CHAPTER 5   RESEARCH METHOD

The aim of this chapter is to present the research method. It represents steps 1 to 4 of phase 2 of the research method. The chapter starts off by presenting key aspects of the Robben Island Diversity Experience (RIDE). The researcher then describes the sample of the study, as well as the data collection and data analysis. Thereafter the credibility and trustworthiness of the research are discussed. The chapter concludes with a chapter summary.

5.1   THE ROBBEN ISLAND DIVERSITY EXPERIENCE (RIDE)

The Robben Island Diversity Experience (RIDE) served as setting for this research. The following sub-sections explore the primary task, aims, rationale, core concepts, administration, design and method, programme, venue, population and staff of RIDE.

5.1.1   The primary task

The primary task of RIDE was to afford delegates and consultants the opportunity to study the core concepts of diversity dynamics as it happened in the here and now (DCT, 2000). The core concepts studied were (1) identity, (2) reference systems, (3) power and (4) relations and relatedness (see sec 4.4 for definitions).

5.1.2   Aims

The aims of RIDE were as follows (DCT, 2000):
- to provide opportunities to individually and collectively learn about diversity dynamics
- to provide opportunities to individually and collectively learn about the core concepts of diversity dynamics (identity, reference systems, power, as well as relations and relatedness)

- to provide opportunities for individual participants to learn about how they perceive, interpret, and act towards individual and collective diversity.

5.1.3 Rationale

The rationale for RIDE (DCT, 2000) can be stated as follows:

RIDE rejects overly rational and cognitive approaches to diversity. Diversity cannot be adequately described using only the language of consciousness and rationality since it is also underpinned by powerful, hidden unconscious and non-rational forces. The non-rational forces refer to the emotions, needs and anxieties that influence the way people react to differences and similarities. Specific non-rational forces that influence diversity are the survival instinct, the pleasure principle, anxiety and the defences against it, envy, the needs for attachment and individuation and vicious circles. Diversity is further influenced by the context forces which provide the lens through which differences and similarities are perceived, interpreted and acted upon.

Studying diversity is thus about understanding (1) the conscious, rational and overt forces, (2) the unconscious, irrational and covert forces, and (3) the contextual influence that impacts on how diversity is perceived, interpreted and acted upon. RIDE provides an opportunity to study the way in which these forces influence diversity. As a result of the above, it is the belief that the RIDE, offers the opportunity to attain a deeper and more holistic awareness and understanding of diversity.

5.1.4 The core concepts of diversity dynamics

RIDE focussed on diversity and its behavioural dynamics. Within this framework, the specific focus was on identity, reference systems, power, and relations and relatedness (see sec 4.4 for discussions of these concepts).

5.1.5   Administration of the event

In marketing RIDE, a general invitation was sent to managers and diversity practitioners across the country. The company organising RIDE sent a more detailed letter to all interested parties and also referred them to a web page containing all the relevant information about the venue, what the experience was about and what the approach (group relations training) would be used in presenting RIDE.

5.1.6   Design and method

RIDE involved an educational process and used experiential learning as the medium for insight, understanding, growth and development. RIDE approached diversity from a group relations training framework. The Tavistock model (Miller, 1989, 1993) was used to structure the group relations training event. This model was developed by the Tavistock Institute, in London, from 1957 to date (Colman & Bexton 1975; Colman & Geller, 1985). Specific modifications were made to the primary task, aims, rationale, hypotheses and programme to make the experience suitable for studying diversity. To this end, specific core concepts relevant to the study of diversity were defined.

Dealing with diversity involves drawing on one's own inner resources (and compensating for one's limitations) to make effective group functioning possible. Because this experience is unique to each individual, and also has to vary according to own previous personal experience, dealing with diversity is not a subject that can be taught (DCT, 2000). People were afforded an opportunity to 'learn to learn' from their experience, and the experience was designed to support that process.

The experience is set up as a temporary organisation. It develops its own dynamics, rituals and ways of working within its structures (Colman & Bexton, 1975). Members and staff were part of this organisation and had the opportunity to become aware of these processes and their own contribution to the culture that formed within the temporary organisation.

The experience was designed to provide opportunities for learning. Through the process of examining

and interpreting their experience, members could develop their understanding of the diversity dynamics within RIDE and their roles within them (DCT, 2000). The aim of the experience therefore was not to be a therapeutic intervention, even though some of the learning was personal and could lead to that end. Each member may have considered, for example, how childhood and subsequent experiences with diverse people had influenced his/her behaviour.

The task was educational, based on examining the 'here-and-now' experience. The focus was thus on what transpired within the group as it unfolded at that stage. Each member could use his/her authority to accept what proved valid and reject, what was not. Through this process members could reconsider the way they interact with diversity within themselves, and also with diversity in the external environment (Colman & Bexton 1975; Colman & Geller, 1985).

5.1.7   Programme

The event was structured and presented as discussed above in early November 2000. It was presented over six days, starting on Sunday, 12th November 2000 and ending on Friday, 17th November 2000. It consisted of 28 (90-minute) sessions totalling 48 hours of intensive experiential learning.

Table 5.1 presents the November 2000 RIDE programme.

Table 5.1   November 2000 RIDE programme

Time	Sunday 12 Nov	Monday 13 Nov	Tuesday 14 Nov	Wednesday 15 Nov	Thursday 16 Nov	Friday 17 Nov
07h00 - 08h00		Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
08h00 - 09h30		Large group 2	Large group 3	Large group 4	Large group 5	Small group 7
09h30 - 10h00		Break	Break	Break	Break	Break
10h00 - 11h30		Small group 2	Small group 3	Small Group 5	Lecture	RIDE plenary
11h30 - 12h00	Registration	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break
12h00 - 13h30	Departing from the V & A Arriving on Robben Island	Inter group plenary Inter group 1	Inter group 4	Inter group 6	Small group 6	Application group 2
13h30 - 14h30	Opening Plenary	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Social Event
14h30 - 16h00	Tour of Robben Island	Inter group 2	Free Time Optional: Tour of Robben Island Prison	Inter Group 7 Inter group plenary	Large group 6	Departure from Robben Island
16h00 - 16h30	Large group 1	Break	Inter group 5	Break	Break	
16h30 - 17h00		Inter group 3		Discussion group	Processing group	
17h00 - 17h30						
17h30 - 18h00	Dinner		Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	
18h00 - 18h30		Dinner				
18h30 - 19h00	Small group 1		Processing group	Processing group	Application group 1	
19h00 - 19h30		Processing group				
19h30 - 20h00						
20h00-20h30	Break					
20h30 - 21h00	Processing group					
21h00 - 21h30						

A brief description of each of the events included in the program, are as follows (DCT, 2000):

- *Arrival.* Delegates arrived on Robben Island, crossing the boundary from being a citizen to becoming a group member. At the same time, the delegates become aware of the island surroundings in its practical and symbolic meaning.

- *Plenary.* The purpose was to provide information on the experience and its events, as well as to discuss the crossing of boundaries into and out of events. The total experience and the inter-group event started and ended in a plenary event.

- *Large group event.* All the delegates and four consultants participated in this event. The purpose was to study the core concepts of diversity dynamics as it happened in the total system.

- *Small group event.* Up to 10 delegates and one consultant participated in this event. The purpose was to study the core concepts of diversity dynamics during face-to-face interpersonal relations.

- *Inter group event.* The delegates had the opportunity to form groups among themselves. Consultants were available to the groups so formed and to any meetings between whole groups or representatives of groups. The purpose was to provide opportunities to study relations between groups as they happened in the total system.

- *Processing Event.* Delegates were divided into functional groups of up to 12. The purpose was to work towards integrating the formed working hypotheses. Consultants provided opportunities for this integration to take shape and as well as for delegates to process their experiences.

- *Lecture.* All delegates and consultants participated in this event. The purpose was to share information about diversity dynamics and its paradigms.

- *Application group event.* Working in the same groups as in the processing event, the purpose

was to provide opportunities for delegates to work towards the application of the learning (about diversity dynamics) within their everyday working life.

- *Tour of the Robben Island Prison.* On the Tuesday afternoon most participants visited the Robben Island prison were the political prisoners were previously jailed. This served as a optional RIDE social event.

- *Social event.* This event provided an opportunity for delegates and consultants to socialize in an informal atmosphere.

- *Departure.* On Friday afternoon the delegates left Robben Island for the mainland. Delegates crossed the boundary of being a group member to take up the role of citizen once again.

5.1.8   The venue

Robben Island was chosen as the venue for the experience because of its diversity-related historical significance. Throughout South Africa's history, Robben Island served as a container for those elements that were too different from society or that threatened the status quo of society. As discussed in Klein's (1997) paranoid schizoid position, society banished or split off those parts of itself that were difficult to contain, and project them onto another object, in this case Robben Island. The result is an idealised state in which the mainland symbolised 'goodness' or purity while all the 'badness' or impurities such as the black freedom fighters, the chronically sick and the mentally ill were contained on Robben Island.

Robben Island thus became the prefect dumping ground for those in power – a place in which elements that became anxiety provoking could be pushed out of awareness. Through this process, society split off those parts that confronted itself with its own diversity. In doing this, society protected itself from the difficult process of integrating these differences with its 'self-image'. In actual fact, society protected itself from dealing with the diversity within.

With the release of the last political prisoners in 1991, and the release of Nelson Mandela in particular, Robben Island became a symbol of human freedom. It links up with Klein's (1997) depressive position where the diversities that were once too anxiety provoking to deal with, are contained and integrated back into society. The previously disowned parts of society in actuality became the foundation on which the new South Africa was constructed.

5.1.9   Population

A total of 24 delegates attended the November 2000 RIDE. The gender ratio was 11 males and 13 females. There were 10 black delegates, two coloured delegates, two Indian delegates and 10 white delegates. They represented large (52%) and small (10%) private organisations, as well as national (30%) and provincial government (8%). The delegates were all in the field of human resource management. Most of the delegates were either human resource practitioners or diversity consultants. The delegates were mostly (82%) on a middle management level, with a few trainers (18%) still on a junior level.

Table 5.2   Breakdown of the RIDE population

	Black	**White**	**Coloured**	**Indian/Asian**	**Total**
Female	4	6	1	2	13
Male	6	4	1	--	11
Total	10	10	2	2	24

5.1.10 Staff

DCT, as the hosting organisation, appointed a white male (Director) and a coloured female (Associate Director) as the directorship of the experience. DCT authorised the directorship to plan and conduct the experience. The directorship started with their planning six months prior to the experience. The staff

for the event were chosen on the strength of (1) their training and experience in the GRTM, (2) their representation of race and gender as primary diversity dimensions, and (3) the number of delegates who attended the experience. Two other consultants, a black female and a white male, were invited to be part of the staff of the experience. Another white male served as the administrator of the experience.

5.2   THE SAMPLE OF THE STUDY

From the population of RIDE (24), a sample of convenience (15) was drawn chosen on the grounds of their availability (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002). Table 3 provides a breakdown of the research sample. Six white delegates, six black delegates, two coloured delegates and one Asian delegate were included in the sample. In terms of gender, seven of the delegates were male, while eight were female. In terms of organisational level, 13 of the delegates functioned on a middle management level while two functioned on a junior level.

Table 5.3   Breakdown of the research sample

	Black	**White**	**Coloured**	**Asian**	**Total**
Female	3	3	1	1	8
Male	3	3	1	--	7
Total	6	6	2	1	15

5.3   QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

In line with the exploratory and descriptive nature of this study (Bauer & Gaskell, 2000; Johnson & Christensen, 2000), a qualitative approach was chosen to structure and conduct the research. According to Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2002, p. 398) qualitative methodology focuses on 'contextual' research, is not concerned with discovering universal, law-like patterns of human behaviour,

but is focused on making sense of human experience from within the context and perspective of human experience.

The hermeneutic approach was used to collect, analyse and interpret the research data. The term 'hermeneutics' in a general sense refers to the practice of interpretation in all its forms, and to the study and practice of interpretation (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002). From the hermeneutic perspective it is essential that the researcher should use himself/herself as an instrument. From this perspective the 'self' refers to the emotional, perceptual and cognitive processes that make up a person, and using the self as a instrument means becoming aware of and using these emotional, perceptual and cognitive processes (McCormick & White, 2000). Using the self as an instrument also fits into the paradigm of this research since it stems from psychoanalytic practice.

McCormick and White (2000) identified the following methods for using the self as an instrument:

- *Emotional reactions.* This involves paying attention to emotional reactions to a specific person or comment and using them to formulate diagnostic hypotheses. Internal responses (emotional reactions and fantasies) are thus seen to reflect the external environment and can be used to understand the structure, dynamics and culture of the phenomenon (diversity dynamics) being studied.

- *Common Reactions.* The reactions experienced by the researcher can be seen as being representative of a common reaction to the phenomenon. Feelings experienced in the self thus indicate common feelings shared by others when interacting with the phenomenon. It is therefore important for the researcher to have some insight into and clarity on these feelings in order to work with them and to translate them into hypotheses. In translating common reactions, the researcher should understand his/her own prejudices regarding difference and the potential for counter-transference in order to reduce the bias of the interpretation. This require the researcher to have some degree of self-insight in order to reduce these potentials as far as possible.

- *Feelings of surprise.* Researchers should also pay close attention to feelings of surprise. Incomprehensible feelings suggest that some of the researcher's assumptions, preconceived hypotheses or expectations have not been met.

- *Indicators of specific hypothesis.* Specific feelings may suggest specific conditions within a entity. There are, for example, links between RIDE and the emotions commonly experienced by the delegates.

- *Initial perceptions.* Noting initial perceptions of the respondents is important, whilst still operating in a field of perceptions that has not yet necessarily merged with the situation.

- *Understanding biases.* This is about understanding one's own common reactions and prejudices to enable the researcher to reduce the effect of bias on the diagnosis. The feelings experienced by the researcher may have more to do with his/her own past than the entity being diagnosed. Emotions may thus indicate something about the entity being studied or simply reflect something about the researcher's unresolved issues.

- *Postponing judgement.* Postponing judgements to avoid premature conclusions refers to (1) the researcher's ability to engage in self-observation, to listen while suspending critical judgement, to avoid speculation, and (2) to avoid premature summation of data. This required the researcher to initially listen and observe in an open-ended way which postpones the drawing of premature conclusions.

- *Images and fantasies.* This involves paying attention to fantasies and images that occur while gathering information about that system or situation and using it to formulate hypotheses.

Using the self as an instrument is applicable to the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data. According to McCormick and White (2000), it allows for the following benefits:

- It widens the scope of data collection by not only supplying more data but also providing a different class of data. This provides an opportunity to triangulate data and thus enhance the objectivity of the findings.

- It serves as a source for initial hypotheses. It also provides a source for generating creative hypotheses since it is not limited to hypotheses that fit into predetermined categories.

- It affords the researcher the opportunity to use the feelings and experiences to form an overall picture and to integrate hypotheses.

- It serves as an inexpensive and easily accessible source of data.

The researcher not only used himself as instrument during the data collection (unstructured interviews), but also used these principles to analyse and interpret the research data.

5.4   DATA COLLECTION

Data collection was planned according to qualitative research principles (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). An unstructured interview was chosen as the research instrument.

5.4.1   The aims of the unstructured interview

The aim was to collect qualitative data on the way the delegates experienced RIDE 2000, specifically the rich and in-depth data on their thoughts, beliefs and feelings about the experience (Flick, 2002; Gordon, 1999).

5.4.2   Rationale for using the unstructured interview

The unstructured interview was chosen in line with the exploratory and descriptive nature of this research. This type of interview was chosen to elicit in-depth dynamics about diversity. It provides a format for discovering a range of perceptions about and understandings from the participants' point of view. The researcher did not provide a structure and also refrained from taking preconceived ideas or assumptions into the interview situation (Flick, 2002).

The rationale for using the unstructured interview is that this method with its personal, open and less restrictive nature, would create a milieu in which interviewees could reveal the true experience of participants. The unstructured interview thus allows as many of the diversity dynamics as possible to surface. As an information-gathering instrument, the unstructured interview allows for the exploration and identification of variables, as well as the examination of the relations between the variables.

According to Kerlinger (1986), it can be used to formulate hypotheses and guide other phases of the research. Unstructured interviews provide a greater depth than other types of interviewing, and given their qualitative nature, can be used to understand complex behaviours without imposing any prior structure or categorisation that might limit the field of inquiry (Fontana & Frey, 1994).

The unstructured interview allows the researcher to enter into the inner world of the RIDE delegates and to gain a true understanding of their experience of the event (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

5.4.3 Design of the unstructured interview

Taking into considerations the guidelines presented by Keats (1993), Bauer and Gaskell (2000), and Mouton and Marias (1994), the following steps were included in the design of the interview:

- *Step 1*. An interview schedule was drawn up containing the questions to be asked during the interview. Open ended, non-directive questions were formulated to enable respondents to freely explore their experience of RIDE (Gordon, 1999). The interview schedule was discussed with a number of individuals to determine whether the questions were clear and to the point. The interview schedule was structured in order to ensure that the interviewer would not prompt for specific responses from the interviewees (Mouton & Marias, 1994). This was done to counteract any possible bias on the part of the interviewer, stemming from his multi-role involvement as consultant to the RIDE 2000 event, researcher and interviewer.

- *Step 2*. The interview started with the following comments:

  "Thank you for taking the time to do this interview. The reason for this interview is, for research purposes, to determine how you experienced RIDE, that you attended during November. You can rest assured that all information will be kept absolutely confidential and your response will remain anonymous."

- *Step 3.* The following introductory question was asked:

  "It has now been approximately a month since RIDE. Could you tell me about your experience of RIDE? "

- *Step 4.* The interviewer used a maximum of three follow-up questions to obtain more information about the delegate's experience of the RIDE 2000 event. These questions were as follows:

  "What else did you experience?"
  "Would you like to add anything else relating to your experience of RIDE?"
  "Are there any other experiences that stood out for you?"

- *Step 5.* The interviewer listened attentively, but refrained from probing further or asking additional clarifying questions. This was done to obtain thick descriptions of the experience of the delegates - their thoughts (head), emotions (heart) and reactions (hand) regarding the experience.

- *Step 6.* The interview was concluded by thanking the interviewee for his/her cooperation when it became clear that he/she had covered the topic of discussion, or if the interviewee repeat himself/herself unnecessarily and/or when it became clear that the interviewee did not intend to reveal more detail (Johnson & Christensen, 2000).

5.4.4   Administration of the interviews

The following steps were followed in administering the qualitative interviews:

- *Step 1.* The interviews took place approximately one month after RIDE 2000. The researcher made appointments with all the interviewees included in the sample. During this conversation,

permission was obtained to use a tape recorder.

- *Step 2*. The interviews were conducted either telephonically or in person.

- *Step 3*. The location and duration of the interview was planned in such a way to ensure privacy, no interruptions and to allow sufficient time for the completion of the interview.

5.5   DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative data analysis normally requires the reduction and interpretation of the voluminous amount of information collected (Johnson & Christensen, 2000). Through data analysis certain patterns, categories or themes are identified and then interpreted by using some schema (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Simply put, qualitative data analysis requires separating the data into smaller pieces so that the larger, consolidated picture can emerge (Johnson & Christensen, 2000).

The hermeneutic approach was used to analyse and interpret the data in order to gain a clear understanding of the dynamics from the point of view of the participants (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002). By analysing the data, the researcher could identify themes relating to South African diversity dynamics.

The use of the hermeneutic approach to analyse and interpret the data allows for the inclusion and application of the GRTM (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002). This approach requires understanding and exploration to a depth which is beyond the face value of the interaction (Flick, 2002). In order to structure the interpretation of the results, the GRTM was used, since it allows for the integration of conscious and unconscious dynamics related to diversity in the South African context.

The following steps were followed to analyse the research data:

- *Step 1: Transcription*. This refers to the procedure of transforming research data, such as tape recordings, into typed data (Johnson & Christensen, 2000). The tape recordings of the

interviews were transcribed and then used as raw data. The researcher transcribed the interviews himself as soon as possible after the interviews had been conducted.

- *Step 2: Familiarisation.* During this phase the researcher read and re-read the data several times to come to grips with the data as a whole (Bauer & Gaskell, 2000). The data were also given to and discussed with colleagues (industrial psychologists) who are well acquainted with the GRTM. When reading through the data, the researcher kept track of the themes, hunches, interpretations and ideas by making notes in the margins of the transcripts. He also identified emerging themes, patterns, specific vocabulary or topics, recurring activities and specific meanings or feelings that surfaced from the data.

- *Step 3: Segmenting the data.* Segmenting involves dividing the data into meaningful analytic units (Johnson & Christensen, 2000). After reading through the data several times, the researcher identified meaningful units or segments. The segments ranged from single words, sentences and even larger passages centring around specific themes (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984).

- *Step 4: Coding the data.* Coding is the procedure of marking segments of data with symbols, descriptive words or category names (Johnson & Christensen, 2000). After segmenting the data, the segments were coded (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Specific codes were assigned to identify and cluster meaningful segments.

In developing coding categories, the researcher listed all the identified themes, concepts and interpretations first and then decided on the data that fitted each category. As part of this procedure the researcher developed a master coding list with all the codes that were used in the research. The master coding list included the full code name as well as a description or definition of the code (Johnson & Christensen, 2000). The codes of the master list were assigned to new segments portraying the same dimension. New codes were added to the master list as they emerged.

In an effort to sort out the coding, certain categories changed as additions, redefinition or collapsing of categories occurred. Data not included in coding categories were re-examined. The analysis was further

refined by comparing the themes, concepts and ideas. Through this process certain themes were emphasised while others were discarded (Johnson & Christensen, 2000).

In analysing the data (from a GRTM lense), the following approaches were used (Bauer & Gaskell, 2000):

- The researcher kept an open mind to avoid prejudgements and to allow receptivity to what might emerge. This meant suspending past experience as the sole structure of the present.

- The researcher allowed the process of exploration to evolve in a state of ignorance and uncertainty.

- The researcher did not make quick judgements, but allowed the value of the qualitative process to be perceived.

5.6   INTERPRETATION OF THE RESULTS

The interpretation of the results, as per the hermeneutic approach, entailed an attempt to understand the situation as it seemed from the reality of the respondents. This entailed the ability to look past the obvious and superficial aspects of experience, towards its deep and underlying structures (Kets de Vries, 1991; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Geertz (as cited by Wrogemann, 2002) talked about a "thick" description, which is interpretive and seeks out the significant events, and searches for themes that will explain a myriad of facts. It entails working with the patterns, ideas or sentiment that could explain underlying themes. As Kets de Vries (1991) indicated, the search is for elements that are not only logically central but that have a deep unconscious and emotional significance. Krantz and Gilmore (1991) emphasises listening with a "third ear" and interpreting the data in a way that enables the integration of the different pieces of the puzzle. This approach to interpretation was imperative in order to gain a deeper understanding of South African diversity dynamics.

As Kets de Vries (1991) indicated, that interpretation is a dynamic and interactive process that may bring insights, but which rarely provides final solutions. The interpretations are not neatly integrated diagnostic formulations, but should rather be seen as a working hypothesis, that needs to be tested against the reality as perceived by others.

Practical understanding is seen as a starting place for interpretation, rather than the origin of knowledge (Packer & Addison, 1989). The perspective from which phenomena are approached thus reflects the researcher's decision on how to engage with the research problem. According to Roffey (1980), research needs to respect the integrity of what is presented rather than distort it through predetermined structures.

The hermeneutic approach emphasises the notion that this perspective relates to an interpretation of the world as a reality constituted by each individual's perception of it (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002). Accordingly there is no objective reality, there are only multiple realities which can be described subjectively (Hewitt, 1991). It emphasizes the aspect that interpreting is not only limited to what is being said, but also incorporates what lies behind what is being said. This recognises the conscious and unconscious in expression, and involves a search for the origin of thoughts or behaviour (Roffey, 1980).

The researcher used himself as instrument in integrating, analysing and interpreting the data. Themes were identified, clustered and interpreted from a GRTM lense. On the base of these themes the researcher worked towards formulating working hypotheses about diversity dynamics. These interpretations, as indicated in the above mentioned paragraphs, do not represent the whole truth, but rather present one perspective or truth about the data as seen from the researchers vantage point.

5.7   VALIDITY OF THE RESEARCH

As indicated in chapter 1 (see sec 1.5.3), qualitative researchers use alternative criteria in working with the validity of qualitative research. The following subsections explore the validity of (1) the literature review and (2) the qualitative research.

5.7.1 Validity of the literature review

The credibility of the literature review was ensured by means of the following:

1. Conceptual descriptions of all relevant concepts used in this research were provided (Bogden & Biklen, 1992).

2. The models and theories were chosen in a representative manner and presented in a standardised format. Hence the literature chosen, relates to the nature, problem and aims of the research (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

3. The literature collection was done as comprehensively as possible by using various computerised searches of the relevant themes (Flick, 2002).

4. The literature review incorporated the latest literature sources, as well as classical sources relevant to the research topic (Richardson, 1996).

5. Consensus discussions were conducted with colleagues (industrial psychologists) and consultants in the fields of diversity and group relations training (Mukherji, 2000).

The credibility of the literature research can be justified by accepting the fact that the literature collected and used for this research, stems from the latest developments in the subject field and therefore complies with standards for international and local publications in subject articles and books (Gordon, 1999).

5.7.2 Validity of the qualitative research

The credibility of the research was ensured by implementing criteria appropriate to qualitative research (Flick, 2002; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002). The credibility of the group relations training event (RIDE) was ensured by designing and structuring it according to the Tavistock model, with specific adjustments to make it more appropriate for studying diversity. Top consultants (experts in the field of group relations training) were used as the consultants for RIDE.

The credibility of the qualitative research was also enhanced by choosing the measuring instrument in a responsible and representative way, and presenting it in a standardised format (Gordon, 1999). In terms of procedural credibility, the researcher also kept to the specific questions framed prior to the start of the interviews. The focus was on listening as much as possible, whilst refraining from talking or asking questions not related to the research (Flick, 2002). The procedural credibility was further enhanced by recording the data as exactly as possible by (1) using a tape recorder, and (2) the interviewer himself transcribing and typing the data as soon as possible after the interviews (Flick, 2002).

According to Johnson and Christensen (2000) research bias is one of the main threats to credible research. Specific care was also taken to eliminate research bias, impulsive interpretation, and leading questions. As Packer and Addison (1989) indicates, the analysis and interpretations should not reflect the prejudices and bias of the researcher. Reflexivity, referring to the researcher's ability to engage in critical self-reflection about his/her potential biases and predispositions, is seen as a key activity in understanding research bias (Johnson & Christensen, 2000). Through reflexivity, the researcher could become more self aware and try to control his bias. The researcher used himself as an instrument to become aware of the intra-personal as well as interpersonal dynamics that could influence the way he analysed and interpreted the data (McCormick & White, 2000). The GRTM was used as lense to interpret the data.

The researcher also corroborated the research data with his memory of the experience (RIDE) itself (Camic et al, 2003). Although not sufficient in itself, the credibility of the results was also enhanced by illustrating or substantiating the themes and hypotheses generated in the research results through appropriate quotations from the research data (Flick, 2002).

The credibility of the research was increased by applying what Lincoln and Cuba (Flick, 2002) call 'peer debriefing'. According to this, the researcher discussed the results and working hypothesis with people who are not involved in the research in order to disclose his own blind spots.

The theoretical constructs, as discussed in chapters 2, 3 and 4 provided a framework but not the entire basis for the analysis and interpretation of the data. The researcher looked for confirmation of the

themes while also remaining open to disconfirming evidence (Miles & Hubermann, 1994).

5.8   RELIABILITY OF THE RESEARCH

As indicated in chapter 1 (see sec 1.5.4), qualitative researchers use alternative criteria in working with the reliability of qualitative research. The following subsections explore the reliability of (1) the literature review and (2) the qualitative research.

5.8.1   Dependability of the literature review

The dependability of the literature review was ensured by the assumption that other subject specialists have access to the same literature and that the researcher attempted to reflect the facts scientifically.

5.8.2   Dependability of the qualitative research

The dependability of the research is influenced by four variables: the researcher (interviewer), the interviewee, the measuring instrument and the research context (Johnson & Christensen, 2000).

- *Researcher*. Contrary to quantitative research, objectivity is not the primary goal of qualitative research Gordon, 1999). From a hermeneutic approach (McCormick & White, 2000), the researcher's 'subjective' perception and experience in collecting, analysing and interpreting the data, forms an integral part of the qualitative research process. Using the self as an instrument, enhances the researchers ability to work with the multiple realities of the data and to come to meaningful conclusions.
- *Procedural dependability* was enhanced by the fact that the *researcher (interviewer)* had training and experience in the use of the non-directive approach (Flick, 2002). Since the image of the interviewer as consultant during the Robben Island Diversity Experience could affect the reactions of the interviewee, special care was taken not to prompt specific reactions from the

interviewee (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2002).

- The *interviewee,* on the other hand, was asked to respond to previously determined questions which limited the opportunity to select a role, which he/she might think the interviewer wanted him/her to fulfil.

- *The measuring instrument.* Except for the predetermined questions, no other leading questions were asked, thus the *measuring instrument* itself allowed ample freedom for the interviewee to express himself/herself.

- *Research context.* With reference to the *research context*, the interviews were scheduled approximately one month after the group relations training event (RIDE), to ensure that factors relating to time and place remained the same for all the interviewees. In addition, each interviewee was contacted in order to arrange for a time and venue for the interview, thus ensuring that both the interviewer and interviewee were comfortable with the interview setting.

The dependability of this research was further ensured through the use of an adequate sample in order not to reflect the results of a minority group (Richardson, 1996). The sample includes individuals from all races and both genders.

5.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter the research method was presented. The chapter started off with an outline of the key aspects of the Robben Island Diversity Experience. The sample of the research, as well as the data collection and data analysis procedures were then discussed. Thereafter the validity and reliability of the dependability of the research were explained.

The research results will be presented in chapter 6.