

**THE EXPERIENCES OF BLACK PROFESSIONALS IN CORPORATE SOUTH
AFRICA: NAVIGATING THE BLACK IDENTITY IN PREDOMINANTLY WHITE
CORPORATE WORKSPACES**

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the

Degree of

Master of Social Sciences (Clinical Psychology)

In the

School of Applied Human Sciences

College of Humanities

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL, PIETERMARITZBURG

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June 2021

DECLARATION

I, Bongiwe Innocentia Mathenjwa (219046371), declare that:

1. The research work reported in this thesis, except where indicated, is my original work.
2. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
3. This thesis does not contain other persons' data or any other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.



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Supervisor's approval of this thesis for submission:

As the candidate's supervisor, I have approved this thesis for submission.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the Lord, Almighty God, for giving me the strength and motivation to finish this research. “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13).

I am also thankful to my supervisor, Ms Samukelisiwe Mahlawe, for her invaluable support and guidance throughout this study.

I am grateful to my partner and my children for their love, support, inspiration and patience throughout the long research journey: Ladislaus Usaiwevhu, Nomfumo Manaba, Kateko Manaba and Msaseki Manaba.

I would also like to extend my special thanks to all my siblings for their constant moral support, humour and light-heartedness during this time of my life.

Additionally, I would like to thank the research participants for sparing time to take part in the interviews. May you be blessed abundantly.

ABSTRACT

Public places, parks or beaches are no longer clearly marked “Whites only”. However, the scourge of racial discrimination is still lingering in the post-apartheid South African corporate environment. During colonialism and apartheid, institutional racism became entrenched into the South African societal systems and institutions, also influencing policies, operations, and organisational cultures (Sivanandan, 2006). Furthermore, Black South Africans endured significant discrimination and outright denial of civil, social, political, educational, and economic entitlements throughout the apartheid era. Huge socio-economic disparities between racial and ethnic groupings continue to exist in employment, income and wealth, work-related promotions, and other sectors of the new South African economy. Professional office settings conceal subtle but pernicious manifestations of racism (Baker, 1995). It is against this background that this research seeks to investigate the experiences of Black professionals in corporate workplaces in South Africa. The theoretical framework underpinning this study is encapsulated in the Identity Negotiation Theory (INT), which enables the study to observe participants’ interaction with their colleagues and their work-related activities in White-dominated work environments. The research employs a qualitative case study approach based on the interpretive paradigm. The participants who took part in the study were nine Black professionals occupying senior management positions in corporate offices in South Africa. The study found that Black South African professionals go through negative experiences because of working in White-dominated environments. These experiences are categorised as being a numerical minority at a workplace, everyday Black professionals are subjected to stereotypes at the workplace, discrimination or subtle racism towards Black South African professionals, Black professionals adopt code-switching strategies in the face of White power structures; experiencing emotional toll as a result of being a racial minority at the workplace and poor policy implementation in the South African work environment. The study recommends that certain interventions and measures be put in place to encourage organisations to create safe and conducive work and business environments for the growth and development of the previously marginalised groups.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

| | |
|----------------|--|
| BEE: | Black Economic Empowerment |
| B-BBEE: | Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment |
| EEA: | Employment Equity Act of 1999 |
| GEAR: | Growth, Employment and Redistribution Strategy |
| GNU: | Government of National Unity |
| INT: | Identity Negotiation Theory |
| RDP: | Reconstruction and Development Programme |
| SMMEs: | Small, Medium, and Micro Enterprises |

CONTEXTUAL DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Black: It refers to a term used to racially differentiate people. In this case it is the population group that entails Black Africans who are of African origin.

White: It refers to a term used to racially differentiate people. In this case the term refers to the population group that is of European origin.

Professional: An individual with a minimum of undergraduate university degree who has a paying occupation in a private organisation.

Middle manager: An individual who is in the intermediate management level of a hierarchical organisation that is subordinate to the senior management and is responsible for ‘team leading’ line managers.

Senior manager: An individual who holds one of the highest positions in an organisation and is responsible for company strategy, goals, and efficient use of human, financial and material resources.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The history of South Africa depicts racism as manifesting in the whole spectrum of the South African society and does not only involve individuals but professions, institutions, and the private sector as well. Colonialism and apartheid sired institutional racism, which became entrenched into societal systems and institutions, thus corrupting policies, operations, and organisational cultures (Sivanandan, 2006). Consequently, Black South Africans endured a significant degree of discrimination and were denied access to civil rights as well as social, political, educational, and economic possibilities throughout the apartheid era. As such, huge disparities between racial and ethnic groupings continue to manifest in employment, incomes and wealth, promotions at workplaces, and other sectors of the new dispensation in South Africa. Although several factors may be at play, the scale and scope of the disparities suggest that various forms of discrimination against Black South African professionals persist, particularly in White-dominated environments in South Africa. This discriminatory treatment of Blacks weakens the drive towards the provision of equal opportunities to all races (Tolla, 2020). Arguably, however, there are no longer places, parks or beaches clearly marked “Whites only”. However, it is unfortunate that the scourge of racial discrimination is still deeply entrenched in the post-apartheid South African corporate environment. Regrettably, after 26 years of democracy, the injustices of the past socio-economic policies endure and Black South Africans are still being disadvantaged (Ronnie, n.d. cited in Tolla, 2020). Clearly, this inequality is evident in corporate workplaces, despite the introduction of legislative frameworks that promote employment equity (Tolla, 2020).

In the early 1990s, South Africa was reportedly the most inconsistent country in terms of income and employment, compared to the 57 countries whose data were available at the time (Wilson & Ramphela, 1989). In 2017, the World Bank reported South Africa as still being the most inconsistent country in the world (Webster & Francis, 2019). This has also been caused by the ugly effects of apartheid, which left indelible marks on the South African society. The roots and traces of institutional racism are clearly visible in present-day South Africa that parades itself as an inclusive and democratic society.

Furthermore, in the present-day South Africa, institutional racism has pervaded many areas and sectors of the country's economy, but this scenario has either largely been ignored or inadequately addressed by policies and policy implementers. Therefore, this racial disparity has developed into the ideology of White superiority and Black inferiority in all facets of South African life. According to Adjai and Lazaridis (2013), the post-apartheid South Africa was built on a culture of tolerance, inclusiveness and respect for human rights, as exemplified in the country's 1996 Constitution. Yet, this is still not practically the case in many workplaces in South Africa.

The period of socio-cultural change in South Africa has seen the existence of racialised social relations in different national and local settings (Adjai & Lazaridis, 2013). Studies have revealed that in South African workplaces, White people still exhibit racist attitudes towards Black South African citizens, resulting in the propagation of numerous forms of injustice and discrimination (Adjai & Lazaridis, 2013; Horwitz et al., 2002). Racial inequalities that manifest in unequal employment opportunities are comprehensively documented and apparently evident in diverse work environments in South Africa. Gumede (2018) argues that discrimination against Blacks remains pervasive in both private and public sectors. Studies reveal continued racial discrimination in workplaces within South Africa. Hence, this study investigates experiences of Black professionals in predominantly White workspaces and how they navigate their identity. The study avers that, by and large, within the South African workplace, Black professionals have historically been treated as less intelligent, less competent and less capable than the Whites and that this legacy still lingers within workspaces and organisational cultures.

1.2 Research problem

During the apartheid period, organisational cultures were rooted in the racist ideology, and this has resulted in workplaces adopting a racial hierarchy where the best jobs, skills and management positions being reserved for Whites only, whilst Blacks were made to occupy lower paying work, with little benefits (Horwitz et al., 2002). In addition, segregation promoted the division of labour, space and facilities which dehumanised Black people who were unfavourably treated by the racist system (Bezuidenhout, 2004). In 1994, the newly elected democratic South African government introduced the Black Economic Empowerment (BEE)

programme in an effort to undo previous policies and thus redress organisational disparities. Consequently, the corporate world in South Africa saw an influx of Black professionals in previously White-dominated organisations (le Seur & Tapela, 2018). The newly elected South African government adopted the BEE strategy with the aim of attaining the following goals:

- To empower a large number of Black people to become entrepreneurs;
- To influence a significant shift in the racial make-up of ownership, management structures and skilled occupations in current and future businesses;
- To ensure that the government's preferred procurement regulations promote Black-owned businesses;
- To assist BEE enterprises, particularly SMMEs and Black-owned businesses, develop and enhance their operational and financial capabilities.
- To expand the number of Black women who own and manage current and new businesses, thus making economic activities, infrastructure, and skills training more accessible to them (Republic of South Africa, 1996; Roberts & Mayo, 2019).

Notwithstanding the BEE programme and its clearly stated objectives which seek to empower Black South African citizens, South Africa developed several other initiatives and policies with the same goal of addressing disparities and initiating ideological transformation. For instance, the Growth, Employment and Redistribution Strategy (GEAR) was introduced in 2006 with the goal of creating over 1.5 million jobs over the next five years and promoting competitiveness through trade liberalisation and productivity measures (Tshitereke, 2006). The strategy sought to encourage direct investment and export orientation, as well as to develop social and economic infrastructure through collaboration with the private sector and increase labour market flexibility (Tshitereke, 2006). Unfortunately, the GEAR initiative did not adequately address the issue of job creation, which relied heavily on infrastructural development and public works programmes.

In addition, the Employment Equity Act (EEA) was enacted in 1999 with the purpose of promoting equal opportunities and preferential employment for Black South Africans in the labour market. Discrimination in the workplace on the basis of race, gender, age, sex, disability, religious conviction, beliefs, political opinion, culture, language, or birth is forbidden under Section 5 (1) of the 1996 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Sebola & Khalo, 2010).

However, the Employment Equity Act (1999) had ramifications for Black businesses in addition to employment. For instance, it aimed to:

- Absorb more Blacks into the private sector;
- Increase Black people's chances of directly participating in entrepreneurship;
- Ensure that competition took place within the framework of employment equity.

The EEA aroused hope as it promoted interethnic integration in the labour field in the sense that it linked employment equity to workplace democratisation, worker training, recruitment, and promotion, and worker empowerment through collective bargaining; thus, the EEA concept was innovative (Nzima & Duma, 2014). However, like other policies and programmes that have been introduced earlier in the post-apartheid South Africa, the EEA encountered challenges. The mammoth task was to change South Africa's racially prejudiced apartheid workplace to one that acknowledged the equality of all workers regardless of race, age, sex, sexual orientation, disability, religious conviction, beliefs, political opinion, culture, language, or birth (Nzima & Duma, 2014; Sebola & Khalo, 2010).

Despite the introduction of the different policies and initiatives discussed under the BEE, RDP, EEA, and GEAR, which were promulgated during the post-1994 period with the goal of addressing disparities and transformation, the colonial and apartheid corporate model remains deeply entrenched in the organisational cultures of many South African corporate organisations. Institutional racism remains disguised in different organisational processes, including standard operating policies, recruitment policies, competency measuring procedures and valuing of ideas (Gumede, 2018). Moreover, racial stereotypes abound in workplaces, and they define interactions between White and Black professionals (Franchi, 2003). Correspondingly, since 1994, commitments to redress injustices of the past through affirmative action programmes have been recognised in many studies conducted in South Africa. Reports indicate that the conversion rate of Black young professionals from graduate to senior management positions have increased, but they are still less compared to their White, Indian and Coloured counterparts (36% for Whites, 51% for Indians, 34% for Coloureds and 17% for Black Africans), yet racial inequality persists. Even though great strides have been made in dealing with racism in the South African work environment through the introduction of the EEA, Black South Africans still confront racism in various arenas. For these reasons, Black

professionals try to navigate their racial identities in order to survive in the corporate environments.

According to Baker (1995), professional settings hamper efforts to recognise and address the subtle but destructive nature of racism. Hence, this study is interested in exploring the experiences of Black professionals in South Africa's corporate workplace environments. Moreover, minimal studies have recorded the experiences of Black professionals in such environments; therefore, this study contributes immensely towards the bridging of that knowledge gap.

1.3 Aim of the study

The aim of the study is to understand and describe the experiences of selected Black South African professionals as they navigate their Black identities in predominantly White corporate workplaces.

1.4 Research objectives

1. To understand the experiences of selected Black professionals in predominantly White corporate workspaces;
2. To determine how Black professionals negotiate their racial identities whilst navigating the predominantly White corporate workplaces;
3. To understand code-switching strategies that Black professionals adopt as they negotiate their racial identities in predominantly White corporate workplaces and the purposes that these strategies serve;
4. To understand some of the psychological and emotional implications of code-switching on Black professionals negotiating their racial identities in predominantly White corporate workplaces;
5. To identify the challenges and pressures that Black professionals face in predominantly White corporate workplaces.

1.5 Research questions

1. What are the experiences of Black professionals in predominantly White corporate workplaces?
2. How do Black professionals negotiate their racial identities in predominantly White corporate workplaces?
3. What code-switching strategies do Black professionals adopt as they negotiate their racial identities in predominantly White corporate workplaces? What purposes do these strategies serve?
4. What are some of the psychological and emotional implications of code-switching on Black professionals negotiating their racial identities in predominantly White corporate workplaces?
5. What are the challenges and pressures that Black professionals face in predominantly White corporate workplaces?

1.6 Significance of the study

As a system underpinned by segregation, discrimination and appropriation of wealth, research interest has been on the effects of colonialism and apartheid as they manifest in corporate environments (Franchi, 2003). Maqutu and Motloug (2018) noted that South Africa's history, which is characterised by apartheid, is quite distressing, as the system has suppressed Black people's social, political and financial aspirations while privileging the White race. Furthermore, the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995 provides for jobs that are not characterised by the past, prejudiced and intolerant behaviour, but that are in accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996). Similarly, Khumalo (2018) believes that South Africa is a heavily wounded society that has been grappling with the negative impact of difficult working conditions sired by more than 343 years of racist colonial rule and apartheid.

Evidently, even though the post-1994 government of South Africa has been issuing policies, initiatives and laws in an effort to transform the workplaces to be truly non-racial and non-sexist both in the public and private sector, the numerous cases of racial discrimination

occurring at workplaces are being reported almost on a weekly basis. For instance, two cases were reported by Maqutu and Motloun (2018), “in *Crown Chickens t/a Rocklands Poultry v Kapp*”. The Labour Appeal Court (LAC) evaluated the severity of an injury sustained by an African as a result of racist slur from another South African race. The judge explained: "to refer to Africans as 'kaffirs' extends an omnipresent metanarrative of South Africans legitimizing the racial subjugation initiated over 300 years ago" (Maqutu & Motloun, 2018, p.2). The judge referred to an attitude that unashamedly favoured whites to the detriment of Black people. The court ruled that the Constitution protects human dignity and equality, among other rights, and that this condescending mindset must be eliminated from all workplaces in South Africa.

In a similar incident, the Chief Justice, in *South African Revenue Service (SARS) v Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA)*, argued that “the duty to eradicate racism and its tendencies in South African workplace environment has become all the more apparent, essential and urgent now” (Maqutu & Motloun, 2018, p. 6). Obviously, it is more urgent now than ever before to positively transform the South African workplace environment. If the workplace remains untransformed, workers would be exploited to an unimaginable level; there will be disagreement between employers and employees owing to uncontrollable racial discrimination. On the other hand, the impact of racial discrimination on the employees could be disastrous, as it results in them feeling lonely and depressed due to physical and economic exploitation. The impact could re-instil the seed of inferiority complex in the Black worker’s subconscious minds and metamorphosing into a socially inhumane reality.

Furthermore, untransformed workplaces will not only have a negative impact on the workers but also on productivity levels; therefore, low wages ought to be understood as discriminatory and a serious impediment to enhanced growth and productivity in the workplace. With this in mind, Khumalo (2018) recommends the need to curb the continuous pervasiveness of racism in the South African workplaces through adopting approaches that advocate appropriate tools that effectively address workplace racism in a corrective and punitive manner that is proportional to its social and legal hostility.

However, research on continued institutional racism in South Africa's workplace environments and its subsequent effects on Black professionals and their racial identities still lacks. Hence, this study seeks to investigate this phenomenon further, thus plugging this knowledge gap and contributing towards the existing body of knowledge. The study aims to further understand the experiences of selected Black South African professionals in predominantly White corporate workplaces today and the ways they adopt as they navigate and negotiate their Black identities in these environments. This is important because the Identity Negotiation Theory (INT), which constitutes the theoretical framework underpinning this study, maintains that each person's composite identity has ramifications for group membership, relational role, and individual self-reflexivity (Ting-Toomey & Dorjee, 2018). Precisely, individuals primarily develop their composite identity through socio-cultural indoctrination, personally lived experiences, and recurrent intergroup and interpersonal interactions (Jackson, 2002).

Many scholars believe that the Identity Negotiation Theory captures the socio-cultural membership, negotiation of identity, and personal identity in intergroup relations and communication situations (Ting-Toomey, 2017; Huang, 2011; Swann, 1987). Also, the Identity Negotiation Theory assumes that the core dynamics of group membership identities and personal identities are formed because of significant communication with other people (Ting-Toomey, 2017). Hence, the Identity Negotiation Theory, as the theoretical framework for this research study, is considered appropriate and suitable for this study as its theoretical lens enables the researcher to be able to explore and understand how Black South African professionals working in White-dominated workplaces negotiate their identities.

1.7 Structure of the dissertation

The dissertation is divided into six (6) chapters which are organised as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 1 is an introductory chapter that includes the study's background and research context. It outlines the problem statement, the research goal, objectives, research questions, and the significance of the study.

Chapter 2: Literature review

Chapter 2 presents a detailed description and evaluation of antecedent research studies and theories that are related to negotiating Black identity in predominantly White spaces. The chapter also identifies existing knowledge gaps and explains the theoretical framework and structure of the study.

Chapter 3: Research design and methodology

Chapter 3 outlines the research format and methodology applied in the study. It also presents the rationale for the chosen research methodology, research design and the research strategies. It further describes the ethical considerations the study adhered to during the execution of the study.

Chapter 4: Presentation of findings

Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study that emanated from the participants' lived experiences. The chapter is arranged in terms of themes and sub-themes generated through data analysis.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Chapter 5 discusses the findings in relation to the study questions and reviewed literature in order to provide a holistic perspective of the experiences of Black professionals in work environments that are predominantly White.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and recommendations

Chapter 6 gives the overall conclusion and proffers recommendations that are beneficial to further study that delves into the experiences of Black professionals in predominantly White workspaces and how to navigate Black identity.

1.8 Conclusion

This chapter presented the background of the study, research problem, aim of the study, research objectives, research questions and the structure of the study. The next chapter reviews literature related to the experiences of Black professional in predominantly White work environments and identifies the existing knowledge gaps.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is preoccupied with describing and evaluating research studies and theories related to negotiating Black identity in predominantly White workspaces. It also identifies existing knowledge gaps and explains the study's theoretical framework and structure. The chapter initially discusses the history of institutionalised racism in South Africa, and then; it further explores White spaces which persistently harbour racialised corporate cultures and perpetuate the effects of stereotypes on the lives of Black people, racial identity and identity negotiation either as a survival strategy or deficit. Finally, it discusses the Identity Negotiation Theory, which forms the theoretical framework underpinning this study.

2.2 The history of institutionalised racism in South Africa

The origin of institutionalised racism is slavery, seconded by colonialism (Maluleke, 2016). He further asserts that if slavery was the racism of exploitation, then colonialism was the racism of extermination. Even though slavery no longer exists in its overt form, it is covertly reinforced in social structures, economic arrangements, and the treatment of Black people today. Colonialism and apartheid in South Africa have done more harm to Black South Africans than any other race. The harm colonialism and apartheid caused on Black South Africans was encapsulated in massive inequality. Colonialism deals its deadliest blow when it negatively impacts on the psyche of the colonised (Maluleke, 2020). Opportunities for decent education and employment stand no chance in this regard. Legal statutes such as the Bantu Education Act (1953) ensured that the quality of education given to different racial groups was unequal, with White people getting the best quality with other races getting inferior education that disadvantaged them in many respects.

Dlamini (2015) states that institutional racism dehumanises Black people in the sense that their humanity, and ultimately agency, are denied, and that their competences are questioned on the basis of their skin colour and not on the basis of their intellectual capacity and ability. According to Read (1996), Black people in White-dominated spaces exist in a “zone-being”, where they are objects amongst other objects and their existence is at the mercy or invitation of their master, a scenario that replicates the way one employs a particular tool to fulfil a

particular task and then discards it after use. Corporate spaces that are dominated by Whites are not immune to this racial disparagement; in fact, one may argue that such spaces harbour and maintain anti-Black racism.

South Africa's mainstream corporate culture is built on racist foundations that deliberately exclude Black people (Dlamini, 2015). Further, Hepple (1963) clearly accounts for the root and nature of the current corporate culture in South Africa, which is attributable to the apartheid system. He argues that the apartheid policies such as the Jobs Reservations Act (1957/8) ensured that White people enjoyed priority in corporate employment while non-Whites were relegated to other forms of employment that the Whites deemed uncivilised for them to do. Black people were relegated to do construction, domestic and other jobs that were regarded as too inferior to be the preserve of White people. Dlamini (2015) further argues that this segregation created a sense of entitlement amongst White people who tended to believe that Black people were not fit to be in White people's space of employment. Unfortunately, the dawn of democracy hardly changed the mindset of some of the White people, which is the reason such issues as anti-Black racism and institutional racism are currently ingrained in corporate cultures and other spaces.

2.3 The persistence of racialised corporate cultures

Post-apartheid South Africa remains a country fraught with inequalities and historical divides (Shefer et al., 2018). In many South African organisations, corporate culture is deeply underpinned by institutional racism, which undermines the well-being of Black people, labour relations and racial peace (Gumede, 2018). Racism is not only propagated by individuals but also by the creation of structures that enable and guarantee its continuation and by embedding it in key structures of society (Maluleke, 2016).

Sri Lankan race scholar, Ambalavaner Sivanandan (n.d. cited in Gumede, 2018, p.1), described institutional racism as embodied in the policies, procedures, operations and cultures of private institutions; thus, reinforcing individual prejudices. Precisely, institutional racism is routinely incorporated in the way organisations treat Black people. Institutional racism is embedded in an organisation's core beliefs and values. Similarly, Henry et al. (2004) described institutional

racism as a set of racist beliefs and values ingrained in the operations of organisations or social institutions to discriminate against, control, and oppress minority groups.

Recent media reports further attest to existence of racism; thus, racism has not been relegated to the past (Dlamini, 2015). For example, in September 2020, an advertisement commissioned by an American company (TRESemme Hair Company) carried on Clicks Pharmacies' website, depicting photos of natural, Black women's hair, describing it as "dry and damaged" and "frizzy and dull" in comparison with White women's hair, which was characterised as "fine and flat" and "normal" (Swails & Salaudeen, 2020). This resulted in widespread protests at different Clicks Pharmacies nationwide, which further indicates how companies perpetuate racial cultures.

Boswell (2014) also stated that racial segregation and the less overt forms of racism remain ingrained in South Africa's corporate world. However, many people deny the existence of racialised corporate cultures, thus making it elusive and difficult to address institutional racism. In fact, for an issue to be addressed, first of all, the existence of the issue must be acknowledged. Failure to do so perpetuates denialism, which results in Black people being subjected to perpetual victims of racism.

Gumede (2018) avers that institutional racism affects Black professionals through assaulting their dignity and undermining their health, leading to anger and the destruction of their personal relationships outside their work environments. He further argues that this perpetuates mistrust of White people by Black people, hence destroying South Africa's brittle social cohesion. According to AfriForum Chief Executive Officer, Kallie Kriel, as cited in a newspaper article by Modjadji and Goba (2018), apartheid was not a human rights violation. A study conducted by the Institute of Justice and Reconciliation (2014) reported similar findings, indicating that the majority of White South Africans deny the notion that apartheid was a crime against humanity and that the recent increase in documented incidents of racism is a cause for concern. This highlights the major challenge the South African society faces in its attempt to transform itself into a more democratic and inclusive society.

In unpacking the structure and nature of White-dominated corporate spaces, the study discusses the following key markers of racialised corporate culture: workplace demographics;

predominant workplace cultural values; reception of Black professionals in workplaces where White people and their standards are dominant; the role of policies and practices in the nurturing and maintenance of racialised corporate cultures; the significance of lack of social contact between Black and White employees beyond the workplace; the difficult and hostile work environment as well as the persistence of negative Black stereotypes in the workplace.

2.3.1 Workplace demographics

Racial demographics impact on how space is occupied, by whom it is occupied, as well as the way in which it is perceived (Anderson, 2015). White spaces vary in kind but are self-descriptive owing to their most visible and distinctive feature - the overwhelming presence of White people and the absence of Black people (Anderson, 2015). Despite twenty-six years of democracy, some South African organisations have not transformed the way they treat Black professionals. Bolani (2018), in her book titled *“We Are the Ones We Need”*, shares her experiences in White-dominated organisations. She describes the environment as unsupportive and where she was also rendered invisible and virtually silent. Black professionals are being treated in an unimaginable and unthinkable manner and unrecorded psychological abuse takes place in South African workplaces daily (Bolani, 2018). McKaiser (2015, p. 23), in his book titled *Run Racist Run*, stresses the same argument, averring that “despite key pieces of legislation declaring Black people legally entitled to substantive equality, racism remains alive and well.” This institutional racism persists despite South Africa’s adoption of policies that promote racial integration and incorporation.

Anderson (2015) states that although some Whites supported racial equality and progress, most of them held on to their prejudices and resisted changes fearing that they might lose their privileges. A study conducted by the Black Management Forum (2015) in South Africa found that the conversion rate of young Black professionals from graduate to senior management positions was far less compared to the one representing the rest of their racial counterparts. The conversion rates were found to be 36% for Whites, 51% for Indians, 34% for Coloureds and 17% for Black Africans. Thus, the study concluded that the entrenched prejudice was largely responsible for these conversion rates (Dlamini, 2015). Further, this indicates the extent of institutional racism in organisations in South Africa, despite having a Black majority rule. Also,

according to Statistics South Africa (2018), the Black population constitutes more than 75% of the working age and approximately 90% of unemployed persons are Black South Africans.

The above statistics contradict the fact that studies have shown that Black South Africans currently represent the largest racial group to receive educational degrees. Every year, South Africa's public institutions of higher education now collectively produce significantly more Black graduates than White graduates. Between 1994 and 2014, the number of Black graduates more than quadrupled each year, and between 2004 and 2014, the percentage of Black graduates increased by 137%, compared to the 9% for the Whites (DHET, 2018). In 2015, almost half of the country's PhD graduates were Black, and in 2018, for the third year in a row, South African universities saw more Black PhD candidates graduating in comparison with White ones (DHET, 2018). So, the lack of education is no longer an excuse that corporate organisations can use to sideline Black representation and progression in the organisations and workplaces.

2.3.2 Predominant workplace cultural values

History depicts colonialism and apartheid as premised on White racial superiority; hence, White cultural values and professional standards are still being perceived as 'supreme' in predominantly White corporate workplaces. Since the end of apartheid, the South African society has undergone a major racial restructuring and incorporation process during which Black people have made their way into spaces previously occupied by White people (Nzima & Duma, 2014).

The post-1994 period has seen the new South African Constitution of 1996 making provision for the promulgation of policy and legislation that sought to redress the past inequalities meted out to Black South Africans by the Apartheid Government. For this cause, the Employment Equity Act (EEA) of 1997 was enacted. The EEA, as a broad term, intended to rationalise the labour market and make it both non-discriminatory and socially equitable. Similarly, the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) has been enforced to redress the marginalisation and exclusion of Black people from many spaces, including corporate

environments (Franchi, 2003). On this aspect, the study focuses on the current policies, of which nothing much has changed. However, it is important to distinguish apartheid from current policies so that the study is not understood in retrospect. The role of workplace policies and practices in anchoring racialised values and perceptions cannot be underestimated. It must be acknowledged that democratic South Africa, which came into effect following the first democratic elections in 1994, has crafted policies meant to redress some of the injustices of the past in relation to employment and the inclusion of the previously marginalised groups of society. Yet, institutional racism remains neither fully tackled nor addressed in South African work environments (Nzima & Duma, 2014).

2.3.3 The impact of policies and practices

Some of the legislative policies under spotlight are the Labour Relations Act of 1995; the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996; the Employment Equity Act of 1997; the Skills Development Act of 1998 and the Skills Development Levies Act of 1999 and the revised B-BBEE Act of 2018 (Booyesen, 2007). These policies are significant insofar as they attempt to redress the injustices of the past. However, the policies often exist on paper; they are either not fully implemented or are selectively implemented by White corporate organisations. As a result, it is easier for a White employee to climb the corporate ladder than their Black colleagues.

According to Grun et al. (2009), evidence of racial discrimination manifests in wages between White and Black employees in South Africa's corporate system. This attests to the fact that corporate South Africa remains overwhelmingly White and reflective of expectations, practices, policies, values and perceptions of those who create and reinforce them (Monroe, 2005).

Bolani (2018) describes processes and policies as defense mechanisms that are drawn on but do not accurately reflect fairness. She further maintains that slavery, apartheid and segregation were previously supported by legal statutes though they were never by any means just and fair. Structured racism, which first came into effect through policies and subsequently through de facto practices, was woven into labour market institutions and has had a significant impact on occupational opportunities (McCluney et al., 2018). Although it is now unlawful for businesses

to engage in discriminatory employment practices, multiple studies demonstrate that Black people consistently grapple with diverse forms of discrimination (Rosette et al., 2016). The absence of social contact between Black and White employees is articulated in the next section.

2.3.4 Lack of social contact between Black and White employees

Racist mindsets and the absence of a social contact between Black and White people in predominantly White workplaces typically produce situations in which stereotypes rule over perceptions (Durr & Wingfield, 2011). In a study conducted by Dickens (2014) to investigate Black American women's experiences in White corporate workplaces, it emerged that Black women often reported being continually undermined by their White counterparts, who often exhibited disparaging attitudes towards their authority and credibility. Further, the Apartheid government's Group Areas Act of 1950, that separated the living conditions of South African citizens on the basis of race, even if people worked in the same environment, they were unlikely to live in the same area. This also involved the inhibition of social mobility for Black people (Statistics South Africa, 2018). Even today, social interaction and contact between Black and White colleagues are likely to remain in the workplaces, which further perpetuates disharmony between the two groups thus inhibiting social cohesion.

Studies conducted by Mallett et al. (2008) and Allport (1954) revealed that contact between groups can reduce prejudice. For instance, Mallett et al. (2008), in their study on intergroup contact, found that intergroup contact under the right conditions is one of the best ways of effectively reducing prejudice. The authors argued that people might avoid intergroup contact because of the often-unfounded belief that they will encounter bad experiences (Mallett et al., 2008). However, Allport (1954) believes that contact can effectively reduce prejudice if it is dictated by the four optimal conditions discussed below:

Firstly, the two groups ought to be equal in terms of status. The power dynamics between the two groups or individuals must be balanced in order to ensure equal status and thus dismantle any sense of superiority or inferiority (Allport, 1954). Secondly, there has to be cooperation towards the achievement of a common goal. There must be a shared understanding of the common goal and actions towards that particular goal (Allport, 1954) Therefore, a work environment must be characterised by equal commitment to the achievement of organisational

objectives, with equal and common workforce coming from both parties. Thirdly, there should be opportunities for personal acquaintance: thus, inside and outside the work environment, there must be opportunities that enhance personal acquaintance. However, those opportunities must be premised on a common understanding and willingness from both parties to ensure that organisational work is not forced but runs smoothly to benefit both the individuals and groups. Fourthly, institutional support should be guaranteed for an egalitarian society. In fact, the institution itself must be committed to the creation of an egalitarian society. This means that the institution has a moral obligation to ensure equality in the workplace and that acts and innuendos suggestive of discrimination in its overt and covert forms are decisively addressed to ensure that all employees feel welcome and equal. This could be enhanced by dealing with discrimination without fear or favour (Allport, 1954).

2.3.5 Reception of Black professionals in contexts of racialised corporate cultures

The White society's reception of Black people into spaces earmarked for the Whites has not always been positive. As demographics slowly change and as Black people start occupying White-dominated spaces, the Whites may perceive the space as diverse whereas the Blacks may perceive it as still homogeneously White and relatively privileged (Anderson, 2015). Gumede (2018) tackles this issue, highlighting that in those corporate spaces where Black people have been accommodated, they typically occupied the lower part of the ladder and the system is designed in a top-down approach, with the Whites occupying senior positions and dictating the modus operandi for Black people. Precisely, decisions and policies are made by the White management, with Black workers simply implementing what they were not part of during the formulation phase.

According to Roberts and Mayo (2019), Black South Africans ranging from those labouring in factories and on shop floors to those in corporate offices still face obstacles in terms of advancement that other groups do not face. A Black worker is less likely to be hired, developed, and promoted than their White peers. This implies that in South Africa, the Black South African worker's lived experiences at work are demonstrably worse than those of other racial groups. The authors further argued that if the South African government has to walk its talk, and fully implement the contents of empowerment policies, then it must spearhead much more meaningful change. Therefore, it is important to note that, instead of the government of South Africa undervaluing and squandering Black talent, it must recognise the resilience, robust sense

of self, and the growth of the mindset of Black South Africans and work harder to seek and support them from entry-level recruitment to top level management positions (Roberts & Mayo, 2019).

In addition, Roberts and Mayo (2019) argued for the adoption of better strategies that help companies achieve greater and better representation of Black leaders and this involves embarking on a paradigm shift from exclusively focusing on the business case for racial diversity to embracing a moral cause that promotes earnest conversations centred on racial equality, thus revamping diversity and inclusion programmes that foster competent management of career development at every stage.

In South Africa, it is neither a secret nor breaking news that Black South Africans are heavily and widely underrepresented in professional jobs of the highest status. Despite that reality, a few Black South Africans in top positions in White dominated work environments are always subjected to discrimination and disrespect. According to Anderson (2018), almost every Black person who works in a White-dominated workplace has encountered prejudice or contempt because of their race. The paper further argued that a large but undetermined number of Black people working in White-dominated workplaces feel acutely disrespected in their daily professional lives. They also experience both subtle and explicit discrimination.

Bolani (2018) identified the challenges confronting Black professionals in predominantly White spaces. She delves into her own lived experiences and those she has encountered through other people's professional journeys. The fundamental things that she discusses include the bullying of Black professionals by their White counterparts and the system in which they exist. She states that Black professionals exist in a space characterised by constant intimidation and that they must humble themselves in order to be accommodated. She stated, thus:

“When you are Black and they can't actually pin anything on you, they blame your attitude. This is done to disempower you so that you don't express your unhappiness or openly disagree with anything because “She is not suitable for this job. She can't handle this responsibility. She is not able to engage positively with others” (Bolani, 2018, p. 76).

2.3.6 Difficult and hostile environments

White spaces are generally associated with privilege, social rewards, prestige and the prospects of employment, money, acceptance, and success exclusively for the Whites (Guiffrida, 2003). Such environments are also very difficult and hostile for the majority of Black professionals (Wingfield, 2014). These environments are guided by the construct that perceives Blackness as inferior, thus reinforcing norms that undervalue Black people as typically absent or marginal even when they are present (Anderson, 2015). This can be a troubling and stressful experience for Black people who resultantly approach the White space ambivalently, either choosing to avoid the space altogether and leave immediately or learn to manage themselves in those spaces in order to survive and get rewarded by it (Lacy, 2007). Also, Ferdinand et al. (2015) argues that experiencing discrimination at workplaces was particularly associated with relatively high psychological distress. Similarly, Hammond et al. (2010) believes that the occurrence of workplace discrimination was positively associated with depressive symptoms. Survival in those spaces often depended on one's ability to negotiate their racial and ethnic identities when interacting with other races, particularly their White counterparts.

Recent research investigating the experiences of Black professionals in predominantly White corporate workplaces found that Black professionals reported experiences of feeling unwelcome, being undermined, and being perceived as exceptions and causing interruptions to the system (Bezuidenhout, 2004; Acemoglu et al., 2007; Dickens, 2014). Bolani (2018, p. 96) reported being told that she was “super-sensitive, valueless, spoke nonsense, and that there was a communication problem”. She further reported that some Black colleagues resigned, while others experienced mental break-downs and had to be admitted into mental health institutions due to these hostile work environments. This kind of professional violence was often covert and designed to make the victims doubt themselves and their capabilities. Professional terms like ‘non-performance’, ‘not adding value’ and ‘lacking in team spirit’ were often used negatively by the White racist colleagues in response to the demands associated with the need to treat the Black professional fairly (Bolani, 2018).

2.3.7 Persistence of negative Black stereotypes in the workplace

For many decades, race and race-related issues have remained a divisive issue both in South African politics, workplaces, schools, and even in religion. The discord and intensity of feelings over stereotypical issues at workplaces are unmistakable in South Africa. According to Peffley et al. (1997, p.31), stereotypes are “cognitive structures which contain the perceiver’s knowledge, beliefs, and expectations about a particular human being or human groups”. Hoffman and Hurst (1990) describe stereotypes as cognitive constructs often created out of a kernel of truth but then get distorted beyond reality. Similarly, Jewell (1993) describes racial stereotypes as being made up of beliefs that all people of a particular race share certain qualities, which are usually unfavourable. Peffley et al. (1997), Hoffmann and Hurst (1990) and Jewell (1993) concur on the notion that negative stereotypes against Black South Africans by other racial groups are baseless and unfounded.

Black South Africans encounter different stereotypes at their workplaces. For instance, Myers (2014) noted that one of the most persistent negative stereotypical comments about Blacks is that they have less intellectual ability compared to their White counterparts. He further argued that Blacks are stereotyped in those jobs where intelligence is believed to be an important determinant and most often, professional positions such as management, engineering, and financial analysis et cetera are jobs where intellectual ability is seen as essential. Black South African professionals often express being at the receiving end of negative stereotypes, for instance, being Black is tantamount to being lazy and incompetent (Myers, 2014).

Deitch et al. (2003) examined everyday discrimination of women and described stereotypes as those subtle and pervasive manifestations of racism faced by Black women on a daily basis. The study noted that stereotypes experienced by Black women have been associated with work-related discrimination. Deitch et al. (2003) emphasises the centrality of being aware of the stereotypes that White employers may hold about the Black female working-class and the potential such stereotypes may have in terms of hiring, retaining, and promoting Black women in the workforce. A study conducted by Durr and Wingfield (2011) shows that negative stereotypes about Black people exist in a White society at large and persist in the White workplaces. Subtle racial comments are often passed by White counterparts to silence Black

people and reduce them to less important partners on grounds of their skin colour. Similarly, due to the effects of apartheid, split-second judgments about Black employees are rampant in workplaces in South Africa.

Xaso (2018) highlights that in the legal sector, 80% of attorneys' practices are owned by White practitioners; hence, law is often deemed a profession that is too complex for Black professionals to undertake. Additionally, studies by Booysen (2007) and Myers (2014) explored factors inhibiting the progression of Black South African executives in corporate environments and found the existence of negative stereotyping where the skills and capabilities of Black professionals were always tested and this amounted to unspoken pressures to see whether they have the capability to perform, whereas the same does not apply for their White counterparts. In fact, the findings show that White professionals climbed the corporate ladder without any hustles. Gumede (2018, p.2) corroborate these findings, stating that:

“The stereotype of Black people as inferior has become embedded and White people’s interactions with Black people and are still largely based on the latter being staff with low pay, low skills and low benefits. White privilege — still a dominant force in organisations - automatically renders White employees competent and Black employees less competent, prone to corruption and having to prove themselves”.

The next section will focus on effects of stereotypes on lives of black professionals.

2.4 Effects of stereotypes on the lives of Black professionals

Studies show that negative stereotypes can negatively affect the emotional well-being, mental health and performance of individuals (Burk & Sher, 1990). Burk and Sher (1990) found that negative stereotypes affect memory performance among older adults. The authors further argued that in a situation in which negative stereotypes offer potential for interpretation of their behaviour, the risk of being assessed in light of these stereotypes can lead to disruption in performance and aspirations in this domain. Another study conducted in Sport Science by Stone et al. (1999) found that negative racial stereotypes about Black athletes can impede their performance in sports.

Institutionalised racism, prejudice and other discriminatory barriers reinforce the ability of the dominant White group to maintain a privileged status in relation to Blacks and other people of colour (Bell, 1992). Mtose and Bayaga (2011) stated that such encounters with racism and Whiteness negatively impact on Black identity, making it a continued struggle for Black professionals to strive in these prevailing organisational cultures. It is believed that when a "negative stereotype becomes relevant to one's performance, it triggers a physiological stress response and a monitoring process to detect self-relevant information and signs of failure" (Schmader et al., 2015, p.15). In this way, the black professionals in these environments end up suffering in many ways, other than in their work.

Bolani (2018) argues that one needs to acknowledge and call out the psychological abuse and manipulation of Black professional taking place in the workplace. She further states that Black professionals may experience replays of abusive situations and start doubting themselves and their capabilities. This further elaborates the psychological and emotional damage caused by such workplace environments, which affects the broader health and well-being of the individuals in question.

According to the Statistics South Africa (2018), Black professionals, as a result of the inequality characterising their work environments, are unable to live the kind of life that their White counterparts live yet they are believed to be within the same class working within the same environment. This perpetuates social inequality in the South African society where the majority of the Blacks are poor while their White counterparts are predominantly wealthy. These reports are worthy noting especially regarding the conditions of workplaces in South Africa.

Additionally, whilst there is a wide scope of literature in the African American context on experiences of Black professionals in predominantly White corporate workspaces, there is a lack of evidence attesting to similar experiences of Black professionals in South Africa. With the introduction of affirmative action policies and the influx of Black professionals in the corporate sector, there is a need to better understand this complex experience, especially in the wake of the recent reports of the 'Black brain drain' in corporate Cape Town, where numerous Black professionals are leaving due to struggles related to handling stress and alienation, whilst still balancing survival and in post-apartheid predominantly White workplaces where aversive

racism is still palpable (le Sueur & Tapela, 2018). This research seeks to enrich that body of knowledge, thus contributing to the transformation of corporate environments for the better reception and support of Black professional talent. The next section focuses on racial identity.

2.5 Racial identity is more than just a label

Regardless of twenty-six years the country has moved after the fall of apartheid, race is still a primary source of identity in South Africa. Racial identity has been defined by different researchers as a multidimensional psychological concept that reflects not only the beliefs and attitudes of racial group membership, but also forms part of self-concept which contributes significantly to how people perceive themselves and others, and how they behave and interact with those around them (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014; Cross et al., 2017). As a result, Black people are socialised very early based on mainstream standards enabling them to learn behaviours and mannerisms that will determine their success in various settings. This socialisation includes Black professionals in White workplaces. This socialisation helps every Black person in the South African society to grow up understanding that every human being deserves to be respected, irrespective of their social background, religion, language, ethnicity, economic status, or educational qualification.

Black professionals routinely adjust their identities in order to cross racial boundaries so as to access material and other symbolic resources. Homogenisation, which is the process of making things uniform, was advanced by the apartheid system in South Africa, thereby deepening the racist discourse and practices as well as making the socialisation processes for Black, White and other South African communities problematic. Therefore, these realities that are characteristic of workplaces, schools, and even social places could convince one to accept that the racial divides of White race versus Black race is the natural order of things (Boswell, 2014). The author further suggested that Black South African professionals can only respond in terms of the racial identity of their own. However, the challenge for Black people is to decide on how to engage with the omnipresent Whiteness in the society, since it is presented as the standard and a measure against which all else is measured (Boswell, 2014). Consequently, one may argue that racial identities are not stable. Butler (1990, cited in Canham & Williams, 2017) has stated that Blackness and Whiteness are constituted through performative acts. Blackness and Whiteness, as identity categories, are promoted by regulations and reification of institutions and practices rather than innate biological traits (Canham & Williams, 2017). Therefore, Black

professionals are compelled to perform and negotiate their identities according to established dictates of what it means to be Black or White. Hence, identity negotiation in predominantly White spaces will be discussed in the next section.

2.6 Identity negotiation in predominantly White spaces

Identity negotiation may be defined as the deliberate and conscious process of shifting one's worldview and cultural behaviours (Dickens, 2014). The existence of racism in White-dominated workplaces has led Black professionals to develop coping mechanisms that allow them to negotiate their identities in order to deal with the psychological and emotional effects of racism. For them to ensure survival, Black professional ought to carefully navigate these environments and negotiate their Black identity (Guiffrida, 2003; Reiter, 2016; Anderson, 2015). Identity can further be referred to as a process involving a continuous struggle between an individual's need for self-fulfillment and the demands of collective consciousness and social structure (Frenk, 2011). Jackson (2010) and Hecht (1993), cited in Dickens (2014), suggest that identities are relational and can be negotiated in everyday interactions or communication. Although adequately educated and qualified for their jobs, Black professionals are expected to change their identity to fit in and attain success in these White-dominated workplaces and prove their worth by working harder and increasing their qualifications and skill set (Bezuidenhout, 2004; le Seur & Tapela, 2018; Gumede, 2018). This process results in Black professionals changing their morals, manner of speaking and other behaviours that make up the essence of their individuality. This is not a requirement or an expectation on the part of their White counterparts because of the power dynamics. Most importantly, identity negotiation takes on many forms, as discussed in the next section.

2.6.1 Assimilation and adaptation to mainstream norms

Identity negotiation, also known as identity shifting, is the alteration of one's actions, speech, and appearance to adjust to cultural norms prevalent in each environment (Jackson 2002). This serves as a means of assimilation or adaptation. Black people in predominantly White workplaces face immense pressures to conform to the norms of White-dominated environments and must, as a result, engage in several psychological negotiations as they navigate their professional and social identities. According to Parkinson (2013), identity negotiation can be

in the form of assimilation and adaptation to mainstream norms. A study conducted by Alfieri and Onwuachi-Willig (2013) found that the corporate environments into which Black professionals came had pre-existing corporate culture definitions and standards they had to integrate. Alfieri and Onwuachi-Willig (2013) also stated that company rules and standards were used to reprimand Black professionals rather than White experts. To blend in, Black professionals also indicated that their assimilation into predominately White corporate areas required them to change their manner of clothing, talking, and walking.

One general example of the ways in which Black people conform to White spaces is in the articulation and changing of accents when speaking English. Although there is no correlation between accent and competence, some studies have indicated that failure to adjust your English accent to that of a White person comes with the assumption that your English Language is broken (Alfieri & Onwuachi-Willig, 2013). The assumption is that one cannot communicate effectively or does not know the subject under discussion. Black people do not only feel the pressure to conform linguistically to White-dominated environments, but physical appearance also plays a massive role in determining conformity.

2.6.2 Code-switching

Code-switching is another form of identity negotiation or “dance” which Black people are required to perform in the White space to be assimilated and accepted. ‘Code-switching’ is a term commonly used among Black Americans, describing the behavioural tool that enables Black people to adapt to and negotiate through various contexts, more specifically White-dominated spaces. In the Black American community, code-switching is perceived as a process through which rewards in mainstream institutions may be obtained through transacting relations and performances in accordance with the expectations, culture, and norms of the mainstream institutions (Cross et al., 2017). Thus, code-switching may serve as a form of cultural capital in which the knowledge and attitudes essential to succeeding in society and attaining status often includes behaviours and manners one must display to be accepted and to gain privileges (Bourdieu, 1986). Anderson (2015) posits that as a behavioural strategy, code-switching can take on many forms, such as dress code, language, performance, and overall self-presentation. He further asserts that depending on how well a Black person may code-switch,

they may need to “pass inspection” before gaining provisional acceptance into a White-dominated space.

Mack (2012), cited in Alfieri and Onwuachi-Willig (2013), discusses how code-switching was used by Black civil rights lawyers in the 1800s and the subsequent years. He also avers that to exist in parallel Black and White spaces, Black civil rights lawyers were to be regarded as credible lawyers, code-switching meant that they had to present as “too White” to be Black in predominantly White spaces, whilst also being “too Black” to be White in Black spaces. This is an existential oxymoron that has seen Black lawyers constantly manoeuvring within themselves, their communities, and ultimately their profession (Alfieri & Onwuachi-Willig, 2013).

For Black people, code-switching typically involves developing separate or different personas to present to Whites while reserving the true self only for interactions with fellow Blacks (Allen, 1992). One of the commonest ways through which Black people practice code-switching in White spaces is to distance themselves from their “Blackness”. For example, Fenwick (2018) reported that Black employees in an accounting firm, tended to develop a “White voice” to move away from Black-sounding English. In another study by Guiffrida (2003), Black students in predominantly White universities reported experiencing similar pressures not to perpetuate prejudicial views that White students held about them. Subsequently, Black students altered their dialects to resemble that of their White peers and adopt to redress codes that would prevent them from being perceived as ‘gangsters’.

Another study conducted by Jones and Shorter-Gooden (2003) on Black women managing their Blackness in White-dominated workplaces found that women felt the pressure to change their appearance, conversation content and style to fit in and be promoted. Additionally, to distance themselves from the “angry Black woman” stereotype, they adopted appropriate etiquette and emotional management by remaining quiet and speaking only when spoken to and smiling on cue. For the Black women, remaining expressionless and unmoved, even by the psychologically distressing and controversial conversations to Black people, was also a common occurrence in White-dominated spaces (Durr & Wingfield, 2011). Le Sueur and Tapela (2018) highlighted the same findings pointing to the silence and non-confrontational attitudes of many Black South African professionals whilst tolerating mistreatment and racism in the workplace.

2.6.3 Psychological and emotional implications of identity negotiation

Whilst identity negotiation may be beneficial to Black people, it can also be distressing for them. Cross et al. (2017) likens identity negotiation to acculturative stress experienced by immigrants because of the incongruence of beliefs, values and cultural norms between the person's country of origin and the country of reception (Silva et al., 2017). The process of having to constantly check oneself and code-switch often results in confusion and frustration. Balancing dual identities is often a difficult and stressful process (Harris, 2007). Black American women in White corporate spaces spoke of performance weariness, stating that they felt like they were in parades where they were constantly being judged by their White counterparts. Black American students in White universities further revealed the emotional and psychological demands imposed on them by code-switching and reported feelings of dissonance between their true selves and the image they portrayed to their White peers (Guiffrida, 2003). However, in the context of South African corporate environment, code-switching serves as a way through which marginalised people (Black South Africans) adjust and adapt their behaviour, appearance, and language so as to avoid highlighting negative stereotypes in White-dominated work environments (Ekemezie, 2021).

Individuals, mostly Black South African professionals, in White-dominated workplaces tend to consciously or unconsciously conform to White corporate cultures. In this regard, conformity for Black South Africans means putting on a persona that is more 'compatible' with the White-dominated work environment. According to Ekemezie (2021), this kind of code-switching is often of a second nature, and it can lead to emotional exhaustion and burnout. However, to Black South Africans working in White-dominated corporate environments, code-switching is a means of professional (and sometimes personal) survival (Ekemezie, 2021).

2.7 Theoretical framework

This section discusses the theoretical framework that guided this study. For this study, only one theory constituted the theoretical framework used to explain the experiences of Black professionals working in predominantly White corporate workplaces.

2.7.1 The Identity Negotiation Theory (INT)

Ting-Toomey and Dorjee (2018) contend that the Identity Negotiation Theory (INT) perceives identity as referring to a person's multi-layered identities of social class, cultural, ethnic, religious, gender, and sexual orientation; professional and family or relational role; and individual image(s) in light of self-reflection and other classification or social development processes. According to the Identity Negotiation Theory, each individual's composite identity has implications for group membership, relational role, and individual self-reflexivity. This implies that individuals primarily develop their complex identity through socio-cultural conditioning, personal life experiences, and recurrent intergroup and interpersonal interactions and experiences.

On the other hand, negotiation in the Identity Negotiation Theory refers to the exchange of verbal and nonverbal messages between two or more communicators (South African Black, White, Indian, and Coloured professionals) working in the same or a particular workplace in maintaining, threatening, or uplifting the various socio-cultural group based or unique personal-based identity images of the other (Ting-Toomey & Dorjee, 2018). This implies that individuals acquire their composite identity through socio-cultural conditioning and their individual, lived experiences. It is within that interactive space that this study is based. Hence, the researcher sets out to investigate the experiences of Black professionals in predominantly White corporate workspaces and how they navigate and negotiate their Black identities within these spaces.

The basic assumption Ting-Toomey (2017) proposed when applying the Identity Negotiation Theory is that the development of mindful, cross-cultural communication greatly relies on understanding the value content of individuals' identities. Ting-Toomey (2017, p. 5) further defined the concept of negotiation as a “transactional interaction process whereby individuals in an intercultural situation attempt to assert, define, modify, challenge and/or support their own and others' desired self-image”.

The Identity Negotiation Theory is based on the following assumptions: that the basic dynamics of group membership characteristics and personal identities are formed because of significant

communication with other people (Ting-Toomey, 2017). Identity security, inclusion, predictability, connection, and consistency are core motivating needs shared by people of all cultures. On the other hand, too much emotional security leads to ethnocentrism, whereas too much emotional insecurity (or vulnerability) leads to the dreading of outsiders or outgroups. Identity inclusion, predictability, connectedness, and consistency all follow the same underlying idea.

Identity emotional security is experienced in a culturally familiar environment, whereas identity emotional vulnerability is experienced in a culturally unfamiliar environment. When people's desired group membership is positively endorsed, they tend to feel included. Contrary, when their desired group membership identity is stigmatised, they experience differentiation. People experience interaction unpredictability if communicating with culturally unfamiliar others and feel interaction predictability if communication occurs with culturally familiar people. Constant interaction unpredictability tends to lead to either mistrust or negative versus possible positive expectancy violations (Ting-Toomey, 2017).

Ting-Toomey (2017) adds that interpersonal connection is desired in meaningful close relationships, and identity autonomy is felt when people are separated from those interactions. In a known cultural milieu, people tend to experience identity consistency, but in a new and unfamiliar cultural setting, they tend to experience identity transformation. The meanings and perceptions of these identity-related topics are influenced by cultural or ethnic, personal, and variable situational factors. The need to combine intercultural identity-based knowledge, awareness, and interpersonal skills to communicate appropriately, effectively, and adaptively with culturally dissimilar persons is emphasised in the competent identity negotiation process.

Satisfactory identity negotiation outcomes include the feeling of being understood, respected, and affirmatively valued. As social beings, people become themselves in communicating with others (Vink, 2002). Therefore, the Identity Negotiation Theory is relevant to this study because in collectivistic, group-oriented cultural communities such as South African workplaces, different professionals from different social cultural backgrounds (Black, White, Indian, and Coloured professionals, and even foreign nationals) are accommodated, and relationships with other group members and the interconnectedness between them play a central role in shaping each person's identity. The Identity Negotiation Theory was employed

to provide a framework for this research. The theory was also employed to show how Black professionals negotiated their identities in White-dominated workplaces.

Individuals are then able to watch the communication process and outcome more attentively and, hopefully, with identity attunement (Ting-Toomey & Dorjee, 2018). This enhances a better understanding of the role of identity negotiation in the context of intercultural communication competency. The researcher questioned Black professionals who were always engaged in intercultural communication in this study. The Identity Negotiation Theory posits that it is in intergroup contacts and communication circumstances that socio-cultural membership, identity negotiation, and personal identity are formed (Ting-Toomey, 2017); Huang, 2011); Jackson, 2002); Swann, 1987). Hence, Black professionals are the targeted group; thus, the researcher wants to understand their experiences of working in predominantly White corporate workplaces. Arguably, the Identity Negotiation Theory suits this research study because through its lens, the researcher is able to better understand how Black South African professionals working in White-dominated workplaces negotiate their identities.

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the history of institutional racism in South Africa and the perpetuation of racialised corporate cultures. It explored the effects of stereotypes on the lives of Black professionals. Aspects such as racial identity, identity negotiation and code-switching were discussed in detail, together with the Identity Negotiation Theory, which constituted the theoretical framework guiding the current study. The next chapter outlines the research format and methodology applied in this study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the research methodology that was applied to generate responses that answered the key research questions guiding this study. It details the research paradigm, research approach, and research design, which enabled the researcher to formulate logical questions, which served as the structure that held the research together (Wagner et al., 2012). Furthermore, this chapter describes the criteria used to select the participants who took part in this study. It further highlights the data collection method and describes the data collection instruments, which included the researcher as key instrument and the interview guide. It discusses the pilot study, the data collection process, the data analysis process, the trustworthiness of the data, and the ethical considerations to which the researcher adhered. The chapter highlights the preoccupations of the subsequent chapter.

3.2 Research paradigm and design

The researcher indicated the research paradigm within which the study was located. It is the research paradigm that informs the researcher's worldview, which is influenced by the nature of reality, knowledge and values. This study is guided by the interpretative paradigm which is premised on social reality encapsulated in human experiences and social situations rather than on a singular or objective reality. Interpretivist research is based on the researcher's interpretation of reality as well as their knowledge and experience (Wagner et al., 2012). Interpretivism also acknowledges the existence of multiple realities and takes human differences into account. Niewenhuis and Smit (2012) further assert that interpretivist studies assume that people create and associate their own subjective and intersubjective meanings as they interact with the world around them. Interpretivist researchers thus attempt to understand phenomena through profound interpretation of the meanings of participants' lived experiences.

The study aimed to investigate and understand the experiences of Black professionals in corporate workplaces that are predominantly White, through in-depth data analysis that is mainly interpretative and subjective in nature. Therefore, it was imperative for the researcher to select a research design that would best address the research questions. The research design

replicates an architectural blueprint that determines the structure of a building (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). It gives specifics on the actual execution of the research. Therefore, this study adopted the qualitative research design and clearly outlined the logical strategy that seeks to answer the research questions, from data collection and analysis to data interpretation and discussion. This research design was chosen owing to the type of research questions that the study aimed to address and the researcher's inclination towards the interpretivist paradigm. It was the nature of the therapeutic space that the researcher was exposed to that acknowledged the existence of multiple realities that necessitated the use of open-ended questions to stimulate participants to tell the story of their lived experiences in their own words.

3.3 Research approach

The study was qualitative in its approach. Qualitative research seeks to understand the phenomena of interest in terms of the socio-cultural context that shapes various behavioural patterns as exhibited by the research subjects (Niewenhuis & Smit, 2012). It strives to create a coherent story as seen through the eyes of those who are part of that story. Thus, qualitative research seeks to understand and represent participants' lived experiences and actions encountered through live situations (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). Precisely, qualitative research allows the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study through identifying and analysing the categories of information emerging from the data.

This study sought to understand the experiences of Black South African professionals as they navigate their Black identities in corporate spaces that are predominantly White. The qualitative approach was the most suitable approach as it guaranteed an in-depth understanding of the participants' experiences and realities. One of the greatest strengths of qualitative research lies in the richness and depth of the explorations and descriptions of data (Niewenhuis & Smit, 2012). However, the major disadvantage of qualitative research is that its results might not be generalised to other settings or people (Silverman, 2005).

3.4 Selection of participants

The study sample consisted of male and female Black South African professionals who were formally employed and working in corporate environments where most employers and employees were White. For the purpose of this study, a professional is an individual who holds a minimum undergraduate university degree who has a paying occupation in a private

organisation. Nine participants were interviewed for the study, and all of them resided in the Gauteng Province. The initial targeted sample comprised twelve participants; however, due to data saturation, data collection was discontinued when nine participants had been sampled.

The purposive sampling technique was used to select the research sample for the study. This is a non-probability sampling technique that enabled the researcher to select a sample on the basis of specific characteristics of a population that are representative of the topic under investigation (Laher & Botha, 2012). The potential participants included those that were already known to the researcher. The researcher approached them soliciting their participation in the study. In cases where participants were difficult to locate, the researcher applied the snowball sampling strategy which involved existing participants helping the researcher to identify other participants that conformed to the study description (Gravetter & Forzano, 2009).

Individuals already known to the researcher and satisfied the sample criteria were asked to participate in the study. Since the participants were approached in their individual capacities and not as employees of corporate entities, the gatekeeper's approval became non-applicable. An email was sent to all the potential participants soliciting their participation in the study. All the essential information regarding the study (the purpose of the research and the researcher's roles in the research) and the informed consent were enclosed in the email. Informed consent was enhanced through providing individual participants with the appropriate information about the research before they voluntarily decided whether or not to assent to participation (Gravetter & Forzano, 2009). Informed consent meant that participants had the right to agree to or decline participation in a research study after they have fully understood the research process and its perceived consequences (Ogletree & Kawulich, 2012).

3.5 Study sample

The sample consisted of nine Black professionals, male and female (35 – 58 years) who were formally employed and working in corporate environments from various industries, where most of employers and employees were White. Their years of experience in their respective jobs ranged from 7 to 18 years. Their job positions ranged between middle and senior management.

| Participants' Demography (Black Professionals) | | | | | |
|---|---------------|------------|--------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Name | Gender | Age | Industry | Position | Years of experience |
| Ms. M | Female | 51 | Agriculture | Senior management | 15 |
| Mr. X | Male | 48 | Agriculture | Senior management | 15 |
| Mrs. Y | Female | 40 | Agriculture | Middle management | 11 |
| Ms. E | Female | 42 | Pharmaceutical | Senior management | 11 |
| Mr. Z | Male | 52 | ICT | Senior management | 10 |
| Ms. S | Female | 35 | Training and Development | Middle management | 8 |
| Mr. N | Male | 35 | Beauty | Middle management | 7 |
| Ms. T | Female | 51 | Finance | Senior management | 17 |
| Mr. P | Male | 58 | ICT | Senior management | 15 |

3.6 Data collection method

Individualised, face-to-face, and in-depth interviews were conducted with Black professionals to understand their experiences in predominantly White workplaces. According to Niewenhuis and Smit (2012), face-to-face interviews facilitated the obtaining of in-depth and comprehensive information from the participants. Some of the advantages of using face-to-face interviews included accurate screening, the capturing of participants' verbal and non-verbal cues, and the capturing of participants' emotions and behaviours (Niewenhuis & Smit, 2012). All the interviews were audio-recorded in order to obtain rich, descriptive data that enabled the researcher to understand the world through the participant's worldview. The interviews were structured and enhanced by open-ended questions.

3.7 Data collection instruments

The research instruments included the researcher and the interview guide. This section discusses the research instruments that enabled the study to review the relevant literature and to achieve the study aims.

3.7.1 Researcher as the key instrument

The researcher is the primary research instrument or medium that facilitates the execution of the research (Lofland et al., 2006). This speaks to the complexities of qualitative research, as the researcher plays an important role in data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Therefore, the influence and credibility of the researcher as the central research tool is paramount (Patton, 1990). Additionally, Alkin et al. (1979), as cited in Shenton (2004), suggests that a scrutiniser's confidence in the research influences the soundness of the research processes or procedures. All data were collected by the researcher who clearly understood the aims of this study. The researcher used systematic and logical questioning and probing, thus ensuring the collection of quality data.

3.7.2 Interview guide

In this study data were collected using individualised interviews with the aim of collecting rich, descriptive data that would enable the researcher to view the world through the participants' eyes (Niewenhuis & Smit, 2012). Open-ended questions were used to guide the interviews. These are defined as free-form interview questions as they allow participants to answer questions in the open-text format basing their responses on their opinion of the questions in relation to their knowledge, feelings, and understanding (Cohen et al., 2011). This implies that the responses to the questions may not be limited to a set of options. The rationale for using open-ended questions in this study is that they form an integral part of qualitative research (De Vos et al., 2005). Similarly, qualitative research depends heavily on open-ended questions and the answers thereof. This enables the researcher to probe further, depending on the answers provided by the participants (Cohen et al., 2011). Hence, open-ended questions were apparently important and suitable for this study.

Open-ended questions are also frequently used by survey researchers to measure public opinion (Geer, 1991). For numerous reasons, researchers prefer open-ended questions as a data generating instrument to questions that elicit specific information. Firstly, open-ended questions tend to elicit the most elaborate responses from research participants (Lamb & Fauchier, 2001). Secondly, open-ended questions maximise the accuracy of the participant's account of a particular event because the participants are flexible in their responses as they have to report on all the information they remember (Hutcheson et al., 1995). The more the

interviewer imposes their views on what happened, the greater the chances of confusion, errors, or misunderstanding (Lamb & Brown, 2006). Thirdly, an open-ended questioning style is very critical as it fosters the development of a relationship between the researcher and the participant and the eventual elicitation of clear information (Roberts et al., 1999).

Additionally, open-ended questions elicit the most coherent and credible accounts from the participants. They are an important technique that enables the researcher to discover individual participants' spontaneous responses. Open-ended questions are employed in research studies to avoid the researcher's bias that may result from suggesting responses for individuals; open-ended questions produce a much more diverse set of answers for qualitative research studies (Reja et al., 2003). Hence, this study employed open-end questions as a suitable data collection method.

3.8 Pilot study

A pilot study is a small-scale methodological test carried out ahead of a larger study to ascertain the efficacy of the chosen methods or ideas when they are applied during the actual fieldwork (Prescott & Soeken, 1989; Jariath et al., 2000). A pilot study determines if a particular set of methods can be used and tests the research's modus operandi. The pilot study was conducted with a similar sample in order to determine the feasibility of the study and to try out the research instruments, particularly interview questions. The participants who took part in the pilot study did not participate in the main research. The pilot study assisted the researcher in refining the final interview schedule as some questions were discarded for being redundant, with other questions being re-arranged in a logical manner. It also assisted the researcher to renew her interviewing skills and enhance her preparedness for the interviews.

3.9 Data collection process

The length of the interviews ranged from forty to eighty minutes, and the average length was sixty minutes. The interviews were conducted at different sites which were convenient for each participant. All the venues were secure and free from noise and other distractions.

Prior to the interview process, the participants were informed about the details of the research which included the aims of the research, the risk arising from participating in the study, issues of confidentiality and anonymity, as well as feedback. They were also informed that

participation in the study was strictly voluntary, and that pseudonyms would be used to enhance anonymity. The researcher obtained the participants' consent to participate in the study and to audio-record the interviews. The participants were informed of their right to terminate participation at any stage during the study. The researcher also utilised this period to build rapport and trust with the participants as this was crucial for obtaining in-depth information. The researcher ensured that the participants were comfortable and understood their ethical rights before responding to the interview questions.

3.10 Data analysis

Thematic analysis was applied to analyse the data obtained from the interviews. The thematic analysis technique was used to identify, analyse, and report themes within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). One of the advantages of thematic analysis is that it is a highly flexible approach as it can be modified depending on the needs of each study, thus providing a rich, detailed and complex account of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The data from the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Thematic data analysis is especially used in qualitative research, as it does not merely count explicit words or phrases but focuses on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas embedded in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Subsequently, findings relating to identified themes are analysed and then discussed. Hence, to analyse the data collected from the interviews conducted with the participants of this study, the researcher took various steps as discussed below:

- Familiarising with data: The researcher began by listening to and transcribing the audio-recorded interviews conducted with the study participants. The researcher also read all the data generated from the interviews. Additionally, during the transcription stage, notes were made when necessary.
- Generating initial codes: To generate initial codes to enable in-depth analysis, the researcher selected the thickest and richest of the interview responses and recorded assumptions as well as perceptions that could be used in a meaningful manner in answering the research questions.
- Searching for themes: When searching for suitable themes, data belonging to similar topics were then thoughtfully grouped to assist the researcher in outlining conceptual resemblances and then determine patterns in the data.

- Reviewing themes: To ensure that similar topics were grouped, the researcher ought to review the themes. Thus, all the topics were then thoroughly abbreviated to create codes and these were allocated descriptive headings and were changed into categories. Thereafter, the number of categories was reduced by grouping the corresponding topics under well-matched headings.
- Defining and naming themes: The researcher defined and named the emerging themes. Each category was abbreviated and assigned a particular code for easy identification.
- Producing the report: Later, to ensure the dependability and credibility of the report, all the data materials that linked to each category were collected and initial analysis was done, which then enabled the researcher to generate the themes. The categories of data were also grouped into five emerging themes. Correspondingly, sub-themes emerged from each theme (Marshall & Rossman, 2010; Hopwood, 2004).

3.11 Trustworthiness

Data collection is an integral part of the research process. Appropriate use of data collection techniques greatly enhances the value of a research. In qualitative research, the criterion used to judge the quality or rigour of research findings is trustworthiness. The four criteria used to ensure the trustworthiness of qualitative research are:

- (i) *Credibility*: Credibility refers to the confidence inspired by the truthfulness of the research findings (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Precisely, credibility establishes whether or otherwise the research findings are representative of plausible information drawn from the participants' original lived experiences and whether or not the researcher correctly interpreted the participants' original views. Credibility establishes the believability of the results, which depends more on the richness of the gathered information than on the amount of the gathered data. To achieve credibility, the researcher ensured that scientific data collection and analyses methods were used. Data interpretations and the final conclusions were shared with participants, allowing them to clarify certain issues, correct errors and provide additional information where necessary. Credibility could have been enhanced through triangulation of the data

collection, for example by the use of interviews and questionnaires for data collection.

- (ii) *Transferability*: Transferability refers to the extent to which the findings or experiences of the research phenomenon can be transferred to similar contexts, situations, and time (Laher & Botha, 2012). The researcher ensured transferability by maintaining all versions of data in their original form and using the data to make similar judgements as well as taking limitations into consideration. The researcher also ensured transferability through providing thick description of the experiences of Black professionals in predominantly White corporate spaces. The research provided a robust and detailed account of participants' experiences during the data collection process. It also established explicit connections with the cultural and social contexts that surrounded data collection.
- (iii) *Dependability*: Dependability refers to the stability of the findings over time (Anney, 2014). To ensure the dependability of the findings, the participants were involved in the interpretation and evaluation of the findings as well as the proffering of recommendations of the study to ensure that all the research processes were supported by the data received from the informants of the study. Dependability is established by using an audit trail, a code-recode strategy, stepwise replication, triangulation, and peer examination (Anney, 2014). In this case dependability was achieved through clearly documented research trail which included detailed descriptions of the themes of participants' experiences. Methods used for data collection and analysis were clearly outlined to enhance dependability.
- (iv) *Confirmability*: Confirmability refers to the extent to which the results of a study can be confirmed by other researchers (Anney, 2014). It ensures that data and interpretations of the findings are grounded on the original data obtained from participants (Laher & Botha, 2012). This study ensured confirmability by ascertaining that the findings conformed to the data collected from the participants and by guarding against biases. This was done using bracketing, a method used in qualitative research to mitigate the potentially deleterious

effects of other preconceptions that may taint the research process (Anney, 2014).

3.12 Reflexivity

Considering the sensitive and complex nature of racism and discrimination that the study sought to explore, reflexivity was critical. As previously stated, the researcher is the chief data collection tool in qualitative research; hence, the researcher's credibility is indispensable. As a result, qualitative research necessitates the researcher's active participation. According to Mason (2002, p. 5), the researcher's reflexivity is the process of "thinking critically about what you are doing and why, confronting and often challenging your own assumptions, and recognising the extent to which your thoughts, actions, and decisions shape how you research and what you see". The researcher's reflexivity is required in order to determine the researcher's role in this study as understood from an epistemological and methodological standpoint; reflexivity also made the researcher recognise that she was not an objective and neutral observer.

Cole et al. (2011) have stated that a researcher needs to critique their own epistemological pre-understandings in terms of feelings, knowledge and experiences of the social world and how this influences their worldview. The researcher was aware of how some of these factors may have been at play in executing her role as a researcher. For instance, the researcher's previous encounter with discrimination and racial stereotypes may have resulted in enhanced reactivity to participants' responses. There was also a connection in terms of shared experiences of being exposed to racial discrimination in White-dominated spaces.

To mitigate the effects of some of the factors affecting the reliability of the study, the researcher warned the participants of the sensitivity of the subject and shared information regarding the centres where they could get psychological assistance. The researcher's reflexivity was also enhanced by the researcher's experiences, feelings and knowledge from the conceptualisation of this research up to the conclusion. The researcher actively engaged with the research process and challenged her own assumptions and was aware of the extent to which her actions and thoughts could influence the research.

3.13 Ethical considerations

Ethical approval to conduct the study was obtained from Human Social Science Research Ethics Committee of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. This project adhered to strict ethical standards and also complied with ethical guidelines and was conducted in accordance with the principles of research ethics.

3.13.1 Autonomy

All the participants involved in this study were over 18 years old. Participation in this study was completely voluntary. All the potential participants had the right to agree to or decline participation and were not discriminated against for refusing to participate. All the participants were fully briefed on their participation in the project using an information sheet and verbal information was followed by informed consent process presented in a suitable format. All the participants were given an opportunity to ask questions, which the researcher addressed during the informed consent process. The participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any point in the data collection process without being required to provide reasons. Individuals who refused to participate were assured of freedom from any negative consequences. Personal information was kept confidential during the study or in the dissemination process.

3.13.2 Informed consent

Prior to data collection, participants were provided with an information sheet and a consent form. This informed consent form and information sheet outlined all the aspects of the study. This information included the background and purpose of the study, the study procedures to be followed, the voluntary nature of participation; confidentiality (including voice recording and maintenance of anonymity), the risks associated with participating in the study, benefits of participating in the study and contact information for questions or other concerns. The researcher was responsible for contacting potential participants. The interviews only took place after the consent forms had been signed and returned to the researcher.

3.13.3 Privacy

The administration of interviews took place in private locations that were conducive to the participants. The researcher did not enquire into participants' personal information that was irrelevant to the objectives of the study.

3.13.4 Confidentiality

The information obtained from the participants was strictly used to execute the aim of the study. The forenames and surnames of the participants were kept confidential and did not appear in the report of this study. Participants were uniquely identified through the use of pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality. The discussions, questions, audio files and informed consent forms concealed the participants' identities. The researcher ensured that all the data were kept confidential. The audio files were used to verify the accuracy of the data collected during the discussions. Audio-recorded data were stored on the researcher's computer secured with a password. The data on the audio file will be stored for five years.

3.13.5 Non-maleficence

The study was conducted in a manner that minimised risks, simultaneously maximising benefits to the participants. The researcher eliminated anticipated risks or discomforts that would be experienced by the participants during the research process by emphasizing that participation was voluntary and ensuring confidentiality and anonymity. The researcher was aware of the possibility of participants being uncomfortable or wary of sharing information as it related to their professional work. The participants were informed of the possibility of psychological referral should they experience any overwhelming psychological distress triggered by discussing their experiences. Participants that withdrew from the study at any given point in time were neither coerced into participation nor discriminated against. All the data collected from the participants that had withdrawn from the study were not used.

3.13.6 Beneficence

The participants were informed that they were not going to directly benefit from participating in the study. The anticipated benefit of this study included the advancement of knowledge in

the area of study. As stated previously, there was limited research conducted on the experiences of Black professionals working in South Africa's White-dominated corporate world. This research seeks to address this gap thus contributing towards knowledge required to address institutional racism in corporate environments.

3.14 Conclusion

This chapter described the research methodology and design used in the study. The study used the qualitative method and design. It further described the data collection methods and processes. In this study, data were collected using the structured face-to-face interview method. The chapter then presented the importance of ethical considerations that regulated the data collection methods and procedures. The next chapter analyses data and presents a discussion of the findings arising from the empirical analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter described the research methodology employed in the study. Analysis of data in this chapter was based on the data generated from nine (n=9) participants. The audio-recorded interviews were transcribed. The transcripts were perused, and data were coded. Themes were generated and when they are presented, relevant quotations are mobilised for illustrative purposes. The findings are grouped into six core themes, and these answer the research questions. Each theme is supported by sub-themes and verbatim quotes from participants' responses.

4.2 Themes and sub-themes

The six (n=6) themes that were generated with regards to Black South African professionals' experiences of working in a White dominated environment were:

- Discrimination/subtle racism towards Black South African professionals
- Experiences of being a numerical minority at a workplace
- Everyday Black stereotypes at a workplace
- Identity negotiation for survival in White power structures
- Emotional toll of being a racial minority
- Poor policy implementation in South African work environment

4.3 Discrimination/subtle racism towards Black South African professionals

Participants had multiple experiences. These experiences fit into discrimination or subtle racism and stereotypical experiences. Therefore, the discussions are based on the sub-themes of (discrimination/subtle racism, and stereotype experiences). The participants' responses indicate that Black South African professionals working in White dominated organisations experience different forms or categories of discrimination, experienced at various stages. For

example, discrimination can occur during hiring, and promotion processes, and may manifest through lack of respect and recognition.

4.3.1 Black professionals' experiences of hiring/promotion at workplace

The participants in this study reported their experiences of working in a White dominated and controlled work environment. They described the processes of promoting and hiring staff members, which they mostly characterised as being discriminatory. The participants reported that Black professionals faced different kinds of discrimination, which could be traced back to college where they obtained their qualifications, based on skin colour, tone of the voice, and the way they pronounced words. For example, a 35-year-old male who was working in the beauty industry stated the following:

“I will relate how I, a Black South African marketing manager was evaluated and compared to several other White assistants. It was terrible and humiliating to me as a professional. The incidents I mentioned stand out because they were so clearly racist. It will not be right to dismiss them as the work of a few misguided White individuals. They serve, instead, as reminders that different kinds of discrimination are still here”
(Mr. N).

Similarly, another participant, who was in the agricultural sector shared her experiential knowledge of how recruitment may be biased on racial lines. She stated the following:

“I’ll tell you from experience and observation that you could walk into a job interview with a Black South African candidate that went to a previously disadvantaged higher education institution. And a White South African candidate that went to a Private College, and both candidates can articulate themselves well. They may or may not be holding the same qualifications, and while the Black candidate’s qualification might be higher, they’re faced with the same interview environment, and they’ll respond differently. It’s obvious that the stakes are on the side of the Private College graduate, there will be no two ways about it” (Mrs. Y).

Furthermore, another Black professional who was also in the agricultural sector complained about how Black people are always treated with contempt and suspicion. He reported the following:

“As a Black minority in a White dominated work environment your level of education and the institutions where you received your education are always under scrutiny” (Mr. X).

From the statements above, the participants’ responses revealed the forms of discrimination that Black professionals endured daily that are not even reported or documented. The different forms of discrimination ranged from their educational qualifications, especially when a Black person was in possession of a certificate from a reputable institution of higher learning.

Some participants emphasised that discrimination against Blacks in White dominated work was rampant. The participants raised concern regarding how Blacks were being treated during job interviews. A 42-year-old employee in the pharmaceutical industry stated the following:

“There is this Black lady who has been working with us as a junior staff member. A higher position came out in the same office, I recommended her because she is qualified for the post. But one White colleague came with a recommendation letter and referral from nowhere, and the position was given to him. As a senior officer, I couldn’t do anything because I was the only Black person among the executives” (Ms. E).

Similarly, another participant, a 51-year-old senior manager in the Finance department highlighted that Black professional were susceptible to being criticised unnecessarily. She explained the following:

“If you are expressing the same message with a, not so polished accent you are open to being poked or holes being poked at the message that you’re delivering. And if you speak or deliver the message with a specific accent that is acceptable to your audience, there are not as many holes being poked to the message. Although, you are delivering the same message and I think it’s something that corporate South Africa poses on us blacks” (Ms. T).

Another participant, a 35-year-old middle manager in training and development explained that workers were not treated equally but segregated on racial lines. She shared the following:

“As a Black person working in a White dominated organisation, if you ask for time off because you are going to attend something like a traditional ceremony for your child, you must try to be understood. You must try and make your White colleagues or manager understand why you must take time out or if you are a Black junior staff, you must spend whole lot of time to make your manager understand why you’ve got to take that time out, versus the production that needs to happen. Yet if a White person’s child is playing rugby and they’ve got to go overseas, and they’ve got to take time out, it’s just acceptable. Nobody will ask questions why you are taking time off” (Ms. S).

What emerged from the responses above is that White professionals are not always comfortable working with Black professionals who have the same level of qualification or higher than theirs. The participants reported experiences of discrimination that are far-reaching. For example, discrimination against Black employees has led to White senior staff to be less concerned about the welfare of Black professionals. The participants’ responses revealed that different forms of discrimination exist in predominantly White dominated work environments. These different forms of discrimination are mainly against Black South African professionals. The participants’ responses also demonstrated how stressful work environment dominated by Whites are for Black professionals.

4.3.2 Lack of respect and recognition for blacks at workplace

Black professionals working in White dominated environments did not only report experiences of discrimination, but also the findings revealed lack of respect and recognition at workplaces where they were a minority group. Black South Africans working in White dominated working environments are treated as second class citizens. Participants’ responses revealed that in most White dominated work environments, when it comes to booking flights for executive board members to attend meetings either abroad or local, Black executive members are often not treated in the same way as their White counterparts. Data indicated that Black executive members usually travel on economy class, while their White colleagues are booked on business or first-class tickets. Ms. E confirmed the following:

“Your White colleagues are booked business class. So, why should I not also be booked business class because I’m also an executive? The thing is that as a Black person, they see it that I’m just privileged that I’m travelling” (Ms. E).

Another participant, a 52-year-old male working in the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) industry had a perception that there were different salary scales for the same job position. He said the following:

“I feel that as Blacks, we are secondary citizens in the workplace in South Africa. We are being discriminated against and marginalised. In South Africa, White males earn more than Black men, and the same goes with women. Even when we hold the same positions, especially in the private sector, though we may hold the same title, we don’t earn the same” (Mr. Z).

Also, another participant Ms. T stated that:

“Often times at my workplace, I experience subtle forms of verbal insults, for instance, racial jokes, innuendoes, and negative comments simply because I belong to the numerical minority. Also, I often miss out on important meetings because I don’t get to know about such meetings” (Ms. T).

The participant’s responses revealed different forms of discrimination against Black South African professionals working in White dominated environments.

4.4 Experiences of being a numerical minority

Participants shared their experiences of being a numerical minority in their workplaces. Being a numerical minority meant that they were one of few Black faces in predominantly White environments. It was also found that participants frequently made statements indicating that being a numerical minority in their workplaces was often associated with negative experiences. Most importantly, participants’ accounts demonstrated that being a numerical minority in such spaces often presented its own kind of stress, and that there were often a number of

psychological costs attached to it. For example, Ms. M, a 51-year-old female working in the agricultural sector stated the following:

“Frankly speaking, to be a Black professional in a White dominated work environment often creates its own special kinds of stress” (Ms. M).

Similarly, another participant claimed that:

“Apart from facing discrimination as a Black person in White majority workplace, there are also huge psychological costs to being one of just a few Black faces in a predominantly White environment” (Mr. Z).

The statements from participants highlight the daily psychological stress that Black professionals in White dominated environments face, which are often exacerbated by the strong feelings of isolation and being alone. In order to navigate these environments and negotiate their identities, it means accepting the difficulties they face and experiencing the psychological struggles in silence. One participant said:

“With my experience and number of years in this sector, to be a Black professional in White people majority work environment means to be alone, that Black individual is completely alone” (Mr. N).

These responses from the participants are a demonstration of how Black professionals working in these spaces are often unhappy or even completely uncomfortable in their environments as they face lack of acceptance from their White colleagues and the environment in general.

4.5 Everyday Black stereotypes at workplaces

Black professionals working in White dominated environments did not only report experiences of blatant discrimination, but also the findings revealed that when navigating through these environments they, often experienced negative stereotypes. The various stereotypes are discussed below:

Participants’ accounts highlighted that Black professional often faced stereotypes related to their character, which impacted on perceptions related to their competency and the weight of

their contributions at the workplace. For example, a 58-year-old male working in ICT industry speaking on this stated that:

“Most times you hear some White guys making comments like Blacks are not excellent performers. That our performance is always lower than the rest” (Mr. P).

The fact that Mr. P even as a seasoned professional with years of experience in his field was still battling with such stereotypes shows the gravity and persistence of these historical stereotypes within South African society.

Other participants also shared their frustrations emanating from their experiences. A female participant said the following:

“Yeah, comments like Blacks are not to be trusted are unpleasant. So, as a Black person in such organisations, the likelihood is that whatever you say must be taken with a pinch of salt” (Ms. T).

Ms. T’s account highlights negative stereotypes related to the character of Black people, whereby they are viewed with suspicion and perceived as untrustworthy, to the extent that their contributions are questioned.

In addition, participants’ responses indicated their White counterparts’ lack of trust in Black professionals particularly in handling huge responsibilities, suggesting that they are not capable enough to hold executive roles. The following quotation illustrates this:

“White South Africans believe that Black people are not to be trusted with positions of responsibility, and that Black people are not competent. Blacks are not qualified; they don’t deserve to be in higher positions in organisations” (Ms. E).

The accounts shared by Black professionals above highlight some of the negative stereotypes they face in White dominated workplaces. There was a general lack of trust in Black professionals by White colleagues to the extent that they were perceived as not being competent enough to assume high positions in organisations. The following was said:

“Most times you hear some White guys making comments like, ‘Blacks are lazy people!’” (Ms. T).

The above account by Ms. T is a typical example of negative stereotypes related to the character of Black people, where Whites doubt the strength, ability, and capability of Blacks.

4.5.1 Black professionals being perceived as unqualified for their jobs

Participants’ responses revealed that their White counterparts often made racist comments related to their job qualifications, their competency, and ability to perform work-related tasks. These comments were often subtle.

A male participant alluded to the negative remarks often made by White colleagues, questioning the qualification of a fellow Black female colleague and its suitability for her role in the organisation.

“It’s very embarrassing and frustrating to hear comments such as ‘She is occupying the office because of BEE scorecard’. They assume it is because of BEE...” (Mr. Z).

Similar accusations as the one shared by Mr. Z above were also reiterated by Mr. N, who claimed that White counterparts would say:

“You must prove that you are not here with a BEE scorecard...” (Mr. N).

These accounts highlight the unpleasant feelings that emanate from being constantly undermined as their qualification are considered as inadequate for their roles. Further, assumptions that most Blacks’ jobs were not attained on merit and suitability but because of quota requirements were prevalent and disgusting. As stated by Mr. Z, such experiences are both humiliating and discouraging for Black professionals.

4.6 Identity negotiation for survival in White power structures

Another theme that emerged from the data was the common occurrence of Black professionals actively negotiating their identities in White dominated environments to survive in workplaces

with a culture of ‘whiteness’ and where the power structures were controlled by Whites. This theme reflected on the everyday experiences of Black professionals as they adopted various mannerisms in their navigation in seeking to co-exist with White colleagues. This was equivalent to the African American concept of “code-switching” highlighted in the literature, which is described as a “performance” put on by Black people in predominantly White spaces to survive in these environments.

4.6.1 Black professionals having to prove themselves in their workplaces

For black professionals to navigate experiences of their qualification and competency for their jobs, they often must negotiate their identities in White dominated work environments by proving themselves to their colleagues. Participant accounts revealed the pressure that Black professionals endured in their quest to prove themselves to their White colleagues for them to be perceived as equally qualified and competent in their executing their duties.

A male participant shared the following:

“... until you actually prove that you are not in that office because of BBE. It is because of your experience and what you can do for the company” (Mr. X).

Another male participant had the following to say that:

“As a Black minority in such an environment hearing such comments, you push yourself a bit harder to prove that they are not any better than you” (Mr. P).

Moreover, Mr. N similarly recounted this same experience:

“You simply need to work harder than everybody else, to prove that you are actually worth being in the position you are in. And Yah! you have to work harder like ten times more, basically” (Mr. N).

In recounting their experiences, participants highlight the pressure that Black professionals endure in White dominated workplaces in seeking to excel. They strive to work harder than their White counterparts to counteract the skepticism about their qualifications and suitability

for the roles they play as employees. This “culture” of questioning the competency of Black professionals remained pervasive in White dominated environments and was often heavily linked to persistent negative stereotypes in the workplace.

4.6.2 Adaptation/Assimilation into Whiteness

The need to negotiate their identities to adapt to the environment of Whiteness was recounted by many participants. This often involved changing various aspects related to their Blackness. Ms. M stated the following:

“I think we Blacks do change many things about ourselves not for anything bad, and not because of any Black conscious or whatever. But just to adapt to the work environments in which we find ourselves” (Ms. M).

Similarly, Mrs. Y, also stated the following:

“We just tend to get into environments and adapt to the way in which things are done... a way to fit into that environment. In the plant where I work when you do it, you are acceptable, and when you don’t do it, you get judged” (Mrs. Y).

Even those participants that occupied top managerial positions were not an exception. Ms. M affirmed the common occurrence of Black professionals altering their identities to fit into the work environment and be accepted. Similarly, Mrs. Y described the need to adapt to fit in the environment and be accepted by White counterparts. Not adapting came with repercussions, including being judged.

4.6.3 Sociolinguistics as social currency

To navigate the variations of differential treatment, participants recounted their experiences of “code-switching” their language in accordance with context. Often Black professionals adopted various mannerisms in which they switched languages, altered their accents and tones of voice as ways of fitting into the presiding White cultural norms and expectations in their organisations.

For example, some participants spoke about changing the language in which they speak when stepping into predominantly White Afrikaner organisations. They described this experience as a necessary strategy used to be accepted and to be taken seriously by her White counterparts. One of the participants said:

“It’s like when I go to the mine, the minute I walk in and I speak Afrikaans, I’m literally accepted. And people are now more than willing to listen to me...So, I think we do at times and I’m saying we do at times change, because it might be necessary for you to adapt to that environment” (Ms. S).

Similarly, another participant stated the following:

“I had to learn to speak Afrikaans. I had to, now and again, you know...” (Ms. E).

Participants also discussed the need to change their language tones and select their choice of words wisely when speaking in these environments, to fit in and to avoid incessant stereotypes about Black people being loud, less intelligent and aggressive. This was articulated explicitly in the following:

“But even things like when I talk, I had to tone down my channel of thought and the certain words that I would use in my daily language, just to adapt to the environment” (Ms. E).

Similarly, another participant also stated the following about his tone and articulation:

“In fact, during meetings or any other general discussions about projects, I am always very careful about my tone, and my articulation, because I do not want to sound too aggressive, and not speaking up as much in a meeting” (Mr. P).

A similar experience was also shared:

“Obviously yes, I had an opinion on a few things, but I didn’t say it because I did not want to be described as being too aggressive” (Mr. N).

The common occurrence of opting not to speak up during meetings revealed the way White dominated environments silence Black people by making them not feel comfortable and confident enough to be and express themselves fully without being judged and generalised to a stereotype. Another participant commented on how they changed their language in a work environment that is dominated by whites.

In addition, other participants commented that the reason black South African professionals accepted and maintained the status quo at workplaces that are predominantly White is to be accepted and avoid being judged. Participants described this as a way of not conforming to different stereotypes. One participant shared the following:

“You know, you will be called a coconut, or you will be called that Zulu woman, Shaka Zulu type or whatever it may be. But you get judged somehow because it’s like she thinks she’s better than most of us. So, you’ve got to be the one that has the ability to adapt and appropriate whatever is necessary for you to fit in and avoid being judged every time” (Mrs. Y).

From the responses above, what is evident is that Black professions are concerned because they feel censored, and that they are under observation by their White counterparts. One can argue that Black South African professionals feel that they must be on their tippy toes to avoid being labeled or to prevent the outcome of confirming a Black stereotype. The response above indicates that Black South African professionals believe that it is necessary for them to find a way and adapt to the culture of their workplaces whatever situation they are confronted with in predominantly White environments to avoid outright discrimination and alienation.

4.6.4 Building and maintaining relationships

To survive in a hugely White dominated and controlled work environment, the participants shared their experiences of building and maintaining relationships. They considered this as a survival strategy, almost indispensable for their social and professional advancement. Hence, Black South African professionals code-switched identities to build and maintain personal and professional relationships.

For example, one participant spoke about how important it was that on a Friday, instead of getting into a different bus, she would go and join the general employees' bus, which was often full of White Afrikaners. This was for her to make friends and adapt to the environment to avoid being treated like an outsider.

“I think in the mines as well; the biggest thing was about do you feel like you're a part of us or not? So, it was important that on a Friday, instead of getting into a different bus, I would go and get into the general employees' bus. Just to make friends and adapt, get used to people and for them to see me as any other person” (Ms. T).

Another participant described the building of friendships as a necessary strategy to thrive in social and professional environments. The following was shared to support this thesis:

“You've got to make friends. I mean if that White woman is your line manager you have to make her your friend and you have to worship her, because she holds your life” (Ms. M).

These above statements demonstrate how participants perceived building and maintaining friendships with their White counterparts as a survival strategy and to adapt to their environment. Similarly, another participant stated how these friendships are necessary for survival, success and promotion at work. The participant said:

“The person you report to is your god, they decide how much bonus you gonna get, they decide how much salary increase you're going to get, they even decide whether you have a job in this company or not. They decide whether you gonna get promoted or not. So, think, at much lower levels I think the adaptation is less to do with humility and doing it because you think it is the right thing to do, it's doing it really for survival” (Mr. Z).

Another participant also confirmed the above, by saying:

“Friendship with your White peers is important to your success and promotion in the workplace because the workplace is dominated by them. Such a relationship can

provide you with valuable information concerning the formal and informal aspects of tenure and promotion and help diminish feelings of isolation” (Ms. T).

Participants stated that the reasons for opting for friendships with White colleagues is to avoid being treated like outsiders in a hugely White dominated environment. Further, from the excerpts above, it is evident that the superior or the person the participants report to in their workplaces decides many things for them. According to the participants’ responses, the person they report to probably a supervisor decides when they get their promotion, the amount they receive as salary and salary increase, the person decides when and how much bonus they get, and the person even decides whether the participants will have a job in the company. This implies that if a Black professional is not in good terms with his/her supervisor who is a White person, that Black professional will obviously suffer because the supervisor will do everything possible to ill-treat that Black professional or determine their fate.

Therefore, considering the circumstances around their work environment, which are highly dominated and controlled by Whites, the only option available for Black professionals working in White dominated and controlled work environments is to adapt to the status quo. The participants commented that adaptation is less to do with humility, and they adapt to their workplace status quo not because it’s convenient for them, but because they believe it is the only thing to do for survival at a work environment dominated and controlled by White people. Hence, one may conclude that Black professionals working at White dominated workplaces are at the mercy of their White supervisors. This evidently shows the loopholes and implementation failures of labour laws and policies in present day South Africa.

Furthermore, other participants commented that the reason Black South African professionals opted for friendship is to avoid being discriminated against, treated harshly, and to thrive in social and professional environments dominated by White professionals. One participant said the following:

“It’s two different things. On the one is hand is willingness to change, and on the other one is really being forced to change. Because if you don’t, everybody will have better money. In fact, you won’t even have a job unless you adapt to that environment” (Mr. N).

The above was expressed in a slightly different way as follows:

“White people still dominate, and they are the majority in all these senior positions and the network is small up there. So, if you try and fight it in company A, company B will be waiting for you. These people are like a knit close family, they want to know why you left company A” (Ms. M).

These responses from the participants are a demonstration of how Black South African professionals working in White dominated corporate workspaces build and maintain friendships with their White counterparts for survival, social and professional advancement, to be accepted and to adapt. What is evident from the responses is that the participants recognised that code-switching their identities and building relationships has allowed them to interact with people from different cultural backgrounds. From the participants’ comments, it indicates that there are some benefits that Black South African professionals gain from making friendship and interacting with their White counterparts. These benefits included access to valuable information pertaining to promotions and diminishing feelings of isolation. However, the participants also commented on how they felt being forced by the circumstances to build these relationships for survival.

4.6.5 Linguistic negotiation

To navigate the variations of differential treatment in a White dominated workplace the participants of this study described their experiences of code-switching their languages to adapt to their work environment.

For instance, some participants spoke about how they prefer not to talk during meetings and social gatherings. They also indicated how they do not like to engage in certain topics, for instance, cultural topics to avoid being labeled as living Black people’s lifestyle. Ms. E stated the following:

“I always try as much as possible to be quiet when certain cultural topics are raised. For instance, when other people tell their opinion about how they feel, especially when I am surrounded by a White majority” (Ms. E).

Mr. Z also stated the following:

“I usually don't say how I feel or what I think about the topic of discussion unless someone asks me about my opinion, because I don't want the situation where someone will say ‘you are supporting it because it's black people's lifestyle’. So, I keep quiet to avoid unnecessary controversy” (Mr. Z).

From the above responses, it is evident that Black professionals understand the environment in which they are working and tend to be careful in terms of not seeking to conform to any form of stereotype by code-switching their identities. The participants' accounts indicate that Black South African professionals do not only adapt and assimilate to the culture of their work environment, but they also work to carefully manage their emotions in ways that reflected the racial landscapes they must navigate to avoid discriminations and alienations in the workplace characterised by White power structures.

4.7 The emotional toll of being a racial minority in a workplace

Participants discussed their feelings about code-switching identities at workplaces. They shared their experiences and feelings about code-switching identities, which they described as stressful, uncomfortable, and capable of causing one to feel like a second-class citizen.

For example, the participants lamented about how they are being judged at everything they do, the tone of their language, how they walk, and constant misinterpretations of their opinions. One participant reported the following:

“It makes me feel uncomfortable, you know; I want to be treated like any other person. I feel like I am not being my true self, you know that feeling when you are out of character in whatever situations?” (Ms. S)

Considering the above, similar sentiments were shared by another participant. The following was said:

“I feel like second class citizen. Looking at how we Blacks struggle at our workplace, I think how we’ve been socialised and things we are made into believing is bad. We all have an internal instinct whether we do something about it or not is another story. But deep down inside me I can feel when something is off” (Mrs. Y).

Participants commented on how the treatment they receive in these White dominated workspaces make them feel inferior and uncomfortable. They also commented on how they have been socialised as Black people into believing some aspects of themselves as bad, which makes them feel out of character and not being their true selves.

In addition, other participants explained that code-switching identities, for instance through language tone, makes one develop feelings of powerlessness and a sense of not belonging to that particular environment. One participant explained the following:

“It makes me feel like being black here in South Africa you don’t belong to the power group. So, you have to code-switch your identities in various environments” (Mr. P).

Ms. S confirmed that:

“Let me be honest with you, daily going to work and approaching the gate of our company...there is this kind of mood that comes up as if I am going to war or something of that nature. The feeling of entering into an unpleasant area...a place where you get judged for every little thing...that’s what I feel every day when I go to office” (Ms. M).

These responses from the participants are a demonstration of how Black South African professionals working in predominantly White corporate workplaces experience emotional and psychological stress because of code-switching their identities. Further, they reveal that Blacks are under intense pressure to code-switch their identities for them to adapt and avoid being ridiculed. This implies that changing behaviours and language tone has negative and stressful feelings associated with them, and more worrisome for Black professionals is not being their authentic selves.

4.8 Poor policy implementation in South African work environments

Data generated from participants' responses indicated that the challenges currently faced in some South African work environments result from lack of proper policy implementation.

Participants described their experiences of discrimination when it comes to promotion. They reported that the promotion that one gets is not dependent on what the policy stipulated or an employee's level of qualification or work experience. Rather, it depends largely on skin colour. The following is an example:

"The levels and pace at which we grow as Blacks within organisations is very slow. Further, our salary brackets or incomes are a matter of concern. We know that they are not the same as those of our White counterparts. So, the problem is with implementing the necessary policies in these organisations. Some individuals within organisations consider themselves to be above policies so they don't even consider what the policies are saying when they make decisions" (Mr. P).

Another participant said:

"It's configured around politics than policies. The company that I work for doesn't get to see the levy income the sector would have generated" (Mr. X).

What is evident from the above is that promotion of staff is not guided or backed by policy, but rather it is dependent on one's skin colour. It is not about qualifications, or levels of experience which indicates a problem with implementing the necessary policies within these organisations.

Other participants stated that South Africa claims and preaches transformation but in practice, some companies have not transformed. One of the participants said:

"Although, the content of South Africa's Constitution and the content of other policy documents point towards transformation, in practice, there is no sign of transformation taking place" (Ms. E).

Another participant concurred with the above and said:

“It just tells you that even though we preach the gospel of transformation, we have not really transformed” (Ms. T).

The excerpts above indicate that although transformation policies are available, but their implementation is poor and lacking in different organisations. However, the participants acknowledged that in democratic South Africa, the government has put different policies in place to redress some of the injustices of the past in relation to employment and the inclusion of the previously marginalised racial groups.

4.9 Conclusion

This chapter presented the qualitative findings. The chapter presented the perceptions of study participants with regards to experiences of Black professionals working in White dominated work environment. Their perceptions were identified and grouped into experiences of being a numerical minority at a workplace, everyday Black stereotypes at workplace, black professionals’ code-switching strategies in the face of white power structures; emotional toll of being a racial minority at workplace; poor policy implementation in South African work environment, and discrimination/subtle racism towards Black South African professionals.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

5.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter presented the analysis of qualitative data collected from the study participants. The outcomes of the data analysis revealed that the participants had numerous negative experiences of working in the predominantly White corporate spaces. In this chapter, the researcher discussed these findings and the findings from related literature in relation to the Identity Negotiation Theory (INT) espoused in this study. In addition, the discussions responded to the objectives of the study and individual key research questions outlined previously in Chapter One.

5.2 Experiences of black professionals in the predominantly White corporate workplace

This theme is linked to the first objective of the study, which seeks to explore the experiences of participants working in the predominantly White corporate workplace. According to Guiffrida (2003), White spaces are generally associated with privilege, social rewards, prestige, and the promise of employment, money, acceptance, and success. Thus, understanding the experiences of Black professionals working in such environments is very important. The findings from in-depth interviews have revealed that most of the participants, who had been working in the predominantly White corporate workplace for an average of seven to eight years, faced ambivalent attitude from their White workmates over the years, punctuated by lack of respect, anger and bitterness.

The research participants have intimated that Black professional, as a minority in the predominantly White workplace, were considered invisible or 'felt as though they did not exist'. They negatively experienced discrimination at the workplace, psychological stress, stereotyped perceptions or racial prejudice, being coerced into adaptation/assimilation, servile attitude to please the White boss, and code switching. Thus, most participants had negative experiences of working in the predominantly White workplace.

5.2.1 Discrimination during hiring and promotion processes

The findings from in-depth interviews have revealed that Black professionals face discrimination at the predominantly White corporate workplace, while their white counterparts are being favoured in hiring and promotion processes. According to Dlamini (2015), discrimination is the act of making an unfavourable distinction, which is based on the group, class, or category to which one is perceived to belong. The findings from in-depth interviews have revealed that discrimination makes the workplace unhappy and unproductive, since participants had to spend most of their working hours agonising over unfair treatments they experienced there. Moreover, such discrimination which is manifested in secret forms is more harmful in organisations, due to its deceptive and pervasive nature.

According to Gumede (2018), the system in the predominantly White corporate workplace, where Blacks have been accommodated, is designed in a top-down approach, where the Whites occupy senior positions and therefore dictate the modus operandi to black people, who are typically at the lower part of the ladder. The findings from in-depth interviews have revealed that sometimes the White workmates, who are supposed to be junior members of staff and were trained by participants, would be unfairly promoted to high positions and end up being Black professionals' superiors. Hence, being Black and being a minority working in the predominantly White corporate workplace had its own stressors. These findings concur with Guiffrida's (2003) assertion that White spaces are very difficult and hostile environments for a lot of Black professionals. In the same vein, the findings concur with Anderson's (2015) observation that the White dominated corporate environments work to construct blackness as inferior, as well as reinforce norms in which Black people are typically absent or marginalised when present. The study participants have intimated that, in the predominantly White corporate workplace, hiring and promotions are not based on merit but, rather, on "skin color" and "who you know". Therefore, the findings from in-depth interviews have revealed how troubling and stressful it can be for a Black professional to work in the predominantly White corporate workplace in South Africa.

5.2.2 Psychological stress

The findings from in-depth interviews have revealed that most Black professionals in the predominantly White corporate workplace experience psychological stress, resulting from loneliness. According to Ferdinand et al. (2015), discrimination at workplace is associated with high psychological distress that has a severe impact on the worker. Psychological stress can affect a worker's performance level since it affects job satisfaction. Similarly, Hammond et al. (2010) observe that workplace discrimination is positively associated with depressive symptoms. Therefore, Black professionals working in the predominantly White corporate workplace experience very high psychological stress, which poses a threat to their mental health.

5.2.3 Daily stereotyped perception or racial prejudice

The findings from in-depth interviews have revealed that Black professionals working in the predominantly White corporate workplace experience racial prejudice or daily stereotyped perception. According to Seur and Tapela (2018), stereotype refers to a mental judgment or bias about a thing or situation, which is based on assumed behaviour from peoples' race, gender or their economic background. In this research, the study participants have intimated that the situation results from being underrepresented in the workplace. Hence, Black South Africans are underrepresented in the predominantly White corporate workplace, leading to racial prejudice from their White counterparts. The study participants have revealed that they are judged or perceived according to their social identity group instead of their actual or potential performance in the workplace. Hence, this is obvious and expected, since prejudice or stereotyping never see anything positive in minority groups.

Furthermore, the findings from in-depth interviews have revealed that Black professionals' intellectual abilities are continuously questioned and underrated by their White counterparts at work, regardless of having produced academic credentials. Hence, they experience racist or prejudiced comments like: "*Blacks are not to be trusted*"; "*Blacks are not excellent performers*"; and "*Blacks are incompetent*". Therefore, the goals and expectations of Black professionals, who have the ambition to reach to the apex of their career, are sabotaged by racist individuals who do not believe that they are capable of achieving certain objectives or

holding positions of authority. These findings concur with Gumede's (2018) observation that stereotyping Black people as inferior has so become embedded in society that White people's interactions with Black people are still largely based on the latter being staff with low pay, low skills and low benefits. The findings of the study also concur with Bell's (1992) observation that institutionalised racism, prejudice and other discriminatory barriers reinforce the ability of the dominant White group to maintain a privileged status in relation to Blacks and other people of colour.

Therefore, the findings of this study corroborate the Identity Negotiation Theory (INT), which captures socio-cultural membership, negotiation of identity, and personal identity in intergroup relations and communication situations (Toomey, 2017; Huang, 2011; Jackson, 2002; Swann, 1987). Black professionals working in the predominantly White corporate workplace pay considerable attention to strange happenings in their various offices and tend to understand the level of hostility against them in that environment. Thus, they interpret being hostile and making the workplace environment un-conducive as a strategy or ploy by a particular group of professionals to drive other professionals away. Therefore, the findings of this study have revealed that stereotypes at the workplace perpetuate social inequality, and thus promote the dominant culture in work environments.

5.3 Negotiating racial identities in the predominantly White corporate workplace

This theme is linked to the second objective of the study, which seeks to determine how Black professionals managed to fit in the predominantly White corporate workplace. According to Dickens (2014), the term identity negotiation refers to a deliberate and conscious process of shifting one's worldview and cultural behaviour. The experience of racism in white dominated workplaces has led Black professionals to develop coping mechanisms that allow them to negotiate their identities in order to avoid the psychological and emotional effects of racism. This is closely related to code-switching, which is a form of identity negotiation, in which Black people are required to perform in the predominantly White workplace to be accepted and assimilated and be successful.

According to Anderson (2015), code-switching as a behavioural strategy can take many forms, such as dress code, language, performance, and overall self-presentation. Hence, depending on

how well Black persons code-switch, they may “pass inspection” and then gain provisional acceptance into White spaces. This implies that code-switching embodies everyday experiences in which the participants must identify and actively code-switch their identities. The findings from in-depth interviews have revealed that there are several ways in which Black people actively code-switched their identities. These include adaption or assimilation, building and maintaining friendships, and linguistic negotiation.

5.3.1 Adaptation/assimilation

The findings from in-depth interviews have revealed that adaptation/assimilation is a strategy that Black South African professionals use to adapt in a work environment dominated by White professionals. Black professionals working in the predominantly White corporate workplace experience immense pressure to carefully manage their emotions in ways that reflected the racial landscapes, in order to avoid discrimination and alienation. Thus, they adapt and assimilate to the culture of their work environment to survive and ease pressure. As Alfieri and Onwuachi-Willig (2013) observe, the corporate spaces into which higher Black professionals entered had existing definitions and rules of the corporate culture, into which they had to assimilate. As Bolani (2018) shares, the white dominated environment was not only unsupportive, but also rendered her invisible and not heard. In the same vein, Gumede (2018) observes that even in the corporate spaces where Black people have been accommodated, they are at the lower part of the ladder and the system operates in a top-down approach, where Whites occupy senior positions and therefore dictate the modus operandi to Black people. This implies that Black South African professionals have to conform and engage in several psychological negotiations as they navigate their identities professionally and socially. Therefore, Black South African professionals working in the predominantly White workplace are in an unsupportive and un-conducive environment, which was created to perpetuate social inequality, and thus promote the dominant culture in work environments.

5.3.2 Building and maintaining friendships

The findings from in-depth interviews have revealed that that building and maintaining friendships is another form of code-switching strategy, which Black South African

professionals adopt in order to survive in the predominantly White corporate workplace. The study participants have intimated that the only option available for Black professionals to survive is to build and maintain relationships, which is done as a servile attitude ‘to please the White boss’. Thus, Black South African professionals code-switch identities to build and maintain personal and professional relationships, which they consider as indispensable for social and professional advancement.

These findings concur with Cross et al.’s (2017) view that code-switching is perceived as a process through which rewards in mainstream institutions may be obtained through transacting relations and performances in accordance with the expectations, culture, and norms of the mainstream institutions. Similarly, Bourdieu (1986) believes that code-switching may serve as a form of cultural capital, in which the knowledge and attitudes essential to succeeding in society and attaining status often include behaviours and manners one must display to be accepted to gain privileges. Thus, Black South African professionals’ resort to building personal and professional relationships with their White counterparts, which are motivated by the need to be accepted, included, and attain a certain status. Therefore, building and maintaining friendships with the Whites is a code-switching strategy for Black South African professionals to survive in the predominantly White corporate workplace.

5.3.3 Linguistic negotiation

Linguistic negotiation is another code-switching strategy for Black South Africans working in the predominantly White corporate workplace. The findings from in-depth interviews have revealed that Black South African professionals change their language tones and sometimes opt not to speak in meetings and social gatherings to fit into the environment that is predominantly White. The study participants have intimated that they use linguistic negotiation as a code-switching strategy to avoid negative experiences of discrimination and alienation in the predominantly White corporate workplace. These findings concur with Fenwick’s (2018) view that black employees tended to develop a “White voice” to move away from Black-sounding English. Thus, to avoid conforming to different stereotypes, Black professionals code-switch their identities. Similarly, Alfieri and Onwuachi-Willig (2013) observe that the corporate spaces into which higher Black professionals entered had existing definitions and

rules of the corporate culture, into which they had to assimilate. Therefore, the findings of the study imply that Black South African professionals have to code-switch their language and other identities, in order to navigate the variations of differential treatment.

5.4 Challenges faced by Black professionals in the predominantly White corporate workplace

This theme is linked to the third objective of the study, which seeks to examine the challenges faced by Black professionals working in the predominantly White corporate workplace. According to Anderson (2015), White spaces vary in kind but are described by their most visible and distinctive feature of the overwhelming presence of White people and the absence of Black people. Hence, racial equality and progress was of course supported by many Whites, but still many others held to their prejudice and resisted the changes because of the fear of losing their privileges. Thus, it is important to examine the challenges that Black professionals face in the predominantly White corporate workplace. These challenges are categorized for convenience into emotional toll of being a racial minority at the workplace and poor policy implementation in the South African work environment.

5.4.1 Emotional toll of being a racial minority at the workplace

The findings from in-depth interviews have revealed that Black South African professionals experience negative feelings of working in the predominantly White corporate workplace. The study participants have intimated that their experiences are stressful, uncomfortable, and make them feel as second-class citizens. Hence, they felt unhappy since they were being negatively judged at everything they do, including the tone of their language, their walking mannerisms, and constant misinterpretations of their opinions. Moreover, the participants always pretended to be what they are not since they could not express themselves freely in order to avoid being misjudged. These findings concur with Wingfield's (2014) view that White dominated work environments are very difficult and hostile for Black professionals. Similarly, Anderson (2015) observes that White dominated work environments construct blackness as inferior and reinforce norms in which Black people are typically absent or marginalised when present.

Furthermore, the findings from in-depth interviews concur with Lacy's (2007) view that surviving in the predominantly White corporate workplace as a Black professional often means

negotiating racial and ethnic identities when interacting with others, particularly the White counterparts. This implies that code-switching has negative and stressful feelings attached to it. Therefore, Black South African professionals working in the predominantly White corporate workplace experience emotional and psychological stress because of code-switching their identities. They suffer the negative feelings of not being themselves.

5.4.2 Poor policy implementation

The findings from in-depth interviews have revealed that lack of proper policy implementation is a major challenge facing the South African corporate work environment. The study participants have intimated that they are most concerned with implementation of policies in the South African corporate workplace. Hence, there is lack of uniformity in policy implementation across the South African corporate environment. For instance, in some companies and public sectors participants have intimated that they receive low wages compared to their White counterparts, even when their qualifications and level of education were the same. Hence, even when it comes to training and salary increments, White professionals are considered first before their Black counterparts. These findings concur with Gumede's (2018) view that the elephant in the room which stifles the implementation of these policies is institutional racism, which manifests itself in subtle ways and masquerades as standard operating policies, enforced in the criteria for appointment(s) or promotion(s), and the measuring of competency or the valuing of ideas amongst employees. Similarly, Grun et al. (2009) observe that there is evidence of racial discrimination in terms of wages amongst White and Black employees in the corporate system of South Africa. The findings also concur with Bolani's (2018) view that processes and policies are only used as a defense that is drawn on during dispute but are not an accurate reflection of fairness.

Furthermore, the findings from in-depth interviews have revealed that racial prejudice still exists in the South African corporate environment, despite various policies which the government put in place to redress the injustices of the past in relation to employment and the inclusion of the previously marginalised groups of society. Such policies include the Labour Relations Act of 1995; the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996; the Employment Equity Act of 1997; the Skills Development Act of 1998 and the Skills

Development Act Levies of 1999; and the B-BBEE Act of 2018 (revised). Thus, the findings of the current study reveal that these policies only exist on paper, since they are not even implemented in the predominantly White corporate workplace in South Africa.

However, policies are there to be followed at the workplace; yet White employees are still prioritised when dealing with issues like promotion, salary increase, and developmental training. It is surprising that in South Africa promotion and training still depends largely on the colour of one's skin. Nevertheless, one must acknowledge that in democratic South Africa, the government has put different policies in place to redress some of the injustices of the past in relation to employment and the inclusion of the previously marginalised groups of society. What this implies is that although transformation policies are available, their implementation is poor and lacking in different South African corporate environments. Therefore, governmental policies are available, but they are hardly implemented in the predominantly White corporate workplace, where an individual or a group of individuals dictate the pace in different South African corporate environments.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter discussed in detail the main findings of the study. The research findings have revealed that Black South African professionals have numerous negative experiences of working in the predominantly White workplace. Such experiences are categorised for convenience as experiences of being a numerical minority at the workplace, stereotyped attitude at the workplace or racial prejudice, discrimination/subtle racism towards Black South African professionals, Black professionals' code-switching strategies in the face of White power structures; emotional toll of being a racial minority at the workplace, and poor policy implementation in the South African work environment.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the researcher analysed and discussed the data obtained from in-depth interviews in connection with research findings from related literature, in order to respond to the objectives and research questions espoused in this study. In this chapter, the researcher summarised the main findings of the study and discussed the study limitations. Lastly, the chapter presented recommendations for future research and conclusions of the study. The implications of the study were also highlighted.

6.2 Main findings

This study has revealed that Black South African professionals face numerous negative experiences in the predominantly White corporate workplace. Their experiences are categorised for convenience as experiences of being a numerical minority at the workplace, stereotyped attitude at the workplace or racial prejudice, discrimination/subtle racism towards Black South African professionals, Black professionals' code-switching strategies in the face of White power structures; emotional toll of being a racial minority at the workplace, and poor policy implementation in the South African work environment.

First, Black South African professionals experience untold emotional toll of being a numerical minority in the predominantly White corporate workplace. Such experience is stressful, uncomfortable, lonely, punctuated by lack of freedom of expression and inability to be themselves, which pose a threat to their mental health. Second, Black South African professionals experience the discrimination or subtle racism from their White counterparts in the workplace. This practice is prevalent in hiring, promotions and remunerations, whereby their White counterparts are being favoured regardless of qualifications or seniority. Third, Black South African professionals experience daily stereotyped attitude or racial prejudice which manifests itself in form of such negative remarks as: *"Blacks are not to be trusted"*; *"Blacks are not excellent performers"*; and *"Blacks are incompetent, blacks are lazy"*.

Moreover, Black South African professionals are coerced into adaptation/assimilation, servile attitude to please the White boss, and code switching. Code-switching strategies are employed by Black professionals as a means of survival in the face of White power structures. These include adaptation and assimilation, linguistic negotiation, and building and maintaining friendships, which was basically interpreted as a servile attitude 'to please the White boss'. Lastly, there is poor policy implementation in the South African corporate environment, despite the different policies that were put in place by the government of South Africa to redress the disparities of past due to apartheid.

6.3 Limitations of the study

One of the limitations of this study is that the findings cannot be generalised due to the limited number of participants across different industries. The researcher cannot claim that all Black people in the predominantly White corporate workplace have negative experiences which lead them to code switch their identities for survival.

The study is also limited to Black professionals that are in top managerial positions in South Africa. There is a possibility that there might be other Black managers in lower positions in the predominantly White corporate workplace with similar experiences. Future research with a bigger sample should include Black junior managers in White dominated work environments. In addition, there was limited South African data in the topic. Most of the available literature was obtained from studies conducted in America.

6.4 Recommendations for future research

This study has researched only selected Black South African professionals as they navigate their Black identities in the predominantly White corporate workplace, using only Black professionals in top positions. In this regard, a further and larger study is needed to be conducted on experiences of Black South Africans in junior management positions. Also, the study employed one method of collecting data which was the in-depth face-to-face interviews. Therefore, the researcher recommends a further study that could cut across different sectors of the economy and employ more than one data generation tool for triangulation.

Furthermore, this study recommends future researchers to:

- Investigate the implementation of labour policies in the corporate South Africa.
- Explore the psychological impact of working in the predominantly White corporate workplace.
- Examine the national policy document on employment in South Africa as the benchmark for all companies operating within South Africa.
- Explore ways of promoting awareness campaigns against racism and discrimination in the South African corporate workplace.

6.5 Implications

Based on the findings and conclusions drawn from this study, several implications are highlighted. The study confirmed the prevalence of racism and discrimination in the predominantly White corporate workplace and also emphasised the social disempowerment experienced by the minority Black professionals in this environment. Rather than being all-embracing and accommodating, the workplace is hostile and harsh, which negatively impact in Black professionals' psychological well-being.

Furthermore, this study implies that race and race transformation in South Africa is something that is still very prevalent. Hence, the national policy document on employment in South Africa should be the benchmark for all companies operating within and around South Africa.

6.6 Conclusion

The study explored experiences of Black professionals in the predominantly White corporate workplace. The research findings have revealed that Black South African professionals experience discrimination, daily stereotyped attitude or racial prejudice, loneliness, code switching and being coerced into adaptation/assimilation, including a servile attitude to please the White boss. Furthermore, the study corroborates the Identity Negotiation Theory which explains how individuals and groups negotiate their identity in different work environments. This study has identified lack of transformation in the South African workplace. The study limitations include lack of data relating to Black professionals' experiences of working in the predominantly White corporate workplace in South Africa. Lastly, the study has revealed the lack of responsibility on the part of corporations, businesses, and organisations, whose

practices fail to create a safe environment for people that were previously marginalised to grow and develop.

This study has revealed that race and race transformation in South Africa is something that is still very prevalent. Therefore, based on the findings of this study, it is clear that certain interventions and measures must be put in place to encourage organizations, both public and private, to create a safe and conducive work and business environment for Black South African professionals, who were previously marginalized, to grow and develop.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Information Sheet and Consent to Participate in Research



25 June 2019

Dear Participant

Re: Request for participation in the study: The experiences of black professionals in corporate South Africa: Navigating the Black identity in predominantly white corporate workspaces

I am a Masters student in Clinical Psychology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), Pietermaritzburg Campus. I am conducting a research with the topic “The experiences of black professionals in corporate South Africa: Navigating the Black identity in predominantly white corporate workspaces”.

Participation:

We are asking you whether you will allow us to conduct one interview with you about your experiences in a predominantly white workspace. If you agree, we would ask you to participate on one face to face interview for approximately 45 minutes.

Please understand that your participation is voluntary, and you are not being forced to take part in this study. The choice of whether to participate or not, is yours alone. If you choose not to take part, you will not be affected in any way whatsoever. If you agree to participate, you may stop participating in the research at any time and tell me that you do not want to continue. If you do this, there will be no penalties and you will not be prejudiced in any way.

Confidentiality

All identifying information will be kept in a locked file cabinet and will not be available to others and will be kept confidential to the extent possible by law. The records from your participation may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including members of the ethics committee at the Human Sciences Research Council. (All of these people are required to keep your identity confidential.) Otherwise, records that

identify you will be available only to people working on the study. We are asking you to give us permission to tape-record the interview so that we can accurately record what is said.

Your answers will be stored electronically in a secure environment and used for research or academic purposes now or at a later date in ways that will not reveal who you are. All future use of the stored data will be subject to further Research Ethics Committee review and approval. We will not record your name anywhere and no one will be able to connect you to the answers you give. Your answers will be linked to a fictitious code number or a pseudonym (another name) and we will refer to you in this way in the data, any publication, report or other research output.

Risks/discomforts

At the present time, we do not see any risk of harm from your participation. The risks associated with participation in this study are no greater than those encountered in daily life.

Benefits

There are no immediate benefits to you from participating in this study. However, this study will be extremely helpful to us in that we hope to promote understanding of how black professional navigate their black identity in the predominantly white work spaces. If you would like to receive feedback on our study, we will record your phone number and e-mail address on a separate sheet of paper and can send you the results of the study when it is completed sometime beginning of year 2020.

Who to contact if you have been harmed or have any concerns

This research has been approved by the Human Science Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC). If you have any complaints about ethical aspects of the research or feel that you have been harmed in any way by participating in this study, please contact the HSSREC on: Tel: 031 2604557 or Fax: 031 2604609 or e-mail:HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

If you have concerns or questions about the research, you may call: The project supervisor: Ms Samukelisiwe Mahlawe: 033 260 5374

Yours Sincerely

Bongiwe I. Mathenjwa

Appendix B: Consent for participation

CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION

I hereby agree to participate in research on “The experiences of black professionals in corporate South Africa: Navigating the Black identity in predominantly white corporate workspaces”. I understand that I am participating freely and without being forced in any way to do so. I also understand that I can stop participating at any point should I not want to continue and that this decision will not in any way affect me negatively. I understand that this is a research project whose purpose is not necessarily to benefit me personally in the immediate or short term. I understand that my participation will remain confidential.

Signature of participant

Date

Appendix C: Consent for Tape Recording

I hereby agree to the tape-recording of my participation in the study. I understand that the information that I provide will be stored electronically and will be used for research purposes now or at a later stage.

Signature of participant

Date

Appendix D: Interview Questions

1) What are experiences of black professionals in predominantly white corporate workplaces?

- What does it mean to you to be a black person in South Africa?
- What are some of the experiences you think that black people in South Africa may face as a result of their race?
- Are there any stereotypes of black people that you know of?
- How may these experiences translate into the corporate environment that you are working in?
- Do you know of any experiences that you think black people had in the corporate environment you are working in, that you think they experienced because of their race?
- Have you had similar personal experiences because of your race? If so, what were some of these experiences?
- Are there any stereotypes of black people that you know of or have encountered in your workplace?

2) How do black professionals negotiate their racial identities in predominantly white corporate workplaces?

- Do you think that black people sometimes change themselves when interacting with white people versus black people?
- If yes, in what ways do you think black people change themselves when interacting with white vs black people?
- Do you think that this also happens in the corporate environment that you are working in where there are a lot of white people?
- What are some of the reasons that you think black people may feel the need to change themselves when working in these environments?
- Have you personally felt the need to change yourself in your workplace? And why?
- If so, did you? And in what ways did you change yourself?
- What do you think are some of the ways that black people change themselves when working in these environments? (Probe: physically, behaviours, how they speak or

relate to white people, dress etc.) And how is this different to how they are outside of the workplace?

- What do you think are some benefits of changing oneself in these environments? Are there any benefits or advantages that you think you have gained as a result of changing yourself?
- How does changing yourself make you feel? Or how does it make you feel that others feel the need to change themselves?

3) What are the challenges and pressures that black professionals face in predominantly white corporate workplaces?

- Do you think it is sometimes harder for black people working in the corporate environment, where there are a lot of white people?
- In what ways do you think that it can be harder for black people?
- What are some of the difficulties that you think black people face in these environments?
- What are some of the difficulties that you personally have faced as black person in this environment?
- What do you think are some of the pressures black people face when working in these environments? What are some of your personal experiences in relation to this?

Appendix E: Ethical Clearance



19 June 2019

Ms Bongiwe I Mathenjwa 219046371
School of Applied Human Sciences – Psychology
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear Ms Mathenjwa

Protocol reference number: HSS/0279/019M

Project Title: The experiences of black professionals in corporate South Africa: Navigating the black identity in predominantly white corporate workspaces.

Full Approval – Expedited Application

Your application dated 10 April 2019, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 1 year from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

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Dr Rosemary Sibanda (Chair)

/px

cc Supervisor: Samukelisiwe Mahlawe
cc. Academic Leader Research: Prof R Teer-Tomaselli
cc. School Administrator: Ms P Konan