

**SOUTH AFRICAN DIVERSITY DYNAMICS
REPORTING ON THE 2000
ROBBEN ISLAND DIVERSITY EXPERIENCE
A GROUP RELATIONS EVENT**

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ABSTRACT

The 2000 Robben Island Diversity Experience was presented as a six day experiential learning event in November 2000. The Group Relations Training model (the Tavistock approach) was used. The primary task was to provide opportunities for delegates and consultants to study diversity and its behavioural dynamics. The event was attended by 24 managers and employees from different South African organisations, which can be seen as a microcosm of South African society.

The qualitative research done took the form of interviewing a sample of 16 participants one month after the event. The data were analysed hermeneutically and the following six themes emerged: being imprisoned by the past; subgroupings formed in accordance with the primary and secondary dimensions of diversity; the tension between being part of one's (ascribed) subgrouping and being an individual; the power-play as a means of positioning the different subgroups in the new dispensation; integrating the denigrated and the idealised parts within the Self; and a never-ending journey of healing.

It is recommended that South African organisations apply systems psychodynamic interventions in order to understand the manifestation of diversity dynamics in their organisations (instead of trying to manage this in a mechanical way). Thus, movement towards healing and reparation can be facilitated.

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1 INTRODUCTION

South African organisations are currently quite aware of racism (Oakley-Smith & Winter 2001), equity (Collins 1995; Richards 2001) and diversity management (Laubscher, 2001) and its effect on the psychological well-being of the individual employee, teams and the organisation as a whole. Especially diversity and its management (Abdelsamad & Sauser 1992) has become an international and local buzzword referring generally to a variety of differences among employees which lead to discomfort, disrespect, intolerance and strong feelings of fear, anger, resentment and hurt. On the other hand it is generally accepted that diverse work teams will ensure a variety of perspectives, enhance creativity in decision making, increase risk taking and open diverse markets and attract diverse clients (Kenton & Valentine, 1997; Leach, George, Jackson & LaBella 1995). In the South African context it is hoped that working with diversity instead of managing diversity will lessen racism and racial conflict in the workplace (Oakley-Smith & Winter 2001).

Since the early 1990s, many programmes have been designed and implemented in up to 40% of the major organisations in the USA, with the aim of making workplace diversity easier by managing and facilitating mutual understanding between different racial, ethnic and gender groups (Abdelsamad & Sauser 1992). Also in South Africa it became fashionable for designated staff in diversity departments to "put employees through diversity training". In most cases the underlying assumption is that diversity can be trained and an employee can be certified to "now do it". These programmes are typically presented in a mechanistic, instructional and didactic style, extending knowledge and content about "the other's" way of life, preferences and conduct. According to Human (2001), these programmes fail because the responsible managers do not understand the concept of diversity or its unconscious behavioural dynamics. Argued from a systems psychodynamic and group relations point of view, this means that the covert and unconscious social political issues such as resistance, denial, splitting, projections and projective identifications are not addressed. In this stance, it is accepted that change can only occur through true social learning in an experiential design with clear boundaries of time, space and especially task. The primary task of such an event should be well thought through and the responsible consultants designated to perform the task should be very well trained in behavioural dynamics and should be appropriately authorised in their role.

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; 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, parental status, residential area, upbringing and work and job characteristics (Leach et al 1995). Diversity is not synonymous with differences but encompasses difference 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 must be distinguished from multiculturalism, workforce diversity, diversity management and empowerment. Multiculturalism refers to culture, ethnicity, race and workforce diversity, which is seen as a catalyst of organisational change, a composite of multicultural human resources, a business objective and a learning opportunity (Arredondo 1996). Diversity includes relationships between people and with the organisation in the context of ongoing culture. 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 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.

Reece and Brandt (1993) refer to 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 form 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, with devastating effects on human relations in the organisation.
- Secondary diversity dimensions are changeable and may be modified. These include communication style, education, relationship/marital/parental status, religious beliefs, work experience and income.

- 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 between diverse employees in the organisation are possible when the differences are accepted and valued.

From a psychodynamic perspective, the anxiety underlying the influence and effect of diversity, is studied (Colman & Bexton 1975; Colman & Geller 1985). This includes the individual's stereotypes, which shape prejudiced attitudes in favour of or against other people regardless of other factors that prove the stereotype invalid. Ethnocentrism is defined as the tendency to regard the own culture as better or more correct than others (Reece & Brandt 1993). This is perpetuated by cultural conditioning. Discrimination refers to behaviour based upon prejudiced attitudes, for example about gender, age, race, disability or sexual orientation.

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

3 GROUP RELATIONS TRAINING

Group relations training started about 60 years ago (Miller 1989) and has its philosophical and theoretical roots in psycho-dynamics. It is based upon the writings of Freud, the father of psychoanalysis (Czander 1993), and incorporates the work of Melanie Klein on child and family psychology (De Board 1978), Ferenczi on object relations (De Board 1978) and Bertalanffy on systems thinking (Czander 1993; De Board 1978; Hirshhorn 1993).

As a therapeutic stance it is well known and is used in psychiatry in Europe and the USA (Menzies 1993; Miller 1976; Obholzer & Roberts 1994; Rioch 1970), has been applied in working conferences by the Tavistock Institute (Miller 1989), and developed into an organisational theory (Bion 1961; 1970; Miller 1976; 1983; 1993) as well as an organisational consultancy stance (Gabelnick & Carr 1989; Neumann, Kellner & Dawson-Shepherd 1997). Internationally, its application in organisational psychology is growing among industrial/organisational psychologists, who apply this stance in team building (Cilliers 2000; Cytrynbaum & Lee 1993; Gabelnick & Carr 1989; Kets de Vries 1991) as well as in organisational consultation (Cilliers & Koortzen 2000a).

This training model accepts that group behaviour is both conscious and unconscious (Miller 1993). Conscious behaviour is clear and explicit, manifesting for example in the group's set rules and observable behaviour. On the other hand, the unconscious is filled with unknown, unwanted and sometimes threatening needs and feelings regarding matters like relationships of power, authority and leadership, developed collectively by the group. When this disguised and unexamined material surfaces into consciousness, the group raises defences against it, for example in resisting change (Coleman & Bexton 1975; Czander 1993; Gabelnick & Carr 1989; Hirschhorn 1993; Kets de Vries 1991; Miller 1993; Obholzer & Roberts 1994).

3.1 The basic assumptions of group relations

The following five assumptions are seen as the cornerstones of group relations:

- *Dependency.* Group members unconsciously project their dependency upon (imaginative) parental figures or systems, representing authority. If these authority figures do not respond the way the group wants them to, anger develops and manifests in counter dependence (Bion 1961; Kets de Vries 1991; Miller 1993; Rice 1965; Rioch 1970). Later the group develops to the stages of independence and interdependence.
- *Fight/flight.* These are defence mechanisms the group unconsciously uses in trying to cope with discomfort. Fight reactions manifest in aggression against the self, colleagues (with envy, jealousy, competition, elimination, boycotting, rivalry, fighting for a position in the group and for privileged relationships) or the authority figure. Flight reactions manifest in the avoidance of others, threatening situations or feelings, or in rationalisation and intellectualisation (Bion 1961; Kets de Vries 1991; Miller 1993; Rice 1965; Rioch 1970).
- *Pairing.* In order to cope with the anxiety of alienation and loneliness, group members try to pair with perceived powerful others or subgroups. The unconscious need is to feel secure and to create. Pairing also implies splitting up, which may happen because of experienced anxiety in a diverse workplace. Typical examples of splits are black/white, male/female, senior/junior and competent/incompetent. Unconsciously the group tries to split up the whole and build a smaller system, to which the individual can belong safely and securely (Bion 1961; Kets de Vries 1991; Miller 1993; Rice 1965; Rioch 1970).
- *One-ness.* According to Turquet (1974, in Lawrence, Bain & Gould 1996) the assumption is that group members seek to coalesce into a powerful

and omnipotent union, surrendering the self in favour of passive participation, thus experiencing well-being and wholeness. It is as if the individual loses himself or herself in oceanic feelings of unity. This wish for "salvationist inclusion" can be seen in a group striving towards cohesion and synergy where it is believed that problems will be solved by this strong united force.

- *Me-ness*. This assumption, which is the opposite of one-ness refers to the risk of living in turbulent contemporary society (Lawrence, Bain & Gould 1996). The individual is increasingly compressed into his or her own inner reality in order to exclude and deny the perceived disturbing reality of the outer environment. The inner world becomes the comfortable place, and the outer, the one to be avoided. The group works on the tacit, unconscious assumption that it is to be a non-group. Relationships can only exist with people present because their shared mental construct of what the group is about is that of an undifferentiated mass. Therefore they act as if the group has no existence, because if it did exist, it would be the source of persecuting experiences. The idea of the group is contaminating, taboo, impure - all that is negative. The members act as if the group has no reality - the only reality is that of the individual. This assumption exists in a culture of selfishness, where the individual is only aware of his or her own personal boundaries, which have to be protected from others. This leads to instrumental transactions with no room for affect (experienced as dangerous because one would not know what feelings may lead to).

3.2 Concepts in group relations

The following concepts and their behavioural dynamics apply to group relations (Cilliers & Koortzen 2000b; Koortzen & Cilliers 2002).

- Anxiety is accepted as the basis of all group behaviour (Menzies 1993). In order to cope with its discomfort, the group unconsciously needs something or someone to contain anxiety on its behalf, especially in the early stages of the group's life.
- Defence mechanisms against anxiety are used in order to gain a sense of safety, security and acceptance. Rationalisation and intellectualisation are used to stay emotionally uninvolved and in control (Gabelnick & Carr 1989; Neumann et al 1997). Projection refers to the intra-system defensive process, where one part of the system denies and rejects feelings inherent in the unconscious image (fantasy) of the situation. It then tries to alter the uncomfortable experience by imagining that part of it

belongs to another part of the system rather than to the self. It then puts good or bad (unwanted) material **onto** the other, thus distancing itself from the discomfort. This has no effect or influence on the target. Projection may be used to blame management for what goes wrong without management being influenced.

- Projective identification as an anxiety reducing process (Colman & Geller 1985; Czander 1993; Kets de Vries 1991; Obholzer & Roberts 1994), is one of the most elusive and complicated concepts in group relations. It refers to an inter-system, object relational action and process, where one part of the system (as the subject) projects material **into** the other part (as the object), which identifies with the projection (taking it on). This results in changes in both parts. The dynamics of projective identification are as follows (Knapp 1989). The subject experiences anxiety either because of its primitive envy of the object's idealised qualities and its consequent urge to destroy, spoil, dominate, devalue and control, or its wish to re-fuse with the object, or as a form of parasitism, thus becoming part of the object. It tries to relieve itself of this anxiety by externalising it, splitting off parts and internal objects of the self, leaving the self less aware of its wholeness and diminished by the projective loss of important aspects of itself. It requires or assigns the object to receive, identify with and contain these aspects of the self, as if it belongs to the object, but still retains a closeness to the object. Depending on how subtle the projection is, the object may have a sense of being manipulated into a particular role. When this behaviour predominates in the group, it becomes difficult to find other ways of coping, because it is almost impossible to think clearly, to locate sources of problems and to find appropriate and creative solutions.
- Valence refers to the individual's or group's predisposition to attract or receive specific projections from other individuals or groups (Colman & Bexton 1975; Colman & Geller 1985).
- Container refers to the activity of "holding" psychic energy or projections on behalf of another person or group (Bion 1970).
- Boundaries refer to the physical and psychological borders around the group the purpose of which is to contain its anxiety, thus making the group controllable, safe and contained (Cytrynbaum & Lee 1993; Czander 1993; Hirschhorn 1993; Kets de Vries 1991; Miller 1993; Neumann et al 1997).
- Identity refers to a comfortable feeling of belonging to some group or part of a group. In the initial phases of the group's life, the identity is unclear, although it becomes more distinct with time and maturity (Colman & Geller

1985).

- Representation refers to a situation where a group member consciously or unconsciously negotiates a boundary, acting on behalf of the group (for example in crossing, resisting or erecting a boundary). If the individual's authority boundaries are unclear, the high level of anxiety tends to immobilise and disempower him or her. The group learns firstly how it normally disempowers its representatives and secondly it learns new ways of empowering its representatives in order to work more effectively on behalf of the group (Kets de Vries 1991; Obholzer & Roberts 1994).
- Authorisation refers to empowering a group member to act on behalf of the group in the role of observer, delegate or plenipotentiary (Czander 1993; Obholzer & Roberts 1994).
- Leadership is described as managing what is inside the boundary in relation to what is outside. This can happen inside the individual (without followers) or leadership can be exercised by one group member on behalf of the followership (Gabelnick & Carr 1989; Obholzer & Roberts 1994).
- Relationship between group members refers to any type of face-to-face interaction, as it happens in the here-and-now. Unconsciously, the group member is always in a state of relatedness to the group, which is also known as "the group in the mind" (Gabelnick & Carr 1989; Neumann et al 1997; Shapiro & Carr 1991).
- "The group as a whole" refers to collectivism - one part of the system acting, or containing emotional energy, on behalf of another. This implies that no event happens in isolation and that there are no coincidences but rather synchronicity in the behaviour of the group (Wells 1980).
- "Facing the diversity within" refers to the realisation of the system - individual or group - that the outside diverse objects are also represented and present within (the self or group) (Reed & Noumair, in press; Shapiro & Carr 1991).

3.3 The group relations training event

The Tavistock (also called the Leicester) model (Miller 1989; 1993) is used in structuring the group relations training event. The primary task of the event is to provide opportunities for participants to study their own diversity dynamic behaviour as it happens and unfolds in the here-and-now (Rugel & Meyer 1984) (meaning that no topics are given to be discussed). This is an

educational task consisting of sub-events, namely (in this research) a plenary, large study group, a small study group, an intergroup event (as a here-and-now event), a processing event, and a lecture and application group, each with its own task, described as follows.

- *Plenary.* All participants and consultants are present. The task is to provide the opportunity to share information (at the beginning) about the crossing of the boundary from the outside world (being a singleton) into the group relations event (becoming a group member or participant) and (at the end of the event) back to being a singleton again. The learning around this experience is shared.
- *Large study group.* All the participants and consultants (plus one in the role of observer) are present. The task is to study diversity dynamics as it happens in the here-and-now of the total system.
- *Small study group.* Up to ten participants and one consultant are present. The task is to study diversity dynamics as it happens in the here-and-now of face-to-face relationships.
- *Inter group event.* Participants have the opportunity to form groups among themselves with consultants available to groups so formed and meetings between the groups or representatives of the groups. The task is to study the relationship and relatedness between the subgroups as it happens in the here-and-now.
- *Processing group.* Participants are divided into functional groups of up to 10 with one consultant. The task is for each individual to process his or her learning up to that time.
- *Discussion group.* Participants are divided into functional groups of up to seven with one consultant. The task is to work towards the integration of the formed working hypotheses in the large, small and intergroup events.
- *Lecture.* All the participants and consultants (in role of lecturers) are present. The task is to share theoretical information about the concepts of the Tavistock model and how it manifested within this experience.
- *Application group.* Participants are divided into functional groups of up to 12 with one consultant. The task is for each individual to work towards the application of the learning within his or her everyday working life.

The group relations training consultant is actively involved in the event, formulating working hypotheses and interpreting behaviour processes and dynamics in the here-and-now, on the basis of his or her own observations, experience and expertise. He or she assumes the responsibility and authority for providing the boundary conditions of task, space (territory) and time, in such a way that all participants can engage with the primary task (Miller 1989; 1993).

4 INTEGRATION

This research endeavours to understand diversity as a phenomenon in terms of its behavioural dynamics. It is expected that the study of diversity by means of the group relations approach will enhance the understanding of the underlying anxiety and the resulting defence mechanisms among the total membership as well as between subgroups within the total system. No research findings could be traced where group relations training has been used to study the behavioural dynamics of diversity in the South African scenario. Reed and Noumair (in press) offer a theoretical perspective on American diversity issues, but without any empirical data.

5 RESEARCH AIM AND DESIGN

The aim of the research is to report on the learning about diversity as it happened in the here-and-now of the Robben Island Diversity Experience (RIDE) by means of the manifesting themes. Action research was done in the presentation of a group relations training event, and qualitative research in the measurement and reporting of participants' experiences.

6 METHOD

6.1 The group relations training event

Robben Island was chosen as a venue for its symbolic containment of captivity (previously), as well as freedom (since the release of Nelson Mandela). The event was structured and presented as discussed above in early November 2000. It was presented over six days, starting on Sunday and ending on Friday. It consisted of 28 (90 minute) sessions totalling 48 hours of intensive experiential learning. The programme is given in table 1.

Table 1: The Robben Island Diversity Experience Programme

TIME	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
08:00 09:30		Large study group 2	Large study group 3	Large study group 4	Small study group 5	Lecture
09:30	<i>BREAK</i>					
10:00 11:30	Registration Cape Town Waterfront	Small study group 1	Small study group 3	Small study group 4	Large study group 5	Application group 2
11:30	<i>BREAK</i>					
12:00 13:30	Departure to Robben Is	Small study group 2	Inter group event 4	Inter group event 6	Small study group 6	Closing plenary
13:30	<i>LUNCH</i>					
14:00 15:30	Settling in	Plenary Inter group event 1	Free time	Inter group event 7	Discussion group	Depart Cape Town Waterfront
15:30	<i>BREAK</i>					
16:00 17:30	Opening plenary	Inter group event 2	Inter group event 5	Intergroup plenary	Processing group 3	
17:30	<i>DINNER</i>					
19:00 20:30	Large study group 1	Inter group event 3	Processing group 1	Processing group 2	Application group 1	

The primary task of the event was to provide learning opportunities to study diversity dynamics as it happens in the here-and-now.

The staff for the event were chosen on the basis of (1) their training and experience in the psychodynamic group relations (Tavistock) training model

and (2) their representation of race (White, Coloured, Black) and gender. The directorship consisted of a white male (Director) and a coloured female (Associate Director). The consultants consisted of a black female, a coloured female and two white males.

6.2 The participants

A general invitation was sent to many large organisations in South Africa, specifically to managers of diversity programmes, to attend the event on Robben Island. They were referred to the web-page of the consulting firm presenting the event. This contains all the relevant information about the venue, what the event is about, and the group relations training approach. In total, 24 individuals attended the event. The gender ratio was 11 males and 13 females. There were 10 blacks, two coloureds, two Indians and 10 whites. They represented large (52%) and small (10%) private organisations, as well as national (30%) and provincial (8%) government.

6.3 The sample

After the event 16 (of the total of 24) participants were randomly selected for interviewing.

6.4 Data gathering

One month after the event, a tape-recorded, semi-structured interview was conducted with the above selected sample of participants. They were contacted telephonically and an appointment was made to meet for a maximum of one hour at a place of mutual convenience. No-one objected to the interview, which was conducted mainly in vacant offices and board rooms of the companies for which the participants work. The aim of the interview was to ascertain the experience of each participant. It started with an open question, namely, (1) "It is now one month since the Robben Island Diversity Experience. Could you tell me about your experience of the event?" The interviewer asked a maximum of two follow-up questions to elicit more responses from the interviewee if necessary, namely, (2) "What else did you experience?" and (3) "Would you like to add anything else relating to your experience of the event?". All the interviews lasted between 40 and 60 minutes.

6.5 Data analysis

Firstly, the interviews were transcribed. Next the analysis was done hermeneutically (Van Manen 1990) using the following procedure:

- The responses were thoroughly studied, always in relation to the question posed.
- Phrases or sentences which seemed to indicate rich meaning in response to questions were selected.
- These phrases or sentences selected from different participants' responses were related to form themes relevant to the research question.
- Where relations between themes occurred, these were articulated.
- A final discussion was written.

Although the data analysis was based on interviews administered after the experience, the memories of the experience were linked to these interviews and became part of the final discussion.

7 RESULTS

The participants' experiences were captured in the following six themes:

- Being imprisoned by the past
- Sub-groupings formed in accordance with primary and secondary dimensions of diversity
- The tension between being part of one's (ascribed) subgrouping and being an individual
- Power-play: a means of positioning the different subgroups in the new dispensation
- Integrating the denigrated parts and the idealised parts within the Self
- A never-ending journey of healing

Next, the themes were discussed in greater detail. Throughout the interviews the respondents (R) used the term "we", which seems to refer to South Africans overall.

7.1 Being imprisoned by the past

Despite rapid change, we carry baggage from our history with us, which makes connection across differences difficult. RIDE provided participants with the opportunity to look at what individuals carry. South Africans keep on living in the past by carrying baggage from generation to generation, nurturing this baggage. R11 commented: "Something that puzzled me is that we keep on living in the past. There are so many baggage that we are carrying from generation to generation and this baggage is actually nurtured, keeping us from working together. Why can't we leave the past in the past? What must happen before we can move on? Maybe that is the major issue with this country in that there has been a lot of things that were not just discrimination. How can we get rid of this baggage and move on?"

There was a realisation among participants that the baggage from the past keep South Africans from working together and that we need to get rid of the baggage and move on. R6 stated that "we need to confront and address unresolved issues from the past, we cannot sweep things of the past under the carpet - we have to deal with it." This process was also seen as moving from death (past) to the here-and-now, and the experience of excitement, being empowered and "wonder".

7.2 Subgroupings formed in accordance with primary and secondary dimensions of diversity

R12 commented: "At the start, the race issue was prominent, but it seemed to be solved. What worried me is the gender issue, particularly the women have a lot of problems with it still. It maybe that race was the most important issue for the group as a whole to address and it was addressed first, and then after that we moved on to other issues such as gender diversity." R3 stated: "We group together as whites, blacks and females." These comments point to the fact that the primary dimensions of race and gender were used by the participants, consciously or unconsciously, to form specific subgroupings. On this basis the consultants worked with these primary dimensions of diversity to ensure an optimal learning experience for the participants. Next, our experiences of the groupings were presented, and where possible, evidence from the data which supports these experiences was added. This discussion is in terms of the objects of race and gender and what they represented in the learning experience.

- *The black male.* The older males seem to represent the struggle of the past. They were very prominent at the beginning of the experience and became more silent as time went on - as if they became tired. They seem

to embody the new stability in the country and "being there" may be enough. They are proud of being Africans - a title not to be shared with whites. The younger, black males were very active and acted powerfully and assertively, with quite a lot of competition between them.

- *The black female.* The older females represented a mother figure to the group. The younger blacks saw her as a role model who looked after them during difficult times. One of the older females expressed her anger at both black and white males, for the past oppression - the black in the domestic and the white in the political sphere. The younger females were more silent than the younger males, but were very empowered. One expressed her need to take advantage of all opportunities and for whites to get out of her way.
- *The coloured male.* The older male seems to be empowered but is networking with everybody in terms of future cooperation. This enables him to avoid the role assigned to him, namely of being in the middle and being pulled by both sides (black and white). R2 stated: "I don't represent all the coloureds, but they expected me to carry this on behalf of all coloureds. The same happened with the Indians."
- *The coloured female.* Coloured females have quite a difficult time within the new structures of the country. They referred to "struggling to find all of her parts", as well as their experience of being rejected because of the colour of their skin. R15 spoke of how childhood memories of being rejected as a coloured person were evoked by this experience. She stated: "The RIDE once again made me aware of what I represent. It awakened a lot of feelings inside me. The most important was that childhood rejection of being coloured. It made me so angry, probably the most angry that I was in my entire life."
- *The Indian female.* They seem to be caught between tradition and the new demands to be powerful and part of the new dynamic; they express anger and carry the pain of not belonging or being acceptable (not being black) in the new dispensation. R9 stated that "from day one I was being told that I am not black. I lived my whole life knowing that I am black." Obviously if she is holding onto the pain of not belonging, then she is doing it on behalf of the group-as-a-whole. This frees the rest of the subgroup of the pain of not belonging.
- *The white male.* Historically they were in power and were kept busy with the management of the country. Thus they had the least contact with other races, which could explain their present position - it is as if there is a

disability when it comes to making contact with others. They are disempowered and often not heard by others. They seem to operate from the periphery. R14 stated: "At a certain time in the programme I was really down and it felt as if there is no future for white (*men*) in the country." They also reported being pushed into offices at work which are out of reach of others, making contact difficult. They seem to represent the shame of the past. Two white men fell during the event, which could point to a lack of connection with the other groups.

- *The white female.* They have difficulty adapting to the new male role in the system. Historically they had contact with black men (as garden "boys") and females (as house "maids"). Both are now their colleagues. They are disillusioned regarding white males and express their anger towards them for allowing the discrimination of the past. R1 stated: "Interesting for me was the anger I experienced against the white males who with their big mouths sat in the group and didn't say a thing. Only afterwards they have a lot to say, but when they are back in the group they are silent. It is as if they are afraid of the black males." In reaction, they try to form links with the black males, who accept this reaching out on one level but reject it on another level.

Subgrouping based on gender

The above discussion indicates the level of exploration with regard to racial groupings during the event. Although there was some work done with regard to issues of gender, it seems that it was not nearly enough. Quite a few participants referred to unresolved conflict among women (such as R1, R2, R7, R12, R13). R7 stated: "My illusion of women totally exploded into bits and pieces. I thought this would be a group where we all share the same things, feelings, warmth. It was nice in the beginning but then the pretence disappeared. ... The thing of women being warm and nurturing disappeared."

Subgrouping based on positional power within RIDE: Consultant versus participants

Another split which has not been attended to was the difference between being a consultant and being a participant in the event. To a great extent this split was located between one of the female consultants and two female participants. R15 indicated that "the thing between *the two female participants and the female consultant* was bad for me".

We propose that in RIDE work with diversity issues linked to race may have taken so much time and effort that insufficient attention was given to other

issues of diversity. We propose that at times diversity issues based on race could lead one to overlook diversity issues based on gender and positional power. In other words, race is such a familiar issue to work with that other subtleties of diversity are lost if one concentrates on race. This also points to the complexity of diversity and how the different dimensions of diversity can be used to enhance conflict. R3 stated: "I realised that this thing of diversity is more complex. You have conflict between different parties, say men and women, and it doesn't matter what colour they are, it doesn't matter what their conflict is because they are women and men, and so it is with other diversities as well."

The consequence of splitting across subgroupings

Splitting occurred throughout RIDE within small group, intergroup and large group events, based mainly on the two primary diversity dimensions of race and gender. R12 described this split and its consequences as follows: "What I learnt is that people in South Africa especially from different race groups have assumptions about one another. Some of them are correct but some are not true. This causes that we misinterpret each other, widens the gap (*split*) between people."

It is proposed that splitting the world into white and black, male and female, young/new and old, consultant and participant, allows us to project our own unpleasant characteristics onto the other. The other often introjects these unpleasant bits (takes them into the psyche) and identifies with them (called projective identification), owing to a valence which could be linked to one's demographic position in this country. Thus, these psychic processes allow for dumping onto the other and carrying the projection on behalf of the other. R2 stated: "What I experienced was that men stood together and the women were to an extent split. There was also little conflict amongst the men but quite a lot between the women." This illustrates how the men left the conflict with the women, thus freeing themselves from the experience of conflict. In this situation racial groupings were ignored in the face of groupings according to gender. One subgroup within the intergroup event was struggling with difference resulting from group membership (black, white, male, female). However, these differences in group membership were ignored in the face of threat from the outside (another group entering its territory). Thus, a new identity across the primary dimensions of diversity was formed in the face of threat from the outside. The change in the diversity dimensions used for groupings also refers to diversity among members of a particular group, as well as to how conveniently one can use a particular diversity dimension in any situation.

7.3 The tension between being part of one's (ascribed) sub-grouping and being an individual

As stated in theme 2 above, the participants mainly grouped themselves into sub-groupings based on the primary diversity dimensions of race and gender. R13 commented: "... how difficult it is to be an individual, but also to be part of a group". The following discussion will explore the advantages and disadvantages of being part of a subgroup, with specific reference to the tension that can be created within the individual as a result of the need to be part of a subgroup and to be an individual.

Being part of a particular subgrouping has certain advantages. The perceived group memberships allow for the formation of identity within the Self. Thus by clinging to one's perceived subgroup in an intergroup situation, one's identity is established along with a comfort zone. Thus, the Self finds safety in an identity which is based on the subgroup that one forms part of. R4 commented: "So what one can learn is the issue of grouping together, people find safety in a group whether it is on the basis of colour of being a woman or man".

Having a comfort zone or being part of a subgroup also has particular consequences for the individual. It appears that it is expected of individuals to support subgroups that form with regard to primary diversity dimensions (race and gender), and refusing to do so will arouse the anger of the entire group against the individual. R2 stated: "The large group showed me that it is normal for people to group together according to certain characteristics. The funny thing is that these groups expect the rest of the group to back them up. At one stage the coloureds and Indians were extremely cross with me because I did not back them up when they wanted me to."

Furthermore, in the intergroup event there was a pull (or a push) from the group-as-a-whole to go back to one's people (sub-grouping). R3 stated that during the intergroup event "they say go back to your people". Thus, the person is not allowed to decide where he or she belongs - for example, the individual's uniqueness is challenged or ignored because of an assigned subgrouping on the basis of some characteristic. These characteristics have a particular hierarchy, which can influence a person's group membership at any give time.

Another consequence of belonging to a subgroup was articulated by R3: "Subgroupings symbolise things to other people. Like I would symbolise a young black male and people react to you according to what you symbolise." R13, a white woman, stated that she "never realised to what extent I am playing a role, and that people are reacting to the role and not to me ... I did not realise till that last day when it came out in the small group that they were

reacting to the white bitch and actually telling the white bitch and not me. That helped me to understand why I was being rejected the whole time - even though I thought that I was working very hard." The fact that one is judged and interacted with according to one's group membership and especially one's racial group could have created anger within particular participants. This is indicated by R15's statement: "The idea that people relate to you according to what you represent and the colour of your skin totally pissed my off."

It seems that participants oscillated between seeing other participants as individuals and experiencing the same participants in terms of their particular group membership with its concomitant stereotypes. R13 stated: "I made a close connection with a *black woman* and I think I became dependent on her. Then in the plenary she sided with the *black* group and that floored me and I reacted on behalf of my *white* group and she could not understand that." It appears that participants oscillated between seeing each and being seen as individuals or as group members. The consequence of this "oscillating" could be that in RIDE the connections amongst individuals were influenced, mostly negatively, by group membership, especially membership of a race group. It could also have created a tension within the individual with regard to being part of one's (ascribed) sub-grouping and being an individual.

R12, a black man, referred to learning about the tension between being an individual and belonging to a particular subgroup, "the collective". He stated: "What I have learnt was that I was brought up approaching people, the world as a collective. We are part of the collective trying to achieve certain objectives. What I have learnt is more the individual stance - to talk for myself. It was very difficult for me to see myself apart from the collective and it created a barrier for some time, as the days went by it became easier and I was surprised that sometimes my ideas and feelings differed from those in my reference group. But tension remained between what I experienced and that of my reference group." It seems that this participant is moving from being part of a collective to being a singleton, in other words finding his own identity which includes a group and an individual identity.

7.4 The power-play: a means of positioning the different subgroups in the new dispensation

Throughout the different interviews participants referred to the power-play among the different racial groups. We propose that this power-play has several purposes which will be elucidated by the following discussion.

It appears that one of the purposes of this power-play is to establish the position of the different racial groups within the new dispensation. R11

discussed the position of the different groups in the power-play, such as black and white as the role players, with coloureds and Indians in the background. This is juxtaposed by R2 stating that it did feel as if he was in the middle and was involved in a power struggle, while others (probably among the black and white people) wanted to see where he would fit in. R2 stated: "It felt like I am in the middle. If I go to the one side, the other would ask - OK, when are you coming to visit us. Precisely the same when I go to the other side. it was like a power struggle to see where I fit in." The idea of *where he will fit in* appears to refer to whether he will side with white people or with black people. The negotiation and competition around the issue of where the coloured man will fit in suggests that he belongs within the new dispensation. However, his exact position within this dispensation still has to be negotiated. Being in middle probably illustrates how this participant (a coloured man) has to struggle with other participants' projections of where they want to see him in the new dispensation. The nature of the projection aimed at this participant is probably linked to his valence, based on his demographic position in this country (Reed & Noumair, in press). However, we are not sure what this "being in the middle" represents for this particular participant.

Another purpose of the power-play relates to fighting for a place within the new dispensation. In other words, the question is not what the group's position within the new dispensation is, but rather, does the particular subgroup belong within the new dispensation. R7, a white woman, reflected on the experiences of an Indian woman. R7 stated: "It was as if she (*the Indian woman*) was struggling to find a place for herself in South Africa. ... It was like she (*the Indian woman*) didn't have a place in the country. ... It is as if she is carrying this on behalf of her *group*." Perhaps this fight for belonging is far wider than having a place in the new dispensation - it may be about emotional belonging within a country marked by a history of outcasts (the rejected ones), whether from Europe, whether through the Great Trek, the Anglo Boer War, slavery, missionary work or Apartheid. It seems that the role of the rejected one has become an element within the South African psyche.

The power-play also provoked a competition for scarce resources. These scarce resources are not economic in nature, rather they are emotional in nature - in particular the need to make space to listen to and hear the pain of others. Within RIDE, it seemed imperative to first focus on the pain of black people. It appeared difficult for participants to listen to the pain of an Indian woman. It also appeared difficult for black people to listen to the pain of others in the RIDE. R11 stated: "Indians and coloureds were rejected by both black and white - thus they are in a difficult position - *things have changed but is still the same, they only have new boss*." Perhaps R11 is highlighting how, within South African society, there is a need to oppress the other. We dare to

propose that as South Africans we split ourselves into the oppressed and the oppressor - white people were the oppressors in the past, and now black people are the oppressors, and the Indians and coloureds remain the oppressed. This is evidence of how a primary dimension of diversity (Reece & Brandt 1993), such as race, is used to split the world into the oppressed and the oppressor.

We propose that in this split into the oppressed and the oppressor, there seems to be an unconscious understanding that the oppressed is the idealised one, while the oppressor is the rejected one. In using the group-as-a-whole phenomenon, it is suggested that race groups are split into idealised parts and rejected parts of the country-as-a-whole. The rejected part is projected onto, and at times identified with, the coloured and Indian participants. Possibly, white and black participants were then less burdened by the struggle of their position in RIDE.

In conclusion it is proposed that this denigrated part is now projected by certain subgroups (black and white) onto other subgroups (Indian and coloured), so that the black and white people can hold onto to their idealised, good parts. This idea could have further implications: if the country-as-a-whole can be sure who are the rejected ones, then black and white people are free to struggle about who are the chosen ones. R11 could be correct in saying, "things have changed, but are still the same."

7.5 Integrating the denigrated parts and the idealised parts within the Self

Recognising and owning the denied and denigrated parts of oneself seems to have been an overwhelming and unpleasant experience for some. Other respondents considered this process to be necessary for their own development and for addressing diversity within the self and across groups. Respondents did not express this view in so many words, but we could deduce this from their statements. R13 stated: "Robben Island itself symbolize Eva to me. A book I read of Eva, a child of a Hottentot and a Dutch minister. Eva was a mix and finally lost her mind because it was so difficult for her to live in two worlds. I saw her everywhere, this struggle to live and cope in different worlds". Recognising this was important to R13. For us this also illustrates the process of firstly recognising and then integrating the different parts within the Self, such as the struggle to live and to cope with the different worlds/parts within the Self. Perhaps these different parts refer to be the denigrated and the idealised parts within the psyche.

Sorry seems to be the hardest word

R14 stated: "A lot of emphasis was put on saying sorry. I couldn't understand it and no one could tell me what I did wrong. You know one session I sat and I realised that we were part of the system. We really discriminated against non-whites, and that was a big learning for me. The whole thing of saying sorry for what has happened."

This statement seems to illustrate that if a white person apologises for the system it is about connecting oneself more fully to one's group membership, which has included discrimination against black people. Apologising is about being accountable to the other for one's group membership. Perhaps it is also about taking responsibility for the unpleasant, denigrated parts of oneself that one has dumped on one's own group. For example, it is not only the white group that has discriminated, it is the white person that has discriminated.

This process may also address the needs of black people. R4 stated that he experiences anger and frustration with others' denial of their responsibility with regard to Apartheid. He feels a need that those who are considered "guilty" should be accountable for the crimes of Apartheid. To some extent one can accept that "the others" that R4 refers to are white people. However, given that he has not stated this, it appears that the issue of who should be held accountable for the crimes of Apartheid requires further exploration.

7.6 A never-ending journey of healing

It seems that there is a need to create and recreate guidelines for interaction between white and black, male and female, young/new and old, consultants and participants. This need is deduced from R10's statement: "What also came out is the level of anger that still exists. That it is so powerful and overwhelming. RIDE provided an opportunity to go back to that anger and that was very astonishing." It seems that participants usually reacted to issues of diversity with anger, hurt and pain and that there is a need for dealing with and facing these feelings following diversity. It appears that RIDE provided an opportunity and enough containment for the exploration of unresolved emotions from the past. R10 stated: "What was good is that although I was experiencing these emotions, we could work through it and laugh about things."

The diversity experience allowed the participants to face the anger, hurt and pain and dealing with baggage from the past. R10 said: "The more we as a society face these emotions - anger - the more we can work through it". We propose that the resolution of the baggage which imprisons us is an unknown process which requires South Africans to deal with emotions (such as pain and

anger from the past). Linked to resolving issues from the past is the importance of understanding what one represents and what role one plays for the other. R13 stated: "It is powerful to realise what we represent, and the role that we play regarding what we represent."

Another way of addressing issues from the past and working across differences is for each individual to accept his or her share of the blame for what happened and perhaps for what is still happening, such as the legacy of Apartheid. R5, a black woman, stated: "I also realised that people must take your part for what happened and the other person must also take their part for what happened." This statement seems to refer to issues related to Apartheid. We want to propose that this statement is also relevant to what happens when people from different subgroupings interact with each other, for example, each person must take responsibility for what happens in an interaction. In other words, each person has the responsibility of seeing and listening beyond the stereotype. R5 stated: "I realised that things aren't about race and religion. In the end it goes back to the individual."

A few participants proposed that issues from the past and working across differences can be addressed by nurturing intimacy with those who appear to be different from ourselves. R5 commented: "If we could just love people, just love people, but something happens to it." R13 stated: "I also realised that it is about connection and trust. It is not about sameness and otherness. It is not about trying to find a common ground or middle path. The joy is in being diverse and to trust other people to live out their differences. And the funny thing is that made me more tolerant towards my own group as well as to other groups." Thus, in linking with others and nurturing intimacy across difference, diversity can be celebrated. We propose that in celebrating and exploring diversity with all its complexities, a real connection can be made with individuals from the other sub-groupings, as well as with individuals from one's own group.

8 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The psycho-dynamic nature of the event whose primary task was to study diversity among South Africans was difficult to cope with. The demands were real and addressed diversity issues within the individual self, in dyads and in groups. The participants struggled with some real South African issues, for example the issue of being seen and responded to as an object of "what I represent" for others. As the event progressed, individuals and subgroups started to understand and eventually own their projections onto other individuals and subgroups. This psycho-dynamic process, integrated with the efforts at reparation, sent all the participants on a journey of healing. It seems clear that without this difficult confrontation with the own unconscious, the participants

would not have been aware of the manifesting diversity dynamics, let alone owned their own part in it.

It is recommend that organisations realise that employees can only understand diversity and its dynamics when some form of psychodynamic and experiential input is used. This research leads to the formulation of the following hypothesis. Diversity and its behavioural dynamics can only be studied and understood in its unconscious depth from a systems psycho-dynamic stance, with an intensive and lengthy experiential learning input (such as the group relations training model).

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