. The focus group lasted for two hours, was tape recorded and the data transcribed. Both authors took up the role of focus group moderators, which consisted in being psychologically present in the moment, making field notes and responding to the content, feelings, processes and group dynamics. The two moderators were both white, one male and one female. The group was welcomed and asked to answer the following question: "What is your experience of diversity in this organisation?" Thereafter, the moderators verbally reflected the behaviour and offered working hypotheses about the manifesting dynamics (see Cytrynbaum & Noumair 2004).

6.3 Data analysis

To accommodate traditional practice in analysing focus group results, content analyses were used (Camic, Rhodes & Yardley 2003). This method consists of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualising and categorising the data. After the responses had been read through a couple of times for familiarisation, the content was analysed by applying the systems psychodynamic stance. This was followed by the application of

Schafer's (2003) guidelines on interpretation in the form of working hypotheses (Haslebo & Nielsen 2000) which included the manifestation of the basic assumptions and the associated anxieties and conflicts (see Czander 1993; Hirschhorn 1993; Huffington et al. 2004; Menzies 1993; Neumann, Kellner & Dawson-Shepherd 1997). Similarities were clustered (according to Brewerton & Millward 2004), making it possible to identify prominent themes. Trustworthiness was ensured (as defined by De Vos 2002) by having the findings examined by a psychologist, to whom this research method and interpretive stance were well known.

Two methodological problems to be addressed in this study to make it possible to compare these findings with the findings of previous studies related to context and time. The previous contexts were group relations events over three to six days, whereas this study used a focus group lasting two hours. It would appear from the guidelines given by Gould, Stapley and Stein (2004) that these variables are not crucial in experiential events of this nature. The argument is that for both the previous and the present participants, the experiences being studied focused on their personal experiences in the present within similar organisational contexts.

7 Findings

The following seven themes were identified:

7.1 *Hostility between the generations*

The older black men often frustrated the younger white females. It appeared that some younger black women were labelled as less "obedient" towards older black men, while the older black women appeared more accepting of older black men. Young black men were at times less challenging or confrontational towards the elder black men, whereas the white women, both young and old, frankly expressed their frustration and disagreement with the older black men. Often the black men dominated the discussion, attempting to assume power. This was directly opposed, particularly by younger women, both white and black. The older black women were less challenging or resistant. This became evident in the long speeches by black men, as attempts were made to position themselves; voices were raised in an attempt to be heard, yet they had only a few followers. This was interpreted as a generation split in which the genders adopted different positions. This was followed by hostility and threats to the group participants, particularly by one black male, who shouted, "If you look again, I will be president." This powerful speech ironically elicited gales of laughter that de-authorised the black man. It may have been that he was trying too hard, and only a few people really heard him. It could be interpreted as a competitive bid for the ultimate role of authority, which the group was withholding, and even ridiculing.

7.2 *Projections around age*

The above age differences led to inclusion and exclusion of participants in the focus group. Older participants used age to label younger participants as ruthless, arrogant and impatient. Furthermore, they were accused of not taking the time to engage in diversity matters or contributing meaningfully. This accusation was extended to the political realm where the younger people were accused of not honouring the political struggle and the sacrifices by older black citizens. In defence, younger participants described themselves as youthful, associated with energy and adaptability, and not caring about the past. This added to the hostility of the older participants. The working hypothesis offered was that

the older participants were rejecting and splitting off their bad parts (in this case being ruthless, arrogant, impatient, non-engaging, uninterested and non-participative) and projecting that onto the younger ones. The dynamics were perpetuated when the younger ones identified with the projection, which meant that the older ones' projection was now not only onto, but also into the younger participants as a subsystem of the group. This projective identification (Obholzer & Roberts 1994) implied that the younger participants were acting out the older participants' bad parts, leaving the older participants to behave as old people traditionally do.

7.3 Projections around age and gender

Young women were seen as too independent and not obedient enough, especially by black participants. On the one hand, some men saw younger women as dominant but without authorisation - as if older people have to give the younger ones permission and authority to act in an adult manner. On the other hand, women saw men as coercive in their manipulation of the discussion. This often resulted in conflict and resistance, noticeably in flight reactions where the discussion was shifted from the here-and-now focus to outside and safer topics.

Furthermore, the male and female fight for dominance, visibly in assumed parental roles, was directly opposed by the younger participants. Some openly articulated that they did not need a parent in this context, or need to be told what they should do or how the group should proceed. It was as if a true family dynamic was playing itself out - the children fighting with the parents about rules of behaviour. The working hypothesis offered was that an intergroup dynamic (between subgroups) had developed, characterised by stereotyping and blaming and filled with suspicion/paranoia. This paranoid-schizoid position (Cytrynbaum & Noumair 2004) indicates the split in and disintegration of the organisational system.

Male and female dominance had a tendency to shift from time to time. The working hypothesis was offered that this related to the levels of energy at any given time as well as to the content of the discussion. Often, when the discussion was male-dominated, the content was largely at cognitive levels and was less personal. Once the discussion reached a deeper level of intensity, emotion and sensitivity, the women seemed to authorise themselves into the leadership roles. They seemed to believe that they could handle such conversations better, which the group allowed them to do. The hypothesis was that men did not trust their inner selves to participate on those levels. This was also indicative of competition based on differences and the power struggle (for dominance).

7.4 Splits around race

Race and colour as objects of inclusion and exclusion revealed some fascinating dynamics, particularly in terms of acceptance and/or the denial of blackness and whiteness. For example, an Indian woman expressed her confusion: "Part of me feels black, part of me feels white." Interestingly, the reaction of some group participants, particularly white men, was to deny seeing her blackness, and as such, her racial identity. The working hypothesis offered was that the anxiety about who belongs where and with whom and in what identity was so intense that participants become pseudo colour blind as a defence against really working with difference between the race groups.

7.5 Splits caused by language

Another dynamic resulting in the inclusion and exclusion of participants was language. It had the potential to perpetuate divisions among them through the levels of discussion, the content and the specific usage of language. The group spoke English, which became problematic when the discussions became highly emotional. During such periods, when some group participants found it difficult to express their feelings in English, which was their second, third or fourth language, they switched to their vernacular. This led to non-understanding, further divisions and exclusions. The language behaviour indicated another way in which the group split itself as a defence against the anxiety of working together as a system in the midst of so much diversity.

7.6 Splits caused by status

Status was also responsible for a split dynamic in the group. Some participants used their academic status and performed intellectual "gymnastics" in an attempt to use rhetoric to exclude other participants. This type of conversation, where the academic rhetoric employed bored some members of the group, resulted in the marked segregation of other participants. Unfortunately though, only a few participants made an effort to understand why discourses of that kind were taking place and what the significance was for the focus group discussion. The impression created was that the complexity of the behavioural dynamics created so much anxiety that it was impossible to engage with the content on an equal level. The working hypothesis offered was that status was used to split the system into more manageable and safer parts. An alternative interpretation is that flight reactions into status issues were used as a defence against linking with opposites that threaten. The boredom acted as a regressive and resistant defence mechanism, against the building of relationships across differences.

7.7 The continuous splitting of the system

There were times when it seemed as if some participants were not capable of engaging at an emotional level because commitment felt too risky. It was as if their anxiety levels were so high that they had hoped that by using complex language they would be able to cope better with an anxiety-provoking situation - a flight reaction. It was fascinating to observe how some white men used highly academic language to remove themselves from the immediacy and intensity of the discussion. At times this was done in a hostile manner. This behaviour was interpreted as a distancing phenomenon in defence of linking with opposites. Conversely, some black men took on the role of the mature traditional leader, using his "words of wisdom" to tell others in the group what to do and how to keep the process going. This led to further splitting of the group and caused further confrontation between black and white males, much to the frustration of the women in the group. These behaviours offer evidence of how the group as a collective projected different objects (including feelings) onto its different parts, for example, hostility and distance onto the white male, tradition and leadership onto the black male. The males in the group split into different factions, which was a source of frustration to the females. The psychodynamic interpretation was that a classic war dynamic was created where the men fight and the women stay at home, deprived and frustrated. This indicated the group's lack of creativity (or procreation).

8 Discussion

8.1 *The richness of the data*

The data emanating from the focus group were sufficiently rich for analysis and interpretation from the systems psychodynamic perspective. Because the moderators not only measured opinions and perceptions but also influenced the participants, by interpreting behaviour by means of the working hypothesis, the method becomes comparable to the small study group in the group relations event (Cytrynbaum & Noumair 2004). It is important to note that when this type of behavioural influencing is offered in a focus group, the moderators must offer the necessary containment for participants to feel safe enough to explore difficult diversity topics (Czander 1993).

The diversity dynamics in this organisation reflected the complexity of diversity dynamics and especially relationships across differences of race and gender. Although hostility and projections may be said to be manifesting in all organisations, the amount and intensity of the psychodynamic splits in this system are a cause for concern. It was suggested that the organisation should remain constantly aware of its dynamics, use such focus groups regularly to measure the intensity of feelings (almost as a "dip stick") and follow up with wellplanned and implemented diversity dynamics events. The best example of such an event is the group relations working conference (Miller 1993), which was used in the previous studies mentioned above.

8.2 *Comparison of the present study with past studies on diversity dynamics*

The present study was compared with previous studies on South African diversity dynamics from the systems psychodynamic perspective (Cilliers & May 2002; Cilliers & Naidoo 2005a; 2005b; May & Cilliers 2002; Pretorius 2004). This comparison revealed similarities and differences, which the authors have attempted to explain through the following comments and hypotheses:

- In terms of similarities, it would be naive to think that these dynamics will ever disappear from the South African organisational discourse.
- The same applies to the dynamics of inclusion/exclusion. It was hypothesised that the denial and splitting off of parts of the self, especially around difference in race and gender, and which leads to hostility, a power play and projections between the parts of the system, will always be part of diversity dynamics.
- The first difference referred to an increase in the intensity of the dynamics of hostility between the different parts. It was hypothesised that there is an increase in frustration levels because of ineffective ways of dealing with diversity management in organisations.
- The second difference referred to a shift from an inclusiveness in race (eg. where black participants were united in their hostility towards white participants) towards a split among black participants - with the black females expressing their hostility towards the black males. It was hypothesised that the prominent and powerful roles that black females are taking on in organisations as a result of affirmative action and employment equity have authorised them to express their feelings more openly than before towards their black male colleagues (even against cultural prescriptions).
- As a corollary to the second difference, a new dynamic is emerging, namely that of the males, black and white, becoming more united in the presence of the black

females' power. It was hypothesised that because black females are taking on such powerful roles in organisations, the racial divide between males is becoming smaller as a result of their mutual experience of loss of social power.

- The findings did not clearly indicate what role the white females are adopting in the present diversity scenario. Hypothetically their role could be called a non-position where they are containing a lot of anxiety on behalf of the system, possibly between the previous and the new authority and their different power bases.
- The third difference referred to the previous dynamics, which were mostly about the dimensions of race and gender, and currently age as well. It was inferred that the new generation of (especially black) employees with no firsthand memory, experience and sometimes knowledge of the intensity of the struggle for freedom and democracy, frustrates and angers the older (especially black) employees for whom the struggle was and still is a highly emotive matter. One older black man expressed his disappointment at seeing the children failing to honour the older people's efforts to make a difference for the younger ones. It was hypothesised that the age split manifests in the older black employees carrying with them the memory (of the past) while the younger black employees are motivated by a desire for a bright and affluent future. The split leads to mutual blaming and projections of "You don't honour our struggle enough" versus "You are so stuck in the past and forget about the bright future".
- In terms of generation theory (see Codrington & Grant-Marshall 2004), the younger millennial generation of employees born between 1980 and 2000 were in primary school when Nelson Mandela was released from prison in 1990. Although they may have heard stories around it, their memory of the preceding situation and experiences are not the same as the memories of those who experienced the struggle at first hand. This represents a new conflict of interest which is entering the diversity discourse in South African organisations.
- The fourth difference referred to identity dynamics expressed through language. The previous findings referred to Afrikaners using their own language as an expression of their own identity. The same behaviour is now being seen among black participants. It was hypothesised that language is used as an expression of identity, previously by Afrikaners who spoke about the loss of (eg political) power, and now by black females as an expression of the gaining of power. This dynamic best illustrated the shift in power that has taken place in the country over the last 12 years.
- The fifth difference referred to the added dynamics around status (which has never before been mentioned in the study of South African diversity dynamics). It was inferred that diversity dynamics are moving away from a pure obvious and observable colour and racial divide to a more complex status and class divide (typical of some European countries - see Foster 2004; Nichols 2004). It was hypothesised that the growing South African economy and economic empowerment is showing its effect in the diversity discourse, where previously economically disadvantaged employees are moving into money and using the power of money to differentiate and divide. In terms of relationships and relationship building in organisations, there are indications of how status and class differences are becoming stumbling blocks in effective organisational functioning.
- The findings of the focus group revealed a potentially explosive element, especially around the dimensions of race, gender and age. The moderators were acutely aware of the intensity of the experienced feelings that could easily be acted out under

provocation. It was hypothesised that organisational diversity violence could be expected to manifest in these areas if precautions were not taken.

8.3 Concluding remarks

In the new South Africa organisations are expected to have multicultural workforces, and it has become the task of officials in the fields of diversity management, skills development, employee relations, management and leadership development to attend to the related diversity issues. The above findings suggest that such officials take cognisance of the following: that South African diversity dynamics are here to stay, that they are highly dynamic and constantly evolving, that organisations are experiencing enormous and increasing psychological splits around the many differences inherent in diversity dynamics, especially in relation to the primary dimensions of race, gender and age, and that the splits are filled with high intensity feelings of frustration, hostility, resentment, non-tolerance and suspicion, even to the point of explosion into violent behaviour.

In order to understand, manage and contain diversity dynamics in organisations, it was suggested that all diversity management endeavours implement the following:

- Constant monitoring of the level and intensity of diversity dynamics through observation of the levels of feelings in the organisation in general, as well as in all types of meetings, workshops, official and unofficial correspondence. It helps to see no behaviour or event as happening in isolation or by chance (in terms of behavioural dynamics there are no co-incidences). The challenge is to see the part and relate it to the whole.
- Typical behaviour to look out for includes defences such as having strong and negative stereotypes about "the others", blaming, generalisations and projections of own frustration, anger and incompetence onto and into the other race, gender or generation.
- Where the intensity becomes high and potentially explosive, the individual carrying the projection must be psychologically cared for, for example through coaching or counselling.
- The group must also be psychologically cared for, for example through arranging a focus group where the participants can ventilate and offload their feelings.
- All one-on-one and group interventions must be conducted by trained officials who understand the systems psychodynamic manifestations of diversity dynamics and who can contain the potentially explosive situation. It is suggested that the consultants/moderators should be representative of the primary diverse dimensions of race and gender (and not as in this study where two white people worked together in a diverse scenario).
- All informal or formal findings around diversity dynamics must be taken seriously and compared over time to establish trends and shifts in its manifestations in a type of diversity dynamic audit.
- The above monitoring and auditing can be linked to the employee wellness programme to establish what the total organisational system is experiencing and what the different subsystems are carrying on behalf of the total system.

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