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IMAGES OF A CULTURE OF DIVERSITY IN A SOUTH AFRICAN ORGANISATION

Declaration

I declare that this dissertation is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Masters of Arts (Industrial Psychology) at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any university, nor has it been prepared under the aegis or with the assistance of any other body, or organisation, or person outside the University of the Witwatersrand.

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SHANYA PILLAY

15 February 2007

Abstract

This study was interested in assessing whether any disparity between formal policy and employee experience exists within a South African organisation. Specifically, the research identified the images and metaphors presented within an organization's formal policy documents on diversity and then assessed the extent to which those images reflect a culture of diversity within the organisation. The researcher made use of qualitative methods in the form of content and discourse analysis and in-depth interviews. The results suggest that while the images and metaphors found in policy documents do in fact represent a culture of diversity in its stated intentions, practically, as experienced by employees, a culture for diversity remains limited.

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Chapter One

Introduction

The need for transformation has been recognised at all levels of the South African economy. South Africa, in its endeavour to create a new democracy and attain alignment with international standards, has adopted many new forms of legislation and policy. Designed in the spirit and prescription of national legislation, organisations develop policies that are intended to create a democratic workplace, particularly in the implementation of Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) and employment equity. However, while theoretically sound, these formalised statements may cause fear and uncertainty in practice (Rensburg, 1993).

A possible reason for the fear and uncertainty in practice is suggested in the work of Rensburg (1993). She maintains that the factors shaping organisational culture stem from the norms and practices of European and American co-operations, seldom accounting for the norms and practices of indigenous South Africans. Thus, the question of the applicability of formal policy within the South African workplace arises. Moreover, and perhaps more importantly, it is important to note that formal policy is not always mirrored practically within organisations. While having policies promoting democracy is indeed necessary, it is not altogether sufficient in assuring positive work outcomes for employees and employers, alike. Therefore, rather than just having formal structures that

regulate organisational policy, what is of greater importance is to develop a culture that includes respect, tolerance of diversity and trust in practice.

Understanding how employees feel about their culture is of particular importance to management as it helps them to understand how employees feel about their work (van Dyk, 2004). While a culture that is accepted by employees can have numerous benefits, including employee participation, quality assurance and increased productivity, the mismanagement of culture can produce negative consequences for the organisation. This is particularly true in relation to South African organisations. The lack of aggressive transformational leadership in developing an acceptable culture within South African organisations decreases the quality of both service delivery and productivity (van Dyk, 2004). One possible reason for the failure of organisations to effectively develop an acceptable culture is because traditional measures and methods of assessment do not examine the scope and complexity of organisational culture (van Dyk, 2004). Thus, what is needed is a method of assessment that taps into the complexities of organisational culture.

This study used organisational policy documents on diversity and conducted interviews with employees within a South African organisation as a way of accessing some of the complexities of organisational culture. In particular, this study was interested in organisational culture and employee diversity. Thus, the documents assessed, as well as the interview questions were related to

employee diversity. In addition, in an attempt to capture the complexity of the diversity culture of the organisations, this study also identified metaphors and other images of the culture of diversity in the organisation as proposed by Morgan (1997) and other organisational theorists including El-Sawad, (2005), Palmer and Dunford (1996), Gergen (1992) and among others, Bolman and Deal (1996). The way in which images and metaphors were used in this research will be addressed in some detail in the literature review. Prior to that however, this proposal will assess the available literature on diversity and organisational culture, both in terms of theory and research.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1. The need for transformation in South Africa

Since its first democratic elections in 1994, South Africa has experienced astronomical change in all sectors of its economy (Henry, 2001). Political change, redistribution of wealth, nationalisation, affirmative action, equalising opportunities and similar concerns are of rising importance in South African organisations. At a policy-making level, the need for transformation has been recognised in legislation and policy, particularly relating to Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) and employment equity. As indicated by Henry (2001), in South Africa, there have been immense legislative changes aimed at eliminating the discriminatory elements of the Apartheid era, cultural and societal changes have become necessary and organisations have had to adapt to issues such as employment equity and diversity.

National policy is reflected at the level of organisational policy. Numerous policies within human resources, including skills development, selection procedures, training and diversity management are implemented in response to the diverse workplace, the challenges presented by globalisation and the need to become an effective competitor in the global market and, at the same time, remain effective within a unique African environment. These factors inevitably constitute organisational transformation. There are countless issues that impact on

transformation in South African organisations given the diverse composition of the workplace. Social issues such as race and gender as well as a host of others, including poverty, social welfare, employment availability, HIV/AIDS, downsizing and crime make attaining an acceptable organisational culture difficult.

It is therefore imperative that organisational policies aid positive transformation through managing issues of diversity and change. Managing diversity within the workplace results in developing a culture that appropriates systems of shared meanings that help individuals work together toward desired outcomes (Werner, 2004).

Considering the nature of transformation in South Africa as well as the potential consequences for the organisation and employees alike, it is important to develop a way of assessing and understanding organisational culture if to alleviate and avert negative outcomes. While certain provisions and claims are designed in both the spirit and prescription of the formal policy, it becomes important to examine the extent to which these sentiments are actually mirrored by the organisations' culture. In doing so, one must examine the arising metaphors within organisational policy documents and assess the extent to which these metaphors reflect a culture of diversity in the organisation, as experienced by employees. These were some of the issues that the research attempted to examine. Thus, the experiences of employees within an organisation were studied and compared to what was formally stated within the

organisation's policy documents on diversity. Essentially, the research examined whether or not there is alignment between organisational documents (at the organisational level) and actual experiences of employees within the organisation, by looking specifically at diversity, within the South African context.

2.2. Diversity

Diversity includes all forms of differences among individuals such as culture, gender, age, race and religious affiliation (van Dyk, 2004). According to Thomas (1996), diversity must be understood as a broad range of human uniqueness – race, culture, perception and attitudes, work style, personality, values, lifestyle, educational background, work experience, work location, personal habits and among other things, work ethic and ethnicity. In their description, Nankervis, Thomas and McCarthy (1996 in Moodley, 2000) portray diversity as a variety of race, gender, age and cultural differences. In South Africa, political affiliation represents another area of diversity posing as a powerful force.

Workplace diversity is a driver of change in organisations. Democratic South Africa is built on the diversity of its people – black and white, practicing many cultures and religions and speaking eleven official languages (www.studysa.co.za, 2007). The importance of diversity must be considered as the culture of an organisation, that is its shared beliefs and values, is contingent upon the management of diversity (van Dyk, 2004). Furthermore, the effective management of diversity is a strategic necessity in that it facilitates a

fundamental change in attitude, perception and behaviour, something that cannot be prescribed by law.

As suggested by Moodley (2000), the valuing of diversity has not been recognised by organisations in South Africa. Moodley also maintains that unlike in countries such as America and Brazil, the subject of minorities and cultural diversity has only recently been seen as an important theme within South African organisations. The importance of managing diversity has been highlighted by many authors including Jamieson and O'Mara (1991), Thomas (1991, 1995) and Hoecklin (1995), all of whom are based in America. The relevance of these authors to the challenges of diversity in South Africa is highly questionable thus emphasizing the need for distinctly South African research in this area. It is only through a unique South African perspective that a sense of cultural diversity, as opposed to cultural assimilation, may become instilled within South African organisations.

2.3. Managing Diversity

Thomas (1996, p10) describes the management of diversity as a, 'planned, systematic and comprehensive managerial processes for developing an organisational environment in which all employees, with their differences and similarities, can contribute to the strategic and competitive advantage of the organisation, and where no-one is excluded on the basis of factors unrelated to productivity.' Wiggill (1994, p13 in Fleetwood, 1997) suggests that '…managing

diversity seeks to achieve equity through the creation of inclusive organisations and the motivation is not compliance or justice, nor is it harmony… the motivation is to transform sterile and homogenous cultures into a kind of all inclusive diversity which will help organisations to attain competitive advantage'. Similarly, Coetzee (1995) suggests that organisations should be strategically repositioned and redesigned to give effect to the norm of inclusivity.

Managing diversity is not a short term strategy that is used to correct imbalances in the workplace. It is a long term process which requires senior management to identify with and commit to strategies so as to access the potential of all its employees (Moodley, 2000). Indeed, such long term initiatives have proven to be limited within South African organisations. For example, despite rapid growth and interest in the management of diversity, Armitage (1993 in Wentling and Palmer-Rivas, 1998, p3) state that "organisations are scrambling to develop diversity programs but find little concrete guidance". Similarly, Noe and Ford (1992 in Wentling and Palmer-Rivas, 1998, p358) state that although "training for diversity has increased in popularity, no systematic empirical research regarding the effectiveness of diversity programs has been published".

Given the drive for democracy in South Africa, one would assume that the management of diversity would remain central and harness commitment from all sectors in the South African economy. Thomas (1996) asserts that it seems only logical that business would want to tap into the range of talents that were previously unrecognized, and extend its business capacity beyond that which it

has historically been afforded by homogenous minority white input. Arguably however, this in not the case. She goes on to suggest that in spite of the political freedom that has finally come to South Africa, in the industrial and commercial sectors, little has changed regarding employment equity. In exploring this argument further, reference is made to Jinabhai (2006) who draws on the World Competitive Report and the United Nations Report (1995).

According to the World Competitive Report, South Africa is placed 48th out of 48 countries in relation to its human resources development. In a report by the United Nations, South Africa was placed 95th under 174 of the richest nations in terms of its ability to develop the countries human resources. Interestingly, the report indirectly taps into issues of the management of diversity in its findings. While South Africa is placed 95th as a nation, when divided along racial lines, White South Africa is placed within the top 40 countries for White human resources development but holds the 128th position in terms of black human resources development. Not only does this reveal South Africa's inability to manage diversity, but more importantly, it implies that despite its many impressive documents relating to the management of diversity, preferential treatment with regard to employment, especially in higher level positions, is afforded to white individuals.

Despite the serious shortcomings of current initiatives in managing diversity, Human (1993 in Human, 1996) maintains that few committed efforts to managing diversity have been made in South Africa. She further states that although many

organisations are in support of managing diversity, few actually incorporate diversity objectives into their strategic planning processes or reward systems. South Africa has no choice but to manage diversity and to manage it effectively; the stability of the country and possibly even the region depends on it (Human, 1995). Indeed, the government has committed itself to developing legislation and policy, most notably in the form of BEE and employment equity, which encourage the management of diversity. However, what is stated in formal policy documents is not always experienced at the level of the organisation. Furthermore, it is suggested that although organisational policy documents pertaining to diversity may be in line with national legislation, these formal concessions are may not be experienced by employees. One of the aims of this research was to therefore assess whether there is any disparity between formal policy and the actual experience of diversity of employees at the level of the organisation.

2.4. Organisational culture

Organisational culture represents a complex pattern of beliefs, expectations, ideas, values and behaviours shared by the members of an organisation. More specifically, organisational culture includes the dominant values held by the organisation and a philosophy that guides organisational policy towards its employees and customers (van Dyk, 2004). In the past 25 years, the concept of organisational culture has received wide acceptance as a way of understanding human systems. Edgar Schein explains culture as a system of building blocks. He defines it as, ‘a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has

worked well enough to be considered valid and therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems'(Schein, 1993). In other words, as groups evolve, they must integrate individuals into an effective whole, and adapt effectively to the external environment. As groups find solutions to these problems over time, they engage in collective learning that develops a set of shared assumptions and beliefs called "culture" (Schein, 1993).

In his description, Gareth Morgan describes culture as "an active living phenomenon through which people jointly create and recreate the worlds in which they live" (Morgan, 1997, 256). Because culture is so deeply entrenched in an organisation's history and combined experience, working to transform it requires a major investment of time and resources. This is especially true in relation to South African organisation which is seen as one of the most culture-rich countries in the world. In other countries, cultures co-exist with one or two cultures that dominate. In South Africa however, Western and African cultures must merge to create a South African culture, and not just merely co-exist (Finestone and Snyman, 2005).

Perhaps what is most essential within the context of South Africa is to develop a *culture for diversity*, where importance is attached to the development of people and the norms, values and beliefs that either reinforce or discourage the development of people and the advancement of those previously disadvantaged (Human, 1996). In developing this culture for diversity open and constructive

feedback should be given to employees on performance, discrimination based on race, gender or disability should be removed and, among other things, that the importance of developing people must remain central.

As mentioned before, numerous factors, such as restructuring and globalisation has made it necessary for South African organisations to renew their organisational cultures and diversity practices (Werner, 2004). There have been many studies carried out in relation to the development of an appropriate culture within South African organisations, some of which are presented below. Essentially, what these studies reveal is that creating a shared organisational culture results in many positive outcomes for both employees and employers. Failure to create this shared culture however, leads to may negative consequences.

Research carried out by Phakathi (2002) draws on the positive impact of a shared organisational culture. His case study of the African Gold Mine examines the industry's attempt to create a twenty-first century workforce through self-directed work team (SDWT) training conducted within the mine. The research findings revealed that at the mine, organisational constraints hamper the implementation of SDWT training. In coping with these constraints, workers resort to ‘improvising’ (referred to as *Planisa*), using teams self-initiated action. The paper argued that planisa is part of the existing occupational culture of miners and that all strategies to increase the productivity of mineworkers must draw on such experiences, if to remain effective (Phakathi, 2002). The

importance of instilling a shared understanding and culture among employees is imperative, as noted in the above mentioned study. As suggested by Bredenkamp (2002), organisational cultures that are shared among employees can lead to excellence, growth, capacity building, communal development, and to positive job orientation.

In another study, Dirk Hermann (2002, in Finestone and Snyman, 2005), examined the effects of affirmative action on Whites, especially males. He found that affirmative action leads to increased levels of estrangement among White employees which lead to decreased productivity, racial segregation, resignations, depression, emigration, and even suicide in some cases. Hermann identified a lack of norms, and therefore a lack of an acceptable culture, among the employees. He concluded that White employees felt separated from the company and its vision which ultimately lead to reduced levels of commitment and a general lack of interest in the organisation's well-being (Hermann, 2002 in Finestone and Snyman, 2005). As suggested by the findings, the ability to create a shared culture that accounts for the needs of all employees, regardless of race gender or disability, is critical to the wellbeing of both the employee and the organisation at large. As suggested by Bredenkamp (2002), a company's corporate culture, particularly in relation to how it treats, values and trusts its employees, is related to decisions made by employees to either remain with or leave the organisation. In fact, as cited in Bredenkamp (2002), Messmer (2001) stated that, in a survey targeting Fortune 100 executives, a positive work environment was seen as most important to ensuring employee wellbeing.

At this point, the literature reviewed has illustrated the need for managing diversity and creating a corporate culture that is accepted and shared by all employees within an organisation, if to ensure organisational success. Human capital is by far one of the most important aspects related to organisational success. The review has suggested that due to South African workplace being exceptionally diverse, the management of diversity is critical. Although much is being done by government relating to the development and implementation of democratic legislation in South Africa, little has manifested practically, thus revealing South Africa's inability to effectively manage issues related to diversity.

Furthermore, it was maintained that while studies are being carried out in relation to diversity in South Africa, albeit limited, the bulk of research is carried out by international authors, thus neglecting the need for distinctly South African research in the area.

In the literature reviewed on organisational culture, the need for South African organisations to emphasise and to create a culture of diversity was demonstrated if to promote employee and organisational wellbeing within the South African workplace.

Thus, one of the aims of the current research was to understand employee experiences of diversity from a South African perspective. Indeed, although many provisions are made formally by both national government and organisations in the promotions and implementation of diversity practices, the effects of such provisions may not be positively experienced by those that it targets - namely,

the employees. Given this possibility, the researcher explored the metaphors (or images) that are presented within an organisations policy documents relating to diversity and then assessed the extent to which those identified metaphors reflected the culture of diversity in an organisation, as experienced by its employees.

In order to effectively attain a sense of the organisations culture, and the experiences of its employees in relation to formal statements made at the level of policy, the researcher made use of a method of measurement that enabled her to assess individual experiences. A discussion of the use of metaphors in the measurement of organisational culture follows.

2.5. The use of metaphors in the measurement of organisational culture

Metaphors act as a guiding force in ways of thinking, acting and creating meaning (Lakeoff and Johnson, 1980 in Morgan, 2001). Essentially, a metaphor is a figure of speech that is used to imply resemblance between an action or object, event or experience on the one hand, and a widely understood word or phrase on the other (El-Sawad, 2005). Sackmann (1989) examines the role of metaphors in relation to organisational transformation. She argues that metaphors are particularly useful in that they trigger perceptual shifts, transmit information at the cognitive, behavioral and emotional level and that they provide vivid images that can easily be remembered.

A range of metaphors describing organisations have surfaced, including machine and organism metaphors (Morgan, 1980), cultures, political systems and brains (Morgan, 1986), clouds and songs (Gergen, 1992) and strategic termites and spider plants (Morgan, 1993). Metaphors have been used in numerous organisational practices including decision making, leadership, organisational change, organisational development, human resources, policy implementation, organisational culture and organisational design (Palmer and Dunford, 1996).

When assessing organisational culture, Schon (1979 in Morgan, 2001) asserts that, as in the case of many organisations, a 'root' metaphor places employees within certain roles, making them act or behave in certain ways. Thus, the use of metaphors within the organisation develops a unified vision that provides what Morgan (2001) refers to as a metaphorical lens. Put simply, the use of a specific metaphor or image that is characteristic of an organisation may prime individuals to act in or behave in a specific manner, according to what the image may imply. For example, if an organisation considers itself to be a 'brain', employees may become concerned with increasing their knowledge and improving on skill in matching up to the organisation's image.

Indeed, while the use of such metaphors may serve well in creating a unified vision, given the exceptionally diverse nature of the South African workforce, the existing images or metaphors used to describe organisations need to be reexamined. In realising the need for swift adaptation within South Africa's

transformation (at the political, social and economic level), existing metaphors may be ill fitted to gear and support such change. The factors that have historically shaped organisational culture within South African organisations would be the norms and practices of European and American co-operations, stemming from the apartheid era. Organisations fail to incorporate the norms and practices of indigenous South Africans. What then emerges, according to Rensburg (1994), is a ‘culture of exclusion’. Because the South African workplace is so diverse and multiracial, it becomes imperative to stimulate imagination and creativity in advances toward organisational efficiency. If the development of culture includes a process through which people jointly create and recreate their worlds, then to be sustainable, existing metaphors in organisations should focus on the human side of organisational life. For example, research by Bolman and Deal (1991 in Palmer and Dunford, 1996) revealed that the use of effective metaphors in organisations offer a sense of choice and alternatives. For instance, if an organisation uses the metaphor of ‘family’ in describing workplace relationships, then employees may have choices with regard to communication styles and the way in which they approach management. However, on the other hand, the use of metaphors can be associated with misuse whereby change developers manipulate metaphors as a means to affecting certain behaviors. This in itself creates a ‘culture of domination’. For example, the same metaphor of ‘family’ mentioned above can be used for the benefit of management whereby employees feel that they are

obligated to remain in the organisation because of loyalty and allegiance, something often associated with ‘family’.

As inferred by the argument above, a specific image or metaphor used to describe an organisation may be experienced differently by different individuals within the same organisation. Moreover, the message/s behind an image may be interpreted or experienced differently, by an individual/s, to what was intended by the organisation.

As such, given the high likelihood that interpretations and experiences of individuals may be significantly varied in the current study, the researcher decided that the use of metaphors as a measurement tool would be particularly useful in that, as suggested by Alvesson (2005), they are important organizing devices in thinking and talking about complex phenomena which in this case, would relate to issues of diversity.

A few examples of research done in the area of organisational metaphors are presented to outline the scope and implications of using metaphors in research:

Morgan (2001) used a cultural-critical approach in exploring dominant and alternative ideologies of change reflected in the metaphors of retail based management staff. The study was qualitative and included both open ended questions and interviews. The research revealed that while managers were able

to use the corporate call to ‘get out off the box’ as an image of organizational transformation, the use of their metaphors failed to convey meaning which ultimately hampered efforts to effectively implement organisational change. These findings prove particularly appropriate to the current research. Images and metaphors used to describe or convey a message about an organisation need to be equally embraced by employees if to facilitate for positive outcomes. In addressing the potential for misalignment between organisational intensions and individual needs, the current research assessed whether or not there is any disparity between metaphors and images presented within organisational documents and employee experiences of them.

In another study, Gibson and Zellmer-Bruhn (2001) explored an intercultural analysis of metaphors in relation the concept of team work. In the study, different metaphors were derived from the language used by the team members during interviews in different geographical locations from six multinational organisations. The results revealed that metaphors are effective in revealing underlying individual meaning structures that are based on both national and organisational culture. This finding supported the researcher’s decision to use metaphors in deconstructing an individual’s experience of culture in that metaphors were shown to effectively portray meaning in spite of diverse locations, which in itself implies individual diversity – which is fitting to the issues tackled in the current study.

Wilson (2000) describes case studies of 3 organisations and in doing so, explores the role of culture as a framework for the inclusion and exclusion of actual and potential employees. Both culture-as-variable and culture-as-metaphor perspectives were used to interpret the data. A number of processes were found significant in the promotion of diversity. She used symbols such in the organisations and suggests both theoretical and practical implications in relation to managing diversity. She also concludes that human resources, in some cases proved to be inadequate in encouraging diversity.

One commonality in all these studies is the need for effective diversity management. It is suggested that whether using metaphors hamper organisational change, helps understand the outcomes of a shared culture or explores levels of inclusion for employees in the management of diversity; the extent to which these ‘formal’ intentions are brought into practice requires deeper consideration.

The relative small body of literature examining the use of metaphors within organisations does, at least to some extent, explore organisational transformation at a conceptual level. The problem however lies in relation to its applicability within the South African context. To engage in the change apparent in South Africa, be it at the political, social or economic level, requires deeper consideration if to enhance human contribution that expands far beyond the ‘box’ of organisational behaviour. It is suggested that formal statements and organisational documents symbolically portraying organisations as ‘families’ and

‘rainbows’ may not always be the case in practice. Thus, the examination of existing metaphors (formal statements for organisational policy documents) as well as emerging/opposing metaphors (actual experience of individuals) allowed for a comparison between documentation and organisational practice in the area of diversity.

In assessing whether the proposed benefits of diversity are reflected within employees’ experiences, the researcher analysed formal statements within a case study organisation’s diversity policy documents and the actual culture of the organisation, as experienced by its employees. The discussion to follow gives a brief description of what is meant by organisational documents and the types of information it carries. A description and explanation of the diversity documents of the organisation used in the current study is also presented.

2.6. Organisational documents defined

Organisational documents provide proof of communication, the declaration of views and attitudes and the limits of behaviour. Its many functions include the recognition of security needs, rules, regulations and procedures for carrying out organisational functions such as recruitment and training and among other things, the rights and obligations of managers and workers, alike (van Dyk, 2004). As suggested by Henry (2001), policy statements (as found in policy documents) stand as an expression of what the company believes.

This research is interested in organisational culture and employee diversity. Thus, the documents used and the interview questions were related to employee diversity. The way in which the interview questions were generated will be addressed in some detail in the methodology. Firstly however, reference is made to the policy documents pertaining to diversity within Company X, the chosen organisation for this study.

2.7. Company X

Company X is a leading global manufacturer in South Africa with its products being sold in over 150 countries. The company prides itself as being innovative and as a leader in the 21st century. The organisation states that it places much concern on ensuring teamwork, caring for others and superior performance. Most notable are Company X's many policies pertaining to rebalancing the racial composition of its workforce in the new democratic South Africa.

Although the company has a host of policies, emphasis in the current study is placed on the following four policy documents as they target issues of diversity:

1. *Company X's Employee Handbook;*
2. *Company X's Employment Equity Policy;*
3. *Company X's Recruitment and Section Policy;*
4. *Company X's Corporate Values Statement Document.*

Company X's diversity policies state that understanding individual diversity is crucial if to achieve long term goals.

The policies pertaining to diversity within Company X are extensive. Their internet sites, design of office space, required attire of employees, mission statement and formal policies are all geared toward the promotion of diversity. What is of importance however, is the degree to which these organisational policy documents are actually experienced by employees. The use of extracting metaphors from the documents (in the form of diversity policy documents, newspapers, bulletin boards…etc.) and actual experience (responses to the interview questions and the organisations culture) allowed for an examination of the potential for disparity between formal policy and organisational practice.

Given the huge amount of resources provided for diversity planning at Company X, it would be expected that issues of diversity are taken into consideration. One stated aim of Company X is to provide equal opportunity to all, is in itself indicative of cultural acceptance. Having formal policies relating to diversity however, is not necessarily enough to conclude that these formal statements are positively related to actual experience. The reverse is also true. In extracting dominant and alternate metaphors from the organisations' policy documents and actual experience of employees, the subsequent alignment, of lack of alignment, between policy documents and actual experience can be evaluated. The use of

certain metaphors presented in Company X's policy documents on diversity develops a vision and creates a particular image, but the subsequent experience of this image requires consideration as experiences within the organisation may reflect otherwise.

2.8. Research questions

- **What metaphors can be identified from organisational policy documents?**

- **Do these metaphors reflect the culture of diversity in the organisation as experienced by employees?**

Chapter Three

3. Methodology

The aim of this research was to assess whether or not any disparity exists between formal policy documents on diversity and employee experience. In assessing the potential for disparity, the researcher identified metaphors from an organisation's (hereon referred to as Company X) policy documents on diversity and then assessed whether or not these metaphors reflect the culture of diversity in the organisation, as experienced by the employees.

In attending to the above mentioned aim, two major forms of analyses were conducted. Firstly, a comprehensive discourse analysis of Company X's policy documents on diversity was undertaken. Then, through in depth interviews, participants of the study were asked to express their personal understandings and experiences of diversity within Company X. The researcher then assessed whether or not any disparity exists between what is documented formally within Company X's policy documents on diversity and the culture of diversity within Company X, as experienced by the employees. In accounting for the diverse sample used (with regard to age, race, gender etc.), the researcher accepted that experiences of diversity within Company X may be differ between employees. As suggested by Leedy and Ormrod (2001 in Govindsamy, 2005) research of this nature, where different individuals may construct different yet equally valid realities relevant to the problem, is most suited to qualitative research. For this reason, qualitative research was adopted for this study.

The term ‘qualitative research’ espouses many different approaches to research that are, in some respects, different to each other. However, as indicated by Leedy and Ormrod (2001 in Govindsamy, 2005), qualitative approaches have two things in common, both of which proved characteristic of this study.

Firstly, the focus is on phenomena that occur in the real world, within its natural setting. The use of qualitative methods proved appropriate in this study as it allowed for the study of attitudes and behaviour within the individuals’ natural setting. Similarly, Babbie and Mouton (2000) propose that qualitative research is best suited to understanding events and actions within a specific context. And, given that Company X is extremely diverse with regards to its employees, the very nature or context of Company X proved to be advantageous as the context itself conferred much meaning. In accounting for individual differences, the research also considered many biographical details of the participants including race, gender, years of employment at the organisation, marital status, number of dependents and their highest level of education.

Secondly, qualitative approaches involve the assessment of phenomena in all their complexity. As suggested by Patton (1987), qualitative research allows for important dimensions to emerge from the analysis of cases under study without presupposing in advance what those important dimensions might be. This proved to be especially characteristic in this study. For example, even though emphasis was placed on issues of diversity in relation to South Africa’s transformation,

other dimensions such as job characteristics and issues of organisational commitment emerged from the data.

Qualitative research provides greater flexibility than quantitative research as it allows the researcher to probe further to attain deeper understanding of responses. Because issues of diversity are sensitive and often invoke discomfort and emotional responses, especially if experienced negatively by an individual, participants at times responded to some interview questions very briefly. However, by using qualitative methods, the researcher was able to reassure participants of confidentiality, rephrase questions in a more sensitive manner and probe participants to expand on initial, short responses. In doing so; the researcher was able to attain rich, detailed information surrounding their experiences of diversity at Company X.

This research was a non-experimental, ex post facto design due to the fact that no manipulation or experimentation was used. The research was interested in understanding the experiences of employees and therefore made no attempts to alter the already existing experiences of the employees. As such, the qualitative method enabled a deeper understanding and description of the potential disparities that exist between formal policy (the policies relating to diversity within Company X) and employee experiences, as they naturally occur.

3.1 Procedure

3.1.1. Access

In assessing the possibility of disparity between organisational policy documents on diversity and employee experience, access to both Company X's employees and Company X's policy documents on diversity was attained.

The sample was attained from one organisation – Company X. Company X has branches both internationally as well as nationally. The company's products are sold in over 150 countries and have established production facilities in 40 countries. Internationally, Company X was listed, among 800 companies, as one of the best companies to work for (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2006). The branch used is situated in the Gauteng area.

Company X was contacted telephonically and briefed on the researcher's intentions. In doing so, the researcher communicated with the companies' Human Resources Manager who was briefed on the purpose of the study, what it would involve and who it would involve. The Human Resources Manager was asked access to the employees for the interviews as well as for access to Company X's policy documents on diversity, both of which are discussed in detail, below. The researcher was granted access to conduct interviews within Company X's call centre and access to Company X's policy documents on diversity by the Human Resources Manager in the form of a written letter.

The Human Resources Manager was told that access to the organisation would entail holding interviews with willing participants (see Sampling for details on participant consent) at a venue within the organisation. She was told that the researcher hoped to interview approximately 15 employees, that the interviews would not exceed an hour and that the researcher would require her assistance in the distribution of subject information sheets and venue facilitation. She was also informed that participants would be given a small token of appreciation for their participation and time upon ending each interview in the form of thirty rand (R30.00). The incentive was included in the study so as to encourage greater participation among employees. It was decided that due to the fact that participants would be interviewed in the time usually taken for lunch, that participants would be compensated by the researcher for their time and any inconvenience caused.

Upon being granted access to carry out the research, the researcher provided the Human Resources Manager with copies of the subject information sheets which outlined the purpose of the study (See appendix A). The subject information sheet also informed employees that if they wished to participate in the study, they were required to fill in their details and sign both consent forms and place it in the sealed box provided. The researcher's contact details, including telephone numbers and email address, were also made available on the information sheet should the participants wish to make contact for any clarification or concerns pertaining to their participation in the study. The Human

Resources Manager distributed the Subject information sheets to all 19 of the employees within the department used.

A week after initially distributing the subject information sheets, a reminder was sent out through electronic mail to all employees. A week following the reminder, the box was collected by the researcher and all consenting participants were contacted to arrange dates and times for the interviews. The interviews ranged between thirty minutes to an hour.

When communicating with the Human Resources Manager about the purpose of the study, she was informed that the research would require access to Company X's policies documents on diversity. The Human Resources Manager was assured that the name of the organisation would not be used in the research report and that all information presented in the policy documents on diversity would not in any way indicate or point to the identity of the organisation. The Human Resources Manager agreed to grant the researcher access to the following policy documents on diversity:

1. Company X's Employee Handbook;
2. Company X's Employment Equity Policy;
3. Company X's Recruitment and Section Policy;
4. Company X's Corporate Values Statement Document.

3.2 Sampling

3.2.1 The Sample

The sample consisted of fourteen participants. the researcher had initially hoped to choose a sample that accounted for different biographical data including race, gender, age, work experience and different levels of education to assess other variables that might contribute to different perceptions and experiences. However, since the department used was small (nineteen employees), the researcher was unable to be selective in this manner. However, the sample attained did offer some variability with regard to biographical information (see Participant Biographical Information below).

3.2.2. Participant Biographical Information

Participant	Gender	Race	Years working and Company X	Marital status	Number of dependents	Highest level of education
One	Female	Indian	17	married	3	matric
Two	Female	White	28	widow	3	matric
Three	Female	Indian	22	married	3	Grade 11
Four	Female	Indian	1	single	none	Diploma
Five	Female	White	2.5	married	2	2 diplomas

Six	Female	Black	1	married	2	N-Levels (diploma equivalent)
Seven	Female	Coloured	1	single	none	Matric
Eight	Female	White	2 months	married	1	Matric
Nine	Male	Black	2	single	2	2 diplomas
Ten	Female	White	10	divorced	none	A-levels (British equivalent to South African matric certificate
Eleven	Female	White	2	married	2	Matric
Twelve	Male	Black	1	single	none	Diploma
Thirteen	Female	Black	1	married	3	Degree
Fourteen	Female	Indian	5	Married	none	Matric

3.3 Data Collection Techniques

Data was collected in two ways. Firstly, data was gathered from the organisational policy documents on diversity. These documents were analysed to gain an understanding of its content and intention and, together with literature in the area of diversity and culture, informed the questions posed to participants in the interview process, the second method of data collection (refer to Data

Analysis below for review of analysis of Company X's policy documents on diversity).

3.3.1 Interview Overview

As suggested by Emory and Cooper (1991 in Raymond, 1998), the greatest value of the personal interview lies in the depth and detail of information that can be gained which exceeds the information obtained from quantitative methods. In acknowledging the diverse composition of the sample as well as in accounting for varying employee experiences that were informed primarily by race and racial attitudes, the use of interviews were appropriate. The use of in-depth, interviews for collecting data in this research allowed for a rich account of these experiences and perceptions. The use of focus groups was eliminated as participants tend to give socially desirable answers, especially when discussing sensitive issues (Greenstein, 2003). Moreover, given that all the participants work together at the same department, participants may have provided responses that were not reflective of their actual experience from fear of being judged by their fellow employees.

One on one in-depth interviews were conducted with the fourteen participants. The interviews used semi-structured questions (see Appendix B). Introductions were made before the interview commenced and participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality. A summation of the purpose of the study was also given at the end of the interview.

3.4 Data Analysis

The aim of this research was to identify the images and metaphors presented within Company X's policy documents on diversity and to assess whether those images and metaphors identified reflect the culture of diversity within Company X as experienced by employees. In analysing the collected data from the policy documents on diversity and the interview responses, *Discourse Analysis* and *Thematic Content Analysis* were used, respectively, both of which are discussed in detail later on.

Both discourse analysis and thematic content analysis fall under qualitative research. Essentially, both forms of analyses are interested in decoding the characteristics of language (Babbie and Mouton, 2004). However, while content analysis is concerned with the characteristics of language as communication with regard to its content, discourse analysis emphasises the process in which communication occurs, both of which proved valuable in the current study. Discourse analysis is effective in that it allows the researcher to move beyond the obvious to the less obvious and in doing so, challenges common assumptions. Discourse analysis proved to be particularly useful for analysing the policy documents provided by Company X in that it allows for addressing the ways in which language is structured in producing certain sets of meanings or discourses. As suggested by Bannister, Burman, Parker, Taylor and Tindall (1994), texts convey assumptions about the nature of individual psychology and by using discourse analysis as a method of analysis; texts can be systematically read by a

researcher to lay open the psychological processes that lie within them. The process of language as communication unearths many underlying, yet powerful meanings that are inferred by different discourses such as context which is necessary when conducting research in the South African context. As such, the researcher found the use of discourse analysis in analysing textual documents especially useful when analysing the policy documents on diversity at Company X.

3.4.1 Analysis A: Company X's Policy Documents on Diversity: Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis covers a multitude of different approaches. As suggested by Hammersley (2002), these approaches may vary in their overall focus, in the sorts of knowledge claim they aim to make and in the kinds of techniques they deploy. One definition provided by Potter and Wetherell (1987, p.7 in Bondarouk, 2005, p.1) is that *discourse* refers to "all forms of spoken interaction and written texts of all kinds". Subsequently, a definition of discourse analysis is an analysis that is concerned with language and text and the interrelationship between language and society (Babbie and Mouton, 2004).

As mentioned above, there are numerous forms of discourse analysis approaches. However, of its focus on understanding discourses within a specific context (which is particularly applicable given the undertaking of this study in examining diversity within the unique South African context), the approach of discourse analysis adopted follows that of Ian Parker's approach. Parker (1992 in

Babbie and Mouton, 2004), provides a useful framework and set of criteria when using discourse analysis in research. Furthermore, these criteria detail the conceptual work of Foucault on the constructions, function and variation of discourses as they pertain to the requirements of qualitative research in psychology.

As such, when analysing Company X's policy documents on diversity (including Company X's Employee handbook, Employee Equity Policy, Recruitment and Selection Policy and Corporate Values Statement), the researcher examined the formal text in relation to the following:

- The *subjects* it related to or the categories of people it refers to (such as 'previously advantaged' or 'historically disadvantaged' employees);
- to the texts reference or articulation of other similar or dissimilar *discourses* (for example, the discourse of 'racism' and/or 'equality');
- to the coherent set of meanings that were inferred from textual, formal statements (such as 'black' and 'white' employees are equal, or sexism at Company X is unconstitutional);
- as well as examining the text in a *historical context* by mapping the different versions of the social world that coexists in the text (such as accounting for apartheid, racial intolerance and perceptions of workplace justice).

Having done this, the researcher was able to group these findings by providing labels for the dominant discourses that arose from the analysis discussed above. These main discourses then informed the choice of questions posed to participants in the interviews.

3.4.2 Analysis B: Interview Responses: Thematic Content Analysis.

In analysing the responses generated from the interviews, thematic content analysis was used. Thematic content analysis is described by Roller, Mathes and Eckert (1995, p.167 in Babbie and Mouton, 2003, p.492) as ‘any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages’. More recent interpretations have expanded on this definition to include latent as well as manifest content, the symbolic meaning of messages and qualitative analysis (Raymond, 1998). In using thematic content analysis to analyse the interview material, various steps outlined by Palmquist (1993 in Babbie and Mouton, 2004) were followed.

The level of analysis chosen allowed for the inclusion of a broad range of data that could be coded. For example, rather than only coding specific words or statements (such as ‘diversity’), which could limit the study by excluding useful information, generalisations around the content of the data (for example, reference made to words such as ‘differences’ or ‘variety) were also accepted and coded. Once having completed the coding of data, specific meaningful labels

were ascribed to the text. In extracting the dominant themes and patterns that emerged from the data, the text was revisited many times until a satisfying account was reached.

The dominant discourses that emerged from Company X's policy documents on diversity were then critically compared to the themes that arose from the interview process in assessing the potential disparities between the images of a culture for diversity presented in Company X's policy documents and the experiences of the employees.

3.5 Ethical Issues

All participants were briefed on the purpose of the study. Also, informed consent was given, whereby participants were told that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any point. Confidentiality was also assured. Respondents were informed that participation was voluntary, and that no person would be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way for choosing to participate or not participate in the study.

Participants were also informed that all their responses would be kept confidential, and that no identifying information would be included in the research report. They were also assured that the interview material (tapes and transcripts) would not be seen or heard by any person in the organisation at any time, and would only be processed by myself.

Chapter Four

4. Research Findings

Four major findings/themes emerged from the discourse analysis of the Company documents and the content analysis of the interview data. These themes are:

- *Two competing discourses in Company policy*
- *Ambiguity – differences in employee perceptions*
- *Incentive to remain at Company X*
- *Family as a common experience*

Research Question One: What metaphors can be identified from Company X's organisational policy documents on diversity?

4.1 Theme One: Two Competing Discourses

In identifying the metaphor/s presented within Company X's policy documents on diversity, the method of discourse analysis was adopted. Two major 'metaphors' were revealed (which I refer to as 'discourses' in this analysis) which include the discourse of *Rationality* and the discourse of *Family*. Overall, it was found that there is a disparity within the discourses presented in Company X's policy documents on diversity. Company X's policy on diversity espouses both national

legislation and organisational imperatives, both of which present very disparate discourses.

4.1.1. The Discourse of Rationality

Within Company X's policy documents on diversity, much emphasis is placed on policy implementation in both the spirit and prescription of national legislation, most notably in the form of Employment Equity (EE) and Black Economic Empowerment (BEE). As such, much reference is made to formal procedures, policy implementation and national legislation within Company X's policy documents on diversity. Some statements presented in the policy documents are presented below:

- Employment Equity Act of Company X:
    - *The purpose of this policy is to regulate the process for active implementation of Employment Equity strategies within Company X as indicated by the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998.*
    - *Appropriate steps will be taken to ensure that all employees and job applicants are advised of this policy of non-discrimination.*
    - *Company X will take specific measures to create equity in employment and to employ and develop employees from historically disadvantaged groups who can play a significant role in Company X's future success*
- Recruitment and Selection Policy

- *The purpose of this policy is to regulate the recruiting and selection procedures in order to maintain effective manpower requirement as indicated by the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 and the Employment Equity Policy HP-00-50-009*
- *All advertising will contain the phrase 'An Equal Opportunity Employee'.*

As derived through the process of discourse analysis, the discourse of Rationality is indicative of Company X's policy documents as it presents the ability to follow procedures and is predicated on the recognition of appropriate authority (National Legislation). Company X's policy documents presents a coherent set of meanings that maps a picture of a particular stance adopted which confers meaning about equal opportunity, legal obligation and among other things, fair opportunities. Moreover, what is inferred by this set of coherent meanings is that rejections of these meanings (by both employers and employees, alike) are immoral, unconstitutional, defiant of human rights and unlawful. Clearly the stance taken by Company X, in the prescription of national legislation, is historically located accounting for the 'previously disadvantaged' which informs the implementation of new endeavours, particularly in the form of 'equal opportunity'. This discourse of Rationality presents a set of stringent rules and procedures to follow and indirectly implies disapproval of those who fail to adhere to it or who break away from this prescribed rationality.

Indeed, policy pertaining to diversity at Company X is in line with the changing social trends in society at large. As indicated by Henry (2001), policies within South African organisations, to a large extent, mirror the changes found in South Africa's political and legal arena, the changing nature of the workforce, increases competition and, among other things, the rapid upsurge in new technology and the ever widening of the global marketplace.

Changes in South Africa's political and social policy has in the last ten years emphasised the importance of cultural diversity and valuing diversity. Indeed, stated formally in policy, these intentions and endeavours implemented by government and organisations alike make sound policy. As illustrated by the findings, Company X fares well in implementing policies that seek to include all individuals within Company X, most notably in the form of its recruitment and selection policies. Company X's policies on diversity logically follow from national legislation. The policies make clear that racial and cultural intolerance is unacceptable and that regulating employment practices remains critical in its developmental strategy.

Thus, the rational discourse following from policy statements at Company X is largely in line with national legislation. For example, the Bill of Rights in the new Constitution provides that neither the state nor any person may unfairly discriminate against anyone on one or more grounds including sexual orientation, and marital status (www.labour.gov.za, 2006). Legislation such as the

Employment Equity Act is intended to force organisations to employ a diverse workforce that is representative of society (Moodley, 2000). However, it should be noted that there is very little that government can do other than make democratic practices within the workplace obligatory. Although employees and employers may abide by democratic workplace practice, few actually accept or understand the potential benefits of undertaking such efforts.

Thus, the findings suggest that policy documents at Company X are to a large extent 'rational' in that it follows logically from national policy, considers historical injustices, is geared toward establishing a workplace that is largely representative of South African society as well as in line with political, economic and social changes. However, concern arises in relation to the degree to which diversity initiatives are accepted by employees rather than just being followed due to obligation. In other words, while legislation focuses on remedial actions and strategies to deal with issues of diversity which are related to Employment Equity, Equal opportunities and Affirmative Action, this very strategic approach is seldom understood and embraced by employees. This argument is attended to in detail later on in this chapter in assessing whether or not this image/metaphor reflects the culture for diversity at Company X as experienced by its employees. At this point, however, it is clear that one major image/metaphor that has been identified within Company X's policy documents of diversity is that of a rationalist discourse.

4.1.2 The Discourse of Family

Equally powerful yet considerably dissimilar to the discourse of Rationality, is the discourse of Family that arose from Company X's policy documents on diversity. The promotion of 'family', 'team spirit' and 'loyalty' in Company X's policy documents implies a sense of unity and togetherness among its employees. Some excerpts from Company X's policy documents on diversity are presented:

- Company X's Employee Handbook
    - *We believe in the power of teamwork.*
    - *Truly caring for the well-being of the people we work with.*
    - *We believe by contributing to successful teams we can become respected and trusted members of the 'Company X' family*
- Company X's Corporate Value Statement
    - *Maintaining social organisational and ethical norms in all job related activities through acting openly and honestly and consistently thereby earning the trust of others.*
    - *Sensing, accepting and communicating an understanding of others' feelings, perspectives, values and belief systems and taking an active and empathetic interest in these concerns.*
    - *Creating synergy in working toward shared goals through unconditional participation as a member of a team.*

The discourse of family is powerfully reinforced by policy documents at Company X by inferring the importance of ‘family’ as the foundation of organisational success. This discourse objectifies family through the mention of ‘team’ and ‘togetherness’ and in doing so, imposes particular roles onto employees (such as ‘team member’, or ‘team player’). The explicit set of meanings relayed presents a picture of ‘sharedness’ and ‘togetherness’ while implicitly implying that non-conformance or deviance from this shared picture is unacceptable or distasteful.

This image, as inferred from the results, extends far beyond the concept of sharedness. The hidden, latent meanings and understandings of such a discourse require deeper consideration especially when deconstructing its meaning. The discussion to follow only briefly assesses some potential problems with the image of family that is used within Company X’s policies on diversity and is afforded greater attention later on when assessing whether or not this image reflects a culture for diversity, as experienced by employees, at Company X. Again, as mentioned briefly above in the discussion of the Rationalist discourse, what requires much consideration is the extent to which policy implementations are accepted by employees rather than simply being followed through obligation.

As derived from the discourse analysis of the Company X’s policy documents on diversity, the image of family, if deconstructed, produces a unique set of meanings that operate independently from the writer’s or in this case, the policy makers, intentions. As suggested by Alvesson (2005), in a cultural context,

meaning or the interpretation of something is socially shared and that it is ones' culture that dictates to the way in which one may interpret something. In other words, while the intention of a policy maker may centre on creating a workplace that is encourages a family spirit and a sense of togetherness, this imposed sense of familiarity may differ from person to person depending on his/her cultural beliefs. Therefore, unique sets of meanings, as suggested by the researcher, may significantly differ from individual to individual in relation to many factors including individual perceptions, attitudes and previous experiences. While these factors are afforded consideration later on, emphasis is now placed on the implications and consequences of imposing the family metaphor within Company X's policy documents on diversity.

Perhaps at this point, what is most worthy of consideration is an analysis of the word 'family' in its most simple form. Essentially, the word family relays some imposition of homogeneity and similarity of people who are related to each other through biological means. As suggested by Bannister, Burman, Parker, Taylor and Tindall (1994) in a critical textual analysis, the word family or familial implies much about ownership and supervision. If one likens this understanding of family in its most basic form to the issue of diversity, issues of heterogeneity and dissimilarity arise. Indeed, as suggested by Moodley (2000), the legacy of apartheid which set different race groups apart has become one of South Africa's major historical liabilities. The system of apartheid was responsible for

exaggerating the differences among races groups and used these differences to distribute wealth, status and education unjustly.

Historically then, South Africans were taught to believe that the different race groups were anything but similar. In its endeavour to become democratic at all levels of the economy, South African organisations now promote racial acceptance within the workplace and advocate for creating organisational cultures that represent families and teams. For example, Alvesson (2002) uses ‘social glue’ as a metaphor for organisational culture. He explains a culture such as this one where common ideas, symbols and values are sources of identification with the group/organisation and where fragmentation conflict and tension are rejected. Organisational life then, if looking at culture in this sense, is characterised by consensus, family and harmony. If one likens this metaphor of social glue to that of the family metaphor that is presented in Company X’s policy, the idea of sharedness becomes apparent.

Implementing such initiatives is the easy part, getting people to accept in however, presents a formidable task especially when considering how diverse individuals in South Africa are. As examined in the literature review, Moodley (2000) suggests that the valuing of diversity, in spite of its many benefits, has only recently become recognised in South African organisations. Moreover, those organisations that do recognise the need for diversity seldom incorporate diversity objectives into their strategic planning process (Human, 1993). As such,

diversity practices and initiatives remain limited in South African organisations. And, even if effectively implemented within an organisation, employees' experiences of diversity may remain disparate for various reasons. Historical injustices, recruitment and selection practices and government legislation represent only a few factors that may shape individual experiences. Can people with such different experiences now come together under one, shared culture? What are the implications for imposing metaphors like family and teams upon individuals in the workplace? These questions and others are discussed later when assessing whether or not the metaphors identified in Company X's policy documents reflect a culture for diversity as experienced by employees.

The textual analysis has revealed two dominant metaphors that are presented within Company X's policy documents on diversity including the metaphor of family and the metaphor of Rationality. Indeed, if examined on a superficial level, these metaphors represent a culture that is not only fair and logical (stemming from national policy and addressing past injustices) but also promotes a culture that harnesses unity and sharedness in a country that was dominated by decades of segregation. A closer examination however; calls for consideration of the potential implications and consequences of imposing these metaphors which may include non-conformity non-acceptance and among other things, a loss of individualism.

4.2 Research Question two: do the metaphors identified in Company X's policy documents on diversity reflect the culture for diversity as experienced by employees?

Theme Two: Three Classes of Perceptions

The results suggest that despite the proposed culture of family, employees do not share similar understandings and experiences of diversity within the organisation.

A thematic content analysis of the data generated from the interviews revealed differences in perceptions of diversity initiatives at Company X. The results indicated that the differences in perception regarding the applicability and viability of diversity management at Company X are based on racial lines. The perceptions with regard to the purpose of diversity; what diversity actually constitutes; the effective implementation of diversity at Company X and the validation of diversity management significantly differed between White, Black and Indian employees thus suggesting some discrepancy between individual understandings and perceptions of diversity. Furthermore, the findings suggest that White employees are more accepting of national and organisational legislation (such as BEE and Employment Equity), and therefore present high levels of support toward the Rationalist discourse. It was also ascertained that, by and large, Black employees feel that they are not given preferential treatment but that they are either still discriminated against or treated equally. Interestingly, Indian employees do not consider themselves 'previously disadvantaged' or

'black' (as classified in Company X's Policies) and the findings strongly suggests that Indian employees, significantly more than White or Black employees, feel disadvantaged at Company X with regard to employment and promotional opportunities. These findings, supported by evidence, are discussed in more detail below.

4.2.1 White Perceptions

Understandings of Diversity

Diversity, as defined in the conceptual background, is understood as including all forms of differences among individuals such as differences in culture, gender, background, personality, geographic origin, age, race and religious affiliation. An extension of this definition is provided by Thomas (1996, p10) who describes the management of diversity as a, 'planned, systematic and comprehensive managerial processes for developing an organisational environment in which all employees, with their differences and similarities, can contribute to the strategic and competitive advantage of the organisation, and where no-one is excluded on the basis of factors unrelated to productivity.'

The results suggest that White employees have a very specific understanding of diversity management and its intentions. When asked what it was that they understood by the term *diversity*, emphasis was placed on terms such as 'race' and/or 'black and white' and not in terms of individual differences or culture. For

example, Participant eight stated that when she heard the term diversity, people of different races and gender came to mind. Similarly, Participant two stated that diversity refers to people of different race groups coming together.

This understanding of diversity is congruent with responses relating to the acceptance of diversity at Company X as expressed by White employees. For example, Participant Two, a White female, maintained that the application of diversity strategies at Company X *"is good…Company X is a very good company to work for, if you need help they are always there to assist you…they look after you".* Similarly, Participant Five asserted that Company X has a strong culture for diversity and gives equal opportunities to males and females, alike. Another participant stated that at Company X, all employees, regardless of race or religious affiliation were always given equal opportunities at the organisation. Essentially, most of the White respondents indicated that they felt that non white participants were treated fairly and were given much opportunity to grow and develop within the organisation. Furthermore, White respondents feel that creating opportunities for non white employees is important and that the workforce should be representative of the South African society. For example, Participant Five asserted that she thought Company X's racial composition is reflective of the South African society. Participant ten said that she has witnessed a lot of employment equity within the company especially in relation to black employees and that of late, many black employees had been employed at Company X.

While White employees perceptions of diversity are seemingly aligned to that of the Rationalist discourse (in that non white employees should be given more opportunities), generally, this expression of accepting diversity is not without condition. This conditional acceptance is recognised in the suggestion that Black employees should be employed or promoted if they meet the requirements of race and merit. For example, participant eleven asserts that while employing black employees is in line with equity standards, black employees should be employed if they meet the requirements of being both previously disadvantaged and if they hold the necessary skills required to do the job. Similarly, Participant Ten stated, *"I feel sometimes they are employed on their colour only and not their merit…I feel, you know, like I have to roll my eyes"*. Participant Ten, a White female, asserted that, *"you should put someone in a position because of what they can bring um, that said, you are generally, with the amount of people that are applying for jobs these days, able to find someone that will satisfy both [race and skill]"*. Interestingly, Company X's policy on Employment Equity states that, "*when candidates are equally qualified…and when one is from a historically disadvantaged group/he or she must be given preference".*

This conditional acceptance of equity practices by White employees calls into question the necessity of Affirmative Action. According to the ANC Conference on Affirmative Action (1991 in Koekemoer, 2007), the purpose of Affirmative Action is to eliminate the harmful effects of apartheid based on race and gender

by creating fair employment practices in redressing inequality, rooted in principles of justice and equity. Typically then, Affirmative Actions aims to redress past discriminatory practices by providing preferential treatment to the historically disadvantaged (Thomas, 1996). Essentially, this translates into providing greater employment opportunities to those with limited skills and those who were historically disadvantaged (non-White South Africans). As suggested by the comments made by White employees in this study, 'Affirmative Action' is acceptable if one meets the requirements of being non-White but at the same time, holds the necessary skills required for a job. This of course, defeats the purpose of Affirmative Action in that those who were previously disadvantaged (and therefore are still limited in skills due to inadequate schooling) are still discriminated against within the workplace. The intention of Affirmative Action is to *redress* past injustices which needless to say can only be achieved if people of both colour as well as with limited skill are afforded preferential treatment. If not, the goal of Affirmative Action is seemingly futile.

4.2.2 Black Perceptions

Understandings of Diversity

Black employees displayed varied understandings of diversity with their understandings accounting for race, culture, disability, change and environmental conditions. Definitions reflected an understanding of concepts such as differential policies, unison, and diversity mismanagement. Participant six stated, when

asked what it was that she understood by diversity, "*I think about different races, cultures, ya, the type of an environment were you get to be in a certain group of people or an organisation were there are different races and cultures*". Participant thirteen suggested diversity is about, "*change, about being able to maybe change from what you are doing to something else"*. Participant eight stated, *"no limits, not really putting things in a box, it could be a bouquet of things, that's what is diversity*". Participant twelve suggested that diversity pertains to the differences in culture, race, age, gender and background.

Black employees, as suggested by the findings, feel that they are either still being discriminated against with regard to employment and promotional opportunities or treated equally. The findings indicate that Black employees, in no way, feel that they are given preferential treatment. For example, Participant six suggested that, when asked about if she felt valued as a Black employee, "*I think they [Company X] are still at the starting phase…there are no African people, there are not a lot of African people and a lot of them don't have higher positions*". Participant seven suggested that there is still a degree of racism at Company X that is particularly targeted toward non-white employees. She stated that, *"I did feel there was a bit of racism, cos you'd be working with people for three months but they wouldn't give you a hello*". Similarly, Participant nine stated that, *"it's [racial acceptance] not really practiced, you have to be White in order for you to grow within the company, people [black] have come and resigned*". Participant nine strongly maintained that White people are given most preference

with regard to employment opportunities and the Affirmative Action is practiced at a very low level.

At best, Black employees feel that they are treated equally and on merit. This finding is supported by the comments made by participants. Participant twelve that, "*race…everyone is treated quite fairly, I think so, you are based on your performance and if you are good enough then there is no discrimination*" and Participant thirteen indicated a culture for diversity at Company X by suggesting that Black, White, Indian and Afrikaans employees form part of her department.

4.2.3 Indian Perceptions

Understandings of Diversity

Indian participants perceive diversity largely through cultural acceptance and cultural differences as opposed to racial differences and on the degree to which one is able to fit in or orientate towards a different or unfamiliar culture. For example, Participant four described diversity as "*how someone feels, about how things happens around you, how you fit in*" and Participant two suggested that diversity was about, *"people [different people] coming together.*

Interestingly, the findings suggest that Indian employees experience diversity very differently to White and Black employees. They, by and large, imply a perception of incompatibility at Company X, often relaying feelings of detachment and isolation. Typically, Indian employees, as prescribed by national legislation such as Employment Equity, are defined as either being previously disadvantaged or Black. However, as indicated by employee experience, Indian employees feel that they do not receive the proposed 'perks' of being classified as 'previously disadvantaged' and that they are still subjected to very high levels of employment and promotional inequity. Supporting this finding is the comment made by Participant four who suggested that black employees are given preferential treatment over Indian employees. She further stated that this implied some degree of personal incompatibility, "*I often wonder what Indians are rated because where do we fit in, we're not white enough, and we're not black enough so where do we fit in?"* When probed further, she suggested that this

incompatibility made her feel frustrated, irritated and angry and that colour should not be a defining factor.

Participant fourteen expressed Company X's failure to create a workplace that is representative of the South African population. She asserted that all the Companies directors are White and that most departments are still White. After having expressed to her that Company X, in terms of its formal policy, considers itself as a diverse organisation that employees people of all races and cultures, she responded by saying that such policies are not a true reflection of her experiences at Company X. She stated that, *"it's [Company X] still White and some departments like to keep it that way, I have actually seen it, you know, they like to keep it that way*". The participant was prompted to explain an experience in which she felt people of colour were denied promotional opportunity. She responded by stating that when a supervisory role arose, the only two people that were sufficiently qualified, both being Indian, did not get the job and Company X decided to employ an external White person.

The findings also suggest that with regard to cultural acceptance, Indian employees feel that their cultural practices/needs are not considered. This is supported by suggestions made by two participants who stated that they were denied leave for the upcoming Diwali Festival (a religious Indian festivity celebrated annually during the month of October). Participant four stated that,

"*Diwali is a very religious festival when it comes to the Indian culture… and due to the fact that they are short staffed they are not giving us leave".*

4.3 Discussion of varying perceptions

Clearly, as discussed above, White, Black and Indian employees at Company X differ significantly with regard to both their understandings and interpretation of what diversity is as well as their experiences of diversity within the organisation. If we revisit the metaphor of family presented in the organisation's policy documents on diversity we must examine the extent to which the image of family reflects a culture for diversity as experienced by employees at Company X.

Values, as expressed by Robbins (2005) represent basic convictions that a specific mode of conduct is personally or socially preferable to a converse mode of conduct. They contain a judgmental element in that they carry an individual's ideas as to what is right or wrong. As referred to by Robbins (1983 in Henry, 2001), people hold different values and that what one values depends on who one is and what interests one represents. This statement implies that the very values one holds is a product of who they are as individuals which has been shaped by their past experiences and their backgrounds. If we liken this statement to the experiences of diversity and the differences of perceptions held by employees at Company X, we must account for historical context. Black employees, by and large, still indicate that they feel discriminated against. Although historically black employees were made to feel inferior in relation to

being under-skilled and having poor employment opportunities, they now, although given equal opportunities in the employment sector, feel that employment equity practices and black empowerment is implemented at a very low level. Trade union pressures and AA legislation drive organisations to appoint certain individuals in 'AA' positions (known as such, or otherwise). These appointees enter into the organisation with high expectations and the desire to add value to the bottom line. The organisational culture however as well as other related systems within the organisation, designed historically by white management, are not suitable to the development of the new recruits. Untapped potential becomes wasted, black employees become frustrated and often leave the company and the organisation enters a phase of dormancy (Thomas, 1996).

To further complicate matters, new-buzz words and current 'hot' topics in organisational psychology centre on diversity and terms such as 'valuing differences', 'understanding differences', 'employment equity', and 'managing diversity' all of which merge into a pot of jargon and are used both interchangeably and as a substitute for Affirmative Action (Thomas, 1996). This new lexicon seems to create more disparity than it does congruence. And, given the fact that a definition is in itself, difficult to attain, acquiring consensus on the understanding of diversity management becomes even trickier. And obviously, any level of understanding is then mediated by individual differences. For example, 'employment equity' may be understood by a black employee as being fair given the injustices of the past while a white employee may feel disadvantaged or disillusioned. Of course, the reverse is also true! As long as

preferential terminology dominates the terms of debate, it will certainly contribute to resentment on the part of some whites and stigma to Affirmative Action beneficiaries; as is indicated by the research findings. Thus, as reviewed earlier in the literature, it is only when a shared culture that accommodates all individual needs, regardless of race or any other differences, that wellbeing can be reached for both the organisation as well as the individual concerned (Bermann, 2002 in Finestone and Snyman, 2005). Affirmative Action, therefore, needs to be understood as a system that seeks to promote equality and until such time that this understanding is shared, these and other expressions will remain.

The varied experiences of diversity within Company X indicate that despite elaborate policy, at both the national and international level, the management of race requires further consideration if to be effectively implemented. The results suggest that while embracing a theoretically sound policy on the management of diversity, Company X needs to make quantum leaps in actively embracing such methodologies and policies that will help leverage South Africa's commitment to ensuring the effective management of diversity. The argument, as directed by the research findings, is as follows. South African organisations, by and large, are exceptionally diverse with regard to their racial composition. Policies at all levels of the South African economy seek to develop workplaces that are adequately representative of South African society. As suggested by Jacques (2002), the promotion of 'all things African' in South Africa calls for the recognition of exploitation of cultural values in all areas including government, education,

commerce and industry. Overall, it is suggested, as indicated by the findings, that Company X fares well in meeting the requirements of employing individuals from different racial groups. However, it is argued that while such provisions are sincerely adhered to, they are not equally embraced by employees within Company X. Implementing diversity policy and the management of diversity requires a drastic balancing act. Policies such as Affirmative Action and BEE are put in place to eradicate discriminatory practices, and to a large extent, it seems to do so very convincingly with regard to establishing racially diverse workplaces. For example, Company X holds periodic reviews to ensure that the organisation is recruiting previously disadvantaged groups. Company X also makes annual training in regarding Affirmative Action policies and practices obligatory for all senior managers.

Company X also requires senior management to submit quarterly reports on equity numbers. Indeed, the structures in place at Company X are geared toward the establishment of a democratic workplace – whether or not these proposed benefits are experienced by employees is debatable. The researcher made every attempt to attain equity numbers from Company X but was unsuccessful in this regard. However, as suggested by participant responses, while the workplace may be diverse with regard to its racial composition, the experience of diversity or a culture of diversity by employees is limited. As suggested by (Moodley, 2000), organisations in South African have taken huge strides in developing a democratic workplace that underpins equity and racial difference. Formally, these

concessions fare well; practically however, they seem to fail. As suggested by responses gathered from employees at Company X, it is acknowledged that the values and intentions that resonate from formal policy are seldom embraced by employees. This is to say that while the articulation and formulation of formal policies relating to diversity does not seem to be problematic, it proves to be difficult practically.

As expressed by the South African minister of labour in 2003, South Africa has passed the stage of putting in place the policies that form the building blocks for transformation and improvement in the working environment. He further stated that, “We are now embarking on the long road of ensuring that real changes happen, and that organisations improve their ways of managing and developing their human resources. And there will be many challenges, to government, to business and labour…”. Essentially, the above mentioned arguments suggest that the process of managing diversity is indeed a difficult one. Having theoretically sound policy is very different to experiencing it practically. Finding a means of materializing such efforts for employers and employees remains central.

Indeed, if one examines the rationalist discourse presented within Company X’s policy documents on diversity, the activation of a developmental process with regard to creating a diverse workforce is apparent through the unfolding of sequential steps of policy making, implementation and policy adaptation. These

initiatives, at Company X, have been shaped profoundly by the contextual, political and economic developments of South Africa since the 1990's. This popular 'democratic discourse', implemented in all sectors of the South African economy, is satisfactorily incorporated into Company X's policy documents on diversity. Some of these are discussed below.

- Employment Equity Act of Company X:
    - *The purpose of this policy is to regulate the process for active implementation of Employment Equity strategies within Company X as indicated by the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998.*
    - *Appropriate steps will be taken to ensure that all employees and job applicants are advised of this policy of non-discrimination.*
    - *Company X will take specific measures to create equity in employment and to employ and develop employees from historically disadvantaged groups who can play a significant role in Company X's future success*

The findings however, suggest that these proposed benefits of policy at Company X are seldom experienced by its employees. Moreover, the experiences of diversity at Company X are moderated by race whereby White, Black and Indian employees differ significantly with respect to their perceptions, and thus experiences, of diversity. It is therefore suggested that until such time that employees understand the intentions of diversity and until such time that Company X can provide for the facilitation and accommodation of its policy within

the workplace, employees' experiences will continue to be negative, as well as disparate.

Many organisational discourse theorists have examined the ways in which individuals draw on and negotiate historical contexts, weave them into contemporary ones and transform them into future discourse (Anderson, 2005). This can be likened to the case employees at Company X who have significantly different experiences of the organisations culture. Indeed, the experiences of White, Black and Indian employees were historically radically different in terms of social, economic and political imperatives. These varied experiences have uniquely constructed individual cultural patterns, different perspectives, and uniquely dissimilar value systems.

As suggested by Jacques (2002), nations generally speak of a "national culture" which is a prescribed set of values, attitudes, beliefs and norms that are shared by the majority of its inhabitants. Indeed, such shared patterns become embodied in the laws and regulations of society which then filter down into organisational policy. Unpacking such a generic understanding or imposition onto individuals, who are uniquely different with regard to their experiences, results in an artificial unity, which is seldom embraced by those concerned. Organisations need to meet the challenge by addressing the process and context of diversity management rather than only meeting regulation and policy requirements if they are to create a workplace that effectively involves all its employees in a

meaningful way. It is suggested that at Company X, management has to look beyond and rethink the ways in which it implements diversity practices. Diversity is an ongoing process of sharing and constructing new meanings and interpretations that are equally, or at least to some extent, embraced by all employees (Moodley, 2000). Management at company X should implement a collusion between national and organisational policy and individual needs that dominate the workplace by creating purposeful understandings of both organisational needs (such as labour regulation) and individuals needs (such as values systems). As suggested by Anderson (2005), while a multicultural society learning about culture can be an exciting process, it can also provoke anxiety because of the painful realities that constitute the history of South Africa and the interactions with the content that come with diverse cultural realities.

Thus, the differences in perceptions among the employees at company X can be understood in relation to the different values, perceptions and attitudes held by individuals who are now required to engage within a new culture that Company X deems appropriate. Clearly, as revealed in this study, employees do not hold shared understandings and as such, differ significantly with regard to their experiences. Essentially, this research argues that while Company X has provided a theoretically sound policy on the management of diversity, one which is aligned with national regulation, until such time that these initiatives are embraced by the employees in a meaningful way, the management of diversity will remain limited.

The metaphor of family proves to differ significantly from employee experiences at Company X and therefore indicates some disparity between the image presented in company policy and the experiences of employees. Family, as presented in the company's policies encourages teamwork, unity and shared understandings. As discussed above, employees at company X have different experiences of diversity within Company X illustrating little shared understanding and a lack of homogeneity as one would expect to be associated with the image of family. Indeed, the experiences of employees both historically and at present have been significantly different and as such, their experiences and perceptions of diversity at Company X are also different.

4.4 Theme Three: Incentive to stay

As indicated in the findings, employees (regardless of their race) generally present some form of criticism or grievance to the ways in which diversity is implemented or employed at Company X. Despite these negative experiences, as experienced by the employees, employees generally opt to remain within Company X. In trying to generate a deeper understanding around this phenomenon, the researcher probed participants to elaborate by providing reasons about why they preferred to remain at Company X. The findings suggest that employees choose to remain at Company X, despite their negative experiences of diversity, for various reasons including the fear of being

unemployed elsewhere, perceived age disadvantages, financial dependence, training benefits, Company X's bursary programme and, among other things, the fear of change.

Two aspects that seemed to be particularly compelling to most employees is the training and development programmes offered to them at Company X's expense as well as bursary opportunities for their children. It was generally implied that the provision of such programmes provides employees with skills that could prove beneficial with regard to long term career goals as well as bursary funds that are set up for employees' children.

For example, Participant one asserted that, "*I have done quite a lot of courses which have I have benefited largely from*". Participant five said that, "*what I really like about this company is that they offer a bursary for your children…I think it's very, very good…I am very happy with this company*". Another participant suggested that if one felt that he or she required some training in a particular aspect, management generally assures that training is made available to the employee. This sentiment is expressed by most employees and is experienced across all races within Company X suggesting some parity between formalised statements about developing employee skill regardless of race, and the experience of this, by employees thereof. This experience is also documented formally within Company X's policy on Employment Equity. For example, Company X's Employment Equity Policy states that, *"the company will initiate*

new, or enhance and entrench existing training, education and development programmes to give all employees an opportunity to develop appropriate skills".

Some consensus in responses was also noted in the fact that some employees felt that their choice to remain at Company X was due to some form of 'convenience'. As suggested by participant three, *"I suppose I'm in a comfort zone, where I'm not gonna go out and start something new…*" Similarly, participant ten said that, "*I not now in a point in my life when where I want to climb the corporate ladder…,*" thus indicating some sort of satisfaction to remain within the company.

Thus, the results suggest that while employees at Company are in some way dissatisfied with regard to their experiences of diversity, they chose to remain at the organisation for varying reasons. One important type of work attitude is that of organisational commitment. Continuance commitment refers to the behavioural component of organisational commitment. Essentially, an employee who holds a strong degree of continuance commitment chooses to remain in the organisation despite alternatives to employment being present. Becker's approach to organisational commitment is known as the 'side-bet theory' (Meyer and Allen, 1984 in Henry, 1995) of organisational commitment because of its evaluation costs of changing behaviour. These side bets may be seen as monetary costs or social and psychological costs. These side bets are valuable to the individual and would be lost if the individual left the organisation or

changed his or her course of action (Henry, 1995). As indicated by the findings, it is suggested that employees at Company X, despite their negative experiences of diversity, display a high degree of continuance commitment in that they still opt to remain within the organisation. The incentive to stay or the 'side-bets' include the provision of training and development opportunities and bursary opportunities for employees children. Essentially, it seems that despite negative experiences of diversity at Company X, employees also place emphasis on resource availability.

4.5 Theme Four: Family as a common experience

The findings indicate that although the different race groups have very different experiences and perceptions of diversity at Company X, they still very much see their department as a 'family'. This finding implies some congruence with Company Policy intentions to construct a culture of family, either directly or indirectly. Numerous statements and comments made consistently by participants are in support of this. Some of which include, *"…in my department we are like family, from home to home", "I have made some really, really good friends and I know that we stick up for each other", "I have got a support base here, yes definitely a family", "we are a rainbow nation", "I would really say we are a family because I mean we interact with each other everyday", "…I love it here"*, among others.

Interestingly, despite their significantly varying perceptions and experiences of diversity, employees at Company X still identify strongly with the family metaphor. Thus, some parity does exist between company policies on diversity in its intent to construct a culture of family. However, it is suggested that this parity comes into play indirectly. The identification of employees as a family at Company X can be drawn from the Rationalist discourse, discussed earlier, which is presented in Company X's policy documents. Some consensus was reached in relation to the proposed benefits of managing diversity and its applicability given the injustices of the past. As discussed above, White employees believe that employment should be based on merit and racial lines, Black employees feel that they are in no way given preferential treatment and Indian employees feel that they remain unaccounted for culturally, more than racially. Indeed, all employees across the race groups feel, in some way or the other, discriminated against. This similarity of perceived discrimination has resulted in some form of parity or similar experiences between employees. Moorhead and Griffin (1995) describe the intention dimension of an attitude as that which guides ones behaviour. It is suggested that this perceived similarity which indirectly happens to be congruent with the image of Family presented in the company's policy documents, has fostered some sense of common experience between employees. In this way, employees are better able to identify with each other thus creating and engaging in a culture of family.

Interestingly, another similarity that employees share, and therefore one that has also promoted this shared experience, is in relation to the nature of work at Company X.

The findings indicate that although negative experiences of diversity at Company X are experienced by employees, other factors, most notably in the degree to which employees feel appreciated for the work that they perform, are also important. This sentiment was strongly suggested by many employees across all races. In response to the question about an instance/s that made her feel devalued as an individual at Company X, Participant five said that, "…I feel like they [Company X] takes you for granted, you give your utmost but then they don't seem to recognise it…they don't reward you". Participant twelve stated that, as a temporary employee, he does not receive any incentives. He suggested that, *"your work sometimes is not recognised, its just like 'oh, that was nice', but not a 'guys you are really doing well, try and keep it up…you don't get recognition in that sense…"*. Participant fourteen expressed much dissatisfaction in that she felt that her work at Company X was never recognised. She said that, *"I don't feel valued at the moment…I just feel like just one of those caught in the wheels, keep the wheels going".*

What this suggests is that employees also tend to identify with each other in relation to the negative job characteristics at Company X including poor recognition from management.

Thus, the findings suggest that while there is some consistency between the image of family that is presented in the company's policy and employee experiences, it is achieved indirectly. The family culture has little, if anything, to do with racial identity or cultural congruence, and is constructed through perceived similarities regarding job characteristics and their personal experiences of diversity.

4.5 Overall findings

Overall, the findings indicate that perception, in relation to the implementation of diversity policies at Company X, most notably in the form of Employment Equity differ largely across the race groups. White employees are in support of such policies, but their support is conditional and based on the extent to which merit of Black employees is considered as a factor in employment and promotional opportunities. Black employees expressed, to a large extent, that they still feel discriminated against at Company X and, at best, experience equal, rather than preferential, treatment, as per their experiences. Indian employees experience high levels of discrimination, especially with regard to cultural acceptance.

Despite the negative experiences of diversity initiatives at Company X, most employees express some form of continuance commitment for reasons relating to training and development resources and the provision of bursaries for their

children. Employees also chose to remain at Company X due to convenience and the scarcity of jobs within the South African labour market.

Although perceptions of diversity initiatives at Company X differ significantly among employees, employees liken their relationship with fellow employees to that of a family which suggests that the differences in perception has fostered some form of related experience between employees which invariably is fitting to the culture of the organisation which is presented textually. Arguably, this parity is achieved indirectly.

The findings suggest that Company X's policies on diversity is aligned to that of national legislation and that it accounts for individuals from previously disadvantaged backgrounds. The discourse of Rationality that arose from Company X's policy documents on diversity is filtered down into the culture of the organisation. It does not however represent a culture of diversity as experienced by employees in that employees, to a large extent despite the proposed benefits of Company X's formal policy, feel discriminated against in some way. Interestingly, the image of family, as is presented in the policy documents, is experienced by employees although for reasons very different to Company X's intent. As discussed earlier, employees feel a sense of familiarity with each other not because they think that the strategies and policies on diversity are acceptable but due to the subsequent discrimination they experience as employees. This shared experience is further developed in relation to other factors such as job

characteristics which are to some extent experienced negatively by employees. Thus, the image of family is experienced by employees but it does not reflect a culture for diversity.

Chapter Five

Research Limitations

One limitation recognised was the fact that not much research is available on formal policy implementation and employee experience which made it difficult to guide the research on previous, reliable findings.

It is also suggested that the research may have been subjected to researcher bias. This suggestion is informed by the observation that Indian participants (as is the researcher) generally communicated more freely and openly, with these interviews generally having a longer duration. As such, it is suggested that the responses gained from Indian participants may reveal more information regarding their experiences of diversity, through the participants perceived association with the researcher, than did other participants thus questioning the overall quality of responses attained.

Also, because the sampling was based on convenience, the results can not be inferred to be entirely representative of the population.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

This study examined whether or not any disparity between formal policy and employee experiences exists within the South African context. In doing so, the researcher identified some of the dominant metaphors and images presented within various policy documents pertaining to diversity within a South African organisation and compared it to the actual experiences of employees. In doing so, the researcher made use of qualitative methods in the form of discourse and content analysis.

The results suggest that formal policy documents at Company X do represent a culture for diversity in theory. Images of family and stringent conformity to national legislation pertaining to employment equity are strictly abided to. However, the findings indicate that practically, that is in terms of employee experiences, employees at the organisation do not experience a culture for diversity as the majority of employees feel discriminated against in some way or the other. The results also showed that employees tend to remain within Company X, despite their negative experiences of the organisation's culture, for other reasons such as financial gain and resource availability. As a recommendation, future research should expand on this finding and assess potential imbalances between intrinsic (such as feeling accepted) and extrinsic (such as financial gain) satisfiers.

Interestingly, employees still identify strongly with the image of family despite their varying experiences and the lack of diversity management, as expressed by employees. The perceived familiarity as experienced by employees is suggested to be a result of poor organisational structures that employees feel as a ‘group’ such as poor job characteristics.

Thus, the research concludes that the images and metaphors identified in company policy pertaining to diversity do not reflect a culture for diversity at Company X practically, or, as experienced by its employees. Its intentions however, as stated formally in policy documents, do.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Subject Information Sheet (Qualitative/Interview Based Research)



UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSTRAND

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Good day, my name is Shanya Pillay and I am conducting research for the purposes of obtaining a Masters degree in Organisational Psychology at the University of the Witwaterstrand. I want to examine this organisations' documents on diversity and compare it to your personal experiences of diversity within this organisation. In doing so I will examine this organisations policies on diversity and study the ways in which the organisation, in terms of its documents, perceives the culture of the organisation. For example, the documents may reflect a culture of family or friendship. After having done this, I would like to compare these findings and trends to the actual experience of diversity of the employees (that is how the employee sees the organisations culture).I would like to invite you to participate in this study.

Participation in this study will entail being interviewed by me, at a time and place that is convenient for you. The interview will last for approximately half an hour. Participation is voluntary, and no person will be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way for choosing to participate or not participate in the study. All of your responses will be kept confidential and no information that could identify you will be included in this research report. The interview material will not be seen by any person in this organisation at any time, and will be processed by myself. You may refuse to answer any questions you would prefer not to, and you may choose to withdraw from the study at any point. Because I want to extract the general trend of diversity experiences in this organisation, I may choose to use

direct quotes from the interview but, at no time, will any participant be identified. All information will be kept confidential.

If you choose to participate in the study please fill in your details on the form provided and place it in the sealed box that is placed in the human resources department. I will empty the box at regular intervals and I will contact you within a week in order to discuss your participation. Alternatively, I can be contacted telephonically on 084 5485 222 or via email at pillayshanya@yahoo.com.

Your participation in this study would be greatly appreciated.
Sincerely : Miss Shanya Pillay

Signature:_____

Appendix B: Interview questions.

- Can you think of any particular incident/s that happened at work that made you feel really valued as an individual? Please tell me about it.

- Can you think about any particular incident/s that happened at work that made you feel discriminated against or not valued as an individual? Please tell me about it.

- According to the policy on diversity in this company, diversity is explained as being able to accept all employees, regardless of their race, status or gender. To you feel that this definition reflects your experiences of diversity within this company? Please discuss your feelings about this with me.

- This organisation describes itself as a ‘family’. Do you agree with this description? Please discuss your feelings about this with me.

- There are many different images that are used to describe companies. For example, we can describe a company as a ‘rainbow’, as a ‘melting pot’, as a ‘family’ or even as a ‘prison’ or ‘cage’. I want you to think about your experiences within this company and think about an image/s that you think describes this organisation. Please discuss the image/s with me.

- When I looked at the documents that deal with diversity in this company, the documents state that they intend to create a culture for gender diversity. In other words, company policy says that your work environment is respectful of both men and women. How do your experiences reflect this? Discuss your feelings with me.

- This company policy on diversity also states that they try to develop a culture for racial acceptance in which all individuals are treated equally regardless of their race. How do you feel about this?

- Throughout the companies documents I have come across images of ‘family’, ‘teamwork’ and ‘caring’. Would you say that your experiences at this company reflect these images? Please discuss this with me.

- According to this company’s recruitment policy, efforts are made to recruit historically disadvantaged individuals because of Employment Equity legislation. Do you feel that this occurs in the company? How do you feel about this?

- Because this company feels that it is extremely diverse with regard to its workforce (that is, it employs people of all races and both men and women), they state that they promote ongoing communication through the Impact Magazine which improves communication. Do you think that the content of this magazine reflects some of the problems that you face as an individual?

- Because of the diverse workforce composition, this company maintains that due to individual differences, they offer all employees assistance, induction training, job-related training and professional training. Have you experienced any of thee programmes? And, if you did experience any of these programmes, do you think that the training effectively helped you in terms of your needs? What are some of these needs?

Appendix C: Consent Form (Interview)

I _____ consent to being interviewed by Shanya Pillay for her study concerning formal policy and employee experiences of diversity. I also acknowledge that I the researcher may use direct quotes for the interview although the researcher will still keep my details confidential.

I understand that:

- Participation is voluntary
- That I may refuse to answer any questions I would prefer not to.
- I may withdraw from the study at any time.
- No information that may identify me will be included in the research report, and that my responses will remain confidential.

Signed: _____

Appendix D: Consent Form (Tape recording)

I _____ consent to having the interview by Shanya Pillay for her study concerning formal policy and employee experiences of diversity to be tape recorded. I understand that:

- The tapes and transcripts will not be seen or heard by any person in this organisation at any time, and will only be processed by the researcher,
- All the tape recordings will be destroyed after the research is complete.
- No identifying information will be used in the transcripts or the research report.

Signed_____