

# **EXPERIENCES OF DIVERSITY IN THE SAPS**

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Mini-dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree  
Magister Artium in Industrial Psychology at the  
Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West University.

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November 2007

Potchefstroom

## COMMENTS

The reader is reminded of the following:

- The editorial style as well as the references referred to in this mini-dissertation follow the format prescribed by the Publication Manual (5th edition) of the American Psychological Association (APA). This practice is in line with the policy of the Programme in Industrial Psychology of the North-West University (Potchefstroom) to use APA style in all scientific documents as from January 1999.
- The mini-dissertation is submitted in the form of a research article.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the following people:

- My God for His help and guidance.
- My husband, for all your support, insight and understanding through all my studies. Without you by my side it would have been a lonely and difficult time. I love you.
- Dr Wilma Coetzer, my supervisor. Thank you for deciding to help me finish this dissertation. I really appreciate your guidance, knowledge, insight, effort and patience.
- Thank you to my co-coders and other specialists for sharing their insight and expertise.
- Thank you to the South African Police Service, Potchefstroom for granting me permission to conduct research.

The financial assistance of the National Research Foundation (NRF) towards this research is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed and conclusions arrived at are those of the author and not necessarily to be attributed to the NRF.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables.....	iv
List of Figures .....	v
Abstract .....	vi
Opsomming .....	vii
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Problem statement .....	1
1.2 Research objectives.....	6
1.2.1 General objective.....	6
1.2.2 Specific objectives.....	7
1.3 Paradigm perspective of the research.....	7
1.4 Research method .....	11
1.4.2.1 Research design.....	12
1.4.2.2 Participants .....	13
1.4.2.3 Data collection .....	13
1.5 Chapter division .....	18
1.6 Chapter summary .....	18
References .....	19
<b>CHAPTER 2: RESEARCH ARTICLE.....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>CHAPTER 3: CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....</b>	<b>71</b>
3.1 Conclusions .....	71
3.2 Limitations .....	74
3.3 Recommendations .....	74
References .....	76

## LIST OF TABLES

<b>Table</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Page</b>
Table 1(a)	Population by age, race, and sex, 2006	35
Table 1(b)	Population by age, race, and sex, 2006	36
Table 2	Characteristics of the participants	42
Table 3	The Understanding of diversity in the SAPS	48
Table 4	The Experience of diversity in the SAPS	53

## **LIST OF FIGURES**

<b>Figure</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>Chapter 1</b>		
Figure 1	Kreitner and Kinicki's model of layers of diversity	4
<b>Chapter 2</b>		
Figure 1	Kreitner and Kinicki's model of layers of diversity	30

## ABSTRACT

**TITLE:** The experience of diversity in the SAPS (North West Province)

**KEYWORDS:** Diversity, contextualisation, experience, dimensions, understanding, employees, work, occupation, business, industry, organisation, South African Police Service, North-West Province, South Africa.

Within a society characterised by globalisation, diversity is an indicative factor of organisational performance. The understanding and experience of diversity are influenced by contexts and perspectives. Therefore contextualisation of diversity is necessary to ensure effective diversity management. The context of the South African Police Service (SAPS) is characterised by high levels of stress, as well as changing demographics. Thus the experience and understanding of diversity should differ from those of other organisations.

The objective of this study was to determine how employees of the SAPS experience diversity. More specifically the objectives were to investigate how diversity is conceptualised in the literature, to determine the dimensions of diversity according to the literature, to determine the experience of diversity in the SAPS in the North West Province, and to investigate whether there are any differences in the conceptualisation and experience of diversity between different genders and cultural groups. An availability, purposeful and voluntary sample was taken of employees working in the SAPS in the North-West province ( $N=22$ ). Qualitative research was conducted and the phenomenological method was used to investigate the employees' experience. Data was collected through conducting interviews and analysed by means of content analysis.

The results indicated that the employees of the SAPS understand diversity mainly in terms of personality and internal dimensions. As a result of the affirmative action policy there is an equal positive and negative experience of recognition as diverse individuals by the organisation. There was a strong positive experience though regarding growth and learning processes of diversity.

Recommendations were made for future research.

## OPSOMMING

**TITEL:** Die ervaring van diversiteit binne die SAPD (Noordwes Provinsie).

**SLEUTELTERME:** Diversiteit, kontekstualisering, ervaring, dimensies, begrip, werknemers, werk, beroep, besigheid, industrie, organisasie, Suid-Afrikaanse Polisiediens, Noordwes Provinsie, Suid-Afrika.

Binne 'n samelewing gekenmerk deur globalisasie, is diversiteit 'n bepalende faktor van prestasie binne die organisasie. Die begrip en ervaring van diversiteit word deur kontekste en perspektiewe beïnvloed. Kontekstulisering van diversiteit is dus nodig om effektiewe diversiteitbestuur te verseker. Die konteks van die Suid-Afrikaanse Polisiediens (SAPD) word gekenmerk deur hoë stresvlakke, sowel as demografiese veranderinge. Dus behoort die ervaring en begrip van diversiteit te verskil van die van ander organisasies.

Die doelstelling van hierdie studie was om te bepaal hoe werknemers van die SAPD diversiteit ervaar. Meer spesifiek was die doelstellings om te ondersoek hoe diversiteit in die literatuur gekonseptualiseer word, om die dimensies van diversiteit te bepaal volgens die literatuur, om die ervaring van diversiteit in die SAPD in die Noordwes Provinsie te bepaal en om te bepaal of daar enige verskille in die konseptualisering en ervaring van diversiteit is tussen verskillende geslagte en kulturele groepe. 'n Beskikbaarheid, doelgerigte en vrywillige steekproef is geneem van werknemers werksaam in die SAPD in die Noordwes Provinsie ( $N=22$ ). Kwalitatiewe navorsing is gedoen en die fenomenologiese metode is gebruik om die werknemers se ervarings te ondersoek. Data is ingesamel deur onderhoude te voer en die analise is gedoen deur middel van inhoudsanalise.

Die resultate het aangedui dat werknemers van die SAPD diversiteit hoofsaaklik verstaan in terme van persoonlikheids- en interne dimensies. As 'n resultaat van die regstellende aksiebeleid, is daar 'n gelyke mate van positiewe en negatiewe ervaring van erkenning as diverse individue deur die organisasie. Daar was 'n sterk positiewe ervaring met betrekking tot groei en leerprosesse van diversiteit.

Aanbevelings vir toekomstige navorsing is aan die hand gedoen.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This mini-dissertation focuses on the experience of diversity in the South African Police Service (SAPS).

Chapter 1 contains the problem statement, research objectives and research methodology employed. The chapter commences with a problem statement, giving an overview of previously related research conducted on diversity and the experience of diversity, connecting it with this research project and its research objectives. A discussion of the research method follows, with details regarding the empirical study, research design, participants, data collection methods and data analysis. It concludes with a chapter summary giving an overview of the chapters that comprise this mini-dissertation.

#### **1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

##### **1.1.1 Overview of the problem**

Similar to other public organisations, the South African Police Service (SAPS) had to reflect the governmental transformations that took place after the democratic elections of 1994 (Reddy & Choudree, 1996). The former South African Police Force (SAP) adopted a new philosophy and approach in policing and the affirmative action policy was implemented. The unique nature of the SAPS as a public organisation lies in the transformation that has been experienced, as well as in the strenuous work conditions of being in the police service (Mostert & Joubert, 2005; Pienaar & Rothmann, 2005; Pienaar & Rothmann, 2006; Steyn, 2005; Storm & Rothmann, 2003; The South African Institute of Race Relations, 2006). The special work context, changes experienced within the organisation and the diverse workforce in terms of gender and ethnicity, presented an appealing environment for the study of the experience of diversity.

There are as many different definitions of diversity as there are people on earth (Marvin & Girling, 2000). The basic, globally accepted assumption underlying the concept of diversity is

that there is a difference or are differences in some or other regard between people (Lumby, 2006).

The effect of diversity on performance, teamwork and processes plays an important role in the business environment (Ely & Thomas, 2001; Marvin & Griling, 2000; Thomas & Ely, 2001). The edge towards competitive advantage could be due to a variety of skills, knowledge, perspectives, ideas, as well as to equal opportunities (Marvin & Griling, 2000; Thomas & Ely, 2001). Despite the mentioned advantages of effective diversity management, failures seem to be more prevalent than successes (Thomas & Ely, 2001). These failures have been attributed to the application of quick fix solutions, underlying assumptions of diversity and the inability to make paradigm shifts (Human, 1996; Thomas & Ely, 2001). Therefore it is essential to understand and investigate diversity in order to ensure optimal performance and collaboration within an organisation.

The question arises whether people in different contexts experience diversity differently in terms of the dimensions of diversity. Literature on diversity basically originated in the United States (Janssens & Steyart, 2003). Since the contexts of various countries differ, there is a strong need for contextualisation of diversity within the South African context. The focus on diversity dimensions that are not context specific could be a possible reason for unsuccessful diversity management and interventions, necessitating the importance to investigate employees' experience and understanding of diversity within organisations and specifically in the SAPS.

Qualitative research and, more specifically, a phenomenological method are used in this study. The reason is that a phenomenological approach gives the researcher the opportunity to understand the concept and experience of diversity from the participant's point of view (Giorgi, 1997; Leady & Ormrod, 2001; Struwig & Stead, 2001).

### **1.1.2 Literature review**

Bateson makes the assumption that: "Without context, words and actions have no meaning at all" (1987, p. 15). Context gives a framework by which individuals' actions could be interpreted. It is therefore important to give an overview of the unique South African context in order to understand background against which certain perspectives of diversity emerge.

Radical transformation is not experienced by humans as a natural phenomenon (Heller, 2002). If not preceded by the institution of secure structural, social, legal and political bases to build on, serious obstacles are likely to occur. South Africa is an example of a country grappling with such obstacles.

In South Africa, since 1970, radical changes have taken place with the transition from an apartheid regime to a democratic order (Abedian & Standish, 1992; Horwitz, 2002). Legislation such as the Labour Relations Act, the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, the Equity Employment Act, and the Skills and Development Act enforced new practices on the South African labour force (South Africa, 1995, 1997, 1998a, 1998b). Up to 2006, a gradual improvement regarding the economy (Cassim, 2006; Southall, 2006) and the labour market (Bhorat, 2006; Statistics South Africa, 2006) was observed. The growing gap between the different socio-economic categories (wealth and poverty), the demography of occupational structures and the skills profile of the labour market, are challenges that require constant attention (Bhorat, 2006; Moleke, 2003, 2006; Southall, 2006).

Any change in a country's social epistemology, will lead to new diversity dynamics (Thomas, 2005). In South Africa diversity has, with the transition from a minority government to a democratic order, been approached from a more relationship-orientated perspective. This change in the dynamics of diversity can also be seen in the metaphorical shifts made. Where apartheid was not only an ideology but also a metaphor, new metaphors, like *ubuntu*, have been adopted (Thomas, 2005).

Thomas (2005) describes diversity as a fluid concept. This idea of fluidity can be explained by referring to the manner in which issues of diversity vary in the different areas of South Africa. A conservative, homogenic, rural area will experience different diversity issues from a liberal, heterogenic, urban area (Thomas, 2005). Diversity is therefore not a generic concept and is influenced by different views and perspectives.

Several distinctions were made in the dimensions of diversity, such as observable and non-observable differences (see Miliken & Martins, 1996) and high and low job-relatedness (see Pelled, 1996). Another trend is the politicisation of the definition of diversity (Thomas, 2006). In such cases, concepts such as diversity and affirmative action, for example, are confused (Human, 1996).

Kreitner and Kinicki (2004) developed a model of the layers of diversity (adopted from Loden & Rosener, 1991), which incorporates most of the above mentioned dimensions.

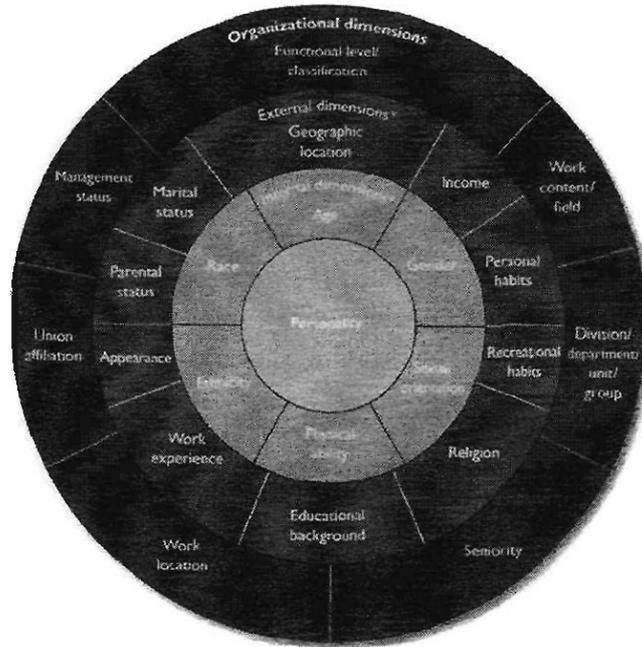


Figure 1. Kreitner and Kinicki's model of layers of diversity (adopted from Loden & Rosener, in Kreitner & Kinicki, 2004, p. 48)

These layers are identified as *personality*, *internal dimensions* (race, ethnicity, physical ability, sexual orientation, gender, age), *external dimensions* (educational background, work experience, religion, appearance, recreational habits, parental status, marital status, geographic location, income) and *organisational dimensions* (work location, seniority, unit/department, union affiliation, management status, work content, functional level) (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2004).

Within literature and research on diversity, two perspectives arise from diversity in the workplace. The first perspective focuses on unequal and discriminatory treatment and the correction thereof. Janssens and Steyart (2003) refer to this perspective as the moral-ethical perspective, whereas Siebers (2007) refers to it as the inequality perspective. The outcomes or effects of diversity on the company with regard to effective group performance are the focus of the second perspective. This perspective could be referred to as the systems perspective (Siebers, 2007; Williams & O'Reilly, 1978) or the organisational and economical perspective

(Janssens & Steyart, 2003). It is important to have an overview of the different theories on which the various dimensions of diversity are based, in order to have more insight on various views on diversity. A literature study on various theories will therefore be conducted.

Robbins, Odendaal and Roodt (2004, p. 107) define perception as "... a process by which individuals organise and interpret their sensory impressions in order to give meaning to their environment." One can conclude from this statement that what one person experiences as reality, the next may not. Other approaches such as the social anthropology, cultural anthropology, cognitive anthropology, cognitive science, ecological psychology and attribution theory all had different ideas on the processes and aspects involved in perceptions and experiences (Ingold, 1996; Robbins et al., 2004). In this study the focus will be on the phenomenological perspective according to which "...the world emerges with its properties alongside the emergence of the perceiver in person, against the background of involved activity" (Ingold, 1996, p. 111).

Seen in the light of previous discussions, it cannot be assumed that there is an absolute and commonly accepted conceptualisation of diversity, especially within the unique South African context. This will also be the fundamental motivation for conducting a phenomenological study, where the experience of employees of the SAPS with regard to diversity, will be investigated. Accordingly, the need arises to investigate the themes embedded in local experiences of diversity. A comparison can then be drawn between the themes as experienced by different genders and different ethnic groups.

Although previous research has been conducted on the conceptualisation of diversity in other countries and contexts (see Lumby, 2006), some South African phenomenological qualitative studies could be found that were conducted on some dimensions of experience or perspectives of diversity. The first study was conducted on police perspectives on the diversity dimensions of race and gender (Newham, Masuku & Dlamini, 2006). Their findings indicated that the race dimension in diversity still remains an issue and especially White officers showed a negative experience of affirmative action. They have also indicated signs of changes in gender dynamics, which was experienced negatively by female officers. Another qualitative study conducted within Non Governmental Organisations emphasised the negative experience of diversity by team members, because of the change involved regarding demographics (Lala, 2001).

As such, no research could be found on the experience and understanding of diversity in the workplace, in the context of South African public organisations and specifically within the SAPS. Therefore, this research will be conducted in the SAPS in the North West Province of South Africa. The objective of this research is to investigate the concept of diversity through the experience of employees in public organisations, and to compare the findings to globally accepted definitions of diversity.

The following research questions emerge from the problem statement:

- How is diversity conceptualised in the literature and what are the dimensions of diversity in the workplace according to the literature?
- What is the experience of diversity in the SAPS in the North West Province?
- Are there differences in the conceptualisation and experience of diversity between different genders and cultural groups in the SAPS in the North West Province?
- What recommendations can be made regarding the management of diversity in the SAPS in the North West Province?

In order to answer the above research questions, the following research objectives are set.

## **1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The research objectives are divided into general and specific objectives.

### **1.2.1 General objective**

The general objective of this research is to determine the experience of diversity in the SAPS in the North West Province, and to compare the results with global experience of diversity from literature.

### **1.2.2 Specific objectives**

The specific objectives are as follows:

- To investigate how diversity is conceptualised in the literature and to determine the dimensions of diversity in the workplace according to the literature.
- To determine the experience of diversity in the SAPS in the North West Province.
- To investigate whether there are any there differences in the conceptualisation and experience of diversity between different genders and cultural groups in the SAPS in the North West Province.
- To make recommendations for future research.

### **1.3 PARADIGM PERSPECTIVE OF THE RESEARCH**

A certain paradigm perspective that includes the intellectual climate and the market of intellectual resources (Lundin, 1996; Mouton & Marais, 1992) directs the research. A paradigm can be described as an authoritative framework which guides and explains the research (Botha, 1996; Struwig & Stead, 2001). Therefore within a certain paradigm, approaches and methods have been chosen as endorsement of the paradigm.

#### **1.3.1 Intellectual climate**

The intellectual climate “refers to the non-epistemic or meta theoretical assumptions and beliefs that are accepted as valid within a discipline at a given point in time” (Mouton, 1996, p. 24). Assumptions about human beings in general adopted in this study include existentialism and cognitive behaviourism. Discipline-specific assumptions and pre-suppositions include social cognition, social information processing and the interrelatedness of culture, society, politics, economy, history and perceptions (Kreitner & Kinicke, 2004; Mouton, 1996).

### **1.3.2 Discipline**

This research falls within the boundaries of the behavioural sciences and more specifically Industrial Psychology. The term industrial psychology includes both industrial and organisational psychology. It comprises the scientific study and application of psychological theories, methods and strategies to workplace issues (Muchinsky, Kriek & Schreuder, 2002).

Sub-disciplines of Industrial Psychology include personnel psychology, organisation psychology, ergonomics, vocational and career counselling, organisation development, consumer behaviour, employment relations and cross-cultural industrial psychology (Muchinsky et al., 2002). In this research, the focus is on organisation industrial psychology, with specific reference to experiences of diversity. The SAPS employees' experience of diversity will be studied in order to understand individual and group dynamics in the organisation. More specifically, organisational behaviour refers to the study of people in a workplace setting in order to apply the understanding of individual and group dynamics to effective management (Kreitner & Kinicke, 2004; Robbins et al., 2004).

#### **1.3.2.1 Meta-theoretical assumptions**

Various paradigms are relevant to this research. Firstly, the literature review is done within the phenomenological philosophy, existential philosophy, cognitive psychology and cognitive behavioural paradigms, and secondly the empirical study is done within the qualitative research paradigm.

##### **1.3.2.1.1 Literature review**

The philosophy of phenomenology has its origin in the work of Husserl (Kvale, 1996). Role players in developing phenomenology towards an existential and later dialectical direction were Heidegger, Satre and Merleau-Ponty (Kvale, 1996). Phenomenology's root assumption is the understanding of a concept from the participant's point of view (Giorgi, 1997; Leady & Ormrod, 2001; Struwig & Stead, 2001).

The assumptions of existential psychology include the following (Lundin, 1996): human beings are seen as unique individuals with different perceptions and world views, free will and

freedom of choice are emphasised and external determinism is rejected. The aim in existential psychology is “to understand human beings in their total existential reality” (Lundin, 1996, p. 381). Experiences in existential reality in relation with other people are important. Therefore the phenomenological methodology underlies existential psychology.

Cognitive psychology is a study of language and its different components as it is seen as a reflection of mental processes (Lundin, 1996). Cognitive behaviourism explains differences in behaviour by referring to the different cognitive processes of people (Lundin, 1996). Both cognitive psychology and cognitive behaviour play an important role in the interpretation of people's perceptions and experiences.

#### **1.3.2.1.2 Empirical study**

The qualitative research paradigm emphasises the importance of understanding experience through the eyes of the participants (Meyers, 2006). The underlying epistemology in this research is interpretive (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1994; Meyers, 2006). The assumption is that reality is interpreted within constructions such as language, consciousness and shared meanings (Meyers, 2006). The foundation of interpretive research is hermeneutics and phenomenology (Meyers, 2006).

This empirical study is presented within the phenomenological philosophy and method. As already mentioned, phenomenology's root assumption is to understand a concept from the participant's point of view (Giorgi, 1997; Leady & Ormrod, 2001; Struwig & Stead, 2001).

#### **1.3.4 Market of intellectual resources**

Mouton (1996, p. 24) describes the market of intellectual resources as “...the ‘stock’ of resources that are directly related to the epistemic status of sciences”. The two main categories are theoretical resources (nature and dynamics of reality, theories, models, interpretations, typologies and valid empirical statements) and methodological resources (methods, techniques and approaches).

#### **1.3.4.1 Theoretical beliefs**

The following theoretical beliefs are accepted in this study:

##### **A. Conceptual definitions**

The relevant conceptual definitions are given below:

*Diversity:* The basic globally accepted assumption underlying the concept of diversity is that there are differences and comparisons in some or other regard between people (Kreitner & Kinicke, 2004; Lumby, 2006).

*Experience:* "...the world emerges with its properties alongside the emergence of the perceiver in person, against the background of involved activity" (Ingold, 1996, p.111).

*Context:* In this study, context refers to the physical environment and social system as found in a workplace (Hamilton & Bean, 2005).

##### **B. Models and theories**

This qualitative study is not necessarily theory-driven from the start and theories could be incorporated later on in the process (Struwig & Stead, 2001). In this study models and theories that will be of importance include models, paradigms and theories underlying dimensions of diversity, and underlying perceptions and experience.

Theories and paradigms underlying the dimensions of diversity that will be discussed in this study include: the assimilation and multiculturalism paradigms, the melting-pot model cultural pluralism, racism, affirmative action, discrimination and prejudice, the basic human capital model (Becker, 1975; Hornsey & Hogg, 2000; Popenoe, Cunningham & Boulton, 1998). The self-verification theory (Polzer, Milton & Swann, 2002) the social identity theory (Tajfel, 1981), self-categorisation theory (Turner, 2000) and the attraction-similarity paradigm (Byrne, 1971) are also included.

Kreitner and Kinicki's (2004) model of the layers of diversity (adopted from Loden & Rosener, 1991) was used in the explanation of the underlying assumptions of diversity (see Figure 1).

In the explanation of perceptions and experience, reference was also made to the attribution theory (Robbins et al., 2004), social anthropology, cultural anthropology, cognitive anthropology, cognitive science, ecological psychology and the phenomenological perspective (Ingold, 1996).

#### **1.3.4.2 Methodological beliefs**

Methodological beliefs can be defined as beliefs concerning the nature of social sciences research (Mouton & Marais, 1990).

This empirical study is presented within the phenomenological method. The phenomenological method describes the participant's experience or view in a specific context (Ingold, 1996; Kvale, 1996; Lundin, 1996; Smith, Jarman & Osborn, 1999). This method includes description, investigation of essences, and phenomenological reduction (Kvale, 1996). Description refers to the objective description of experience and investigation of essences focuses on the common thread that runs through experiences described. Finally, the phenomenological method attempts to put presuppositions, assumptions, common sense and foreknowledge in "brackets", in order to give an unbiased and unprejudiced description of the experience (Kvale, 1996). This process of "bracketing" is called phenomenological reduction.

### **1.4 RESEARCH METHOD**

The research method consists of literature review and empirical study. Results are presented in the format of a research article.

#### **1.4.1 Literature review**

In the literature review, an overview of the South African context has been given. The focus has also been on the conceptualisation and dimensions of diversity in the literature. The sources that have been consulted include:

- Books, journals and the internet;
- Databases such as EBSCO Host: Business Source Premier, Academic Search Premier; ERIC; PsychInfo.

#### **1.4.2 Empirical study**

The empirical study consists of the research design, participants, data collection, and data analysis.

##### **1.4.2.1 Research design**

A qualitative study has been conducted in order to study the multiple facets of diversity in a natural setting (SAPS) (Leady & Ormrod, 2001). A phenomenological approach was used to understand the concept of diversity from the participant's point of view (Giorgi, 1997; Leady & Ormrod, 2001; Struwig & Stead, 2001).

Since the research design is qualitative, it is important to discuss the role which the researcher will play in this study. The researcher is biased and subjective since she is a white, female person, who is also influenced by the South African history and current situation. Therefore value-free interpretations cannot be guaranteed, but certain steps have been taken in order to enhance the validity of the study. This is especially important when referring to the interviews that have been conducted. The capabilities and open mindedness of the researcher determine the quality and validity of the interviews (Leady & Ormrod, 2001; Struwig & Stead, 2001).

Since the validity of the interviews relied on the questioning and listening capabilities of the researcher, the researcher completed a course on conducting unstructured interviews and on communication skills (Leady & Ormrod, 2001; Struwig & Stead, 2001). As far as possible, the researcher ensured that the conditions, under which the interviews were conducted, were as close as possible to the ideal conditions preferred. The ideal conditions preferred can be described as a neutral setting, free of any interruption, noise, extreme temperatures, where the participants are able to feel safe and comfortable.

#### **1.4.2.2 Participants**

The participants consisted of an availability and purposeful sample of employees working in the SAPS in the North-West province of South Africa ( $n = 22$ ). The sample consisted of 4 groups: a) black / coloured females ( $n=54$ ); b) white females ( $n =6$ ); c) black males ( $n =5$ ); d) white males ( $n =6$ ). The reason for the specific groupings of race and gender is that during the apartheid-regime there was a marked difference in the practices of equity at the workplace between these groups. Therefore, the participant will not only be representative of individual perspectives and experiences, but also of group perspectives and experiences from different ethnic groups and genders in the workplace context.

The participants for the study were selected from the middle and top management within the SAPS. The reason and assumptions underlying this selection were that middle and top management positions possibly had more opportunities to encounter diverse situations, since they have more people reporting to them than persons in lower management positions. The assumption is also that these subjects will have experienced diversity not only in their own units, but also in broader contexts within the SAPS.

#### **1.4.2.3 Data collection**

Access has been gained through contacts at SAPS (North West Province) in the North-West province of South Africa. Permission was acquired through formal letters to the Head of the Research Department. In these letters the purpose of the research and the advantages to Research Development in South Africa were explained. The participants were selected with the help of the Station Commissioner.

The purpose and advantages of the research were explained to the participants. Ethical issues such as confidentiality and anonymity were addressed. The participants also gave their informed consent by signing an applicable document. Confidence of participants was secured through rapport. In depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis. The interviews were recorded with the consent of the participant.

### *Interviews*

All the interviews were conducted in the offices of the various participants. As far as possible, the researcher ensured that the conditions, under which the interviews were conducted, were as close as possible to the ideal conditions preferred. The ideal conditions preferred can be described as a neutral setting, free of any interruption, noise, extreme temperatures, where the participant will be able to feel safe and comfortable.

All the interviews started with the researcher introducing herself, thanking the interviewee for the voluntary participation, and commenting on the purpose and advantages of the research (Flick, 2002; Gaskell, 2000). An explanation was given on why the interviews would be recorded, confidentiality was ensured and the participant was requested permission to use a recorder during the session. The confidence of participants was secured through rapport and ensuring that the participant was at ease.

The interviews were semi-structured and conducted on a one-to-one basis. The researcher used a non-directed approach in the interview with open-ended questions, to ensure that the participants were not led to a specific answer. The focus was on the participant's own opinion, understanding and experience of diversity. Two basic questions were asked to all the participants: "*What do you understand of the term diversity within your work context?*" and "*What is your experience of the aspects you have just mentioned with regard to diversity within your work context?*" The researcher encouraged the participants through eye contact, nodding and other reinforcements (Flick, 2002; Gaskell, 2000). The following types of questions were used as probes (Gaskell, 2000): inviting descriptions such as "*What comes to mind when you think of ...?*"; taking things further by using questions such as "*Can you tell me more about ...?*"; testing the hypotheses by saying "*From what you say it seems that you think...am I right there?*"; and final thoughts "*Is there anything else you would like to tell me?*".

After each interview the researcher wrote field notes on her observations, assumptions, insights and emotions. These notes were later used in the paraphrasing of themes.

### *Trustworthiness*

"The concept of validity as quality of craftsmanship is not limited to a postmodern approach, but becomes pivotal with a postmodern dismissal of an objective reality against which

knowledge is to be measured. The craftsmanship and credibility of the researcher becomes essential” (Kvale, 1996, p. 241). The trustworthiness of data collection and data analysis will be discussed.

To gain an understanding of the fostering of trustworthiness within the interviews conducted the following aspects will be discussed: the quality of the interviews, the interview subjects, the interviewer qualifications and leading questions. Kvale, (1996, p. 240) made the following statement with regard to objectivity within interviews: “...the interview as such is neither an objective nor a subjective method – its essence is intersubjective interaction.”

The quality of the interviews has been measured against Kvale’s (1996) quality criteria for an interview. These criteria include a) the quality of answers received; b) short questions and long answers; c) clarification of aspects by the researcher during the interview; d) interpretation to a certain extent of the interview during the process of interviewing; e) verifying interpretations during the interview; f) the interview is complete and sufficient in itself (Kvale, 1996). In this study about 60% of the interviews measured up to expectations of the mentioned criteria. Therefore the quality of the interviews can be described as moderate to good.

The interview subject was a relevant but relatively sensitive subject. The researcher had to have a gentle and sensitive approach in order to receive open and honest answers.

The researcher conducted all the interviews herself. In order to qualify herself as a competent interviewer she attended a session on conducting unstructured interviews and on communication skills (Kvale, 1996; Leady & Ormrod, 2001; Struwig & Stead, 2001). Furthermore she ensured that she had extensive knowledge of the subject, had a good structure for conducting an interview, asked clear questions without academic jargon, had a gentle, relaxed approach, was sensitive, was open to the participant’s views, know how to steer the conversation towards the purpose of the interview and listened in an interpretive and critical way. These qualities tie up with Kvale’s (1996) qualification criteria for an interviewer.

The structure of the interview (semi-structured) and the type of questions (open-ended) supported the object of the study to gain insight in the experience of the participants. The researcher took care not to ask leading questions which could pollute the participant’s own opinion and perspective (Kvale, 1996).

As already mentioned, all the interviews were recorded. These interviews were transcribed by a person with experience in the transcription of interviews. The transcriber had been instructed to transcribe all the recordings word by word. Therefore no rephrasing and formal language was used. The transcriptions were checked by the researcher. In order to ensure confidentiality, no names were given to the transcriber and the person was also briefed on the confidentiality of the contents of the transcriptions.

There are various methods that could be used in validating the analyses and interpretive processes in qualitative research (Kvale, 1996). The methods used in this study included: checking for representativeness and for researcher effects, field notes, triangulation, using a co-coder and using other researchers' insight and opinions on the themes identified (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001).

#### *Ethical issues*

Four aspects will be addressed as identified by Kvale (1996) namely: informed consent, confidentiality, consequences and research and therapeutic interviews.

Before an interview commenced, the participant was briefed on the purpose and procedure of the interview. The researcher explained who would have access to the interview, ensured anonymity and explained requirements of the SAPS with regard to conducting research. The participants gave their informed consent by signing a document.

In this study the SAPS required a list of names of all the participants. Therefore anonymity of participation in the research could not be ensured. All participants had been ensured though that no names would be linked to interviews recorded.

The researcher showed respect for any participant not being comfortable in answering a question asked (consequences). Furthermore, the researcher kept aspects of research and therapeutic interviews in mind. Long, repeated interviews and strong personal and emotional issues could promote a therapeutic interview instead of a research interview. In this study the interviews were not long and repeated, but once off. The issues in discussion were slightly sensitive, but not emotional and personal issues. Therefore no case could be reported where

the interview developed into a quasi-therapeutic relationship or where arrangements had to be made for therapeutic support.

#### **1.4.2.4 Data analysis**

The central task was to identify common themes in people's descriptions of their experiences of diversity by means of content analysis (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001; Struwig & Stead, 2001). The process of interpretative phenomenological analysis started with reading through all the data to obtain a general sense of the information (Creswell, 2003). Thereafter initial coding took place. Coding categories have been developed in advance and were based on Kreitner and Kinicke's (2004) model of the layers of dimensions of diversity.

After the coding of the categories, the interview material was structured. The transcriptions were made amendable to analysis. This included distinguishing between essential and non-essential material as guided by the objective of this study and the underlying presuppositions.

Thereafter meanings of the transcriptions were paraphrased into scientific statements or themes. Both the understanding of the participants and the researcher's perspective has been incorporated into these themes. Next shared themes were identified, coded and grouped into clusters or categories of meaning. The themes were analysed and examined for patterns and relationships. Finally the occurrence of themes between groups was compared, in order to be able to compare the experience of diversity between different ethnic and gender groups (Bauer, 2000; Creswell, 2003; Flick, 2002; Kidder & Judd, 1986; Kvale, 1996; Smith et al., 1999).

In this study other researchers' insights and opinions were used in order to ensure validity. They confirmed or declined the themes identified. Co-coders also assisted in the coding process (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001).

## **1.5 CHAPTER DIVISION**

The chapters in this mini-dissertation are presented as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction and problem statement.

Chapter 2: Research article.

Chapter 3: Conclusions, limitations and recommendations.

## **1.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

Chapter 1 focused on the problem statement and objectives of the study, as well as the research methodology employed. This was followed by a layout of the chapters that follow.

Chapter 2 will focus on the experience of diversity in the SAPS.

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**CHAPTER 2**

**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

## **EXPERIENCES OF DIVERSITY IN THE SAPS**

H VAN DER WESTHUIZEN

### **ABSTRACT**

The general objective of this study was to determine how employees of the South African Police Service (SAPS) experience diversity. An availability, purposeful and voluntary sample was taken of employees working in the SAPS in the North-West province. Qualitative research was conducted and the phenomenological method was used to investigate the employees' experience. Data was collected through conducting interviews. Transcriptions were coded and then analysed and interpreted by means of content analysis. The results indicated that the employees of the SAPS understand diversity mainly in terms of personality and internal dimensions. As a result of the affirmative action policy there is an equal positive and negative experience of recognition as diverse individuals by the organisation. There was a strong positive experience though regarding growth and learning processes of diversity.

### **OPSOMMING**

Die algemene doelstelling van hierdie studie was om te bepaal hoe werknemers van die Suid-Afrikaanse Polisidiens (SAPD) diversiteit ervaar. 'n Beskikbare, doelgerigte en vrywillige steekproef is geneem van werknemers van die SAPD in die Noordwes Provinsie. Kwalitatiewe navorsing is gedoen en die fenomenologiese metode is gebruik om die werknemers se ervarings te ondersoek. Data is ingesamel deur onderhoude te voer. Transkripsies is gekodeer en die analise en interpretasie is gedoen deur middel van inhoudsanalise. Die resultate het aangedui dat werknemers van die SAPD diversiteit hoofsaaklik verstaan in terme van persoonlikheids- en interne dimensies. As 'n resultaat van die regstellende aksiebeleid, is daar 'n gelyke mate van positiewe en negatiewe ervaring van erkenning as diverse individue deur die organisasie. Daar was 'n sterk positiewe ervaring met betrekking tot groei en leerprosesse van diversiteit.

The South African Police Service (SAPS) distinguishes itself from other public organisations by its unique working conditions (Steyn, 2005). Research in South Africa indicates for instance that the work environment in the SAPS is characterised by high job stress levels, burnout and high levels of suicide ideation (Mostert & Joubert, 2005; Pienaar & Rothmann, 2005; Pienaar & Rothmann, 2006; Storm & Rothmann, 2003). These results are understandable with a ratio of one police officer per 376 people in South Africa (South African Institute of Race Relations, 2007).

Similar to other public organisations, the SAPS also had to reflect the governmental transformations that took place after the democratic elections of 1994 (Reddy & Choudree, 1996). After these democratic elections, the former South African Police Force (SAP) adopted a new philosophy and approach in policing and the South African Police Service (SAPS) was established in 1995 (Steyn, 2005). Various pieces of legislation such as the current Constitution of 1996, policy documents, plans, strategies and priorities and objectives of the Department of Safety and Security, ensured a transformation from a crime investigative perspective to a community service perspective. The main objective of this new perspective was to gain trust in the community and to work in collaboration with other institutions and structures to prevent crime (Bellingan-Timmer, 2004; South Africa, 1993, South Africa, 1995b; Steyn, 2005; Steyn & Meyer, 2004).

However, not only was a new perspective implemented, but the affirmative action policy was also implemented in the SAPS. The South African Institute of Race Relations (2007) indicated that the staff racial quotas to be implemented by 31 December 2010 in the SAPS are 79% Africans, 9,6% Whites, 8,9% Coloured, and 2,5% Indian. The outcome of the implemented quotas resulted in a diverse workforce. The proportions of SAPS personnel in 2006 were 66,3% African, 19,4% White, 11,1% Coloured and 3,2% Indian. These changes in the demography lead to an environment where a diverse workforce has to work together in spite of possible obstacles, in order to serve the public. This special work context presented an appealing environment for the study of the experience of diversity.

Literature on diversity originated in the United States (US) (Janssens & Steyart, 2003). This implicates that the conceptualisation of diversity and the development of management strategies originated within an US context. Since the contexts of various countries differ, there is a compelling need for contextualisation of diversity within the framework of a specific

country (Siebers, 2007). With South Africa's unique history, demography, political, economical and socio-economical set up contextualisation is also required.

The impact of globalisation also resulted in an increase in diverse stake holders, clients and work forces (Bhadury, Mighty, & Damar, 2000; Siebers, 2007). With the distinctive changes in organisations, it may lead to the following questions pertaining to diversity: What affect does diversity have on organisational performance? How is diversity defined? What are the underlying theories of diversity? What is the link between diversity and the South African context? What are the perceptions and experience of diversity? How does experience link with the phenomenological approach?

In light of the above the objective of this study was to determine the experience of diversity in the SAPS in the North West Province of South Africa. A phenomenological approach has been chosen for this study, since it gives the researcher the opportunity to understand the concept and experience of diversity from the participant's point of view (Giorgi, 1997; Leady & Ormrod, 2001; Struwig & Stead, 2001).

The affect of diversity on organisational performance will first be discussed.

### **The Effect of diversity on organisational performance**

Both positive and negative conclusions have been drawn regarding benefits and drawbacks organisations experienced with diverse workforces (De Meuse, Hostager, & O'Neill, (2007) Milliken & Martins, 1996). Ely and Thomas (2001) found that diversity perspectives, with regard to processes and experiences, influence a group's learning capacity and adaptiveness to change. Effective management of diversity is linked to a competitive advantage due to a variety of skills, knowledge, perspectives, ideas, as well as to equal opportunities (Marvin & Griling, 2000; Thomas & Ely, 2001).

In contrast, other studies indicate that diversity affects organisation performance negatively. The main reason advanced is that the more diverse a workforce is, the more ingroups and outgroups will form working against each other (Kramer, 1991; Northcraft, Polzer, Neale, & Kramer, 1995; Pelled, Eisenhardt, & Xin, 1999; Smith, Smith, O'Bannon & Scully, 1994; Tsui, Egan & O'Reilly, 1992).

Regarding the effective management of diversity, failures seem to occur more often than successes (Thomas & Ely, 2001). These failures have been attributed to the application of quick fix solutions, category stereotyping, decreased effectiveness of group interaction underlying assumptions of diversity and the inability to make paradigm shifts (Human, 1996; Thomas & Ely, 2001). In the work context it is therefore essential to understand and investigate diversity in order to ensure optimal performance and collaboration within an organisation.

### **Defining diversity**

The basic, globally accepted assumption underlying the concept of diversity is that there are differences and similarities in some or other regard between people (Kreitner & Kinicke, 2004; Lumby, 2006). Diversity is also described as differences among people based on gender, race/ethnicity, age, religion, physical or mental disability, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic class (Soni, 2000, p. 396). Other dimensions that distinguish people from one another have been identified by Harris and Moran (1999). These dimensions include physical appearance, cultural heritage, personal background, functional experience, educational background, family responsibilities, style preferences, thinking patterns, political backgrounds, geographical background, intelligence, smoking preference, weight, height and type of job.

In another perspective diversity is seen as a composition of people with different group identities in one social system (Fleury, 1999; Jackson, May & Whitney, 1995). Within this perspective of different identities within one system, Cox (1993) placed the emphasis on group identities with cultural significance. He explained the importance of cultural significance by indicating that racioethnicity, gender and nationality are unchangeable identity constructions, unlike age and educational background.

Ferdman (1995) further expounded on group identities by including different viewpoints, constructions of meaning, preferences in behaviour, attitudes, values, beliefs and norms. Another trend in defining diversity is the *politicising* of the definition of diversity (Human, 1996; Thomas, 2006). Soni (2000) discussed perceptions of confusing diversity and affirmative action as if they are one and the same thing. Thomas' (2005) sees diversity as a fluid concept in which diversity is not a generic concept and is influenced by various views

and perspectives. This view of diversity as a concept influenced by various views and perspectives, is important for this study, since it supports the phenomenological framework where people's viewpoints on concepts are investigated (Giorgi, 1997; Leady & Ormrod, 2001; Struwig & Stead, 2001).

Siebers (2007) indicated various specifications within diversity. In the first place diversity at work is connected to the subject matter. There is thus a relation between diversity in organisational functions and diversity in human characteristics. Secondly, diversity implies identity construction (cultural diversity). This includes aspects of individuality versus group belongingness, self-referential, race and ethnicity. Apart from these specifications, other categorisations of common denotations of diversity have been done.

Dimensions of diversity have been categorised in various ways, such as *observable differences* (characteristics and values) and *non-observable differences* (skills and knowledge) (see Milliken & Martins, 1996), *highly* and *less job-relatedness* (see Pelled, 1996) and *functional specialisation, demographic* and *cultural* identities (Millikin & Martins, 1996; Polzer, Milton & Swann, 2002).

Kreitner and Kinicki (2004) developed a model of the layers of diversity (adopted from Loden & Rosener, 1991), which incorporates most of the above mentioned dimensions.

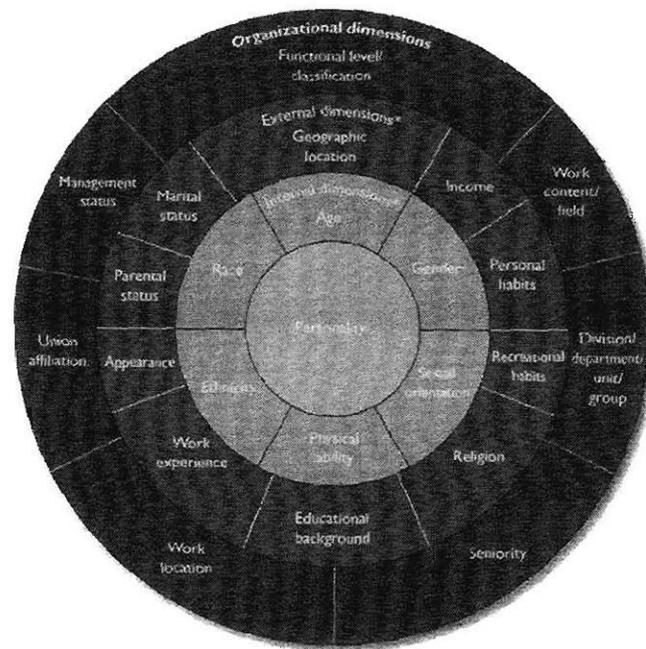


Figure 1. Kreitner and Kinicki's model of layers of diversity (adopted from Loden & Rosener, in Kreitner & Kinicki, 2004, p. 48)

These layers are identified as *personality*, *internal dimensions* (race, ethnicity, physical ability, sexual orientation, gender, age), *external dimensions* (educational background, work experience, religion, appearance, recreational habits, parental status, marital status, geographic location, income) and *organisational dimensions* (work location, seniority, unit/department, union affiliation, management status, work content, functional level) (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2004).

Daft (2003), on the other hand, used dual differentiation in order to explain the dimensions of diversity. He divided diversity into basic and secondary dimensions. The basic dimensions consist of differences that a person is born with, or that will have a life long influence on the person's identity. These dimensions include race, ethnicity, gender, and physical or cognitive ability. The secondary dimensions include dimensions or qualities that the individual acquired later in life and that are usually changeable (Daft, 2003). These dimensions influence people's view of themselves as well as other's perception of them. Included are beliefs, marital status, languages, socio-economic status, educational level and business experience.

From all these different categorisations within diversity, the following three main dimensions can be distinguished. The first dimension includes the inherent human characteristics of a person, the person's self-referential and understanding of group belongingness, personality and internal dimensions (Kreitner & Kinicke, 2004; Siebers, 2007), as well as culture. The emphasis is on these aspects being inherent part of the human being's identity and is therefore seen as unchangeable or difficult to change (Daft, 2003). The next dimension consists of Kreitner and Kinicke's (2004) external dimensions, as well as language, values and beliefs. The aspects included are also part of a person's identity and self-referential, but they are changeable (Daft, 2003). The final dimension is the organisational or functional dimension, which includes the last layer of Kreitner and Kinicke's (2004) model. This dimension includes all work-related aspects that could distinguish one employee from the next.

It is important to have an overview of the different theories on which the various categorisations of dimensions of diversity are based. The discussion of these theories will give more insight on various views on diversity, as well as the experience of diversity. In this discussion these various dimensions will be grouped into two perspectives and the underlying theories on which they are based, will be discussed.

### **Theories underlying diversity**

Within the workplace, unequal treatment of various dimensions often takes place (see previous discussion on research). However let it be noted that, as already mentioned, the focus of this study is on the experience of diversity. Therefore the discussion of theories underlying unequal treatment does not imply that the experience of diversity will be the theme of unequal treatment.

Two perspectives derive from diversity in the workplace. The first perspective focuses on unequal and discriminatory treatment and the correction thereof. Janssens and Steyart (2003) refer to this perspective as the moral-ethical perspective, whereas Siebers (2007) refers to it as the inequality perspective (in this study this perspective will be referred to as the inequality perspective). The outcomes or effects of diversity on the company with regard to effective group performance are the focus of the second perspective. This perspective could be referred to as the systems perspective (Siebers, 2007; Williams & O'Reilly, 1978) or the organisational

and economical perspective (Janssens & Steyart, 2003) (in this study it will be referred to as the systems perspective).

*a) Inequality perspective*

Within the inequality perspective two theses emerge: the discrimination thesis and the deficit thesis.

The *discrimination thesis* is based on the assumption that inequality at work is due to discrimination (Siebers, 2007). Research based on this assumption includes findings of unequal treatment (Darity & Mason, 1998) that could not be explained by any other theory and therefore implied discriminatory actions. Other research includes unequal workplace treatment of minority groups due to expectancies of the dominant group for them to assimilate into the dominant culture (Nkomo & Cox, 1990; Smith, 2001).

The assimilation and multiculturalism paradigms are often founded in research within the discrimination thesis. According to the assimilation paradigm, the minority group(s) should blend into the social circles and networks of the dominant group (Popenoe, Cunningham & Boulton, 1998). A distinction can be made between three types of assimilation: 1) When the minority group has to adopt the values and perspectives of the dominant group, it is referred to minority group assimilation (Hornsey & Hogg, 2000; Popenoe et al., 1998); 2) cultural assimilation which means that the minority group gives up its cultural heritage and adopts that of the majority group, and 3) structural assimilation when the minority group is accepted in all structures of society (Hornsey & Hogg, 2000; Popenoe et al., 1998).

In contrast to assimilation, multiculturalism promotes the protection and preservation of cultural and ethnic groups, while simultaneously living and interacting with understanding, acceptance and tolerance of one another (Hornsey & Hogg, 2000)

Other paradigms and concepts often discussed within the deficit thesis include *cultural pluralism*, *racism*, *affirmative action*, *discrimination* and *prejudice*. When subcultures are accepted within the structures of the dominant group, while simultaneously preserving various aspects of their cultural heritage which differs from those of the dominant group, it is referred to as *cultural pluralism* (Popenoe et al., 1998). *Racism* indicates attitudes or actions intended to harm a specific race or the belief that one race is superior to another. These attitudes or

actions often lead to institutional racism where policies and regulations ensure unequal access to opportunities and resources. (Popenoe et al., 1998). *Affirmative action* is policies and regulations enforced to correct previous inequalities and discriminatory practices taken against minority groups (Popenoe et al., 1998). Unfair actions or behaviour against or directed towards people because of their group membership or categorised status is defined as *discrimination* (Popenoe et al., 1998). *Ethnocentrism* is seeing one cultural group as superior to other group/groups and *prejudice* indicates having attitudes or beliefs towards or about members of a specific group or groups (Popenoe et al., 1998).

Much research has been done within the *deficit thesis*. The basic assumption of this thesis is that inequality in the workplace exists due to unequal access to resources (Siebers, 2007). The pluralist perspective is often adopted in research such as Cox (1991) and Nkomo's (1992) findings that minority groups must develop their own personalised strategies to ensure sufficient social support in the workplace. Ibarra (1995) also supported the pluralist paradigm with her findings on segregation phenomena.

Another model often used within the deficit thesis is the *basic human capital model*. Human capital includes assets such as education and work experience. The assumption is that the higher a person's human capital, the more likely the chance that the person will be highly productive (Becker, 1975). Research based on this model indicate, for example, that differences between minority and majority groups with regard to education levels are a causal factor to differences between groups in career earnings (Tomaskovic-Devey, Thomas & Johnson, 2005).

The *self-verification theory* was developed by Polzer et al. (2002). They argued that since people's self perceptions are formed by others' behaviour towards them (identity negotiation), people will work to influence this behaviour into positive appraisal. Therefore a person will repeat appraised actions. A person's self-view and the appraisal received should be confirmative of one another and should therefore be in congruence. If a relationship of congruence exists, people will know that they perceive reality in the same way as others, and they will be able to manage themselves within an interpersonal relationship. This interpersonal congruence will moderate "the impact of diversity on group processes and performance" (Polzer et al., 2002, p. 316).

### *b) Systems perspective*

The systems perspective includes the *differences thesis*. Researchers base their findings on the assumption that inequality in the workplace exists due to differences in cultures and ethnic groups (Siebers, 2007). Assumptions are built on the *social identity* and *self-categorisation* theories and the *attraction-similarity* paradigm.

The *social identity* and *self-categorisation* theories are used widely in research to indicate the negative effects of diversity within the organisation in terms of social categorisation and ingroups versus outgroups (Kramer, 1991; Northcraft et al., 1995; Pelled et al., 1999; Smith et al., 1994; Tsui et al., 1992).

*Social identity* is defined as "(i) limited aspects of the concept of self which are (ii) relevant to certain limited aspects of social behaviour" (Tajfel, 1981, p. 255). Being part or a member of a group could influence some aspects of an individual's world view (e.g. 'us' versus 'them') (Tajfel, 1981). Group membership could also implicate "associated value connotations and emotional significance..." (Turner, 2000, p. 8). Within a group a positive social identity is important to achieve ingroup "superiority" (Turner, 2000, p. 8). This process of creating positive social identity starts off with *social categorisation*, which can be explained as the individual's process of making sense of, finding a place and fitting the self in society (Tajfel, 1981). In the process of social categorisation the individual develops a collective (prescribed) type of behaviour through depersonalisation. Similarities between ingroup members and differences between outgroup members are emphasised (stereotyping) (Turner, 2000). Social identity follows, after which social comparison takes place. When there is a positive comparison between the ingroup and outgroups, it leads to positive ingroup distinctiveness (Turner, 2000). There are various ways through which groups will achieve positive social identity, such as social, collective or ethnocentric competition (Turner, 2000).

The basic assumption of the *similarity-attraction* paradigm is that people with similar attributes (of which there are various dimensions) will be drawn to each other. They will also find that good interpersonal relationships with each other will come more naturally than otherwise (Byrne, 1971). Tsui and O'Reilly (1989) found that similarity in demographic backgrounds could lead to attraction between employees with regard to interpersonal relationships. Other examples of research within the similarity-attraction paradigm are Baskett

(1973), Dreher and Cox (1996), Elliott and Smith (2004), Greenhaus, Parasuman and Wormley, (1990) and Wilson, Sakura-Lemessy and West (1999).

As explained, the inequality perspective and systems perspective play important roles in the understanding of diversity. In the South African context different factors can influence employees' views and experience of diversity.

“Without context, words and actions have no meaning at all” (Bateson (1987, p.15) in that context gives a framework by which individuals' actions can be interpreted. It is therefore important to give an overview of the unique South African context in order to understand the background against which certain perspectives of diversity emerges to be able to achieve the set objective.

### **The South African context**

South Africa has a colourful demographic profile. Five different races can be identified within the population namely African, Asian, Coloured, Indian and White (Statistics South Africa, 2006). Table 1 (a) and (b) give an overall view of the current population numbers by age, race, and sex.

Table 1(a)

*Population by age, race, and sex, 2006*

Age	African			Coloured		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
0-19	8 593 400	8 506 400	17 099 800	799 600	792 500	1 592 100
20-54	8 479 200	8 716 300	17 195 500	1 066 000	1 104 000	2 170 000
55-80+	1 485 800	1 881 700	3 367 500	194 400	242 300	436 700
Total	18 558 400	19 104 400	37 662 800	2 060 000	2 138 800	4 198 800

Table 1(b)

*Population by age, race, and sex, 2006*

	Indian/Asian			White		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
	196 900	194 600	391 500	567 300	553 700	1 121 000
	294 600	302 900	597 500	1 052 000	1 057 500	2 109 500
	78 700	96 200	174 900	519 600	615 200	1 134 800
	570200	593700	1 163 900	2 138900	2 226400	4 365 300

*Source:* Statistics South Africa, *Mid-year population estimates, South Africa 2006, August 2006*

More than eleven home languages are spoken in South Africa and eleven languages are accepted as the official languages in South Africa (The South African Institute of Race Relations, 2007). Twenty four major religious affiliations have been identified in South Africa in 2001 (Statistics South Africa, 2001). Within Parliament, South Africa has 16 different parties holding seats (The South African Institute of Race Relations, 2007).

Regarding the living conditions of the South African population in 2005, 70% were living in formal dwellings (house/brick structure), 16% living in informal dwellings (shack) and 12% living in traditional dwellings. Only 39% of the population had access to water in their homes. With regard to access to technological resources, 65% of the household population had access to a telephone or cell phone, 79% had radios and 60% had television sets. The highest growth in internet usage in demographic groups in 2006 was in the African group with a growth of 68% (The South African Institute of Race Relations, 2007).

The economically active population of 2006 can be described as 39% of the population is unemployed (including people too discouraged to seek employment) (The South African Institute of Race Relations, 2007). Unemployment by sex, age and race can be set out as 54,2% of all females are unemployed, 88,7% of all Africans are unemployed and 41,4% of ages 25-34 years are unemployed (Statistics South Africa, 2006).

The unemployment rate correlates with the poverty trends. In 2005, 47% of the population was indicated as poor (The South African Institute of Race Relations, 2007). With regard to

the qualification profile of the population, 33,7% of persons aged twenty years and older have completed grade 12, and 3,6% have completed higher education. In 2006, 73,51% of the population with a Grade 8-12 qualification were unemployed (The South African Institute of Race Relations, 2007).

In South Africa, since 1970, radical changes took place with the transition from an apartheid regime to a democratic order (Abedian & Standish, 1992; Horwitz, 2002). Legislation such as the Labour Relations Act, the Basic Conditions Employment Act, the Equity Employment Act, and the Skills and Development Act enforced new practices in the South African labour force (South Africa, 1995, 1997, 1998a, 1998b). Up to 2006, a gradual improvement in the economy (Cassim, 2006; Southall, 2006) and the labour market (Bharat, 2006; Statistics South Africa, 2006) was observed. The growing gap between the different socio-economic categories (wealth and poverty), the demography of occupational structures and the skills profile of the labour market, are challenges which need constant attention (Bharat, 2006; Moleke, 2003, 2006; Southall, 2006).

It can be concluded that in the South African context, a diverse demography with different cultures, ethnic and racial groups could lead to an emphasis on the systems perspective in employees' understanding and experience of diversity. On the other hand, the history of a previous apartheid regime where some groups had unequal access to education, employment and basic provisions could result in an inequality perspective in the understanding and experience of diversity.

The next discussion will address the question on what current perceptions and experiences of diversity are. An explanation of views on how perceptions are formed will also be given.

### **Perceptions and experiences of diversity**

A vast amount of research has been done on some dimensions of perceptions and experiences of diversity. In South Africa three phenomenological qualitative studies were conducted on the experience or perspectives of diversity. The first study was conducted on police perspectives on the diversity dimensions of race and gender (Newham, Masuku, & Dlamini, 2006). Their findings indicated that the race dimension in diversity still remains an issue and especially White officers showed a negative experience of affirmative action. They have also

indicated signs of changes in gender dynamics, which was experienced negatively by female officers. Another qualitative study conducted within Non Governmental Organisations emphasised the negative experience of diversity by team members, because of the change involved regarding demographics (Lala, 2001). Goodham's (1999) study on members of the parliament confirmed that working in a diversifying workforce has an enormous impact on the work experience of employees as well as on their work wellness.

Global experiences and perceptions on diversity vary. Hostager and De Meuse (2002) measured the complexity of diversity perceptions within organisations. They found that "managers had higher levels of complexity than employees with regard to positive judgments about diversity" (Hostager & De Meuse, 2002, p. 201). In Soni's (2000) research racial, ethnic and gender differences were found in the receptivity to diversity. Ely and Thomas (2001) found that diversity perspectives, with regard to processes and experiences, influence a group's learning capacity and adaptiveness to change.

Darity and Mason (1998) discussed various incidences, practices, research findings and court cases where the inequality in treatment could not be explained by any other theory and therefore implied discriminatory actions. In the US, Blacks have difficulties in being promoted since it is often expected of them to assimilate into the dominant culture (Nkomo & Cox, 1990). Smith (2001) indicated that discrimination takes place with black men in the US in gaining access to authority in the workplace. Thomaskovic-Devey et al. (2005) found differences between minority and majority groups with regard to education levels.

Research in the US (Dreher & Cox, 1996) indicated that with regard to mentoring relationships, demographic similarity played a significant role. Wilson et al.'s (1999) findings support other research with regard to certain racial groups having more job opportunities and promotion opportunities due to having demographic similarities with the employer. Research also indicates that candidates more similar to the interviewees were rather considered for positions, even if the dissimilar candidates were more competent (Baskett, 1973). Similar research also indicates that performance evaluation, promotion and the reaching of career plateaus by black persons in the US, are due to the attraction-similarity paradigm (Greenhaus, et al., 1990). Elliott and Smith's (2004) results indicated that in the US in the majority of cases, workplace inequality was the outcome of similarity differences. Baldi and McBrier's (1997) research indicated that White employees were promoted more easily than black

colleagues who had similar competencies and qualifications. The reason given was preferred association with similar people.

In the formation of perceptions and experiences, certain processes and influences are involved. Robbins, Odendaal, and Roodt (2004, p. 107) define perception as "... a process by which individuals organise and interpret their sensory impressions in order to give meaning to their environment." One can conclude from this statement that what one person experiences as reality, the next may not. Various approaches within anthropology and psychology have different perspectives on how perceptions should be researched.

The father of social anthropology, Emile Durkheim, distinguished between the consciousness of the individual (psychological phenomena) and collective consciousness (social phenomena) (Ingold, 1996). He argued that the collective consciousness should be studied rather than the psychology of the individual mind (Ingold, 1996). Perception is a two-stage phenomenon with the first involving the receipt, by the individual human organism, of ephemeral and meaningless sense data and the second consisting in the organisation of these data into collectively held and enduring representations (Ingold, 1996, p. 101).

In contrast to the social anthropology, in cultural anthropology the integration of culture was of a psychological nature (Ingold, 1996). Both social and cultural anthropology agree though that the symbolic meanings of a culture, passed on for generations, have an important influence on the individual's perceptions and experience (Ingold, 1996).

Cognitive anthropology shifted the focus to the cognitive processes of the individual (Ingold, 1996). According to this approach, people make sense of the world by organising experiences into groups ordered hierarchically. Therefore the focus of research should be on how this knowledge is organised and how it varies from one culture to the next (Ingold, 1996). The difference between cognitive anthropology and cognitive science, lies in the focus on structures of the human mind as formed by evolution (cognitive science) and different cultural perceptions due to various ways of organising experiences (cognitive anthropology) (Ingold, 1996).

According to the attribution theory (Robbins et al., 2004) the perceiver might jump to conclusions about a situation through the following process: first it will be decided whether or

not the target controlled its own behaviour, or was forced into the behaviour. Next the perceiver will decide whether the behaviour could be interpreted as distinctive (does not occur otherwise), consensus (other would respond in the same way) or consistent (often occurs). When a conclusion has been adopted, the perceiver will judge the target, often using various shortcuts (Robbins et al., 2004). One such shortcut is selective perception, which refers to noticing selective parts of a situation because it is not possible for a person to absorb all stimuli. A conclusion can also be drawn through the generalisation of a specific trait or characteristic, a shortcut called the halo effect. Recent experience will also influence the current experience through comparisons drawn by the perceiver (contrast effect). Another shortcut is called projection. It is to perceive others to have the same motives, beliefs or values as the perceiver. The perceiver could also judge the target according to the characteristics of the group to which the target belongs, also known as stereotyping (Robbins et al., 2004).

Where the cognitive science sees the perceiver as static, ecological psychology sees the perceiver as active and the process as exploratory (Ingold, 1996). Perceptual activity consists not in the operation of the mind upon the bodily data of sense, but in the intentional movement of the whole being (indissolubly body and mind) in its environment (Ingold 1996, p. 110). Finally, according to the phenomenological perspective "...the world emerges with its properties alongside the emergence of the perceiver in person, against the background of involved activity" (Ingold, 1996, p. 111).

Seen in the light of the discussion above, it cannot be assumed that there is an absolute and commonly accepted conceptualisation and experience of diversity, especially not within the unique South African context.

In the next section, the link between experience and the phenomenological perspective is drawn.

### **The phenomenological perspective**

As Blackhaus (2002, p. 562) explained: "Social phenomenology is the descriptive eidetic science that apprehends the structures of the social world as constituted through the meaningful lived-experience of its constituents". Thus the researcher tries to understand experience of a phenomenon as if through the eyes of the participant (Ingold, 1996; Kvale,

1996; Lundin, 1996; Smith, Jarman & Osborn, 1999). This method includes description, investigation of essences and phenomenological reduction (Kvale, 1996). Description refers to the objective description of experience and investigation of essences focuses on the common thread that runs through experiences described. Finally, the phenomenological method attempts to put presuppositions, assumptions, common sense and foreknowledge in “brackets”, in order to give an unbiased and unprejudiced description of the experience (Kvale, 1996). This process of “bracketing” is called phenomenological reduction.

From this discussion it can be concluded that phenomenology is the most suitable framework within which a study on the experience of a concept such as diversity could be conducted.

Though previous research has been conducted on the conceptualising of diversity in other countries and contexts (see Lumby, 2006) no research could be found on the experience and understanding of diversity in the workplace in the context of South African public organisations and specifically within the SAPS. This has also been the fundamental motivation for conducting a phenomenological study, where the experience of South Africans with regard to diversity, has been investigated. Accordingly, the need arose to investigate the themes imbedded in local experiences of diversity. A comparison has been drawn between the themes as experienced by different genders and different ethnic groups.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

### **Research design**

A qualitative study has been conducted in order to study the multiple facets of diversity in a natural setting namely the SAPS (Leady & Ormrod, 2001). A phenomenological approach has been used to understand the concept of diversity from the participant's point of view (Giorgi, 1997; Leady & Ormrod, 2001; Struwig & Stead, 2001).

### **Participants and procedure**

The participants consisted of an availability, purposeful and voluntary sample of employees working in the SAPS in the North-West Province ( $n = 22$ ). The Station Commissioner of Potchefstroom acted as mediator. The Station Commissioner was provided with a research

proposal and the selection criteria for participants were explained. The criteria were: four groups of different races and genders a) black females; b) white females; c) black males; d) white males. The reason for the specific groupings of race and gender is that during the apartheid-regime there was a marked difference in the practices of equity at the workplace between these groups. Soni's (2000) research indicated racial, ethnic and gender differences in the receptivity to diversity. Therefore, the participants were not only representative of individual perspectives and experiences, but also of group perspectives and experiences from different ethnic groups and genders in the workplace context.

As far as possible, the participants for the study were selected from middle and top management within the SAPS. The reason and assumptions underlying this selection were that middle and top management positions possibly had more opportunities to encounter various diverse situations, since they have more people reporting to them than lower management positions. The assumption was also that these subjects would have experienced diversity not only in their own unit, but also in broader contexts within the SAPS.

Interviews were scheduled with candidates willing to take part in the study. Data saturation was reached after 20 interviews (Woods & Cantazaro, 1988). Two more interviews confirmed data saturation. Descriptive information of the sample is given in Table 2.

Table 2  
*Characteristics of the Participants*

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	20-29 years	4	18,20
	30-39 years	5	23,00
	40-49 years	12	54,40
	50-59 years	1	5,00
Gender	Female	11	50,00
	Male	11	50,00
Race	Black	9	41,00
	Coloured	1	5,00
	White	12	55,00
Ethnic group	Afrikaans	13	59,1,00

Table 2 (continue)

*Characteristics of the Participants*

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Educational level	Setswana	7	32,00
	SiSwati	1	5,00
	isiXhosa	1	5,00
	Grade 12	1	5,00
	Diploma	19	86,40
	Degree	2	9,10
Rank	Senior Clerk	1	5,00
	Constable in Training	1	5,00
	Constable	2	9,10
	Senior Constable	1	5,00
	Inspector	2	9,10
	Senior Inspector	1	5,00
	Captain	10	46,00
	Superintendent	2	9,10
	Senior Superintendent	1	5,00
	Director	1	5,00

According to Table 2, the sample consisted of an equal number of females (50,00%) and males (50,00%). Most of the participants were between the ages of 40-49 years (54,40%) and 30-39 years (23,00%). The racial groups were represented as follows: Black (41,00%), Coloured (5,00%) and White (55,00%). Regarding ethnicity, the majority of the sample was Afrikaans (59,10%) and Setswana (32,00%). The educational level of the sample indicated a 86,40% diploma qualification level. Finally 46,00% of the participants were Captains, 9,10% were Superintendents, 5,00% were Senior Superintendents and 5,00% were Directors. Therefore 64,00% of the sample presented middle and top management within the SAPS.

**Data collection***Interviews*

All the interviews were conducted in the offices of the various participants. As far as possible, the researcher ensured that the conditions, under which the interviews were conducted, were as close as possible to the ideal conditions preferred. The ideal conditions preferred can be

described as a neutral setting, free of any interruption, noise, extreme temperatures, where the participant were able to feel safe and comfortable.

All the interviews commenced with the researcher introducing herself, thanking them for the voluntary participation, and comments on the purpose and advantages of the research (Flick, 2002; Gaskell, 2000). An explanation was given on why the interviews would be recorded, confidentiality was ensured and the participant was requested permission to use a recorder during the session. The confidence of participants was secured through rapport and ensuring that the participant was at ease.

The interviews were semi-structured and conducted on a one-to-one basis. The researcher used a non-directed approach in the interview with open-ended questions, to ensure that the participants were not led to a specific answer. The focus was on the participant's own opinion, understanding and experience of diversity. Two basic questions have been asked to all the participants: "*What do you understand of the term diversity within your work context?*" and "*What is your experience of the aspects you have just mentioned with regard to diversity within your work context?*" The researcher encouraged the participants through eye contact, nodding and other reinforcements (Flick, 2002; Gaskell, 2000). The following types of questions were used as probes (Gaskell, 2000) inviting descriptions such as "*What comes to mind when you think of ...?*"; taking things further by using questions such as "*Can you tell me more about ...?*"; testing the hypotheses by saying "*From what you say it seems that you think...am I right there?*"; and final thoughts "*Is there anything else you would like to tell me?*".

After each interview the researcher wrote field notes on her observations, assumptions, insights and emotions. These notes were later used in the paraphrasing of themes.

#### *Trustworthiness*

"The concept of validity as quality of craftsmanship is not limited to a postmodern approach, but becomes pivotal with a postmodern dismissal of an objective reality against which knowledge is to be measured. The craftsmanship and credibility of the researcher becomes essential (Kvale, 1996, p. 241)". To gain trustworthiness within the interviews the focus was on the quality of the interviews, the interview subjects, the interviewer qualifications and leading questions. With regard to objectivity within interviews, Kvale, (1996) indicated that

the interview as such is neither an objective nor a subjective method – its essence is intersubjective interaction.”

The quality of the interviews had been measured against Kvale’s (1996) quality criteria for an interview. These criteria included a) the quality of answers received; b) short questions and long answers; c) clarification of aspects by the researcher during the interview; d) interpretation to a certain extent of the interview during the process of interviewing; e) verifying interpretations during the interview; and f) the interview is complete and sufficient in itself (Kvale, 1996). In this study about 60% of the interviews met the expectations of the mentioned criteria. Therefore the quality of the interviews can be described as moderate to good.

The interview subject was a relevant but relatively sensitive subject. The researcher had to have a gentle and sensitive approach in order to receive open and honest answers.

The researcher conducted all the interviews herself. In order to qualify as a competent interviewer she attended a session on conducting unstructured interviews and on communication skills (Kvale, 1996; Leady & Ormrod, 2001; Struwig & Stead, 2001). Furthermore she ensured that she had extensive knowledge of the subject, had a good structure for conducting an interview, asked clear questions without academic jargon, had a gentle, relaxed approach, was sensitive, was open to the participant’s views, knew how to steer the conversation towards the purpose of the interview and listened in an interpretive and critical way. These qualities link with Kvale’s (1996) qualification criteria for an interviewer.

The structure of the interview (semi-structured) and the type of questions (open-ended) supported the object of the study to gain insight into the experience of the participants. The researcher took care not to ask leading questions which could pollute the participant’s own opinion and perspective (Kvale, 1996).

As already mentioned, all the interviews were recorded. These interviews were transcribed by a person with experience in the transcription of interviews. The transcriber had been instructed to transcribe all the recordings word by word. Therefore no rephrasing and formal language was used. The transcriptions were checked by the researcher. In order to ensure

confidentiality, no names were given to the transcriber and the person was also briefed on the confidentiality of the contents of the transcriptions.

There are various methods that could be used in validating the analyses and interpretive processes in qualitative research (Kvale, 1996). The methods used in this study included: checking for representativeness and for researcher effects, field notes, triangulation, using a co-coder, and using other researchers' insight and opinions on the themes identified (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001).

#### *Ethical issues*

Four aspects related to ethics were addressed as identified by Kvale (1996) namely: informed consent, confidentiality, consequences and research and therapeutic interviews.

Before an interview commenced, the participant was briefed on the purpose and procedure of the interview. The researcher explained who would have access to the interview, ensured anonymity and explained requirements of the SAPS with regard to conducting research. The participants gave their informed consent by signing a document.

In this study the SAPS required a list of names of all the participants. Therefore anonymity of participation in the research could not be ensured. All participants were, however, assured that no names would be linked to interviews recorded.

The researcher showed respect for any participant not being comfortable in answering a question asked (consequences). Furthermore, the researcher kept aspects of research and therapeutic interviews in mind. Long, repeated interviews and strong personal and emotional issues could promote a therapeutic interview instead of a research interview. In this study the interviews were not long and repeated, but once off. The issues in discussion were slightly sensitive, but were not emotional and personal issues. Therefore, no case could be reported where the interviewee developed into a quasi-therapeutic relationship or where arrangements had to be made for therapeutic support.

## **Data Analysis**

The central task was to identify common themes in people's descriptions of their experiences of diversity by means of content analysis (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001; Struwig & Stead, 2001). The process of interpretative phenomenological analysis started with reading through all the data in order to get a general sense of all the information (Creswell, 2003). Then initial coding took place. Coding categories were developed in advance and were based on Kreitner and Kinicke's (2004) model of the layers of dimensions of diversity.

After the coding of the categories, the interview material was structured. The transcriptions were made amendable to analysis. This included distinguishing between essential and non-essential material as guided by the objective of this study and the underlying presuppositions.

Thereafter meanings of the transcriptions were paraphrased into scientific statements or themes. Both the understanding of the participant's and the researcher's perspective were incorporated into these themes. Next, shared themes were identified, coded and grouped into clusters or categories of meaning. The themes were analysed and searched for patterns and relationships. Finally the occurrence of themes between groups was compared, in order to be able to compare the experience of diversity between different ethnic and gender groups (Bauer, 2000; Creswell, 2003; Flick, 2002; Kidder & Judd, 1986; Kvale, 1996; Smith et al., 1999).

In this study other researchers' insights and opinions were used to ensure validity. They confirmed or declined the themes identified. Co-coders also assisted in the coding process (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001).

## **RESULTS**

Five main themes emerged in the understanding of diversity of the employees working in the SAPS. Table 3 gives a presentation of all the main themes, supporting sub-themes, responses and the total frequencies of responses.

Table 3

*The Understanding of Diversity in the SAPS*

Themes and sub-themes		Black/ Coloured females N=5	Black males N=5	White females N=6	White males N=6	Total N=22
Theme 1	Personality dimensions					<b>50,00</b>
	a) Personal characteristics	4	4	2	1	
Theme 2	Internal dimensions					<b>26,52</b>
	a) Gender	-	-	2	1	3
	b) Sexual orientation	-	-	-	1	1
	c) Ethnicity	-	1	-	3	4
	d) Race	-	1	2	5	8
	e) Culture	3	4	2	3	12
	f) Language	2	1	2	2	7
Theme 3	External dimensions					<b>10,91</b>
	a) Religion	-	-	-	1	1
	b) Parental status	-	-	2	-	2
	c) Marital status	-	-	1	-	1
	d) Work experience	-	-	1	-	1
	3) Values	2	1	2	2	7
Theme 4	Organisational dimensions					<b>9,10</b>
	a) functional level	-	1	1	1	3
	b) Unit	-	-	1	1	2
	c) Seniority	1	-	-	-	1
Theme 5	Politicising dimensions					<b>4,54</b>
	a) Discrimination	-	-	-	1	1

Five main themes have been identified in the understanding of diversity by the employees of the SAPS. The model of Kreitner and Kinicke (2004) has been used as a guideline in categorising the themes. A detail discussion of the various themes and supporting sub-themes follows.

### **Theme 1: Personality dimensions (frequency 50,00)**

#### *a) Personality characteristics*

The core of Kreitner and Kinicke's (2004) model consisted of personality. The employees felt that differences exist between people because of having different personalities. Therefore even persons of the same culture and ethnic group can have problems with interpersonal relations

due to different personality characteristics. From some of the quotations the prevalence of the similarity-attraction paradigm is evident (Byrne, 1971).

One participant was of opinion that unique diverseness could be found in the different ways people approach work: *"I differ from my colleagues...I have to finish all my work before I leave for home...it is a personality thing."* Another participant mentioned the role that a more perfectionist characteristic plays: *"It is important to me that a person has to be neat"*, and *"People see me as a unique individual who does not take any nonsense."* Other personal characteristics mentioned as important diversity dimensions included privacy: *"I like privacy...it differentiates me from other people"* and personality attraction: *"I like to associate with people who like to work"*.

The personality dimension was more important to the Black group (i.e. Black females, Coloured females, and Black males) than to the White group (i.e. White males and White females).

## **Theme 2: Internal dimensions (frequency 26,52)**

In Kreitner and Knicki's (2004) model of the layers of diversity, internal dimensions consist of age, gender, race, sexual orientation, physical ability and ethnicity. For the purpose of this study, culture has been added as a dimension. Of all the different themes that emerged, internal dimensions of diversity were mentioned the most by employees of the SAPS. As mentioned earlier in the study, personality and internal dimensions are seen as characteristics an individual is born with. Therefore these dimensions are difficult or unchangeable (Daft, 2003). As Siebers (2007) also explained, diversity implies identity construction and therefore includes aspects of individuality versus group belongingness, self-referential, race and ethnicity. The following quotations confirmed this explanation.

### *a) Gender*

Some participants understood gender as one of the aspects of diversity, as one participant indicated: *"that (diversity) is between males and females"*.

*b) Sexual orientation*

Sexual orientation was mentioned once together with other sub-themes, but it did not receive very much attention as a sub-theme: *“Diversity also includes sexual orientation....”*

*c) Ethnicity*

Employees did mention ethnicity as a dimension of diversity, but never without mentioning race: *“Diversity...ethnicity within race.”*

*d) Race*

Race came forward as an important dimension within internal dimensions, mentioned by eight participants. The effect of recent changes in South Africa's political regime and emotions involved are still prevalent. One of the quotations was: *“my understanding of diversity is the difference between Black and White”.*

*e) Culture*

Of all the internal dimensions, culture emerged as the dimension carrying the most weight of all the internal dimensions. Within the context of the current change of demographics within the SAPS, this awareness of different cultures makes sense (The South African Racial Relations, 2007). Twelve participants indicated culture as a dimension in their understanding of diversity. *“It actually means different cultures of different people ... who all are working in one organisation with the aim of accepting one another's culture” ; “Diversity means different cultures under one umbrella”; “My understanding is that it is different cultures and the different way of living of the different cultures within the SAPS.”*

*f) Language*

With various different cultures and ethnic groups working in one organisation, it is almost inevitable that language could not be a dimension. Especially with in the South African context where we have 11 official languages: *“We have the Tswana speaking people, the Afrikaans speaking people, the English speaking people...”*

In comparing the different groups with each other, it has been found that the White male group had the strongest emphasis on internal dimensions and the Black male and White female groups were next in line.

### **Theme 3: External dimensions (frequency 10,91)**

External dimensions include geographic location, income, personal habits, recreational habits, religion, educational background, work experience, appearance, parental status and marital status (Kreitner & Kinicke, 2004). Some dimensions have been left out since it was not mentioned by participants and language has been added to these dimensions for the purposes of this study. External dimensions are more changeable than internal dimensions, since they are not so inherently part of an individual's identity.

Some of the participant's felt that other people can only understand you as a diverse individual if they have some background information about you: *"They have to understand your situation..."*

#### *a) Religion*

Only one participant has mentioned that religion should be recognised in diversity: *"Religious beliefs are of course very important."*

#### *b) Parental status*

Especially women participants felt that parental status plays an important role in their understanding of diversity, since it is part of their identity: *"I am a mother..."*.

#### *c) Marital status*

This dimension is linked with the previous paragraph, and this dimension plays an important role for women. *"I am a married woman with two children"*.

#### *d) Work experience*

One participant felt that work experience definitely played a role in diversity within the work context, and especially with regard to how other people saw her: *"Experience plays a role in how people see me at work"*.

#### *e) Values*

Some participants felt that an aspect of diversity lies in people differing with regard to being respectful and honest: *"It is about respecting one another..."* and *"...honesty is an important aspect"*.

The White female group showed the strongest indication of valuing external dimensions as important dimensions of diversity.

#### **Theme 4: Organisational dimensions (frequency 9,10)**

Functional level, work content, unit, seniority, work location, union affiliation and management status are all organisational dimensions (Kreitner & Kinicke, 2004). Not all the organisational dimensions categorised by Kreitner and Kinicke (2004) were mentioned by participants in this study. As previously mentioned the categorisations of diversity dimensions included highly and less job-relatedness, as well as functional specialisation (Millikin & Martins, 1996; Pelled, 1996; Polzer et al., 2002).

##### *a) Functional level*

Three participants indicated that the type of work they are busy with are significant in their understanding of diversity. A quotation supporting this sub-theme is: *“Diversity in work relation in terms of your various functionalities”*. Another participant indicated a difference between people working shifts and people working full time: *“People working shifts are different than others”*.

##### *b) Unit*

One understanding of diversity included: *“different branches, different units”*.

##### *c) Seniority*

One participant stated that: *“we work according to ranks, doesn't matter what the colour of a person's skin is...”*.

These quotations suggested that within the police context functional levels, units, seniority and management location plays an important role. Steyn's (2005) description of the general police culture confirms these findings.

In a comparison between the different groups the White males and females placed the strongest emphasis on the organisational dimensions.

**Theme 5: Politicising (frequency 4,54)**

Sometimes people confuse diversity with affirmative action (Human, 1996; Soni, 2000; Thomas, 2006). This confusion makes sense within the context of the SAPS, since the affirmative action policy has been firmly implemented and especially when mentioned by a member of a previously advantaged group (The South African Racial Relations, 2007).

*a) Discrimination*

Consistent with these findings a participant stated that: “my understanding of diversity is more promotional opportunities for one group than the other...”

In the next table the main themes and supporting sub-themes of the experience of diversity is presented.

Table 4  
*The Experience of Diversity in the SAPS*

Themes and sub-themes		Black/ Coloured females N=5	Black males N=5	White females N=6	White males N=6	Total N=22
Theme 1	Recognition					<b>30,52</b>
a)	Feel they do not have promotional opportunities	-	-	4	6	10
b)	Feel they do not have personal development opportunities	-	-	2	1	3
c)	Feel they do have promotional opportunities	5	5	-	-	10
d)	Feel they do have personal development opportunities	5	5	-	-	10
e)	Aware of the role the EEA* system plays	1	2	1	5	8
f)	Feel their knowledge is not recognised	-	-	-	3	3
g)	Feel their experience is not recognised	-	-	1	2	3
Theme 2	Growth					<b>15,15</b>
a)	Sensitivity	1	1	2	1	5
b)	Tolerance	-	-	2	2	4

Table 4 (continue)

*The Experience of Diversity in the SAPS*

Themes and sub-themes		Black/ Coloured females N=5	Black males N=5	White females N=6	White males N=6	Total N=22
c)	Accommodation	2	2	2	1	7
d)	Compromising	-	1	-	-	1
e)	Acceptance	-	1	-	-	1
f)	Learning enhances understanding	-	1	-	1	2
Theme 3	Difficulties					<b>6,81</b>
a)	Personality clashes	2	1	-	-	2
b)	Cultural clashes	-	-	1	1	2
c)	Different races	-	-	1	1	2
d)	Different languages	-	-	-	1	1
e)	Different values	-	-	-	1	1
f)	Different genders				1	1

\*Equity Employment Act

The three main themes that emerged from this study on the experience of diversity were recognition, growth, and difficulties. These themes and supporting sub-themes are discussed in detail below.

**Theme 1: Recognition (frequency 30,52)**

Bellingan-Timmer (2004) stated that the job satisfaction in the SAPS is correlated to the recognition of the quality employees' work. Within the SAPS the different groups experienced recognition regarding promotional opportunities and personal developmental opportunities in different ways.

*a) Feel they do not have promotional opportunities*

Many white respondents felt the EEA policy of affirmative action negatively influence their promotional and personal development opportunities. These findings are confirmed by a study of Newham, et al. (2006) on employees' perceptions of personnel selection.

Regarding recognition, some of the White females felt that they do not have promotional opportunities. All the White males were negative about promotional opportunities.

*b) Feel they do not have personal development opportunities*

Only participants of the White female and male groups indicated negative experiences regarding development opportunities. As one participant stated: *"You get nominated for a course, but then you never hear about it again"*.

*c) Feel they do have promotional opportunities*

The affirmative action policy (South Africa, 1998a) clearly state that previously disadvantaged groups should be recognised. The following findings support the implementation of this policy within the SAPS.

Black and Coloured females and Black males experienced that they have promotional and personal development opportunities: *"When it comes to promotions, the organisation are really accommodating us"*. The Black males felt the same as the first group in terms of having promotional and personal development opportunities.

Although some of the White female participants experienced promotional opportunities negatively, some of them indicated a very positive experience: *"The police service has always been good to me. ...I am tired of hearing people say the SAPS is a circus, and people leave because of injustices and so on"*.

*d) Feel they do have personal development opportunities*

Both the Black and Coloured female group and the Black male groups showed positive attitudes and indicated positive experiences regarding development opportunities.

For the White female group personal development opportunities were not experienced in the same light as promotions. As one participant indicated: *"Promotion is currently not an option because of the equity system. Though with courses I still have the opportunity to excel..."*

*e) Aware of the role the EEA system plays*

The Black and Coloured female and Black male groups indicated that although they have advantages in terms of employment equity, there are very specific rules and policies which

should be followed when applying for a job. Therefore even though you may fall into a previously disadvantaged group, you need to comply with other specifications as well before you could be considered for a promotion: *"We are working under regulations, policies and acts. If the position doesn't suit me, I understand because of the requirements needed..."*.

The White female group indicated that they are aware of the role the EEA plays in promotional opportunities: *"Due to the equity system I do not have any opportunities for promotion"*.

The White male group showed an understanding that of all the various previously advantaged and disadvantaged groupings indicated within the EEA, it was inevitable that other groups are considered first for promotions: *"Most positions that I would like to apply for are indicated as designated positions."*

*f) Feel their knowledge is not recognised*

The group of White males also felt the same as the group of White Females considering their knowledge not recognised because of the equity system: *"Knowledge and experience are not appreciated to a great extend due to quotas... it is not something unique to the SAPS, you find it everywhere..."*

*g) Feel their experience is not recognised*

The White females and males indicated that even though they understand the necessity of implementing EEA regulations they experience it hard to accept seen in the light of their years of experience. They thus feel they could still make a valuable contribution but do not have the opportunities.

**Theme 2: Growth (frequency 15,15)**

The second theme that emerged concerned a strong positive experience regarding diversity. *Growth* had been chosen as descriptive of this theme. Although the experience was positive, all the participants indicated that they had to make some personal adjustments in order to have a positive experience.

Six sub-themes emerged namely sensitivity, tolerance, accommodation, compromising, acceptance and the enhancing of understanding through learning. A strong cultural pluralistic experience was detected (Popenoe et al., 1998).

*a) Sensitivity*

One participant indicated: *"When I asked why they acted the way they did, I understood and was more sensitive towards them..."*. With most participants sensitivity went hand in hand with learning more about the other person.

*b) Tolerance*

In some cases individuals did not indicated acceptance of others but rather tolerance: *"Sometimes we have to get along with other people's attitude and some people's way they respond to things"* and *"Lets just tolerate one another to a certain level..."*.

*c) Accommodation*

An accommodative attitude was detected: *"I feel you should accommodate one another in your work environment."*; *"They should accommodate you with regard to you personal circumstances..."*; *"People get to know each other, you accommodate other's differences..."*.

*d) Compromising*

Some of the participants indicated that it often requires people to compromise a little: *"Though sometimes there is a clash in culture between us, at a certain stage we compromise."*

*e) Acceptance*

Other's reported the total acceptance of other people's differences: *"What we are here for at the end of the day is to serve our people irrespective of what their culture is"*. Many participants indicated a positive experience working together with or learning from a person of another race: *"You know almost everything I know I have learned from a person of the other race"* and *"Here at our office we don't have any issues with different skins, you know all that things people believe about persons with different skins, I have never experienced it"*.

*f) Learning enhances understanding*

Various participants indicated that learning from each other enhances understanding: *"When you learn about one another, you accommodate one another's difference..."; "Sometimes in their religion, terms we use in spoken language mean something totally different..."*

It was also indicated that diversity workshops helped to get a better understanding of the differences between cultures and promoted positive attitudes and tolerance. *"A diversity course...changed most of our attitudes towards one another"* and *"You have to be patient because at the end of the day, it's not in their culture so we can not blame them."*

The following differences were found between groups: The Black males and White females showed the strongest positive experience of all the groups. The White males were not far behind. The Black and Coloured females indicated the least positive experience. All positive experiences were very closely related to learning from another group and better understanding of the group. Knowledge about other people's cultures enhances understanding.

**Theme 3: Difficulties (frequency 6,81)**

The last theme identified in the experience of diversity, was difficulties. Difficulties relate to more negative experiences of diversity.

*a) Personality clashes*

As one participant indicated: *"If you get someone with almost the same personality than you have, that would make work much easier"*.

*b) Cultural clashes*

Cultural clashes mentioned included: *"You do find some cultural groups that do not want to integrate..."*; *"Some cultures do not respect other cultures"* and *"Some people use their culture as an excuse..."*, *"At functions, we have separate groups, not because of some reason, it just happens"*. More specifically it seems as if cultural clashes were mentioned in contexts where there were different approaches to work (e.g. task oriented versus relationship oriented), different ways of socialising, and different ways of addressing people and aspects such as cultural rituals or ceremonies.

*d) Different languages*

One participant felt that: *"You cannot express yourself the way you would like to and you are not accommodated in that sense either."*

*e) Different values*

Another participant felt that there are different values between ranks: *"I think sometimes the higher and lower ranks don't have respect for each other in both ways."*

*f) Different races*

One participant indicated that he experienced reverse discrimination, especially with regard to recognition: *"Some groups are favoured in the current system..."*

*g) Different genders*

There is a perception that males might be favoured for promotions, especially where dangerous work is implied: *"I think males are first taken into account for positions then females"*.

Regarding the main differences, only the Black and Coloured females and the Black males experienced personality clashes. The White females and males indicated that they have experienced more difficulties with cultural clashes than the other groups. Of all the groups, the White males experienced the most difficulties regarding diversity.

## **DISCUSSION**

The general objective of this research was to investigate how employees of the SAPS experience diversity. To attain the general objective, more specific objectives were developed: a) to investigate the experience of diversity in the literature and to determine the dimensions of diversity in the workplace according to the literature; b) to investigate and interpret the experience of diversity in the SAPS in the North West Province; c) to determine whether there are any there differences in the conceptualisation and experience of diversity between different genders and racial groups in the SAPS; and finally e) to make recommendations for future research.

As already concluded in the literature study, diversity is generally experienced as positive and negative. It often depends on groups being advantaged or disadvantaged (Baldi & McBrier, 1997; Baskett, 1973; Dreher & Cox, 1996; Elliott & Smith, 2004; Greenhaus et al., 1990; Wilson et al., 1999). Previous studies conducted in the SAPS (Newham et al., 2006) have shown that most employees of the SAPS have positive experiences in working with different races and cultures. Negative experiences have been indicated mainly by White employees when referring to recognition within the SAPS.

The different dimensions of diversity can be distinguished as personality and internal dimensions (inherent part of the identity construction of a person), external dimensions (also part of identity construction but changeable) and organisational dimensions. (Kreitner & Kinicke, 2004; Siebers, 2007). The various dimensions of diversity have been incorporated into a model of layers of diversity by Kreitner and Kinicke (2004). This model has been used as a framework to categorise emerging themes in this study.

An investigation and interpretation of the experience of diversity in the SAPS resulted as follows. The majority of employees of the SAPS regarded personality and internal dimensions as very important in their understanding of diversity. Therefore they regard dimensions which are inherent part of a person's identity important in the conceptualisation of diversity. The findings therefore support the differences theses (Siebers, 2007). The similarity-attraction paradigm was especially evident where participants indicated that they like to associate with people who are very much alike themselves (Byrne, 1971). This preference of association has also been mentioned by Newham et al. (2006).

Furthermore diversity is strongly experienced as positive learning and growth process, where understanding behaviours have to be acquired. Most of the participants felt that learning more from one another helps acquiring understanding behaviour. As mentioned by various participants, learning about one another's culture helps understanding one another. These statements support Newham et al.'s (2006) findings on officers being positive about diversity training. Interestingly, the majority of participants who took part in this study and indicated that they have attended diversity training were of the Black and Coloured groups. Most of the participants only indicated attended training in the dimension of cultural diversity.

The influence of the EEA policy has a strong impact on the participants' experience of recognition and being fairly or unfairly treated. This finding supports the results of Newham et al.'s (2006) studies where it was indicated that most White officers felt discriminated against by the affirmative action policy. It is very clear that previously disadvantaged groups have a positive experience and previously advantaged groups have a negative experience concerning recognition through promotion and personal development. It is important though to mention that the majority of the participants recognised the influence of the EEA policy. It does not make the acceptance of the situation for the previously advantaged groups easier though, since they feel that their experience and knowledge could be valuable for the SAPS.

The difficulties experienced regarding diversity make sense when looking at the emphasis the whole group placed on the internal dimensions in the understanding of diversity. All the negative experiences concern internal dimensions except for language. A possible reason for the strong emphasis on cultural clashes could be that people unconsciously adopt the assimilation paradigm where it is expected of the minority group(s) to blend into the social circles and networks of the dominant group (Popenoe et al., 1998).

Gender discrimination is confirmed by qualitative research conducted by Morrison and Conradie (2006, p. 102) in which they concluded that: "Female police officers do not seem to be benefiting from promotional opportunities, because remnants from the previous police force still exist and the SAPS is still male dominant". Newham et al. (2006, p. 6) also indicated that females in the SAPS challenge gender prejudices by males, believing that females are not "suitable for the more dangerous aspects of policing."

Regarding differences in the conceptualisation and experience of diversity between different genders and racial groups, the results indicated a definite difference in experience. Although this finding supports Soni's (2000) research, the current context of the SAPS must be kept in mind. Seen in the light of the still changing demography of the police and the recent transformation of philosophy, it makes sense that the employees in the SAPS are still adjusting to different cultures, within a new corporate culture.

## LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Several limitations were identified within this study. The first limitation was the qualitative research framework used. Problems encountered with the qualitative research included the time consuming procedure of scheduling and conducting interviews when the participants had limited time to spare. The gender, ethnicity and background of the researcher conducting the interviews, could have influence the responses of the participants. English was not the mother-tongue of most of the participants and therefore the participants could have experienced difficulty in expressing themselves. In some cases the participants did not understand the concept of 'diversity' and a very vague definition had to be given in order not to lead the participant with regard to the dimensions of diversity. Furthermore, many of the participants felt uncomfortable being recorded and expressed their concern for expressing their viewpoints on issues. This might have an influence on the results.

A further limitation was regarding the compilation of the sample. The participants were only from Potchefstroom in the North-West Province. Therefore generalising of the results to other contexts is limited. The SAPS is also a public organisation and the conclusions can therefore not be generalised to non-public organisations.

Despite these limitations, this study has important implications for organisations and for future research. As already mentioned, there is a strong need for contextualisation of diversity (Siebers, 2007). Thus this study made an important contribution for the contextualisation of diversity within the South African context.

It is recommended that the management of diversity within the SAPS should focus on personality and internal dimensions. Furthermore the SAPS should ensure that all employees attend diversity training in order to overcome prejudices and to enhance understanding.

It is also recommended that the knowledge and experience of employees should be acknowledged in some way. As already mentioned (see Bellingan-Timmer, 2004) if an employee feels appreciated it is not only to the advantage of the employee's well-being, but also of value to the organisation regarding job performance and retaining talent.

Increased transparency in promotions (as suggested by Newham et al. (2006)) stays a very important issue and recommendation. As the findings of this study indicated, many White officers have negative experiences of diversity because they believe that they have been overseen in promotional opportunities because of affirmative action. It is therefore recommended that the processes and criteria used in promotions are clearly communicated to all employees, to ensure a positive experience and understanding of diversity.

The most important recommendation for future research is a longitudinal design where the experience of diversity within the SAPS should be monitored as the demography of the police change. Furthermore cross-national qualitative research within the SAPS should be conducted, in order to get a general idea of the South African experience of diversity. The experience of employees of public and non-public organisation could also be compared. The final recommendation is that the consequences of practices of classification in diversity should be investigated.

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## **CHAPTER 3**

### **CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

In this chapter, conclusions regarding the results of the empirical study of the research article are given according to the general and specific objectives. The limitations of this research are discussed, followed by recommendations for the organisation and future research.

#### **3.1 CONCLUSIONS**

The general objective of this research was to investigate the experience of employees of diversity in the SAPS. The first objective of this study was to investigate the experience of diversity in the literature and to determine the dimensions of diversity in the workplace according to the literature. Literature from South Africa mainly indicated challenges in the experience of diversity. These challenges especially referred to dimensions of races, gender, and culture. Furthermore findings showed that employees experienced difficulties in adapting to the changing demographics of the workforces (Goodham, 1999; Lala, 2001; Newham, Masuku & Dlamini, 2006). The South African literature correlates with global experiences and perceptions (Hostager & De Meuse, 2002).

Three main categories of dimensions have been distinguished. The first dimension included the inherent human characteristics of a person, the person's self-referential and understanding of group belongingness, personality and internal dimensions (Kreitner & Kinicke, 2004; Siebers, 2007), as well as culture. The second dimension consisted of Kreitner and Kinicke's (2004) external dimensions, as well as language, values and beliefs. The third dimension was the organisational or functional dimension, which includes the last layer of Kreitner and Kinicke's (2004) model.

The second objective was to investigate and interpret the experience of diversity in the SAPS in the North West Province. The understanding of diversity by employees was the first aspect investigated. Personality and internal dimensions came forward as the more prominent dimensions in their understanding of diversity. These dimensions are inherent part of the identity construction of a person (Kreitner & Kinicke, 2004; Siebers, 2007). It was interesting though that the Black and Coloured female and male groups placed the strongest emphasis on

these dimensions. The White female group placed a stronger emphasis on the external dimensions, whilst the White males focused strongly on organisational dimensions. The reasons for these differences have not been investigated, since it was important to get an idea of the overall understanding of diversity by the group. Therefore it can be concluded that the total group of participants understood diversity in terms of all three dimensions of diversity namely 1) personality and internal dimensions, 2) external dimensions and 3) organisational dimensions (Kreitner & Kinicke, 2004).

The next aspect investigated was the experience of diversity by the employees of the SAPS. Three themes emerged from the participant's experiences. The first theme was the experience of diversity in terms of recognition. It came forward that the EEA policy had an influence on the participants mentioning positive or negative experiences with regard to recognition and being fairly or unfairly treated. The different experiences of diversity in terms of recognition were clearly presented by two different racial groups. The Black and Coloured female group and the Black male group indicated positive experiences. The White female and male groups mentioned negative experiences. Similar findings have been reported in previous research (Newham et al., 2006). The reason for these different experiences by different races should be understood within the history and context of South Africa. Currently the EEA policy of affirmative action favours previously disadvantaged groups in order to ensure equal opportunities to all (South Africa, 1998).

The next theme that emerged in the experience of diversity was positive experience as a growth process. It came forward that through learning about other people more tolerant, accepting, understanding, compromising and accepting behaviours are developed. The positive role that diversity workshops played especially regarding dimensions of cultural diversity was confirmed by participants. Previous research also indicated similar findings: "The respondents who have attended training related to diversity and race generally reported that it had been a positive experience and had assisted them in overcoming their prejudices." (Newham et al., 2006, p. 46).

The last theme that came forward was the difficulties experienced regarding diversity. The majority of difficulties concerned personality and internal dimensions. This is interesting when compared to the general understanding of the participants of diversity. Their emphasis of understanding was on personality and internal dimensions. As previously explained, these

dimensions are difficult and sometimes impossible to change. Therefore a lack of understanding of another person's identity constructs could lead to a clash. The social identity and social categorisation theories could be underlying factors in most of the difficulties (Tajfel, 1981; Turner, 2000). People prefer to associate with other people who are like them. Cultural clashes were mentioned by various participants. A possible link could be drawn to the assimilation paradigm where one group expect the other group to integrate (Popenoe, Cunningham & Boulton, 1998). Gender discrimination was also mentioned and other research confirmed that this was still an issue within the SAPS (Morrison & Conradie, 2006; Newham et al., 2006).

The third objective was to determine whether there are any there differences in the experience of diversity between different genders and racial groups in the SAPS. The results indicated a definite difference between different genders and racial groups although the differences were stronger between the racial groups than between the gender groups. These differences therefore support Soni's (2000) findings of differences between racial and ethnic groups regarding diversity perspectives. In the light of the past and current South African context and implemented legislation and policies these differences are understandable. Newham et al. (2006) pointed out that the current context of the SAPS must also be kept in mind as the demography in the SAPS is still in a process of change.

In these findings the aspects of the differences and deficit theses could be traced (Siebers, 2007). The similarity-attraction paradigm was a possible factor underlying the experience of diversity by the participants (Byrne, 1971).

The results of this study indicated that within the specific context of the SAPS in the North-West Province, employees of different races have remarkably more different experiences regarding diversity, than employees of different gender groups. These experiences mainly concern personality and internal dimensions. Lastly, the influence of the EEA policy was determined as an important factor in current experiences. It has been found that the Black and Coloured groups experienced recognition within the SAPS as positive. In contrast the majority of the White groups showed negative experiences of recognition, since they felt they do not have promotional and personal development opportunities.

### **3.2 LIMITATIONS**

The first limitation was the use of a qualitative research framework. It was a time consuming procedure of scheduling and conducting interviews. The participants had limited time to spare. The race, gender and cultural background of the researcher could have influenced the responses of the participants, since all of them might not have been comfortable with someone representing a certain group. The participants who agreed on being interviewed in English could have experienced difficulty in expressing themselves, since English was not their mother tongue. Many of the participants felt uncomfortable being recorded and did not trust the promise of total confidentiality. They feared expressing their concern for expressing their viewpoints on issues. This might have influenced the results.

A further limitation was the concept of 'diversity'. Not all of the participants have given it a thought before and asked for a definition. The researcher gave a very vague definition in order not to lead the participants with regard to the dimensions of diversity. It could still have influenced the results though.

The last limitation was the use of a homogeneous sample. The participants were only from Potchefstroom in the North-West Province. The research has also only been conducted within a public organisation. The implication therefore is that generalisation of the results to other contexts such as other branches and non-public organisations, is limited.

### **3.3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Despite these limitations, this study has implications for organisations and future research. Therefore the following recommendations are made.

#### **3.3.1 Recommendations to the organisation**

As mentioned previously the personality and internal dimensions played an important part in the participants understanding of diversity, as well as their experience of diversity. It is therefore recommended that the management of diversity within the SAPS should not only focus on cultural dimensions, but also on personality and other internal dimensions.

Furthermore all employees should be encouraged to attend diversity training in order to overcome prejudices and to enhance understanding (Newham et al., 2006).

Employees of the SAPS should be recognised for their knowledge and experience. By showing appreciation of knowledge and experience, job performance will increase and valuable employees will be retained (Bellingan-Timmer, 2004; Newham et al., 2006). The SAPS should also focus on increasing transparency in promotions (Newham et al., 2006). Especially White officers show negative experiences of diversity because of beliefs that affirmative action is the sole reason for not being promoted. In order to ensure a positive experience and understanding of diversity, it is recommended that the processes and criteria used in promotions are clearly communicated to all employees.

### **3.3.2 Recommendations for future research**

In order to overcome the limitations in future research, certain recommendations can be made for future studies. The most important recommendation for future research is the use of longitudinal designs where the experience of diversity within the SAPS should be monitored as the demography of the police change is also recommended. The contextualisation of diversity is important; therefore cross-national qualitative research within the SAPS should be conducted, in order to get a general idea of the South African experience of diversity (Siebers, 2007). Studies could also be conducted to show whether the experience of employees of public and non-public organisation differ. Finally, from a sociological point of view the aspect of classification and the consequences of such practices should also be investigated (e.g. race classification).

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