

CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSIONS, HYPOTHESES, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The aim of this chapter is to present the conclusions, hypotheses, limitations and recommendations of the research. The chapter represents steps 6, 7, 8 and 9 of phase 2 of the research method. To this end, conclusions will be drawn on the literature review and the qualitative research. This will be used as a base to formulate hypotheses on the research. Next, the limitations of the research will be formulated. The researcher will then make recommendations on the use of group relations training in exploring (South African) diversity dynamic, as well as on further research. The chapter concludes with a chapter summary.

7.1 CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions will be drawn about the literature review and the qualitative research. These conclusions will be formulated in accordance with the aims of the research.

7.1.1 Conclusions to be drawn from the literature review

Conclusions will be drawn about diversity in the workplace and the GRTM as an application of the systems psychodynamic approach.

7.1.1.1 The first aim

The first aim, namely to conceptualise diversity in the workplace, was achieved in chapter 2. From the literature review on diversity in the workplace, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- (1) Although diversity has been one of the more prominent issues that organisations have had to

deal with in the past few decades, there is still a lot of confusion about what it means, the impact it has on the organisations and how to deal with it.

- (2) Exploration of the concept 'diversity' showed that it is dynamic and continuously changes as society transforms itself. Diversity can thus be seen as a concept that is contextually bound within time and space. The study of diversity focuses on all the similarities and differences that define each person, subgroup or group as an unique entity and the impact that these similarities and differences have on the relations and relatedness within the organisation or country.
- (3) A historical overview of diversity in the South African context reveals the magnitude of the problem with which organisations have to contend. More important than merely dealing with diversity, organisations have to handle the historical baggage (such as unresolved conflict, emotional scars, self-oppression, inequities and discrimination) that people are carrying around. Organisations are thus confronted with a dual challenge of surviving in a cut-throat business environment while also negotiating the socio-political legacies of the past. The overview also illustrates the significant role that race has played in dividing (splitting up) South African society into race-based subgroups.
- (4) Post-1994 South African society is transforming from an apartheid regime, based on exclusion and discrimination, towards a rainbow nation that aims to include and embrace the immense diversity the country has to offer. This journey has been far from smooth and it can be contended that the dynamics underlying these changes has subverted or worked against the initiatives aimed at transforming the country.
- (5) Internationally, various approaches have been used to deal with diversity in organisations. These approaches include the assimilation approach, the 'right the wrongs' approach, the valuing diversity approach and the managing diversity approach. These approaches are primarily informed by the legal requirements (legislation and policies on affirmative action, employment equity and equal opportunities), the moral/ ethical imperatives and the economic necessities that impinge on the organisation.
- (6) South African organisations historically used the assimilation approach to diversity. Since the 1994 transition, the 'right the wrongs' approach has been dominant in most organisations. Although the practice of affirmative action, employment equity and equal opportunities is still commonplace in most organisations, the tendency is to move more towards the valuing and the

managing of diversity approaches. This entails moving from a stance of *having* to deal with diversity because it is *enforced* by legislation, towards a stance of *wanting* to deal with diversity because it could lead to economic *benefits* and possibly provide a *competitive advantage*.

- (7) While valuing diversity focuses on creating a positive outlook towards diversity by changing the feelings, attitudes and behaviour of individual members, managing diversity centres around changing or transforming organisational structures, policies and practices in order to create an environment in which all employees can flourish. Diversity training can be seen as a cardinal tool in facilitating this movement towards valuing and managing diversity.

7.1.1.2 The second aim

The second aim, namely to conceptualise group relations training was achieved in chapter 3. From the literature review, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- (1) GRTM operationalises the systems psychodynamic by applying it to groups and the world of work. It studies the way group dynamics relates to, influences and manifests itself in groups. The basic conceptual framework includes psychoanalysis, object relations and systems theory - with the writings of Bion, Klein, Miller and Rice central to its development.
- (2) Group behaviour can be seen as being both conscious and unconscious. The conscious behaviour of a group is clear and explicit, while the unconscious behaviour is driven by primitive and irrational needs and fears. The focus in group relations training is on the unconscious underlying assumptions of groups that either support or subvert their conscious and rational behaviour.
- (3) Behaviour is regarded as being regulated by primitive emotions, instincts and drives. In this regard the survival instinct and the pleasure principle are cardinal to the understanding of behaviour. The survival instinct holds that an entity will act and interact in such a way that ensures its physical and emotional survival. The pleasure principle implies that entities have a natural tendency to move towards pleasurable activities whilst avoiding activities that involve

pain.

- (4) The anxiety involved in coping with organisational life, often leads to basic assumption behaviour. In this state, despite their sophisticated and mature skills, group members can regress to primitive forms of defence against the anxiety. The basic assumptions of dependency, fight/flight, pairing, oneness and me-ness are central to the emotional survival of groups.
- (5) Group relations training focuses on the way that unconscious and irrational emotions such as anxiety, envy, retribution and hatred impact on behaviour.
- (6) The processes of splitting, projection and projective identification are central defences against difficult emotions or unacceptable parts of the self. In this regard the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions indicate developmental stages through which people integrate their denigrated or idealised parts.
- (7) A group's valency indicates its inclination to act in a certain way - it for instance, indicates the characteristic defensive patterns (basic assumption state) that the group normally engages in when dealing with difficult or threatening situations.
- (8) Group relations training events are structured in such a way that delegates can, through the process of experiential learning, study the group's own dynamics as it unfolds in the present. The GRTM can be applied as a mode of consulting to organisations and/or as an alternative approach to training.

7.1.1.3 The third aim

The third aim, namely to integrate the literature survey by applying the psychodynamic approach to diversity, was achieved in chapter 4. From the literature review, the following conclusions can be drawn about diversity dynamics:

- (1) Organisations react to diversity both on a conscious, overt and rational level, as well as on a unconscious, covert and non-rational level.
- (2) The rational level refers to overt strategies that organisations employ in managing diversity.

These strategies are driven by a variety of legal and economic motives and, for instance, aim to politically align the organisation with current legislation, and/or to use diversity as a strategy to gain a competitive advantage. The end result of dealing with diversity on a rational level pertains to the physical survival of the organisation.

- (3) The non-rational level refers to the unconscious and covert needs, fears, anxieties, beliefs, attitudes and reactions that organisations have towards diversity. These non-rational forces 'move' the organisation to react to diversity in various covert and non-rational ways that can either support or subvert the organisation's rational/overt strategies towards diversity. This level of functioning is related to the emotional survival of the organisation and its members.
- (4) Diversity dynamics rejects overly rational and cognitive approaches to diversity. Since diversity is underpinned by powerful hidden unconscious and irrational processes, it cannot be adequately described using only the language of consciousness and rationality.
- (5) Diversity dynamics focuses on the forces inside a person (intrapersonal or intrapsychic level), the forces between people or groups of people (interpersonal and intergroup level), and the contextual forces (ecological level). A vital aspect to consider is the reciprocal way in which these factors influence and shape one another.
- (6) On an intra- and interpersonal level, diversity-related behaviour is influenced by intrapsychic drives (such as the survival instinct and pleasure-pain principle), needs (security, protection, safety, affiliation, self-esteem, actualisation), and emotions (such as anxiety, envy, hatred, love).
- (7) These unconscious needs, emotions, motivations, fantasies, conflicts, defences and past experiences often set in motion a vicious circle that perpetuates itself through a virtually infinite series of bidirectional transactions between internal psychological states and the real-world consequences they bring about. People ironically and unintentionally act in ways to repeat the very experience that was problematic in the past and which they wanted to avoid.
- (8) Contextual/ecological factors frame the meaning of diversity. This includes aspects such as the history that has been built up over time and the different contexts (organisational, national, international and cosmic) within which an entity exists. To fully understand South African diversity it must be studied within the historical context of the country.
- (9) The dynamic interaction between these intrapersonal, interpersonal and contextual forces either constricts/blocks or facilitates a person or group's ability to effectively deal with diversity. It

leads to a propensity, inclination, valency or predisposition to perceive, interpret and act towards difference in a specific way.

- (10) The diversity dynamics of an organisation manifests itself through the way in which the organisation presents itself (personnel diversity), as well as through its relations and relatedness.
- (11) Identity, reference systems, power and relatedness are core concepts in understanding diversity dynamics.
- (12) Diversity dynamics concerns the study of the conscious, rational forces as well as the unconscious, irrational forces that inform diversity and its dynamic processes which shape the relations and relatedness of a diverse society. The aim is to understand the dynamic forces that govern the way entities view, attribute meaning to and deal with differences and similarities.

7.1.2 Conclusions to be drawn from the empirical study

Conclusions will be drawn on the themes of South African diversity dynamics as discussed in the results chapter.

7.1.2.1 The fourth aim

The fourth aim, namely to report on the themes related to South African diversity dynamics, was dealt with in chapter 6. From the results chapter, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- (1) South African society is engaged in a process of changing from a regime that functioned on apartheid, exclusion, discrimination and oppression, to an idealised state symbolised by the rainbow nation. This process of transformation has been hindered by the underlying dynamics that have subverted or worked against the change process. The scenario is rendered more complex by to the converse experience and dynamics resulting from the different subgroups. Although the country has long since crossed the boundary into the new South Africa, it still

seems to be bogged down in the past. The emotional scars of the past, coupled with the entrenched patterns of socialisation through which people were conditioned to think (perceive), feel and behave towards others of difference, still imprisons many South Africans today.

- (2) The most prominent way in which South Africans deal with the issue of finding a place for themselves in the diverse society is through the process of linking up people who have similar characteristics to themselves. In South Africa, *race* is the primary dimension used to differentiate between people. Gender follows race as the second principal dimension used to differentiate South African society.
- (4) Linking and subgroup formation give rise to issues of inclusion and exclusion, as well as the processes associated with in-group and out-group dynamics. Being part of a subgroup unconscious level ties the person to the subgroup and also implies certain unspoken obligations such as being loyal to the subgroup as well as protecting it from other subgroups. South African diversity dynamics is characterised by this struggle between the different subgroups (race based).
- (5) The socialisation and reference systems of groups provide the blueprint according to which people perceive, interpret and interact with others. It would seem that the South Africans, rather than react to one another in reality, react to the perceptions, beliefs and stereotypes that they have of one another. The behaviour of people can thus be predicted in accordance with their reference systems.
- (6) South Africans are also still imprisoned by the baggage of the past that they seem to carry with them from one generation to the next. In relation to this process, the different subgroups seem to contain different aspects of South Africa's past. Black people seem to carry the anger, hate and aggression, while white people carry the guilt related to an unjust past. The coloured and Indian people seem to carry the ambiguity of both being (1) rejected for not being 'good-enough', and feelings that they are not being acknowledged, and (2) being envied because they are the chosen people who contains both worlds, representing both black and white.
- (7) The beliefs, stereotypes and projections of the various groups give rise to the process of projected identification in which the different subgroups are kept in specific roles/positions. Through projected identification both the sender as well as the receiver of the projections are influenced - the projector receives relief from the pain or frustration associated with the

projected part, while the receiver accepting the projection often starts to act in a way that is congruent with the projected message.

- (8) In general, South Africans approach diversity in a mechanistic format using the normal methods such as lectures and presentations. There is a great deal of resistance to dealing with diversity in an experiential format where delegates have to deal with the emotions contained in issues and also have to accept personal responsibility for their positions and actions towards diversity. Much of the dynamics centred around the struggle between the different subgroups to find a place for themselves in the new dispensation. This is especially important since the position of the different subgroups seems to determine the amount of acceptance and acknowledgement their members received and whether they were listened to.
- (9) There seems to be a tendency to push people into roles where they have to accept responsibility for certain things on behalf of the group. When linked to this research it indicates a general reluctance to accept responsibility for dealing with diversity-related issues.
- (10) The tendency to choose the more pleasurable option and avoid the pain and frustration that come with working through the difficulties associated with diversity, results in vicious circles. These pleasure-oriented choices thus anchors South Africans down in a destructive pattern of dealing with diversity.
- (11) The delegates indicated certain directions that South African society has to follow in order to place the country on the road to reconciliation and healing. These directions indicate that South Africans cannot go forward if they have not dealt with the past. South Africans have to break the vicious circles which keep them in destructive patterns of interaction by following the road less travelled where issues are engaged, projections are re-owned and given back, and reparation is made for the wrongs of the past. In this process, communication is seen as the vehicle that could stimulate people to start the journey to reconciliation and healing. The last but definitely not least factor that the delegates mentioned refers the crux (heart) of the matter, namely the attitudes with which people start this journey of reconciliation and healing with.

7.2 HYPOTHESES

Based on the above-mentioned conclusions, certain hypotheses can be formulated. The researcher first

formulates an overarching research hypothesis and then proceeds to formulate more specific hypotheses on the literature review (diversity dynamics), and the results of the empirical study.

7.2.1 Overarching research hypothesis

The researcher provides the following theoretical as well as a practical research hypotheses.

- *Theoretical hypothesis.* Diversity dynamics is not a rational phenomenon and cannot be treated as one. It is socially constructed and relational in nature. The way that people perceive, interpret and act upon the similarities and differences between people is influenced by a host of conscious and unconscious, rational and irrational, as well as overt and covert forces.
- *Practical research hypothesis.* South African diversity is about the splits and subgroups within the country and the dynamics between these different subgroups. South African diversity dynamics focusses on the dynamics (drives, emotions and needs) that inform subgroup formation, what these subgroups present for and carry on behalf of the total system, as well as the ensuing dynamics between these subgroups. Managing South African diversity is about (1) breaking the vicious diversity-related circles of the past, by ‘working’ through the issues that keep South Africans from relating with each other, and (2) creating a new society that embraces difference.

7.2.2 Hypotheses on the literature review

As part of integrating the literature review, the following hypotheses can be formulated on diversity dynamics:

- (1) Diversity is about the way in which humans occupy space in relation to one another, and the world at large. This entails the struggle to find, define and assert one’s self within the relations

and relatedness of a system.

- (2) A person's awareness of his/her place in the world entails a shift from the initial belief of being the universe, towards that of being the centre of the universe, and ultimately to an understanding that one is but a speck within the greater scheme of the universe - one is but a system within a infinite number of other superordinate and supra-ordinate systems struggling to find, define and assert themselves.
- (3) There is nothing objective about diversity. Diversity is perceived and interpreted through personal, interpersonal and societal filters that create and distort its own reality.
- (4) Difference and similarity are but a figment of awareness. Any two objects can for instance, be viewed as similar or different, depending on the level and focus of analysis.
- (5) Diversity is set in a specific context of time and space and cannot be understood without a thorough understanding of the historical forces that have shaped the way it manifests itself.
- (6) Taking the contextual nature of diversity into account, it could be proposed that diversity related transformation involves a dual process of *moving away from* and *letting go* of the past, as well as *moving towards* and *taking up* a new scenario. Successful change can only occur if both processes are enacted.
- (7) Mechanistic approaches to diversity can be seen as the first step in dealing with diversity. Although such approaches do little more than achieve certain structural and behavioural changes, they create an environment in which one can work with diversity. As a solitary diversity intervention, it is however doomed to failure since the emotions and resistance that it conjures up, normally fuels various unconscious dynamics that subvert the possibility of true integration and change.
- (8) Studying diversity from the systems psychodynamic approach implies analysing the similarities and differences between people, as well as the forces that influence the way these similarities and differences are viewed, interpreted and acted upon.
- (9) Survival is the primary need of any person, group or organisation. In order to fully understand diversity, it must be studied in the context of the physical and/or emotional survival of the entity. Whilst rational or overt strategies relate to the physical survival of the organisation, the non-rational or covert dynamics of diversity (such as needs, desires, fears and anxieties) relate to the emotional survival of the organisations and its members.

- (10) Diversity dynamics entails the interaction between intrapersonal, interpersonal and contextual factors. The interaction between an entity's emotions (such as anxiety, envy and hate), drives (such as the survival instinct and pleasure principle), past experiences, reference system and the contextual factors creates a valency or predisposition to react to diversity in a certain way.
- (11) Various conscious and unconscious defences are used to cope with or defend against unpleasant emotions arising from interacting with diverse people.
- (12) The ability to effectively work through diversity-related problems lies in the renunciation of the pleasure instinct and the ability to enter a life ruled by the reality principle. Before an organisation can reap the benefits of its diverse workforce, its members must be able to suffer the pain associated with diversity. Diversity-related growth lies in the ability to tolerate uncomfortable feelings for long enough to reflect on and re-own the denigrated or idealised parts of the self that were previously split off and projected onto/into external objects. For growth to occur, that which was previously unbearable, and thus projected away from the self, needs to be made more bearable.
- (13) Through the process of not working through diversity-related problems, vicious circles are often created in which the group's behaviour actually perpetuates the problem and keeps them bogged down in destructive interaction patterns.
- (14) Diversity-related behaviour is more influenced by a person's reference systems, beliefs and fantasies about other people than the reality (other people) itself.
- (15) The ability to relate to diversity in the outer world is directly linked to the ability to deal with diversity in the inner world.

7.2.3 Hypotheses on the empirical study

The following hypotheses can be formulated about the empirical study:

- (1) South African diversity can be seen as a crucible into which various desperate and volatile human elements have been thrown, not because they wanted to but because there was no other viable answer. The transformation of the previously separate elements brought intense heat and

energy to the surface as the human elements interacted with one another. The transformation of the previous separate elements into a new amalgam was explosive and volatile. The result of the amalgam is still not known and will be in process for generations to come. The impact that events have on diversity cannot be clearly understood in one lifetime.

- (2) South African society is looking for easy containable answers to its complex diversity-related problems. The need to engage diversity in a mechanistic format seems to indicate a need for containment of anxiety. There seems to be a reluctance to deal with the emotions contained in issues and the acceptance of personal responsibility for their positions and actions towards diversity.
- (3) The strategy seems to settle for pleasurable short-term solutions instead of the option to work through the pain and issues at hand in order to reach long term solutions. This inclination inevitably keeps the country caught up in a self-perpetuating pattern where real diversity issues are avoided and thus not resolved.
- (4) South African diversity entails a process of moving away from the past (and all the things that the past entailed) and moving towards the future (with all its fantasies about the rainbow). This, however, seems to be ineffective since the baggage of the past is still prevalent. South African society has entered the new by hanging on to the old - bringing along the baggage of the past. In biblical terms, the old world has to pass before the new world can be entered. South African society can thus only move to the new by moving through the past - dealing with and working through the issues that keep them imprisoned.
- (5) The symbol of the rainbow nation has become the messiah in the minds of the people. It creates hope and a promise that all the differences, conflict, power struggles and other diversity-related issues will be resolved in the rainbow nation. Unfortunately, the only way that the rainbow nation and the hope it carries with it can be kept alive, is by keeping it a dream. The moment the dream becomes reality, it shatters because in reality it can never deliver what it promises.
- (6) Behaviour is more influenced by people's conceptions and beliefs about others than the people themselves.
- (7) South African society seems to have a need for oppressing the other via splitting itself into the oppressed and the oppressor. The need is to locate the badness into one part of the system so that the rest do not have to carry the burden.

- (8) Through vicious circles, discrimination and self-oppressive behaviour often reinforces itself. The stereotype that black people are intellectually inferior to white people can, for instance, become a self-fulfilling prophecy with both parties contributing to this vicious circle on a conscious and unconscious level.
- (9) Black people feel entitled to their position because of the pain and suffering they have experienced. They are reluctant to share this position and on a conscious or unconscious level will do whatever it takes to ensure that they stay in power. This indicates the dynamics of sub-groups looking after themselves, doing what is needed to ensure their own survival.

7.3 LIMITATIONS

The limitations of the research will now be formulated. The discussion starts by addressing the limitations of the literature review, followed by the limitations of the empirical study.

7.3.1 Limitations of the literature review

A limitation in the literature review was the lack of literature on the systems psychodynamic approach to diversity.

7.3.2 Limitations of the empirical study

The representativeness of the sample poses a limitation of the research. Since the research was on the diversity dynamics of South African society, it would have been preferable for the sample to reflect that society as closely as possible. Although the sample was relatively representative, there were specific areas of concern, as outlined below.

- (1) Firstly there was no Indian male present during RIDE. Hence no Indian male perspective was

included in the views on South African diversity dynamics.

- (2) The second, and probably the principal aspect of the sample was that the members included in the sample can best be described as affluent. Because of the financial implications of attending RIDE, organisations generally sent senior human resource personnel or members from middle management to attend the event. The socio-economic diversity of the group could thus be seen as limitation of the study. It could be contended that a more diverse membership in this regard, would probably have led to more dynamics on envy between the 'haves' and 'have nots'.

Despite these limitations, the research makes a significant contribution to understanding South African diversity dynamics. The researcher next makes specific recommendations based on the results of the research.

7.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made on (1) the use of the group relations training approach in exploring diversity dynamics, and (2) future research.

7.4.1 Recommendations on the use of the GRTM in dealing with diversity

The diversity-related challenges that South African organizations face, will over the next few decades probably increase rather than decrease. These diversity-related challenges brings with it both opportunity as well as a threat. The way organisations perceive, interpret and act upon these challenges will determine which side of the diversity sword will impact their organisation. The search for 'new' or more effective ways to deal with diversity relates to the need to make a business case for diversity - to use the different gifts that diverse people bring to the workplace, to the advantage of the workers and organisation alike. From this perspective the following recommendations can be made regarding using the systems psychodynamic approach to better understand and deal with diversity:

This research presents an alternative approach to studying and dealing with diversity. The research indicates how approaching diversity from the GRTM (systems psychodynamic paradigm) illuminates the dynamics that impacts on diversity. The systems psychodynamic paradigm lends itself to a real and in-depth understanding of diversity and the dynamics which inform on how difference is perceived, interpreted and acted upon. Hence the recommendation is that more attention should focus on studying diversity from this perspective. In particular it would be of great advantage to diversity trainers, change management consultants, organisational development consultants and human resource practitioners to avail themselves of the dynamics that drives diversity, and thus by implication, also drives human interaction. Awareness of the unconscious, covert and irrational needs, drives and emotions that fuel diversity related behaviour could help these practitioners to better understand the forces that inform the relations and relatedness of the different people, sub-groups and departments within their organisation. The systems psychodynamic paradigm contributes an alternative approach to diversity, and although it does not claim to provide comprehensive explanations, or even a complete description of all diversity-related behaviour, it heightens people's awareness of and sensitivity to unconscious processes involved in this phenomenon.

A further recommendation is that the systems psychodynamic paradigm should be used in conjunction with the other approaches (socio-cognitive and legal imperatives) that are currently used in organisations. The aim of the systems psychodynamic paradigm to diversity is thus not to replace the other approaches, but to add a perspective that can enhance the management of diversity in organisations. It is thus not a case of opting for one or the other approach, but using them together in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of diversity, and therefore to be able to manage it more effectively.

7.4.2 Recommendations on future research

The present research is preliminary in many respects. As exploratory research, the objective was to formulate hypotheses and uncover areas for future research rather than to apply strict experimental and statistical controls. The hypotheses generated by this research thus open up various fields/areas on

which future research can focus and explore in more detail. In this regard, both more qualitative as well as quantitative research could be undertaken. The qualitative research could focus on and obtain more an in-depth understanding of the specific themes or hypotheses generated by this research, while the quantitative research could focus on establishing clearer causal or descriptive links between specific variables.

This approach (GRTM) to diversity could also be used for in-house experiences. Such experiences would afford an organisation the opportunity to better understand the diversity dynamics that operate in the organisation itself.

7.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented the conclusions, hypotheses, recommendations and limitations of the research.