The Influence of Normative Whiteness in the South African Private Sector

Thesis Presented for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

In the Graduate School of Business

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

By

Bronwyn Keene-Young

BA (Hons), MA, LLB

March 2024

I, Bronwyn Keene-Young, hereby declare that the work on which this thesis is based is my original work (except where acknowledgements indicate otherwise) and that neither the whole work nor any part of it has been, is being, or is to be submitted for another degree in this or any other university. I authorise the University of Cape Town to reproduce for the purpose of research either the whole or any portion of the contents in any manner whatsoever.

Signed on 30 March 2024:

Signed by candidate

The Influence of Normative Whiteness in the South African Sector

Bronwyn Keene-Young, Graduate School of Business - University of Cape Town

Presented for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, March 2024

Abstract

Thirty years into democracy and notwithstanding the requirements of the Employment Equity Act (Act 55 of 1998), the South African private sector remains largely under the control of White executives, while Black African people constitute less than 20% of senior and top management (Commission for Employment Equity, 2023). Academic research (Myeza & April, 2021) as well as frequent anecdotal reports in mass and social media, indicate that Black professionals continue to experience racism in the private sector workplace, although this racism is often covert in nature and thus escapes the everyday understanding of the term. Studies by scholars of covert racism have established how normative Whiteness in society has operated to exclude or reduce the socio-economic prospects of Black people (Sue, 2010), but is rendered invisible through the establishment of 'colour-blind' norms (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). However, there has been limited organisational research into how normative Whiteness, by maintaining an appearance of professional neutrality, perpetuates racism in the workplace (Nkomo, 1992; Nkomo, 2021). In addition, few studies on racism in organisations include the testimony of White executives as the primary data source. In this thesis I attempt to address this gap in the literature by using hermeneutic phenomenology within a critical theory framework to analyse how 35 White male and female executives at senior and top management level perceive: (i) Black professionals and their lived experiences and (ii) themselves and other White professionals; in the context of the employment equity imperatives of the South African private sector. As a White South African woman with over 15 years of experience in executive management, I include a self-reflexive approach both in the conducting of the interviews with White executives, as well as in the phenomenological analysis of the interview data. The significance of my research is that it shifts the study of racism to the locus of workplace power - White executives - and assesses how the normalisation of covert racism and Whiteness influences the perpetuation of organisational discrimination against Black professionals. My research shows that, notwithstanding ostensible support for the idea of employment equity, White executives' perceptions of Black people are shaped by stereotypes which perpetuate covert racism and the marginalisation of Black (particularly Black African) professionals. Concomitantly, White executives unknowingly establish Whiteness as a neutral standard for professional advancement and success in the South African private sector workplace.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to my supervisor, Professor Kurt April, for believing in this research, trusting me, and always being understanding and thoughtful through all the professional and personal challenges faced during my PhD studies.

Thank you to the respondents who participated in this research and who generously provided their time and their thoughts on the sensitive issue of race in the South African workplace. While you may not agree with all the conclusions of this research, I hope it promotes reflection and stimulates discussion.

Finally, to my dearest children, Erin and Liam. You are, and will always remain, the greatest gift I have ever received in life. I love you both so much.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW…… 7

1. Background…….. 7
2. Overview of the existing literature…… 8
   2.1. Covert racism……. 8
   2.2. Whiteness…….. 15
   2.3. Organisational scholarship on race, racism and Whiteness…….. 20
3. Gap in the literature and the contribution of the proposed research…… 25

CHAPTER TWO: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS…….. 27

1. Introduction…….. 27
2. Methodological approach……. 27
   2.1. Hermeneutic phenomenology…… 27
   2.2. Self-reflexivity……... 32
   2.3. Critical management studies……. 32
   2.4. Application of the methodology…… 34
3. Method……. 35
   3.1. Prior focus group research……. 36
   3.2. Selection and recruitment of White respondents…….. 37
   3.3. Details of the respondents……. 39
   3.4. Conducting the interviews……. 42
      3.4.1. Interview context and structure…….. 43
      3.4.2. The position of the researcher…… 44
      3.4.3. The use of the focus group research…….. 47
   3.5. Transcription, coding and analysis…… 48

CHAPTER THREE: FINDINGS AND OBSERVATIONS…… 51

1. Respondents' early experiences of race…… 52
   1.1. Findings……. 53
   1.2. Observations……... 58
2. Respondents' attitudes to EE and their views on the dominance of White people in executive management……. 59
   2.1. Respondent views on EE as a concept ……. 59
      2.1.1. Findings…… 59
      2.1.2. Observations……. 62
   2.2. Respondent views on the dominance of White people in executive management... 63
      2.2.1. Findings…… 64
      2.2.2. Observations……. 72

3. Respondents' views on the reported experiences of Black professionals…… 74
3.1. Findings……. 74
3.1.1. Initial reaction and general responses to the reported experiences of Black professionals in the workplace…… 74
3.1.2. Respondents' views on specific issues raised by Black professionals.. 78
3.2. Observations……... 103
4. Respondents' beliefs and attitudes regarding racism and Whiteness…….. 107
4.1. Findings…….. 107
4.2. Observations……... 133
5. Respondents' discourse on race, racism and Whiteness……. 136
5.1. Findings…….. 137
5.2. Observations……... 149

CHAPTER FOUR: PHENOMENOLICAL ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION…….. 150

1. Introduction and theoretical context……. 150
2. Employment equity (EE) presumptions and racialised stereotyping…… 154
2.1. Associating employment equity (EE) with lack of merit……... 155
2.2. Assuming homogeneity in the social background of Black South Africans…….. 157
2.3. Stereotyping Black professionals in the corporate environment…… 159
2.4. Associating the government's failures with Black failure……. 163
2.5. Pigeon-holing……. 164
2.6. Use of 'othering' language……. 165
2.7. Summary…… 166
3. Conscious concessions to normative Whiteness……. 167
3.1. The expectation that Black professionals become 'Whiter' in order to progress in the workplace …… 167
3.2. Higher representation of Black minorities……. 168
3.3. Natural inclination to 'one's own'……. 170
3.4. Summary…… 172
4. Denial and minimisation of racism……. 172
4.1. Denying or avoiding racism……... 174
4.2. Admitting racism but minimising it……... 176
4.3. Defending prejudice as 'not racism'…….. 177
4.4. Summary…… 179
5. Mainstreaming of normative Whiteness in the workplace……. 180
5.1. The adoption of Western DEI approaches…….. 180
5.2. The minoritisation of Black Africans in the workplace……. 182
5.3. Presumption of White employment and employment opportunities……. 183
5.4. Presumption of White moral authority and race-neutral knowledge……. 185
6. 'Outliers'……. 187
7. Conclusion, Limitations of Research and Recommendations…… 188

References*……. *191

Figure A: Respondents by city, age and gender…… *39*
Figure B: Respondents by industry type…… *40*
Figure C: Respondents by management level and type…… *41*
Figure D: Respondents by home language…… *42*
Figure E: % Senior Management and Top Management in SA private sector…… *63*
Figure F: Race breakdown of Top Management (TM) and senior management (SM) in the private sector according to % economically active population (EAP)…… *169*
Figure G: Total unemployment by race…… *183*
Figure H: Executive management: Comparison of White women to Black men and women 2022-2023…… *184*

Annexure 1: Focus group research on the experiences of Black professionals in the South African private sector workplace…… *200*

Annexure 2: Sample letter to respondents …… *224*

Annexure 3: Respondent interview guideline…… *227*

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Background

Limited research exists on contemporary racism in post-apartheid South Africa and the effect which this has on the social and economic prospects of Black South Africans. News coverage of racism and discussions in social media forums tend to focus on individual acts of prejudice and therefore divert attention from the continued socio-economic racialisation of South African society in the form of structural and covert racism. While the concept of the 'rainbow nation' celebrates the idea of a post-racial South Africa, which ostensibly dawned overnight on 27 April 1994, the perpetuation of inequality and oppression of Black people and the continued relative prosperity of White people, means that such democratic ideals have not translated into reality.

In this social context, the South African private sector workplace remains a highly racialised space, notwithstanding affirmative action and diversity initiatives. Official employment equity statistics show that White people constitute 66% of top management and 55% of senior management (Commission for Employment Equity, 2023). This, combined with anecdotal reports and academic research (Op't Hoog et al., 2010; Franchi, 2003; Booysen, 2007; Myeza & April, 2021) on the workplace experiences of Black professionals indicate that, in the words of Steyn, Burnett and Ndzwayiba (2018), "[t]he transformation project in South Africa is in crisis" (p. 2). However, there has been inadequate research on how historical relations of race and power have been perpetuated in the workplace given that decisions concerning equity and diversity rest largely in the hands of White executives.

Scholarship on Whiteness and White privilege largely focuses on the United States and Western Europe and is found primarily in the fields of sociology, psychology and critical diversity studies. Research in organisational studies, where it has dealt with race at all, has either tended to treat it as an unquestioned phenotypical descriptor void of social context or has focused on workplace experiences of racial discrimination without interrogating the power structures which perpetuate it. As a consequence, most of these researchers have 'raced' only those who are not White and have unquestioningly accepted White identity and power as an 'unraced' norm or standard by which others can be evaluated or which can be generalised across race groups (Nkomo, 1992; Grimes, 1999; Daya & April, 2014; Nkomo & Al-Ariss, 2014).

The following literature review addresses specific areas of sociological and social-psychological research into the issues of Whiteness and racism. Racism is contextualised within a socio-historical history of White racial supremacy which persists in the present in the form of structural and covert racism. The focus on

Whiteness relates to the manner in which Whiteness and power coexist in organisations and thus serve to perpetuate racism (most often covertly) against Black employees. From this perspective, the study of Whiteness is not simply an ethnographic investigation into the beliefs and attitudes of White people in the workplace. It is primarily concerned with how the normalisation and consequent invisibility of Whiteness, combined with the power which White people still assert in the workplace, combines to perpetuate exclusion and oppression of Black people.

The literature review is structured as follows:

First, it provides an overview of how a new covert form of racism has replaced old, legislated forms of racism which were explicit under colonialism, slavery and apartheid. This section includes literature on how covert racism impacts on Black people in the form of racist discourse and microaggressions.

Second, it deals with Whiteness and continued White power as the foundational causes of covert racism, and White privilege as the 'other side' of Black disadvantage.

Third, it provides an overview of the existing organisational literature on race, racism and Whiteness.

Finally, it identifies the gap in the literature and sets out the proposed research.

2. Overview of the existing literature

2.1. Covert racism

In Western society and previously colonised countries idiomatic use of the words 'racism' and 'racist' tend to refer either to the past - racially discriminative practices or legislation based on ideological notions of biological inferiority of Black people and superiority of White people - or to the present in terms of acts or words of prejudice or hate by individuals. In both instances, racism is considered as overt behaviour which can be identified either through specific forms of racially discriminating legislation or regulation, or statements, acts and obvious behaviour by individuals (McIntosh, 1988; Bonilla-Silva, 1997).

Notwithstanding the end of legislated racism, racial inequality still persists in societies such as South Africa, the United States, Europe and other countries of the global West (Mills, 1997; Boatcă, 2017; Meghji & Saini, 2018) and in Eastern and Asian countries (Haritaworn, 2016; Bonnett, 2021) as well as countries in Latin America (Bordas, 2012; Golash-Boza & Bonilla-Silva, 2013). White people, and whiter/light-skinned people, enjoy better living standards, education and economic progress than Black and darker-skinned people around the globe. This situation is most acute in South Africa where, despite the fact that they represent the vast majority of citizens, Black people as a group have disproportionately lower life

expectancy, living standards, access to housing and medical care, educational opportunities and employment prospects (Leibbrandt et al., 2012; Statistics South Africa, 2019). The contradiction between contemporary democratic ideals of individual equality and opportunity-for-all, and the fact of enduring racial inequality, has therefore necessitated a different approach to understanding racism that goes beyond individual acts of explicit prejudice or hate.

Mills (1997, 2016) situates the persistence of racial inequality within a global system of White supremacy, established during the 500-year history of slavery and colonisation: "White supremacy is the unnamed political system that has made the world what it is today" (1997, p. 1). He notes how the colonisation and enslavement of Black people was justified by the belief by people of European origin (White people) in their superiority over non-European people, who became objects of ownership or colonial and apartheid subjugation. This established a racial hierarchy in which 'civilised' White people were entitled, even destined, to rule over 'savage' and uncivilised 'Others' who were not White. The moral legitimacy of this racial hierarchy was bolstered by theories of scientific or biological racism which posited race as an immutable determinant of human intellect and behaviour, in which Black people were seen as essentially less intelligent than White people. Other forms of scientific racism assumed that European culture was inherently superior to the culture of 'Others' and attributed inherent cultural characteristics to different races, for example, that Black people were barbaric or lazy (Blum, 2023).

Bonilla-Silva (1997) argues that once a society has become racialised through a historical process (i.e., colonialism, slavery and apartheid), the racial hierarchy becomes normalised and "racialization develops a life of its own" (p. 475), independent of formal legislative or regulatory mechanisms. In this context, ideological notions of White race superiority and Black race inferiority are institutionalised and perpetuated through racial stereotypes and a normalisation of White supremacy and racism in society. He posits the idea of "racialized social systems" which take their form from hierarchical social formations based on race in which one race is dominant and thus has access to better social prospects than others (p. 469). In such a socially defined system, the position of the race group is definitive in understanding relationships of power and subordination, as opposed to the position of individuals in that group. Thus, while an individual member of the dominant race group might not in fact enjoy superior social and economic benefits, the existence of the racialised social system means that the race group - as a whole - enjoys such benefits. Bonilla-Silva (1997) states that the concept of racialised social systems provides a framework to understand the continuation of racism beyond legislated discrimination or prejudice. He argues that, contrary to the past, "racial practices that reproduce racial inequality in contemporary America: (1) are increasingly covert, (2) are embedded in normal operations of institutions, (3) avoid direct racial terminology and (4) are invisible to most Whites" (p. 476).

Mills (1997) notes how this racial hierarchy, in which White supremacy endures, has become "taken for granted", to the extent that it is seen as routine and apolitical and that it has become "the background against which other systems, which we *are* to see as political, are highlighted" (p. 1). This has been enabled and normalised through "a combination of historical amnesia (a forgetting of the facts) and conceptual blindness (a failure to admit the implications of those facts, even when remembered)" (Mills, 2016, p. 119).

Feagin (2013) traces how, notwithstanding the end of slavery, colonisation and legalised racial discrimination, the central tenets of biological racism have been internalised in the collective belief system of White people and are reflected in their negative stereotypical assumptions about Black people. Feagin and O'Brien (2003) note that "as conditions change, the dominant [White] group refurbishes or revises, often in subtle ways the old stereotyped views of subordinate racial groups" (p. 10). These racialised stereotypes, in turn, sustain the legitimacy of White racial supremacy and continued exploitation of Black people. As observed by April (2021) "[r]acism is the enactment of the processes of racialisation" (p. 23).

In this context, racism must be understood both in socio-economic terms - the social and economic benefits which White people enjoy by being at the top of the racial hierarchy - as well as in personal terms - the persistent beliefs which White people have about themselves and others which reinforce and legitimise their position at the top of the hierarchy. Racism is a structural problem which is reinforced through everyday practices. Essed (1991) notes that "a working definition of racism must acknowledge the macro (structural-cultural) properties of racism as well as the micro-inequities perpetuating the system" (p. 38). She argues against a common tendency to separate personal racism and institutional racism as it "places the individual outside the institutional" (p. 36) and that, as racism arises from power of one group over another, the term "individual racism" is a misnomer (p. 37). She argues that "micro-racism" (individual acts and statements) and "macro-racism" (structural inequalities), are mutually reinforcing and that therefore structural racism cannot be understood as "external to agents - they are made by agents" (p. 39).

In mainstream White society, the democratic ideal of equality for all has necessitated a shift away from 'biological' or "essentialist" racism (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 14) - the idea that White people are genetically or biologically superior to Black people. In this political and social context, racism is considered as individual incidents of morally objectionable behaviour and is often associated with extreme forms of explicit White supremacy. However, as van Dijk (1993) points out:

> *... racism does not consist of only white supremacist ideologies of race, or only of aggressive overt or blatant discriminatory acts ... Racism also involves the everyday, mundane, negative opinions, attitudes, and ideologies and the seeming subtle acts and conditions of discrimination against minorities, namely, those social cognitions and social acts, processes, structures, or institutions that*

> *directly or indirectly contribute to the dominance of the white group and the subordinate position of minorities" (p. 5).*

As a result, in the modern democratic state based on universal ideals of equality, racism is most often covert in nature (Coates, 2011a), and "[w]hereas overt racism assumed blatant and insidious forms, covert racism hides behind the façade of 'politeness', political correctness and expediency" (p. 10).

Covert racism entails "subtle, subversive, and deliberate informal and formal mechanisms that allow differential access to rewards, prestige, sanctions, status, and privileges based on racial hierarchies. While covert racism does not carry the weight of law - traditions, norms, and customs typically uphold, justify or obscure its operation" (Coates, 2011c, p. 243). Coates' definition is indicative of the difficulty of identifying and analysing covert racism as opposed to the ease of recognition when it comes to explicit acts of racism. Critically, it describes the extensive and persistent negative impact on Black people in circumstances where covert racism is difficult to identify as it allows for "plausible deniability" on the part of the perpetrator (Coates, 2011a, p. 2).

Nevertheless, "Covert racism operates through well established and understood racial codes [which] are inherently part of the socialization processes of the racial state" (Coates, 2011b, p. 123). These informal racial codes include behaviours and practices like social exclusion, denial or minimisation of incidents of racism on either an individual or collective basis and telling racist jokes (but only within the 'in-group'). It also includes tokenism in which White group benefits are bestowed on exceptional members of Black groups who are then expected to assimilate with the elite group (p. 126-127).

Trepagnier (2011) refers to covert racism as 'silent racism'. She focuses on the stereotypical prejudices which even well-meaning White Americans hold in relation to Black Americans but which they do not express, for fear of being seen as morally bad or deficient. In this framework, White people regard racism as explicit expressions of racial prejudice and deny that they hold racist views or engage in racist behaviour. However, their stereotypical beliefs lead them to behave in a paternalistic manner towards Black people. Trepagnier argues that the categorisation of White people into racist/not racist shifts the focus of racism onto explicit acts of prejudice while disguising the pernicious effects of daily covert racism. "Categorical thinking in terms of racism implies that White people who do *not* commit hostile acts against, or make maliciously racist statements about, Black people be labeled not racist. In this way silent racism - and the routine acts of everyday racism resulting from it - are hidden despite the fact that they sustain the racist culture that produces them" (p. 357).

Dovidio and Gaertner (2000, 2011) use the term 'aversive racism' to explain contradictory behaviour in White people who openly express progressive ideals of racial equality but who secretly harbour racist

beliefs about Black people. They argue that since it has become socially unacceptable to express racist views, White people will not openly express prejudice towards Black people and, when they act or speak in a prejudicial manner, they will seek out alternative explanations - other than racism - to explain their conduct. Dovidio and Gaertner's psychological studies on aversive racism demonstrate patterns of subtle racial bias which are invisible to White people but clearly recognised by Black people. Even when aversive racist behaviour is pointed out to White people, they deny it because it contradicts their self-perception as egalitarian and non-racist. The authors argue that aversive racism may be a factor affecting equality in the workplace in that it "can influence both the access of Blacks to the workplace and their performance in it" (2011, p. 115).

Bonilla-Silva (2018) includes covert racism as part of a 'new racism' and categorises it in four 'frames' used by White people: "abstract liberalism", "naturalization", "cultural racism" and "minimization of racism" (p. 56-57). 'Abstract liberalism' argues in favour of the universal ideals of equal rights for all and therefore rejects programmes like affirmative action which correct historical injustices. 'Naturalization' is used to normalise racial segregation on the basis of group choices, i.e., 'that is just the way things are' and is justified on the basis that, for example, Black people also prefer to be with 'their own'. 'Cultural racism' imposes apparently colour-blind social, economic and cultural characteristics on Black people and other racial minorities which racially stereotype these groups and are used as a justification for the continued existence of racial discrimination. Finally, White people use a range of strategies to deny or minimise racism. Bonilla-Silva (2018) argues that these frames allow White people "an interpretive matrix from where to extract arguments or explain a host of racial issues" (p. 74), and that they form a "formidable" defence against accusations of racism "because they provide whites a seemingly nonracial way of stating their racial views without appearing irrational or rabidly racist" (p. 75). Importantly, the pliability of these "central frames" allows for White people to accept certain 'exceptional' Black people who, in their view, do not conform with the cultural stereotype.

Covert racism has therefore been variously referred to as 'aversive racism' (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2011), 'silent racism' (Trepagnier, 2001, 2011), 'new racism' (Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich, 2011) and 'color-blind racism' (Bonilla-Silva, 2003, 2018). Despite differences in terminology, these scholars generally agree that covert racism is subtle and difficult to identify (allowing for "plausible deniability" on the part of White people (Coates, 2011a, p. 2)), leads to contradictory behaviour in White people who openly express progressive ideals of racial equality but who secretly harbour racist beliefs about Black people (Trepagnier, 2011), is experienced by Black people as everyday microaggressions ("[the] constant and continuing everyday reality of slights, insults, invalidations, and indignities") (Sue, 2010, p. xv) and is either invisible to or denied by White people (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2011). Covert racism operates

across all contexts of social interaction, including in organisations where it "can influence both the access of Blacks to the workplace and their performance in it" (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2011, p. 115).

Because explicit racist insults and terminology are not used in covert racism, White people resort to a 'discursive repertoire' (Frankenberg, 1993) which ostensibly disguises their stereotypical views of Black people (van Dijk, 1992; Foster, 2009). Bonilla-Silva (2002) observes five "stylistic components" in colour-blind racist discourse: "(1) whites' avoidance of direct racial language, (2) … rhetorical strategies or 'semantic moves' used by whites to safely express their racial views, (3) … [psychological] projection, (4) [use] of diminutives, and (5) [that] incursions into forbidden issues produce[s] almost total incoherence among many whites" (p. 41).

This has resulted in two types of race discourse which appear to be contradictory, but which are often used simultaneously by White people. One is the notion of 'colour-blindness', based on claims by Whites that they 'do not see' race, and which is closely linked to the claim that all humans are equal. While scientifically correct, the claim of universal human equality is ahistorical in that it fails to acknowledge years of slavery, colonialism and legislated racism which have a legacy impact on the social structures of the present, both in disadvantaging Black people and in advantaging White people (Bonilla-Silva, 2003, 2018; Bonilla-Silva & Dietrich, 2011). It ignores, denies or minimises the contextual history of racial oppression and its socio-economic legacy and adopts a 'post-race' worldview. It allows for White people who express colour-blind racism to ignore enduring race-based injustices and to oppose race-based measures to correct past injustices - often referring to it as 'reverse racism' - while professing egalitarian and 'non-racial' beliefs.

The other type of discourse is the normalised stereotypical depiction of Black people as culturally inferior - based on the unquestioned assumptions that certain cultures (White/Western) are more advanced than others and that members of less advanced cultures (non-White/non-Western) should aspire to assimilate into the advanced culture (van Dijk, 1987; Frankenberg, 1993; Feagin & O'Brien, 2003). This belief is represented in apparently unassailable cultural stereotypes which, although rooted in the justification for colonialism, slavery and apartheid and derived from scientific racism, "are cloaked in a socially acceptable manner" (Collins, 2011a, p. 535).

The meeting point of these seemingly contradictory discourses is the centralising of Western culture as normative, neutral and aspirational in which all people are treated equally, and where prejudice or oppression can be attributed to inherent cultural deficiencies of those who experience them. Bonilla-Silva and Forman (2000) and Bonilla-Silva (2018) argue that this perpetuates racial inequality while allowing White people to ignore the benefits which they continue to enjoy in a racially hierarchical society and to blame Black people for their own misfortune.

> *… the liberal, free market, and pragmatic rhetoric of color-blind racism allows Whites to defend White supremacy in an apparently nonracial manner… Color-blind racism allows Whites to appear 'not racist ("I believe in equality"), preserve their privileged status ("Discrimination ended in the sixties!"), blame Blacks for their lower status ("If you guys just work hard!") and criticize any institutional approach - such as affirmative action - that attempts to ameliorate racial inequality ("Reverse discrimination!") (Bonilla-Silva & Forman, 2000, p. 78).*

Feagin and O'Brien (2003) observe that this dominant view among White people involves a preference for "focus[ing] on troubled families, values, and culture as sources of black problems, rather than confronting persisting discrimination and systemic racism" (p. 128). This viewpoint absolves White people of any responsibility for the continued marginalisation and exclusion of Black people. In a logical extension of this mindset, this discourse is deployed in defence of the continued privileges for White people and against any policies - such as affirmative action - which are intended to redress historical imbalances. Research has shown that most White people regard affirmative action as contrary to their understanding of egalitarianism and a violation of the principle of merit (van Dijk, 1993; Feagin & O'Brien, 2003; DiTomaso et al., 2011).

Numerous studies in various fields of social science have established the adverse consequences of covert race discrimination, everyday racism and stereotyping on Black people (for example, Collins, 1993, 1997; Feagin & Sikes, 1994; Rosette et al., 2008; Carton & Rosette, 2011; Cook & Glass, 2014; Cotton et al., 2014; Anderson, 2015; Ndzwayiba et al., 2018; Myeza & April, 2021). Sue (2010) has undertaken extensive research on the psychological and physical illnesses experienced by marginalised groups, including Black people, who are the objects of everyday covert racist microaggressions. Unlike explicit racism where physical or mental harm can be immediately identified, microaggressions are everyday experiences which are not easily defined - by either victim or perpetrator. The experience of microaggressions includes personal stresses such as self-doubt, uncertainty about the intentions of others, feelings of powerlessness and the expending of time and energy in trying to make sense of the microaggression. Sue (2010) refers to the concept of "microinequities" in the business environment as the "pattern of being overlooked, underrespected, and devalued because of one's race or gender" (p. xvi). The damaging effects of everyday racism in the form of micro-aggressions build up over time and include physical illness in response to stress, low self-esteem, depression, exhaustion, anxiety, cognitive disruption and diminished functioning.

> *Subtle racism, sexism, and heterosexism remain relatively invisible and potentially harmful to the well-being, self-esteem, and standard of living of many marginalized groups in society. These daily common experiences of aggression may have significantly more and stronger effects on anger, frustration, and self-esteem than traditional, overt forms of racism, sexism and heterosexism (Sue 2010, p. xvi).*

Sue (2010) notes that the perpetrator is often unaware of their microaggressive behaviour which is usually either regarded as part of normal discourse or an innocent mistake. But the frequency of occurrence over time serves to entrench unequal power relations by further marginalising minority groups and causing harm to the well-being of those on the receiving end of microaggressions. Common racial micro-aggressions expressed towards Black people include "ascription of intellectual inferiority", "second-class citizenship", "assumption of criminality", "assumption of inferior status", "assumed universality of the Black experience" and assumed "superiority of White cultural values/communication styles" (p. 69).

2.2. Whiteness

Research on racism has tended to focus on the effects of racism on Black people and other racial non-elites (Reitman, 2006). Theorists are increasingly looking at racism from the perspective of how it is maintained and reproduced (Feagin & O'Brien, 2003; Feagin, 2013; Nkomo & Al Ariss, 2014; Carr, 2016; Syed & Özbilgin, 2019; Ozturk & Berber, 2022). If Black people are disadvantaged because of racism, then who and what is responsible for perpetuating that racism and who benefits from it? This necessarily involves an engagement with the concept of Whiteness.

Whiteness, although marked by phenotype, is a socially constructed identity which arises from centuries of slavery, colonialism and legislated racial discrimination by people of Western European origin. Nkomo and Al Ariss (2014) observe that "whiteness is not just a matter of phenotype or skin color. It is about power and privilege …" (p. 390). They refer to an "inexorable link" between "European global expansion and colonization, industrialization, and the racialization/ethnicization of nineteenth and the emergence of twentieth century US organizations" (p. 390). As noted in paragraph 2.1 (above), the construction of White European people as superior human-beings, legitimated and normalised the dominance of Western Europeans (and their descendants) over 'Others' - the indigenous people of the Americas, Africa and the East (Frankenberg, 1993; Mills, 1997, 2016; Steyn, 2001; Feagin & O'Brien, 2003; Bordas, 2012; Byrd & Ray, 2015; Blum, 2023). In this context, being White was associated with power, knowledge, education, progress, economic advances and political sophistication (Frankenberg, 1993). However, the attribution of such characteristics to White people could occur only by means of the existence of an 'Other' who was not White, was weak and childlike, and who lacked knowledge, education and sophistication. In other words, the 'virtues' of being White could only be defined in relation to an 'Other' who lacked these virtues (Frankenberg, 1993).

In this context, Whiteness can only be defined in relation to 'Others' - if it cannot be contrasted with those who are 'not White', Whiteness loses its meaning. It escapes precise definition because it is "fundamentally

a relational category" and "it is a space defined only by reference to those unnamed cultures it has flung to its perimeter" (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 231; Al Ariss et al., 2014). In evaluating Whiteness as a discursive identity Nakayama and Krizek (1999) argue that "there is no 'true essence' to 'whiteness'; there is only the historically contingent constructions of [its] social location" (p. 90).

Whiteness therefore "refers to a set of locations that are historically, socially, politically, and culturally reproduced and, moreover, are intrinsically linked to unfolding relations of domination" (Frankenberg 1993, p. 231). Accordingly, Whiteness "has a set of linked dimensions":

> *First, whiteness is a location of structural advantage, of race privilege, Second, it is a 'standpoint', a place from which white people look at ourselves, at others, and at society. Third, 'whiteness' refers to a set of cultural practices that are usually unmarked and unnamed (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 1).*

The combination of Whiteness and the racialised hierarchy of society perpetuates disadvantage for Black people and sustains White privilege for White people. McIntosh (1988) and Rothenberg (2016) refer to White privilege as the 'corollary' or 'other side' of racism. Sue (2016), drawing on his own earlier work, defines White privilege as:

> *the unearned advantages and benefits that accrues to White folks by virtue of a system normed on the experiences, values, and perceptions of their group. White privilege automatically confers dominance to one group, while subordinating groups of color in a descending relational hierarchy; it owes its existence to White supremacy; it is premised on the mistaken notion of individual meritocracy and deservedness (e.g., hard work and family values) rather than favoritism; it is deeply embedded in the structural, systemic and cultural workings of U.S. society; and it operates within an invisible veil of unspoken and protected secrecy (Sue, 2016, p. 21).*

McIntosh (1988) argues that "whites are carefully taught not to recognize white privilege". In observing her own experience, she states that, "[a]s a white person, I realized I had been taught about racism as something that puts others at a disadvantage, but had been taught not to see one of its corollary aspects, white privilege, which puts me at an advantage" (p. 1).

Frankenberg (1993) observes the manner in which Whiteness perpetuates particular norms of thinking: "ways of understanding history, ways of thinking about self and other, and even ways of thinking about the notion of culture itself" (p. 231). Feagin (2013) refers to the "white racial frame" as "a broad and persisting set of racial stereotypes, prejudices, ideologies, images, interpretations and narratives, emotions, and reactions to language accents, as well as racialized inclinations to discriminate" (p. xi).

The unmarkedness of Whiteness, together with its universality, gives it legitimacy and status (Nakayama & Krizek, 1999; Feagin & O'Brien, 2003). The socialisation of White people, all over the world, into "Eurocentric values, beliefs, standards and norms" results in Whiteness being imperceptible to them while simultaneously establishing a "default standard by which all other group norms and behaviors are consciously and unconsciously compared, contrasted, and made visible" (Sue, 2010, p. 114).

An essential characteristic of Whiteness is its collective nature. Like covert racism, it is not expressed in individual acts of White supremacy or explicit hatred or prejudice against Black people. The normativity of Whiteness means that it represents a "collective white consciousness and unconsciousness" (Feagin & O'Brien, 2003, p. 23) which is generationally transmitted, reproduced and reinforced within White familial, social, institutional and mass media systems (Frankenberg, 1993; Feagin, 2013). While White people may differ, within generations or across societies, in the extent to which they hold conservative or liberal views on race, there is an underlying consistency in their views which upholds the normative nature of Whiteness (Frankenberg, 1993; van Dijk, 1993; Steyn, 2001; Feagin & O'Brien, 2003). Feagin and O'Brien (2003) note that "… all whites find themselves in social settings where they participate in inherited patterns of thought" (p. 22). They note further that White elites, by virtue of being White and in positions of institutional authority have a disproportionate influence in maintaining White racialised consciousness (p. 11).

Sue (2004) places Whiteness in the context of "ethnocentric monoculturalism", "the invisible veil of a worldview that keeps White Euro Americans from recognizing the ethnocentric basis of their beliefs, values, and assumptions" (p. 764) and which is imposed on all social groups, including within the workplace (Reitman, 2006), as an unquestioned norm or standard. Relating it to cultural racism, Sue attributes the following five attributes to Whiteness and ethnocentric multiculturalism: "belief in superiority, 'choseness' and entitlement" (p. 764); "belief in the inferiority of other groups" (p. 765); "the power to define reality" (p. 765); "manifestation in institutions" (p. 766); and "the invisible veil" (p. 766).

The normative framework of Whiteness allows White people to think of themselves as "morally neutral, average, or ideal" (Sue 2016, p. 19). As White people view themselves in this manner, then they feel justified in using it as the standard by which they will judge people who are not White. Sue explains the link between Whiteness and racism as follows:

> *If we define individual racism as any attitude or action whether intentional or unintentional, conscious or unconscious, overt or covert that subordinates a person or group because of phenotypical traits most strongly manifested in skin color, and if Whiteness is considered the*

> *normative and superior standard by which such judgments are made, it becomes clear that most Whites cannot help but be tainted by racism" (Sue 2016, p. 20).*

Whiteness is the flipside of Black disadvantage (Rothenberg, 2016; Sue, 2016; Schmitt, 2018). It is the source from which all racism - including covert racism - is produced and perpetuated. Sue (2010) argues:

> *Covert racism hides in the background of Whiteness: (1) it is an unacknowledged secret protected through silence, (2) it advantages many Whites who enjoy unearned advantages due to skin color, and (3) it allows many Whites to deny responsibility for how it disadvantages and harms other groups of color (Sue, 2010, p. 115).*

This racism is obscured, however, through the conscious expression by White people of principles of equality, individuality and colour-blindness (Sue, 2016; Bonilla-Silva, 2018).

Sue's (2010) 'Four-Step Process Model of Whiteness to Racism Conversion' demonstrates how phenotypical Whiteness combined with the ideology of White supremacy and power (including institutional power) leads to racism. He defines racism as "the individual, institutional, and cultural expression of the superiority of one group's cultural heritage over another and the power to impose and enforce that worldview upon the general populace" (p. 117). He further specifies that racism must be seen both in terms of its disadvantage to Black people as well as its advantage to White people. The advantages thus enjoyed by Whites (consciously or unconsciously, intentionally or unintentionally) position White privilege as one aspect of racism and Black 'underprivilege' as the other.

Research into Whiteness has often centred on the discourse which White people use to justify White advantage and Black disadvantage. Steyn (2001) has studied the self-perceptions of White South Africans of various ages and social backgrounds in regard to their racial identity in post-apartheid South Africa. She identifies five narratives used by White respondents, including expressions of White supremacy and paternalism towards Black people, White victimhood and notions of 'reverse racism', Eurocentrism and colour-blindness. She refers to the use by White people of a "master narrative of whiteness" - which constitutes a "patterning of discourses that could oust other possible explanatory and constitutive discourses around markers of difference between the peoples enmeshed in colonial encounter" (p. 6). Steyn (2001) notes that notwithstanding changing historical circumstances in South Africa, White people "[drew] on the master narrative, interpreting it and adapting it to the particular circumstances in which they found themselves in the country [and] were able to maintain their advantage as the dominating group that controlled the political, material, and symbolic resources of the country for three centuries" (p. 43).

In the United States, Feagin and O'Brien's (2003) study of influential White men investigates Whiteness in the context of social, economic and political power and the 'collective white consciousness' which informs attitudes to issues such as affirmative action. This study includes an analysis of White discourse and the 'sincere fictions' of socially-constructed, inter-generational stories which White people tell themselves to justify social realities (often through stereotypes), to construct Whiteness as a non-racialised universal norm and to absolve themselves from the burden of responsibility for, or having benefited from, racism. The authors discuss further how the invisibility of Whiteness allows White people to regard themselves as objective arbiters of the truth when it comes to the existence of racism while simultaneously believing that Black people are incapable of objectivity on racism.

Trepagnier (2001) presents an analysis of the language used by White women in the United States who regard themselves as 'not racist' but who nevertheless communicate negative stereotypes about, and paternalist assumptions of Black people. Franchi (2003) shows how affirmative action is racialised in organisational discourse. Bonilla-Silva and Forman (2000) and Foster (2009) explore the 'race talk' of White American college students, finding a pattern of discursive strategies in which White people present themselves as non-racist, while blaming African Americans for racial inequalities. In Europe, van Dijk (1987, 1992) sets out how White elites, in particular, use discursive strategies to simultaneously express and mask their racist attitudes. Wetherell and Potter (1992) similarly examine racist discourse used by White New Zealanders in relation to indigenous Mãori people.

As stated above, theorists are increasingly looking at racism from the perspective of those who have "internalized the values and attitudes of white supremacy" (hooks, 2004, p. 69). Green, Sonn and Matsebula (2007) have called for a greater focus on Whiteness studies in previously colonised countries such as Australia and South Africa. They argue that anti-racist research should be centered on Whiteness rather than racism so as to "[focus] attention on how White people's identities are shaped by a broader racist culture". They posit that this approach "transcends the limitations of conventional studies of 'race' and racism by teasing out subtle or unconscious practices of racial discrimination, which are generally accepted as 'normal'" (p. 390).

The central objective of Whiteness scholars is to name Whiteness and make it visible, so that the normative structures which maintain White supremacy are exposed to analysis (Frankenberg, 1993; Nakayama & Krizek, 1999; Schmitt, 2018). "Whiteness as a racial identity maintains its privileged position in part by remaining mostly unexamined, yet at the same time being the standard by which racial 'Others' get measured" (Feagin & O'Brien, 2003, p. 66). In this sense, "[n]aming 'whiteness' displaces it from the unmarked, unnamed status that is itself an effect of its dominance" (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 6).

2.3. Organisational scholarship on race, racism and Whiteness

When drawing on the experiences of "seen invisibility" of scholars of colour in the context of normative assumptions regarding organisational epistemology, Liu (2022) asks why, despite social acknowledgement of racial inequality, "management studies remains ignorantly, obstinately, self-satisfyingly white?" (p. 777). This question sums up the conundrum faced by those who recognise the persistence of racial inequality and White dominance in the workplace in a context where organisational theory appears oblivious to it.

Organisational scholarship has been substantially limited in how it studies race, racism and power in the workplace (Nkomo & Al Ariss, 2014). Mainstream scholarship has explored the experiences of racial minorities in the workplace but the power structures which define these experiences have not been interrogated. In her seminal piece, 'The emperor has no clothes: Rewriting race in organizations', Nkomo (1992) reflects on the shortcomings of much organisational research which presumes that organisations are race-neutral and which discount race as a factor, except in the study of 'Others' - those who are not White. She states that "[t]his omission reflects an unconscious assumption by organizational researchers that [White] majority group members do not have a racial identity and, consequently, it is a 'nontopic' for research" (p. 500). Studies which focus implicitly on White men (without stating their race) are assumed to be capable of generalisation to all workplace situations while studies of 'raced' or 'gendered' (i.e., workplace minority or female) employees are regarded as specific to those groups of employees and are distinguished from the normative (unnamed) White male framework.

Specific fields of organisational scholarship include research which examines the experiences of stereotyping, exclusion and racism by Black people in the workplace and its impact on their well-being, self-perceptions and career progress. For example, Collins (1993, 1997) studies the difficulties faced by Black executives in American corporations. Booysen (2007) explores the barriers inhibiting employment equity at a South African bank, while Op t' Hoog, Siebers and Linde (2010) conducted research into the experiences of Black middle managers on a South African mine. Miller (2021) examines experiences of covert racism and racist microaggressions experienced by Black female managers in Britain. Ndzwayiba, Ukpere and Steyn (2018) present a critical analysis of the 'job-hopping' stereotype of Black professionals in South Africa and determined that this narrative had no factual basis and that it "[sought] to rationalise prejudice and marginalisation while sustaining positionalities of white superiority and black inferiority" (p. 1275). Myeza and April (2021) assess the self-perceptions of Black executives in the South African workplace and find that they constantly experienced race prejudice and stereotyping which impact both on their performance and their prospects in their organisations. Ferguson and Dougherty (2022) discuss the

‘paradox of the Black professional’ in the American workplace where Black people are required to ‘inhabit’ Whiteness to be regarded as professional.

However, while race has been explored through these negative experiences of racialised minorities, organisational scholars have done little in the way of examining the normative (‘unracialised’) status of White people in the workplace (Nkomo, 1992). Only workplace minorities are ‘raced’, while being White is regarded as a norm and prototype to which all others are compared and considered atypical (Nkomo, 1992; Grimes, 2001; Nkomo & Al Ariss, 2014; April et al., 2023). The social group identity of White employees, the concept of Whiteness, the continued power and domination of White men, White privilege and the effects thereof on organisational and institutional practices, are barely subjected to research scrutiny. Instead, White employees, especially those who hold institutional power, are accepted as ‘unraced’ individuals who represent the social and organisational norm and therefore remain racially ‘invisible in the workplace’ (Nkomo & Al Ariss, 2014; April, 2021). In other words, the power structures which shape and reproduce the stereotyping, exclusion and racism experienced by workplace minorities in the workplace environment have generally not been interrogated. In a review of leadership literature, Ospina and Foldy (2009) point out that “there is an implicit bias in the mainstream literature to construct models that use western views and “whiteness” as the referent from which to study and theorise leadership as a universal phenomenon” (p. 892). They draw attention to the relationship between race and power in organisations and argue that a study of race in institutions would assist in understanding privilege and inequality in the organisational context.

The paucity of work on Whiteness and White privilege in the field of organisational and management studies is surprising given the extent of research in the critical race theory and sociology fields. In a contribution to studies of covert racism, Collins and Davis (2011) engaged in a case study on the implementation of a diversity programme at an American company. They examine how the stereotypical beliefs by White management about Black employees - Black inferiority, laziness and lack of qualification - hamper the prospects of Black employees at a senior level and serve to entrench White power even within a company which had stated its commitment to increasing diversity. In discussing the hegemonic nature of White male power in the corporate hierarchy, Collins and Davis (2011) refer to the concept of ‘racialized recruiting’ which involves recruiting to fulfil quotas and which generally applies to Black people, as opposed to ‘general recruiting’ which comprises recruiting to fill positions on the basis of operational and strategic needs and which generally applies to White people.

In the field of critical sociology, DiTomaso, Parks-Yancy and Post (2011) explore the attitudes of White middle class and working-class workers who oppose affirmative action in the basis that it is contrary to the principle of ‘best person for the job’ and that it discriminates against White people. In the field of

intercultural relations, Franchi (2003) examines the discourse of symbolic racism used by White senior personnel in a case study of White and Black employees' attitudes to affirmative action at a South African parastatal. Without mentioning race directly, White supervisors use a range of discursive strategies, based on misinformation and stereotypes, to delegitimise affirmative action by representing Black employees as unqualified, incapable, unworthy and lacking in experience. The discourse used by the White supervisors defends the unequal status quo as a race-neutral norm, disguises their racist attitudes and presented White people as victims of reverse racism.

In the field of social psychology, Sue (2010) lists the psychological and physiological symptoms experienced by minorities (racial and gender) in the workplace (p. 214-216) and argues that color-blindness is a form of microaggression to the extent that it emphasises assimilation, suppresses the discussion of race and racism, disguises or minimises racist behaviour and perpetuates the myth of meritocracy while rendering white privilege invisible. In another psychological study, Dovidio and Gaertner (2000) showed how aversive racism comes into play in cases where there is ambiguity whether to select a Black or White candidate with similar qualifications and that White candidates are given the 'benefit of the doubt' in preference to Black candidates: "moderate qualifications are responded to as if they were strong qualifications when the candidate is white, but as if they were weak qualifications when the candidate is black" (p. 318). In applied psychology research on business leader prototypes, Rosette, Leonardelli and Phillips (2008) found that being White was considered an inherent quality of leadership and that White leaders were likely to be evaluated more positively than leaders who were not White. As a result, White people were more likely to be employed in or promoted to managerial positions than Black people. A study by Reitman (2006) in the domain of social geography, shows how White culture is normalised in the high-tech workplace in a manner which excludes other racial groups. A study in managerial psychology by Cotton et. al (2012) show how there is a positive and 'normal' association with names that are commonly understood as White and that people with these names are assumed to have a higher educational and socio-economic status than those with African-American sounding names.

Various organisational scholars have called for more research on race and power in the workplace. Ospina and Foldy (2009) argue that a study of race in institutions would assist in understanding privilege and inequality in an organisational context. Grimes (2001) borrows from hooks (1990) in a call for "interrogating whiteness" (2001, p. 133) in organisational research, to render visible the power structures which are maintained by the normalisation of White dominance. Al Ariss, Özbilgin, Tatli and April (2014) argue that the study of Whiteness is key to understanding racism in the workplace in that Whiteness and racial discrimination are two sides of the same coin. On the one hand, a study of Whiteness in organisations needs to look at the privileges accorded White employees as a dominant group owing to their normalised

racial group status; on the other hand, the concomitant effect of White privilege is that 'other' groups are marginalised or excluded. The authors consider the South African as well as the United States contexts and propose a framework for the study of Whiteness on three levels: individual, organisational and contextual. Such research must necessarily take account of the past (colonialism, slavery and apartheid), the fact that White privilege occurs across society and organisations and that this translates into exclusionary practices at the workplace level which impact on individual (non-White) employees.

Similarly, Nkomo and Al Ariss (2014) appeal for a greater scholarly focus on "managerial influences sustaining white privilege" (p. 399) In addition, Nkomo et al (2019) and Nkomo (2021) reflect on the persistent lack of attention paid to the role of Whiteness and power in perpetuating racial inequality in organisations, and stress the importance of understanding organisational diversity (or lack thereof) within the broader socio-political environment.

While recent interest in issues like unconscious bias and workplace diversity has provided a renewed basis for the consideration of race and racism in organisations, the glaring issue of White dominance and normativeness has continued in the main to be overlooked. In discussing corporate diversity in America, Collins (2011) posits that such initiatives are often largely symbolic and expresses doubt that they provide meaningful change for Black executives. She notes that the introduction of a wide range of human characteristics which inform 'diversity' mean that race has been relegated to the status of 'one among many' issues while "covering white employers with a gloss of inclusiveness" (p. 520). In this respect, corporate diversity policies actually serve to reinforce White dominance of the workplace.

Mayorga-Gallo (2019) refers to a 'diversity ideology' which, while notionally recognising inequality, disregards the fact that it is historically determined by White domination, and therefore reinforces normative Whiteness. While her research is based on racial diversity in American neighbourhoods, the concepts explored are comparable to the workplace. Mayorga-Gallo (2019) bases the logic of 'diversity ideology' on four tenets: "diversity as acceptance, diversity as intent, diversity as commodity, and diversity as liability" (p. 1789). Diversity as acceptance is based on principles of tolerance and inclusion without questioning the power relationship which determines who is tolerated or included by whom. Mayorga-Gallo (2019) states that "[b]y defining acceptance of people of color as the threshold for promoting diversity, white organizations can let themselves off the hook and maintain the whiteness of their organizations" (p. 1796). Diversity as intent relates to the emphasis on the good intentions of White people in diversity conversations, "by focusing more on identity construction (e.g., not racist, progressive, and inclusive) than structural changes and the production of equitable results" (p. 1796). Diversity as commodity relates to the symbolic appropriation of Black people to represent White commitment to equality and is evident from practices such as tokenism and window-dressing. Diversity as liability deals with White discomfort over

issues such as affirmative action "and frames white racial comfort as more important than diversity" (p. 1802). Mayorga-Gallo (2019) concludes that, in all its aspects, diversity ideology is used as a tool by White people in positions of power "to obfuscate their role in reproducing a system of whiteness" (p. 1804).

In her analysis of organisational philosophies regarding diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), DiTomaso (2021) points to the lack of historical context in DEI initiatives and argues that a proper contextual approach "requires showing the relevance in the present of what has in the past shaped the differences that we take for granted as essential, enduring, and consequential" (p. 2025). She states that, contrary to its 'let us all get along' approach, diversity is always racially hierarchical in that it is based on hundreds of years of historical domination of Black people by White people. Moreover, the inclusion of a long list of possible 'differences' in addition to race, has diverted attention from this racial hierarchy and thus reinforced White domination. In turning to the idea of bias as the root cause of inequality, DiTomaso (2021) argues that research has "focused almost exclusively on eliminating **bias against** minorities and women, with little if any attention to the **bias that works for** Whites and men" (p. 2038) (emphasis added). Referencing Mills (1997), she refers to "an 'epistemological ignorance'" concerning the position and role of White people in continued inequality, "that is an agreement not to know about the domination of Whites over Non-whites" (p. 2039). Further, to the extent that racism is acknowledged by White individuals, it is always attributed to other White people, never themselves.

Nkomo, Bell, Roberts, Joshi and Thatcher (2019) note that while diversity theory originated in the United States, diversity scholarship and practice has spread across the world. They review theoretical approaches which argue that diversity increases business efficacy and competitiveness, as well as the idea that diversity extends beyond race and gender to many kinds of 'difference', including "values, personality, knowledge, tenure, and skills" (p. 501). They note that in many organisational studies, such differences feature equally or more prominently than "race, gender, and other socially marked categories that were historical bases of discrimination and legal protection (p. 501). This results in a focus on individual, often idiosyncratic, differences and ignores the hierarchical power of certain groups over others. Nkomo et. al (2019) refer to diversity "happy talk" which includes "statements about valuing diversity and strength in diversity but encompasses racial and ethnic minorities, women, and LGBTQ individuals, alongside pet owners and birth order affinity groups as part of the 'diversity' that is valued, conflating identity- based differences with those that have little meaning in societal systems of discrimination and oppression" (p. 506). They conclude that the continued failure to recognise how White normativity leads to Black marginalisation, renders Western diversity approaches ineffectual in tackling inequality and, in practice, reinforces White dominance in the workplace.

In summary, approaches to diversity and unconscious bias have been ahistorical and have failed to recognise or problematise the continued normativity of Whiteness and the workplace dominance and power of White men in particular (Collins, 2011; Mayorga-Gallo, 2019; Nkomo et al., 2019 DiTomaso, 2021, 2023).

In reflecting on the 25 years since she first pointed out the failure of mainstream organisational scholarship to deal adequately with race, racism and dominant Whiteness, Nkomo (2021) observes that little progress has been made and that discussions of race have largely been replaced by scholarship on diversity. She calls for an approach to race in organisations which adopts multiple theoretical perspectives including post-colonial theory, Whiteness studies and the sociology of race and questions whether it is possible to continue to pursue the study of race within the context of diversity. In an appeal for recognition of the historical basis of systems of domination and oppression, she highlights the fact that "[e]nding racism is not just about changing the minds of biased individuals or increasing the representation of marginalized groups" and that more research is required on "understanding anti-Blackness and its eradication in the construction of a new vision of humanity to supplant a racialized conception that casts White people as superior humans" (2021, p. 217).

3. Gap in the literature and the contribution of the proposed research

The literature review shows that there has been extensive research - in the fields of social-psychology and critical race studies - into how normative Whiteness perpetuates racism in contemporary society. In addition, this scholarship has started to engage directly with White people on the issues of racism and White privilege. On the contrary, organisational scholarship, to the extent that it has addressed race at all, has focused primarily on the experiences of racism by workplace minorities, has failed to interrogate the role of White executives in the perpetuation of racism, and has not dealt with the issue of normative Whiteness in the workplace. Indeed, the organisational scholars referred to above have specifically called for more research on Whiteness, to understand ongoing racism in the workplace.

This issue is particularly poignant in the South African private sector workplace which remains in the control of the White demographic minority while the Black demographic majority is significantly under-represented in executive management positions (April, 2021). While the views of White South Africans on issues relating to race have been explored in the post-apartheid period (Steyn, 2001), there has been no investigation into the exercise of power by White executives within the substantial South African private sector and the influence of White dominance on workplace racism.

The significance of the proposed research, therefore, is that it will shift the focus on workplace racism to the locus of workplace power - White executives - and assess how the normalisation of Whiteness influences, intentionally or sub-consciously, the perpetuation of employment and organisational discrimination against Black people. This will be explored through the following research question:

How do White executives' perceptions of race, racism and their own White identity, influence their decision-making in regard to Black professionals?

In addressing the main question, the researcher will seek to answer the following sub-questions:

- ***How do White executives view employment equity and the dominance of White management in the private sector?***
- ***What is the attitude of White respondents to the reported lived experiences of Black professionals in the private sector?***
- ***How do White respondents perceive themselves in relation to issues of race and racism?***
- ***What patterns are discernible in the discourse used by White respondents in relation to employment equity and issues of race and racism in South Africa?***

CHAPTER TWO: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

1. Introduction

This dissertation involved a qualitative research process (Creswell & Poth, 2018) based on in-depth semi-structured interviews with 35 White men and women in top and senior executive positions in the South African private sector. The interviews constituted the primary data for the analysis which was approached from a hermeneutic phenomenological perspective (Laverty, 2003; Lopez & Willis, 2004; Langdridge, 2008; van Manen, 2014, 2016) including elements of critical discourse analysis (Wetherell & Potter, 1992; Fairclough, 2001; van Dijk, 2004). Importantly, and consistent with the principles of hermeneutic phenomenology, the researcher who is a White South African woman in her 50s with top management experience in the private sector, adopted a self-reflexive approach to the research which acknowledged the subjectivity of her position, both within the interviews and in the analysis of the data.

This methodology chapter is divided into two parts. First, it sets out the methodological approaches used in the research. Secondly, it describes the methods involved in selecting the respondents, gathering the data and engaging in data analysis.

2. Methodological approach

This section sets out the methodology used in the research for this dissertation. It starts with a discussion of hermeneutic phenomenology, considering it within the broader context of phenomenology, and a discussion of critical discourse analysis. The next section deals with the reflexivity of the researcher and the acknowledgment of her subjective position in relation to the research. After that, the research methodology is situated within critical management studies and the principles which govern this field of research. Finally, the conclusion briefly sets out the relevance of the application of this methodology to the current research.

2.1. Hermeneutic phenomenology

Hermeneutic phenomenology, with its emphasis on the interpretation of lived experience, necessarily involves a qualitative, inductive approach to research (Starks & Trinidad, 2007; Miles et al., 2020). This approach differs from quantitative, deductive research which takes place in a laboratory or controlled setting and which aims to test pre-existing hypotheses (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Qualitative research takes place

in natural settings and is primarily concerned with the notion of theoretical understanding as opposed to proving or disproving a theory. In addition, the very nature of critical research, which questions normative frameworks, is that reality cannot be objectively determined and that meaning is socially constructed. This places critical studies squarely in the qualitative framework (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Phenomenology is the study of lived experience (van Manen, 2016) which is the "experience that we live through before we take a reflective view of it" (van Manen, 2014, p. 42). It seeks to uncover the rich depth of meaning which humans assign to their lives, often unconsciously (van Manen, 2016), and to arrive at a true essence of understanding (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenology aims to get behind the triviality of day-to-day experience and expose apparently self-evident presumptions to unearth deeper insights and to understand how people make meaning from such insights (Laverty, 2003; Starks & Trinidad, 2007; van Manen, 2014).

Although phenomenology originated in philosophy, it has been utilised as a methodology in the social sciences. Moustakas (1994) summarises the key aspects of phenomenological methodology as:

- A focus on getting at the true essence of things unmediated by taken-for-grantedness, presuppositions or perceptual bias;
- Looking at things from all sides in order to acquire as complete a picture as possible;
- Conscious reflection on experience to achieve deeper and richer understanding;
- Fidelity to the actual detailed descriptions of experience which reflect the essence of the experience as accurately as possible;
- Intense personal interest by the researcher in the phenomenon under investigation;
- Interrelationship between the objective and the subjective.

(Moustakas, 1994, p. 58-59)

Because it focuses on lived experience, a phenomenological inquiry involves first-hand accounts, usually in the context of an interview, by those who have experienced the phenomenon under investigation (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2015).

> *The point of phenomenological research is to 'borrow' other people's experiences and their reflections on their experiences in order to better be able to come to an understanding of the deeper meaning or significance of an aspect of human experience, in the context of the whole of human experience (van Manen, 2016, p. 91).*

It is important to note that there are two distinctive schools of thought in phenomenology - descriptive and interpretive (otherwise known as hermeneutic phenomenology). Descriptive phenomenology assumes that

there is an essence of meaning which can be obtained that is universal and independent of socio-historical influences. Because of this assumption, it requires a completely neutral approach by the researcher to the subject of the research and while it acknowledges that the researcher will inevitably have certain biases or beliefs, the method requires the researcher to set aside or 'bracket' her subjectivity during the phenomenological investigation (Lopez & Willis, 2004).

Hermeneutic (interpretive) phenomenology, on the other hand, is less concerned with unmediated essence and focuses more on the meaning of lived experience - the 'lifeworld' of the subject - and how the subject makes sense of this. Hermeneutic phenomenology acknowledges phenomenology's emphasis on questioning the apparently obvious and the search for a deeper meaning below the surface of everyday thought or action. However, it differs with descriptive phenomenology in that it recognises that personal experience cannot be separated from socialisation and that language, culture and social background are an indispensable part of the manner in which a person understands their lived experience (Lopez & Willis, 2004).

Similarly, hermeneutic phenomenology acknowledges that it is impossible for the researcher to abandon her biases and opinions during the phenomenological inquiry. Instead, the researcher's personal experience and/or expertise, is integral to the research project (Lopez & Willis, 2004), as "…[i]t is to the extent that my experiences could be our experiences that the phenomenologist wants to be reflectively aware of certain experiential meanings …" (van Manen, 2016, p. 85). However, it is important that the researcher explicitly acknowledges and is constantly conscious of her own knowledge, insights and biases and the extent to which they influence the phenomenological inquiry (Lopez & Willis, 2004; Langdridge, 2008; van Manen, 2016).

Hermeneutic phenomenology maintains that all personal experience is subject to, and cannot be separated from, interpretation, and that this interpretation is conveyed through language (van Manen, 2016, p. 229), which is determined by one's socio-cultural background. As a result, discourse is a central focus of hermeneutic phenomenological studies. As Van Manen (2016) argues, "… lived experience is soaked through with language" (p. 64) and hermeneutical phenomenology seeks to interpret the "texts" of lived experience (p. 23). For this purpose, "texts" includes both speech and writing (Laverty, 2003).

> *In everyday life we are able to engage in our daily practices because they are to a certain degree habituated, repeatable, common, reproducible. That is why we speak of common or everyday language…. However, at the origin of the reproducibility of everyday thought and language are hidden the originating thoughts and poetic images that make the reproducibility of life possible. Phenomenology aims to grasp and express these originating meanings … (van Manen, 2014, p. 42).*

The interpretive approach of hermeneutic phenomenology further enables it to be used in critical studies in that it allows the application of critical theory as a framework to the phenomenological inquiry. Critical hermeneutics is a field within interpretive phenomenology which seeks to understand lived experience within a socio-historical context (Lopez & Willis, 2004, p. 730) and the extent to which this can "elucidate issues of power, privilege, and injustice" (Zschomler, 2017, p. 21).

Van Manen (2016) appears to discourage any relationship between phenomenology and social science disciplines (p. 31) and cautions against confusing hermeneutic phenomenology with content analysis (on the basis that content analysis presupposes certain assumptions in the approach to the text) (p. 52-53). However, elsewhere he argues that hermeneutical phenomenology is a "critical philosophy of action" in that its requirement for reflexivity and being more attentive to that which is normative "deepens thought and therefore radicalizes thinking" (p. 198).

> *And so to become more thoughtfully or attentively aware of aspects of human life which hitherto were merely glossed over or taken-for granted will more likely bring us to the edge of speaking up, speaking out, or decisively acting in social situations that ask for such action. And while phenomenology as form of inquiry does not prescribe any particular political agenda suited for the social historical circumstances of a particular group or social class, the thoughtfulness phenomenology sponsors is more likely to lead to an indignation, concern, or commitment that, if appropriate, may prompt us to turn to such political agenda (van Manen, 2016, p. 198).*

On the other hand, some social psychology scholars have argued that a phenomenological approach is inadequate in dealing with critical studies because of its focus on description (Langdridge, 2008). In arguing against this criticism Langdridge (2008) points out that "… political expression may be understood through an understanding of the lived experience of the individual" and that through hermeneutic inquiry, "it is possible to critically examine lived experience such that experiences imbued with power and politics may be identified". He proposes a dual analytic approach - referred to as a 'critical narrative analysis' - which aims to remain faithful to the objective of understanding lived experience ('hermeneutics of empathy') and while adopting a critical perspective ('hermeneutics of suspicion'). In acknowledging the complexity of such an approach he emphasises that "…such critique must operate dialectically with respect for empathic understanding and tradition such that analytic understanding remains attuned to the lived experience of the subject/s of such investigations" (p. 1136).

Langdridge (2008) also points out the limitations of using a hermeneutic phenomenological approach in that, when describing lived experience, research subjects may simply reproduce their experience in "discourses of oppression" (p. 1136). This necessitates that the researcher pays close attention to the

discourse used by subjects in a phenomenological inquiry. Alvesson and Kärreman (2000) suggest a 'discursive pragmatism' which recognises that while language can represent a rich and deep interpretation of meaning, it is also socially and politically constructed. For example, respondents who are executive managers are likely to convey their views in the corporate vocabulary (Williams, 2012; Ho, 2016) which has been developed around politically-sensitive issues such as affirmative action. This approach accepts that language cannot be relied upon to present an unfiltered essence of reality but that, at the same time, to focus only on language (as in a strict discourse analysis methodology), is to limit one's research and the possibility of uncovering deeper meaning in the phenomena being studied.

Critical theorists in a variety of disciplines have regularly used discourse analysis when researching the relationship between language, prejudice and power (Wetherell & Potter, 1992; Fairclough, 2001; van Dijk, 2004, 2011). Van Dijk (2004) states that critical discourse analysis involves "focusing on the role of discourse in the (re) production and challenge of dominance" where dominance is defined as "the exercise of social power by elites, institutions or groups, that results in social inequality, including political, cultural, class, ethnic, racial and gender inequality". He emphasises that this is a "top-down" approach which aims to discover how power is sustained through the reproduction of discourse including "the more or less overt support, enactment, representation, legitimation, denial, mitigation or concealment of dominance" (2004, p. 300). According to Wetherell and Potter (1992), discourse analysis reflects socio-psychological practices which are evident in the reproduction and maintenance of racism - "activities of justification, rationalization, categorization, attribution, making sense, naming, blaming and identifying" (p. 2).

Ahmed (2007) specifically proposes phenomenology as a means of understanding Whiteness within the framework of critical race studies. Although her argument primarily concerns the lived experiences of Black women navigating White spaces, she points to the usefulness of phenomenology in making Whiteness visible: "A phenomenology of whiteness helps us to notice institutional habits; it brings what is behind, what does not get seen as the background to social action, to the surface in a certain way" (p. 165). More recently, Schwarz and Lindqvist (2018) adopted a phenomenological approach to understanding normative Whiteness among teachers and its adverse effects on a Black child within the context of a Swedish pre-school.

In summary, while the hermeneutic phenomenological approach seeks to look behind the language used, to get at the essence of Whiteness as experienced and expressed by the respondent, the process of critical discourse analysis seeks to evaluate how the language itself reproduces and reinforces Whiteness.

2.2. Self-reflexivity

The issue of the self-reflexivity of the researcher is central to the hermeneutic phenomenological approach. Instead of the 'bracketing' required in traditional phenomenological research, hermeneutic phenomenology embraces the involvement of the researcher and what she brings to the research project in terms of prior experience and expertise (Laverty, 2003; van Manen, 2016; Zschomler, 2017).

> *Qualitative inquiry is personal. The researcher is the instrument of inquiry. What brings you to an inquiry matters. Your background, experience, training, skills, interpersonal competence, capacity for empathy, cross-cultural sensitivity, and how you, as a person, engage in fieldwork and analysis - these things undergird the credibility of your findings. Reflection on how your data collection and interpretation are affected by who you are, what's going on in your life, what you care about, how you view the world, and how you've chosen to study what interests you is a part of qualitative methodology (Patton, 2015, p. 3).*

However, it is important that the researcher attempts to keep an open mind during the research process so as not to inhibit a deeper understanding of the phenomenon and the respondent's lived experience (van Manen, 2016). Therefore, the researcher must consciously recognise her presumptions and biases and how these could impact on the conducting of the research.

> *For the phenomenologist, participants' experiences form the data. The aim is to describe these experiences in order to make them visible in the participants' own terms. In other words, the aim is to try and get as close an understanding of the participants' lived experiences, as is possible. This involves us in becoming aware of our own beliefs, biases and assumptions and setting them to one side in order that we can see the world through our participants' eyes (Langdridge, 2008, p. 1129).*

In such a research context, the researcher must constantly be aware that "her sense of self, values and place in the world is partly constituted out of [the discourse being analysed]" and that "… at times the process of analysis is largely based around critically interrogating one's own taken-for-granted assumptions and expectations" (Wetherell & Potter, 1992, p. 103).

2.3. Critical management studies

As the proposed research involves a critical analysis of the influence of normative Whiteness in the workplace, it falls within the domain of critical management studies. Critical management studies seek to question established norms, interrogate the use of dominant language and to probe below the surface of what is taken-for-granted in organisational management (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000; Grey & Fournier, 2010;

Ho, 2016). In challenging normative attitudes and discourse, such research is concerned with "investigating themes that are more hidden, that do not materialize so easily, or that are not fully registered or experienced by the subjects involved" (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000, p. 166). This involves a qualitative, critical approach to enable an understanding of "the micropractices of everyday life" within the context of "questioning established social orders, dominating practices, ideologies, discourses and institutions" (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000, p. 7).

Alvesson and Deetz (2000) propose three tasks in critical management studies methodology: insight, critique and transformative redefinitions.

- ***Insight***

The *insight* task requires an investigation into everyday experiences - a "commitment to the hermeneutic, interpretative and ethnographic goals of local understandings closely connected to and appreciative of the lives of real people in real situations" (p. 17).

While critical management studies are concerned with broad social, economic and political issues, such issues arise from and are reinforced by daily practice on a localised level: "Critical studies relate empirical themes at hand to the wider historical, economic, cultural and political context, but domination and decisional constraints are often local in form and the connection between levels is complex and less than obvious" (p. 18). The purpose of the insight task, therefore, is to understand how the phenomenon being studied manifests itself at a local, everyday level in normative practice and discourse.

> *Insight in both a hermeneutic and archaeological sense detaches knowledge from the ahistorical 'truth' claim and reopens a consideration of its formation thereby reframing knowledge and giving choices that previously were hidden by the accepted knowledge, standard practices, and existing concepts (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000, p. 142).*

Developing *insight* within the framework of critical studies is to 'make strange' or problematise that which is taken-for-granted. The process of this stage of the research, therefore, requires an approach which interrogates social conceptions and discourse which may be regarded as normal or obvious - to turn "the well-known into the exotic" (p. 172).

- ***Critique***

While *insight* focuses on the local and the individual, *critique* situates the phenomenon within the broader social, political and historical context (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000, p. 18) and provides a framework for analysing the social production and reinforcement of dominant ideology and power (p. 144).

Understanding the 'unmediated' reality of the subjects of the research is therefore not the main purpose of the study - the primary objective is understanding how the subject makes meaning of [their] life within the broader socio-political context and how this is interpreted and expressed (p. 141). This includes an interrogation of how structures of hegemony, power and dominant culture influence the perception of reality by the research subjects.

> *The critique task demonstrates our commitment to the analytical aspects of critical traditions which recognize the possibility of domination in local formations and to reconnect local forms and meanings to larger social, historical and political processes (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000, p. 17).*

- ***Transformative redefinition***

Alvesson and Deetz (2000) define *transformative redefinition* as:

> *… the opening up of a new ways of engaging the social world - ways marked by critical insight and added ethical considerations and inspiration for new forms of practice in which certain biases, blinkers, constraints and frozen orientations are struggled with in a more enlightened and reflective manner, and more social criteria for responsibility are taken into account (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000, p. 151).*

This task is important in critical studies in order to avoid the trap of 'research for research sake' and rather to use research insights as a means for changing attitudes of those in power and enhancing social equality. Drawing on Freire (1970), Alvesson and Deetz (2000, p. 145) point out the tendency of social researchers to treat their subjects as objects and thus fail to attribute any potential for agency by those who are being researched. Instead, the process and outcomes of the research should be oriented towards a change in thinking and behaviour by the research subjects.

> *The transformative redefinition task demonstrates our commitment to the more pragmatic aspects of critical thought, recognizing that insight and critique without support for social action leaves research detached and sterile (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000, p. 17).*

2.4. Application of the methodology

The researcher applied hermeneutic phenomenology to the research analysis to engage in an exploration into the beliefs, attitudes and worldview of the White respondents in the context of the apparent invisibility, 'everydayness', 'taken-for-grantedness' and normativity of Whiteness (Frankenberg, 1993; West, 2011; Carr, 2016; Sue, 2016; Wekker, 2016; Schmitt, 2018). This was undertaken through semi-structured

interviews which engaged the respondents on vital issues concerning employment equity in the private sector workplace.

Since discourse is critical in the maintenance and reproduction of normative Whiteness, the researcher was constantly mindful of the language used by the respondents. In this context, the discourse analytical approach was key to uncovering beliefs and assumptions which were not candidly expressed by the respondents, and which may have been obscured through the use of corporate or avoidant language. As stated by Alvesson and Kärreman (2000): "If the representational capacity of language is in doubt or denied, then the study of language use is what is left as robust and reliably replicated empirical phenomena" (p. 141).

The complementary combination of hermeneutic phenomenology and discourse analysis therefore enabled the researcher to strike a balance between the attempt to uncover deeply and unconsciously held beliefs which are constructed by normative Whiteness, and the recognition that the words of the respondents may be infused with the discourse of Whiteness. The researcher also used hermeneutic phenomenology as a methodology for addressing the *insight* and *critique* elements of the critical management studies tasks, while the conclusions of the final analysis make pragmatic recommendations regarding a *transformative redefinition* in the approach by White executives to employment equity, as well as highlight areas for further research.

3. Method

> *Method is how one develops research questions, how one attends to social reality, what vocabularies are used in clarifying and reinterpreting what emerges in the voices of the members of the site community. Method is also how one achieves a level of systematicity and logic in the way empirical material is treated, for example principles for how to cope with the ambiguities and contradictions in interview statements, observations and other empirical material. Method connects theoretical frameworks with the production and productive use of empirical material. It involves careful and systematic consideration of what empirical material may tell us. Method is thus not primarily a matter of 'data management' or the mechanics and logistics of data production/ processing, but is a reflexive activity where empirical material calls for careful interpretation - a process in which the theoretical, political and ethical issues are central (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000, p. 4 & 5).*

The primary research method in this study was the conducting of in-person, in-depth, semi-structured interviews (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 2014; Creswell & Poth, 2018) with White executives in the South African private sector.

This section sets out, in chronological order, the methodical process followed by the researcher in the current study. Section 3.1 deals with preliminary focus group research conducted by the researcher to form a basis for discussion in the respondent interviews. Section 3.2 deals with the selection and recruitment of the White respondents while section 3.3 sets out key demographic and professional details about the respondents. Section 3.4 describes the data-gathering process in the conducting of the interviews. It includes an overview of the position of the researcher and the use of the focus group research in the context of the interviews. Finally, section 3.5 describes the process of transcription, coding and analysis.

3.1. Prior focus group research

Prior to conducting interviews with the White respondents, the researcher engaged in focus group research (Morgan, 1996, 2001) among Black professionals on their workplace experiences. The purpose of the focus groups was to gather information from Black professionals about their lived experiences of racism and to use this information to elicit responses from and facilitate discussion with the White respondents. **Accordingly, the narratives from the focus groups are not a formal part of the PhD research.**

In her study of Wall Street bankers which aimed to interrogate the normativity and invisibility of their power and decision-making, Ho (2016) specifically proposed the use of alternative stories from marginalised groups to elicit responses from research subjects: "… one concrete strategy is to intersect and put into conversation these narratives with alternative, marginalized, and competing discourses and practices". She observed that "[s]uch a method allows the ethnographer to triangulate - to test, situate, complicate - dominant representations…" (p. 39).

The researcher engaged a reputable independent research agency, the Kantar Group ('Kantar'), to select the participants for the focus groups and to provide an independent moderator for the focus group discussions. The decision to engage Kantar to manage these aspects of the focus group research was based on the importance of emphasising the independence of the research when the findings were presented to the White respondents. Six (6) focus groups of Black professionals, with a total of 42 participants were held via Zoom in Johannesburg and Cape Town. A summary of the focus group sampling, methods and results is attached at *Annexure 1*.

The focus groups were intended to achieve the following objectives in the interviews with the White respondents:

- Present the perspectives of Black professionals directly and in an unmediated manner;
- Capture anecdotal reports of workplace experiences in a research setting;

- Encourage the White respondents to respond comprehensively to issues which they might otherwise attempt to avoid, gloss over or deny;
- Introduce an alternative reference point (independent of researcher questions and insights) to elicit more honest and open disclosure from the White respondents.

The focus group results were an important tool in countering the dominant narratives of Whiteness in the workplace and, in the context of the interviews, obliged the respondents to consider issues of racism which they might otherwise have attempted to avoid, gloss over or deny. Solórzano and Yosso (2002) observe that "[t]he counter-story is also a tool for exposing, analyzing, and challenging the majoritarian stories of racial privilege" and that "[c]ounter-stories can shatter complacency, challenge the dominant discourse on race, and further the struggle for racial reform" (p. 32).

Additionally, in view of the self-conscious and self-reflexive nature of the researcher's work, the focus groups enabled her to remain focused on the lived experiences of Black professionals while engaging in interviews with the White respondents. As a White researcher, it was natural for the researcher to relate to the White respondents' viewpoints and discourse. The focus group research provided her with an empathetic reference point (the lived experiences of the Black professionals) which would 'check' her own Whiteness and assumptions when engaging in the respondent interviews. The valuable knowledge which the researcher gleaned in the focus groups would, for want of a better term 'keep her honest', during the respondent interviews. It also enabled her to go beyond theoretical issues of racism and Whiteness and ground the interviews in the respondents' responses to statements by Black professionals working in the private sector.

3.2. Selection and recruitment of White respondents

A purposeful sampling approach (Patton, 2015; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Miles et al., 2020) was used to identify the 35 respondents for the research. Patton (2015) defines purposeful sampling as "[s]trategically selecting information-rich cases to study, cases that by their nature and substance will illuminate the inquiry question being investigated" (p. 265). In other words the selection of interviewees is made on "conceptual grounds" and not on "representative grounds" (Miles et al., 2020, p. 29). In this context, the depth and richness of the interviews - and the ability to detect patterns and themes among the respondents' interpretations of their lived experience - was the key focus of the sampling strategy (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Miles et al., 2020).

The researcher's primary means of selecting respondents was through internet searches to identify potential respondents from company websites which list information about executive management. The researcher

then telephoned the company concerned and requested the contact details for the relevant executive or (in most cases) their personal assistant (PA). After securing e-mail details, the respondent followed up with a letter, a sample of which is attached at *Annexure 2*. In most cases, the respondents or their PA then contacted the researcher to agree to or decline the interview. Most requests for interviews were successful.

In some cases, respondents referred the researcher to other respondents, in a sampling process which is known as 'snowballing' (Patton, 2015), sometimes recommending interviews with other executives in the same company. Two (2) respondents were recommended by a personal acquaintance of the researcher. Respondents from a total of 26 companies were interviewed. In two (2) instances, there were three (3) respondents from the same company and in one (1) case there were four (4) respondents from the same company. In one (1) case, three (3) executives from the same group of companies were interviewed but each belonged to a different company.

The demographic and professional requirements for the respondents were as follows:

- White South African;
- Men or women (but predominantly men, owing to the dominance of White men in top and senior positions);
- Employed in senior or top management;
- Predominantly based in the metropolitan areas of Gauteng and the Western Cape (which are the main commercial centres in South Africa.

3.3. Details of the respondents

The 35 respondents included 6 women and 29 men, with an age range of 40s to 70s. The majority of respondents resided in the metropolitan areas of Gauteng and the Western Cape, with one (1) each from Durban and Bloemfontein.

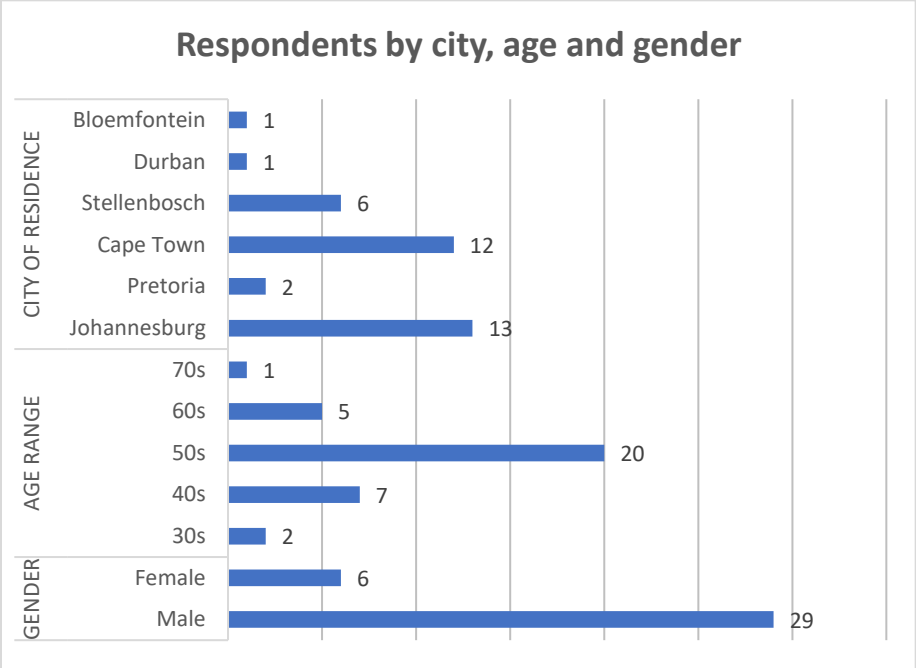

Figure A

The respondents were drawn from a wide range of private sector industries including ICT, fisheries, advertising, legal, education, wholesale, mining and resources, manufacturing, retail, healthcare, consulting and financial services and property. Sixteen (16) of the respondents worked for companies that are listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, two (2) worked for companies which are listed on foreign stock exchanges and eight (8) of them worked for privately owned companies.

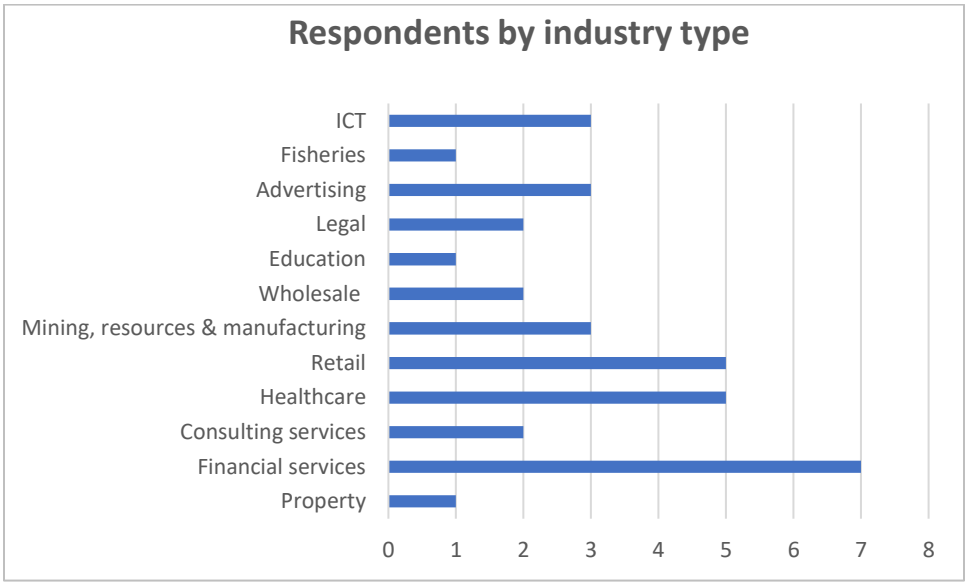

Figure B

The respondents consisted of 24 top managers and 11 senior managers, as defined in the South African Employment Equity Act (Act 55 of 1998) and the regulations issued thereunder. Fifteen (15) of the respondents were Chief Executive Officers (CEOs), nine (9) were in top executive positions other than CEO, for example Chief Operating Officers, and 11 were in senior general management positions.

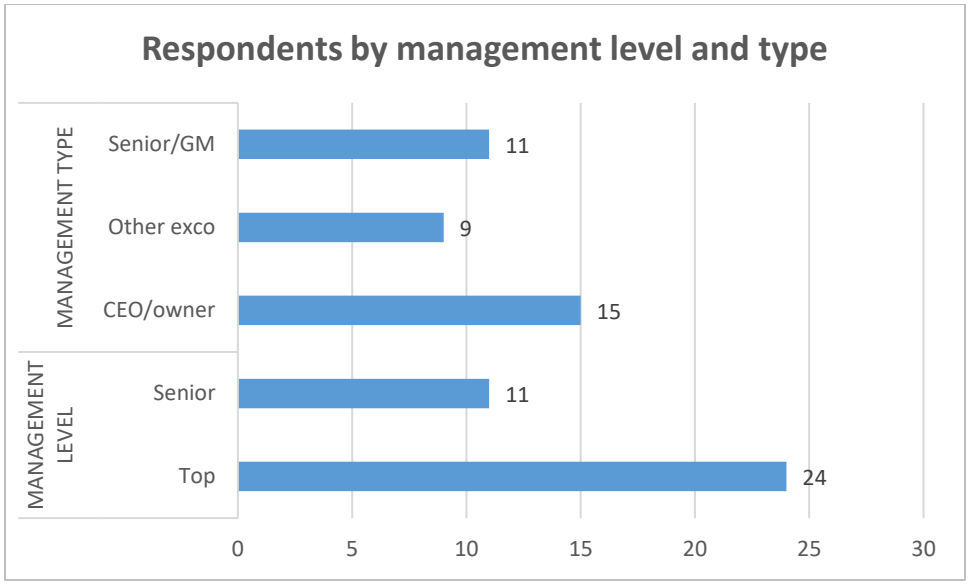

Figure C

Of the 35 respondents, 20 spoke English as a home language, 14 spoke Afrikaans and 1 was bilingual. Ten (10) of them were born and grew up in rural South Africa while 23 were born and grew up in urban South Africa. One (1) was born in South Africa but spent time abroad when growing up and one (1) was born abroad but is a South African citizen. Seven (7) of the respondents went to English or Jewish private schools while the remainder were approximately evenly split between English and Afrikaans government schools. Nineteen (19) respondents described themselves as having grown up in a middle-class home, while four (4) described their background as poor and six (6) said they had grown up in a wealthy home. Thirty-one (31) of the respondents were university-educated.

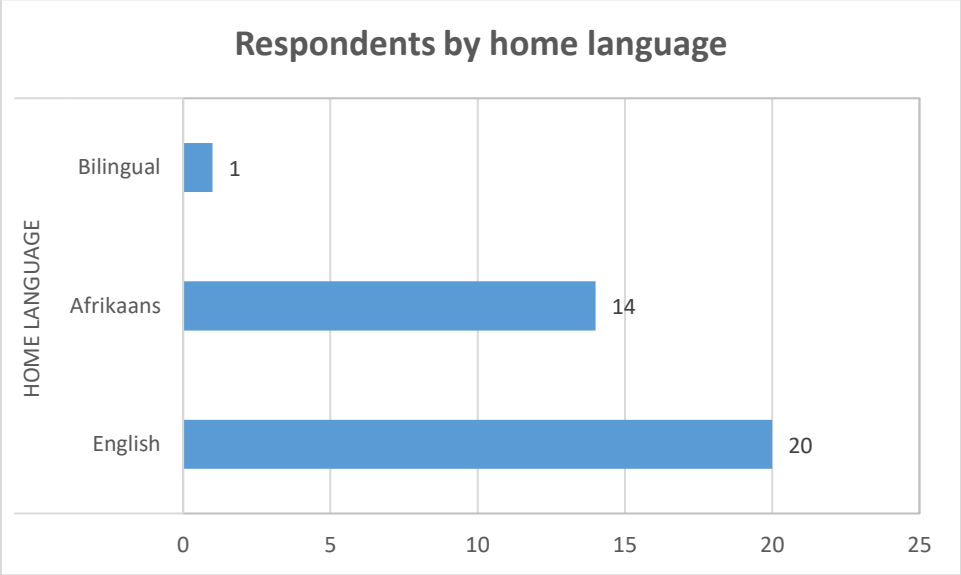

Figure D

3.4. Conducting the interviews

A total of 55 one-hour semi-structured interviews were conducted with the 35 respondents over the course of 2021 and 2022. Twenty (20) of the respondents were interviewed on two (2) separate occasions to enable the researcher to engage further with them on issues which had come up in other respondent interviews and/or on insights which the researcher had developed over the course of the first round of interviews. The interviews were initially intended to take place in person in Johannesburg and Cape Town. However, the onset of the Covid pandemic compelled the researcher to use Zoom or MS Teams for the interviews. This means of interviewing was generally accepted during the Covid period and the researcher continued to conduct online interviews even after Covid restrictions were limited. The use of online interviews, in

addition to providing greater convenience for both the researcher and respondents, also enabled the researcher to recruit respondents in other urban areas such as Bloemfontein and Durban. While the researcher was initially concerned that the use of online interviews may hamper candid disclosure by respondents, this did not appear to be the case and, in retrospect, it may be that being (i) in a familiar environment and (ii) physically separated from eachother, may have contributed to greater comfort and candour for both the respondent and the researcher.

Further details relating to the interviews are set out below under four sub-headings. The first deals with the context of the respondent interviews and the challenges which arose in dealing with race as a subject. The second deals with the reflexive position of the researcher in the context of the interviews. The third and last section addressed the manner in which the researcher used the focus group research to elicit responses from the respondents.

3.4.1. Interview context and structure

To engage in a successful hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry, the researcher needed, on the one hand, to make the respondents as comfortable as possible in making confidential disclosures regarding their views on race, racism and Whiteness in the workplace. On the other hand, she needed to explore difficult questions which are not customarily asked of White executives and which had the potential to annoy them, resulting in them either avoiding or refusing to answer, or, in the worst case, terminating the interview. In addressing these tense contradictions, the researcher: (i) opened all the interviews by disclosing her personal history as a White person and White executive; and (ii) used the focus group research as a means to 'triangulate' discussions on race. Further, while the respondents were aware that the interview would engage with issues of race and Whiteness, the interview was structured in the context of an investigation into the respondents' views on employment equity, thus providing a highly relevant corporate topic as a departure point for discussions on more sensitive discussions on race.

The initial interviews with the 35 respondents were broadly structured according to the following protocol:

- A brief introduction by the researcher regarding the structure of the interview and including the researcher's telling of her own story;
- The respondent's personal life story as it related to his or her identity as a White person;
- The respondent's views on the concept of employment equity;
- The respondent's views on the reasons for the dominance of White executives at senior and top management positions in the South African private sector;
- The respondent's views on the issues raised by Black professionals in the focus group research;

- The respondent's general views on race and racism in South Africa;
- Feedback from the respondent on their views of the research and any other issues they wanted to raise.

As the interviews were deliberately constructed as conversational, some interviews canvassed certain of the above issues more than others. The second round of interviews with 20 of the respondents included follow-ups on some of these issues to the extent that there were gaps from the first interviews.

The respondents' trust in the confidentiality of the process was critical to the successful outcome of the research. Accordingly, the researcher notified the respondents of the confidentiality (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000; Fram, 2013; Gill, 2015; Miller, 2021) of the process in letters prior to the interviews. In addition, the researcher opened each interview by acknowledging the sensitivity of the subject, informing the respondent that they did not have to disclose any information which made them uncomfortable, reassuring each respondent that their identity would not be disclosed and confirming that any information used from the interview would be represented under a pseudonym. The respondent was also reminded that the interview was being recorded.

3.4.2. The position of the researcher

The researcher is a White South African woman in her fifties with fifteen years' experience at a senior and top management level in the South African private sector, whose experience included primary executive responsibility for the formulation, implementation and measuring of employment equity plans at a top media group based in Johannesburg and Cape Town. In the circumstances, the researcher was able to relate both personally (as a White South African) and professionally (as a White executive in the private sector) to the interview respondents. This had many advantages but, given the sensitivity of the research topic, also involved risks.

Given that the current study involved research into Whiteness by a White researcher, two aspects had to be kept in mind. On the one hand, the researcher enjoyed a racial insider status (Frankenberg, 1993; Twine, 2000) which assisted in encouraging respondents to reflect deeply and honestly on their lived experiences. On the other hand, this insider status could create an expectation that the researcher had the same worldview as the respondents. In these circumstances, questioning the assumed shared worldview and seeking to approach it from a critical perspective risked a defensive or hostile response from respondents (Frankenberg, 1993; Gallagher, 2000; Islam, 2000; Kenny, 2000). In her seminal research on the social construction of Whiteness among White women, Frankenberg (1993) observed the challenges which arose from "the special difficulties involved in interviewing white women on what for many of them was … a 'taboo' topic that generated areas of memory lapse, silence, shame, and evasion" (p. 23). This was even

more likely in the case of senior (elite) respondents who were not used to being questioned on sensitive issues and who could simultaneously feel materially and reputationally vulnerable in the context of honest expressions regarding racism and Whiteness.

Frankenberg (1993) noted that her approach to interviews with her respondents involved a "dialogical approach". She recalled:

> *Rather than maintaining the traditionally distant, apparently objective, and so-called blank-faced research persona, I positioned myself as explicitly involved in the questions, at times sharing with interviewees either information about my own life or elements of my own analysis of racism as it developed through the research process (p. 30).*

In the current research, the researcher started each interview with her own personal disclosure regarding her identity as a White person growing up and in corporate life. Owing to the conversational nature of the interviews, the exact words used in this disclosure varied each time. However, a sample of a typical personal disclosure by the researcher at the beginning of the interview is set out below:

> *"And I'll just give you an example of my background I was born in, in Zimbabwe, which was then Rhodesia, and we emigrated in 1983. The first time, I think, well, there was a little bit of mixed schooling - a year and a half in Zimbabwe, before we came to South Africa. But the first time I actually came across peers, or people who were senior to me who were Black, was at university. And I kind of feel that those formative experiences of how one relates to someone of another race - probably for Black people and for White people - whether you've got the sense of White people being in control and in charge and Black people be working for them, that that informs our approach... whether it's - in most cases, probably unconsciously - to the way in which we manage ... our workplaces."*

In some cases, when probing management practices or approaches to employment equity, the researcher would disclose reflections from her corporate experience:

> *"... it's only recently, since I've been out of corporate, that I've really considered that I'd never looked at myself. So for me, [transformation] was a project that was out there. It was raising up Black employees it was training them, it was mentoring them. But I didn't look at my own prejudices, my own assumptions. And I'll give you one example is that ... nothing infuriated me more than if there was an allegation of racism in our company, because I 'knew' what racism was. And only now do I reflect and think, 'Well, actually, as a White person, how much do you know what racism is?'... Um, can you speak to that? And, you know, have you had moments in your corporate life where you've*

> *actually reflected on not just what you're doing out there, and you know, and the fact that that's progressive and transformational, but that in yourself, there may be things that you have to change or look at differently?"*

In several interviews when discussing unconscious bias, the researcher disclosed instances where she had acted in an unconsciously racist manner.

> *"So I walk into Melissa's, and there's a Black woman standing there near the counter. And I'm looking for olive bread. And what do I do? I go to the Black woman and I say, 'Excuse me? Could you tell me where the olive bread is?' And what have I done? She's a customer. She's not a shop assistant. Now, how often does that happen, okay? And I'm excruciatingly embarrassed because she said to me, 'no, sorry, I don't work here, but you know, maybe you can ask one of those ladies'... Who are in uniform! I mean, I don't even know how I missed that. And at that moment, I just thought, you're such an idiot. I mean you've just put this whole thing in about unconscious bias and here you're doing it."*

These and other disclosures at appropriate moments in the interviews aimed to facilitate discussion on racism, to lower inhibitions and to put the respondents at ease regarding their own disclosures. However, they also served an important moral purpose in the context of the research as a whole - the acknowledgement that racism is not something which is only performed in bad faith by morally deficient people. As noted by Frankenberg (1993), a White woman, "… in carrying out the research for this book, I viewed myself, as much as the women I interviewed, as situated within the relations of racism" (p. 30). Further, it indicated to the respondent that the researcher did not 'absolve' herself from her Whiteness nor her own racism. In her study of White South Africans, Steyn (2001), also a White woman, observed that "[a]s a white South African I am greatly implicated in racism and structural privilege; I am part of what I study" and that "[i]n the research I had to name my whiteness, inasmuch as the respondents were confronted by theirs the instant they knew the topic of the research" (p. xxxv).

During the interview discussions, the researcher also needed to remain vigilant about not slipping into the embedded discourse of Whiteness or acquiescing to racist jokes in the pursuit of rapport-building with respondents. The balancing of these two, often contradictory positions, involved constant critical self-reflection throughout the interview process, a process described by Frankenberg (1993) as "a complex set of adjustments in self-presentation" (p. 35).

3.4.3. The use of the focus group research

Prior to each interview, the researcher forwarded to the respondent an interview guideline, a sample of which is attached as *Annexure 3*. This included an outline of the interview process as well as a brief summary of some of the issues raised by Black professionals in the focus groups. The purpose of the guideline was to enable respondents to consider some of the issues in advance and therefore to be better prepared for the interview. The guideline was updated with minor revisions from time to time as the interviews progressed. The following views of Black professionals were included in all versions of the guideline:

- Black professionals say they are not taken seriously - they are not trusted, their expertise is questioned and they often have to get a White person to validate their contributions;
- White managers do not expect them to perform well and are surprised when they do;
- Black professionals often have less autonomy and decision-making powers than White counterparts;
- Their companies tolerate or excuse racism by clients and customers;
- Incidents of racism are not taken seriously by their employers or are swept under the carpet (they are often told not to be so sensitive to racism);
- Lodging formal complaints about racism in their company would be a threat to their career and could even result in dismissal;
- Companies prefer compliant Black employees to independent thinkers;
- They are often excluded from non-work-related social events attended by White colleagues.

Given the limited duration of the interviews, it was not always possible to canvass all the issues raised by the Black professionals. Moreover, as the interviews were semi-structured and conducted in a conversational style, additional issues were sometimes raised. In later interviews, the researcher introduced some of the statements made by respondents in research conducted by Myeza and April (2021) and this led to the exploration of additional issues, such as the association of incompetence in the government with Black professionals in the private sector.

The focus group research provided a substantive basis for the introduction to interview discussions, of matters which would ordinarily be dismissed as without merit or ‘playing the race card’. While it did not prevent some respondents from taking this approach, it compelled most respondents to seriously engage on the issues raised by Black professionals and to confront the reported lived experiences of Black people on the other side of Whiteness.

3.5. Transcription, coding and analysis

The interviews were recorded and electronically transcribed, using the Otter.ai online transcription service (Bazeley, 2021). While the transcriptions were largely accurate, Otter.ai appeared to experience difficulty with South African accents and thus mis-transcribed certain words. The researcher read through each electronic transcription while listening to the recording of the associated interview. This gave the researcher the opportunity to: (i) correct errors in the transcription; (ii) anonymise the transcription by giving the respondent a pseudonym and redacting parts of the transcript which would potentially identify the respondent, the company which they worked for, or identify any other person whom the respondent referred to in the interview; and (iii) enable the researcher to make further notes for the analysis of data, as well as note potential issues to explore further with the respondent concerned.

On completion of all 55 interviews, the transcripts were coded in Nvivo14 (Miles et al., 2020; Bazeley, 2021) using the following process:

- First, the transcripts were coded according to the broad topics (‘umbrella codes’) governing the structure of the interview: (i) Respondent personal background; (ii) Respondent views on employment equity; (iii) Respondent views on the continued dominance of White executives in senior and top management; (iv) Respondent views on the issues raised by Black professionals; (v) Any other issues raised by respondents.

- Secondly, as patterns began to emerge in the review of the transcripts, ‘thematic codes’ were added to the initial codes above. This process also gave rise to new ‘umbrella’ codes, the most important of which were: Extent of awareness of racism and Whiteness; Respondent views on race and racism in South Africa. The thematic codes reflected the patterns in findings under each of the ‘umbrella’ codes and formed the primary basis for the analysis.

- Thirdly, the researcher reviewed all the transcripts with a specific focus on the discourse used by respondents. This led to a third set of ‘discourse’ codes, separate from the ‘umbrella’ and ‘thematic’ codes referred to above, but containing overlapping information. The purpose of the ‘discourse’ codes was to provide a specific focus on the language used by the respondents throughout the interviews in the context of racism and Whiteness.

The process of the initial ‘umbrella’ and secondary ‘thematic’ transcript coding was accompanied by extensive analytical noting which happened simultaneously to the coding. Handwritten notes from the first review of the transcripts were added to various coding memos (and supplemented where necessary). The respondent developed a ‘story’ for each of the 35 respondents, which was essentially a narrative description

of the respondent, their background, and the researcher's thoughts regarding their views on race, racism and Whiteness. Separate memos were retained for 'Method' (which included notes about method and approach from the outset of the research) and 'General Reflections' (which contained most of the researcher's conceptual ideas, including detailed self-reflective notes). In the 'discourse' coding, the researcher sought specific phrases, words and patterns relevant to the study on racism and Whiteness. All this information was stored under one project in NVivo.

The coding provided two layers of analysis. Firstly, a conceptual analysis which considered responses from respondents in regard to specified concepts, and secondly, a discursive analysis (which considered the language used by respondents in those responses).

The coding process itself provided a foundation for analytical thinking by the researcher. As observed by Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2020): "Some research methodologists believe that coding is merely technical, preparatory work for higher level thinking about the study. But we believe that coding is deep reflection about, and thus, deep interpretation of the data's meanings. In other words **coding is analysis**" (p. 63) (emphasis added). This observation was evident in the present research during the process of developing, adjusting and enhancing the coding framework.

The challenge for the researcher was being bold enough to make definitive findings concerning racism and Whiteness. Give the sensitivity of the research topic, the researcher was particularly conscious of ensuring that all the coded data was observed and analysed in its context, which involved a constant process of reading and re-reading the relevant sections of the transcripts. For example, if one or two sentences from the data represented key data for a particular finding, the researcher was meticulous about situating those sentences in the broader context of what the respondent had said. This was important in ensuring that the findings, analysis and conclusion were based on a reliable interpretation of the data - an interpretation that was supported by the statements made, as well as the context in which they were made. While extremely time-consuming, this process was indispensable in ensuring the validity of the findings.

In addition, this iterative process was extended to the representation of data in the findings document. Given that the research had benefited from on-the-record (though anonymous) statements by respondents who would usually never speak openly on these issues, it was important to include extensive respondent quotes in the findings. Moreover, reproducing these quotes in the findings, and in their correct context enabled the researcher to engage in the analysis, having 'discharged the burden of proof' regarding beliefs and attitudes which are often denied. Presenting the findings in such a manner enabled the researcher to: (i) take the findings as a 'given' and (ii) dive deeper into issues such as discourse and rhetorical devices when writing the thematic analysis.

Finally, the data was critically analysed within the theoretical framework of Whiteness and racism studies, taking account of the extant literature, and the extent to which the data reflected, contradicted or provided new insights into the field. Recommendations for further research and proposals concerning organisational practice are included in the analysis and conclusion.

CHAPTER THREE: FINDINGS AND OBSERVATIONS

This chapter sets out the key findings of the research arising from the interviews with the 35 White respondents. It is divided into five sections.

The first three sections deal with statements made by the respondents regarding specific topics raised for discussion in the semi-structured interviews: their early lives; their beliefs and attitudes concerning employment equity (EE); their views on the continued dominance of White people in senior and top management positions in the private sector; and their responses to the reported experiences of Black professionals in the workplace.

The last two sections deal with insights that are largely inferred from the discussions in the semi-structured interviews. In other words, these include matters that were often not asked directly of respondents, but which were apparent in their statements regarding the specific topics referred to above. These findings set out the respondents' implicit beliefs about racism and Whiteness and highlight particular language used in the course of the interviews which are relevant to an analysis of racism and Whiteness.

Because of the often controversial nature of the subject matter of this dissertation, and also because of the importance of discourse in relation to race, racism and Whiteness, the researcher has extensively included direct quotes from respondents which will provide substantive depth and context to the analysis set out in Chapter 4.

Notes on terminology and confidentiality:

(i) The use of the word 'Black' in this dissertation includes all groups designated as Black by the South African Employment Equity Act (Act. No 55 of 1998) (hereafter referred to simply as the EE Act) and the relevant regulations issued in terms of this Act. It therefore includes Black African, Coloured and Indian people. However, the following should be noted:

   a. The term 'Black African' has been used to facilitate comprehension, for readers outside of the South African context, of the race terminology in this dissertation.
   b. Respondents often use the word 'Black' to mean 'Black African' only. To the extent that this is relevant in the context of the particular quotation, the word 'African' has been inserted in square brackets prior to the word 'Black'.
   c. The term 'Coloured' constitutes terminology invented by the apartheid state and is a term which is not accepted by all people designated as such. The researcher

acknowledges these objections and uses this term only because it is used in the regulations issued under the EE Act and is a term which is understood by the respondents.

d. The term 'Indian' refers to South Africans of Indian descent.
e. 'Black minorities', for the purpose of this dissertation, means Coloured and Indian people.
f. All references to race have been capitalised.

(ii) All respondents have been given pseudonyms and any identifying information has been deleted from quotes. References to other people or companies are included simply by a description of the race and gender of the person (where relevant) or the word 'company' in relation to the organisation.

(iii) The term 'executive management' has been used to refer to the categories of 'senior management' and 'top management', as set out in the EE Act.

(iv) References to the reported experiences of Black professionals include the focus group research summarised at Annexure 1, as well as published academic research which was referred to by the researcher during the course of the interviews.

(v) "B-BBEE" refers to Broad-Based Black Employment Equity as legislated in Act 53 of 2003.

1. Respondents' early experiences of race

These findings deal with respondents' early experiences of race from childhood, up to and including early work experiences. This information was usually provided by respondents at the outset of the interview and provided an opportunity for gathering demographic information as well as an understanding of the personal historical circumstances of the respondent. In almost all interviews this discussion was initiated by the researcher telling her own story. Respondents sometimes initially avoided raising anything relating to race in their personal stories or they provided a 'CV-type' summary of their lives. However, in most cases it was possible to prompt them to ask what they remembered about apartheid or their early encounters with Black people.

1.1. Findings

Almost all the respondents were born and grew up in apartheid South Africa. Most attended Whites-only government schools or private schools which consisted mainly of White children. Younger respondents were in high school at the advent of democracy, but White children still formed the majority in these schools attended by the respondents. Most respondents experienced growing up in entirely or predominantly White spaces as a 'normal' childhood and most of them reported little awareness of racism or apartheid. Childhood interactions with Black people were, in most cases, limited to domestic workers, farmworkers or children of farmworkers, and were idealised as warm happy memories. Some respondents recalled some vague awareness of apartheid but that it felt normal to them as they were not exposed to anything else.

DEON	*"I kind of grew up in that 'this is just the way it is, sort of environment' you know. I mean, my, my parents didn't really engage issues of race. To be fair, they didn't, they never used racist slurs or anything like that whereas I did hear a lot of that kind of, a lot of that kind of thing growing up. So for me, that was just the way the world was, you know. There was a, there was a, you know, there was a gardener, you had a domestic worker, and you had a garden. The domestic worker stayed in a little flatlet at the back of your house and went home on, over the weekends."*
ZANDER	*"So when I grew up, you know, we, you know, I was one of those okes that played with the little Black guys … But, you know, my whole mindset was, you know, we different, they're not allowed there on Sundays, we can play Saturdays and, you know, we play everything - we taught them, you know, cards, monopoly, you know …. But on Sundays, they weren't allowed. And we went to different schools. But it was like, you know, I don't know, you ... we just didn't ask questions because it was just like, that's the way it worked, was, you know …"*
IAN	*"I think in South Africa, you know, obviously growing up a a similar age through that apartheid era. I mean, you immediately become, you know, conscious of race. But I mean, not in a, in a negative way. I mean, I remember as a small kid I used to sit, you know, when the gardener came. And I think he came on a Wednesday. He used to make me sugar, white er white bread sugar, and white sugar sandwiches … and we'd sit and eat them in the garden together. So so so I always enjoyed him coming. So it wasn't exactly that there was a particular negative."*
ANNE	*"My father was a professor of [Faculty] at Pretoria University. And we used to as children occasionally just go with him for a drive to the hospital, when he had to go and fetch something or something like that. And it would... you go to this hospital where the Whites were, and that hospital where the Blacks were. So there was a very visual and obvious divide. And also the visual and obvious divide back then of Whites only on the buses, Whites only in the post office, you know that, those sort of real obvious apartheid systems that were in place. But I don't think I thought about it rationally that much as a young child. It was just almost like that, that's how it is, you know?"*

Several respondents spoke about the notion of 'not knowing', being 'innocent', and living an insulated life oblivious to what was happening in South Africa. Often, this was couched in language of neutrality - such as not being involved in, or aware of, politics.

GARY	*"... as far as the country was going in 85, that was the, you know, the first state of emergency and, and all the drama but as as White kids, growing up totally obviously insulated and isolated and cocooned against all that was happening, you know."*
HANNES	*"Grew up in a traditional White home. Ja, people say that I've been a White privileged man. But I grew up in a normal, traditional Afrikaans conservative religious home. But, but our family has never been aware of any politics."*

A few respondents recalled experiences which made them question the apparent normality of their lives. This included respondents who had spent time abroad with their families and had been exposed to a more multi-racial environment. Several respondents spoke about their first awareness of apartheid being in a context of the prevailing views expressed by most White South Africans about the liberation movements, specifically the African National Congress (ANC) during the 1980s and early 1990s.

DEON	*"You know, the ANC were communists, you know. They were supporting a ... they were supported by the Russians, you know. But even if you asked me what that meant, I didn't really understand well, what were the Russians. For me, the Russians were the bad guys in James Bond movies."*

Many respondents reflected on their parents' views of apartheid. In most cases, respondents felt that their parents' views were 'conservative' while their own views were more enlightened. These respondents, however, stressed that their parents were benign towards all people regardless of race. A minority of respondents said that their parents as more actively liberal or left-wing, often describing them as 'politically aware'.

Several respondents spoke of their changing consciousness of race in university, college and early adulthood. For many, this was the first time that they became aware of the widespread opposition to the apartheid system. University encounters with Black peers largely occurred at English-speaking universities and were often couched in terms of protest and politics.

GARY	*"Before I got to UCT, very politically unaware, you know, um and, you know. And at UCT there were there were there were times where, you know, you'd get annoyed that you can't go to your lectures because of of of of the intimidation and the violence or whatever, you know. And initially, I think there was ... amongst me and my friends who came from a probably similar background, there was some, there was some unhappiness with it or that ... you could maybe understand where it was all coming from, you know. You were at university to have fun and study and politics, in our minds at that time, shouldn't have come into it. But, you know, that's that was in hindsight quite a narrow view. But it was, it was, um, you know it was probably because of our upbringing and where we came from."*

A few respondents spoke about their own opposition to apartheid while at university – usually English-language universities. This was usually accompanied by individual anecdotes of their disagreement with prevailing views held by White people at the time. Some attended Afrikaans-language universities which remained almost exclusively White for the duration of their studies.

Those who attended military service did not view it has having had any impact on their views on race. With one exception, they generally reported it as a benign experience.

The majority of the respondents entered the workplace for the first time in the late eighties and early nineties, while the younger respondents started work around 2000. Several respondents recalled a particular moment when they had first encountered a Black peer in the workplace.

DIRK	*"... I did a stint at er, as a, call it an internship if you like, with [Company] in [suburb] in Pretoria and my my senior ... that was while I was studying, er was [African man], their head of PR was a was a Black [African] guy. Brilliant manager and, and .. you know I mean, if I say ... he was er really outstanding and well respected, so that was ... [pause] um ... It was still unusual at the time, but it wasn't .... I mean, he was incredibly competent guy, so it's very easy.... You know, you forget ... because if someone's competent, you don't, you know, you respect the person as a .. for their competency."*

A few respondents remembered racism and discrimination against Black working people in their early working lives. These respondents usually provided personal anecdotes to illustrate these incidents and stated that these experiences were significant in their understanding of apartheid.

HARRY	*"And then I also, during my vacs from from Wits, I worked on the mines, you know, to get extra ... money. And I think the job there as well, it was very clear that the divide between the White people on the mine versus the Black people on the mine ... it really was dehumanising, you know the the split then."*

During the interviews, most respondents acknowledged that South Africa was still impacted by its apartheid legacy. This was expressed primarily in their recognition of the socio-economic disparities between Black and White South Africans. Apartheid was, however, generally described as a system that was historically distanced and outside of the control of the respondents. One respondent wryly observed that it wasn't possible to find people who had voted in favour of apartheid. The general sense among most respondents was that (i) as children, they had little awareness of apartheid and (ii) as White people they were trapped in a system which was beyond their control.

ALISTER	*"And it's quite difficult to explain that [to our children], you know, we were like kind of caught in a system, in the system, where there wasn't a ... there wasn't a way for us to to ... Well, we didn't even think to challenge that kind of thing. That's just the way it was."*

Most respondents (with very few exceptions who mentioned personal friendships with Black people) had little social interaction with Black peers outside of their workplace. They also believed that this limited social interaction between races extended to South African society as a whole. They referred, somewhat wistfully, to their children's multiracial friendships. Several felt that their children's views on race were more progressive than their own. This was not only presented in the context of their children's social circle but also as children of this generation 'not seeing colour'.

Several respondents touched on the issue of privilege. Among these respondents, most were aware of and acknowledged the benefits of White privilege in South Africa.

DIRK	*"In South Africa, particularly, we are we are exceedingly privileged. It's just the way we grew up. I mean whether you, whether you chose to or not, you have ... you are privileged. You know, I remember doing my MBA, and there was a guy, a Black guy, he was a doctor, and he says, 'How is it possible that there are poor White people? How's it possible, explain this to me, that there are poor Whites? How's there ... is it possible that there are White people that need help'. And, I I couldn't answer the guy. I said, 'You're absolutely right. Yeah. 100%'."*
MELISSA	*"Being White gave me opportunities. My parents grew up very, very poor. Both of them studied with bursaries. But they had the ability to go study because they were White, and they got that bursaries."*
WILLIAM	*"I grew up in a family of ... in Cape Town ... in a family of seven children. My father died when I was sort of standard ... what are those days? ... standard five. And as the eldest one in the family, I had quite a lot to do with bringing, you know, the family up. So I would say things like, you know, 'I know what it's like to struggle'. But that's all bullshit, because when I left school ... I got on the bus on my last day of school, drove into Cape Town, walked into [Company], applied for a job and got a job. No Black kid could do that. So you know, you think about things like that."*
DANIEL	*"... I think it's a lot easier to get a job if you're a White kid, than if you're a Black kid. Whether you've got an education or whether you haven't. I just think it's, it's, it's easier for whatever reason, but it's definitely easier."*

A few respondents felt that as they came from poor families, they were not privileged. Others stated that even though they were privileged, their success in the workplace was due only to their hard work and/or the sacrifices of their parents.

ARNO	*"... I also had to work very hard for everything I've got. I haven't. There was no handout. There was no handout. Thank God, I had to work for everything, I've got today."*
BRETT	*"... I'm in no, under no disillusion that I had a very privileged upbringing. I mean, I didn't go to private schools and I can't say that, you know, we lived a lavish lifestyle, but I never went to bed hungry, I always had shoes on my feet, and I got a great education, you know, and I was always well taken care of. Um, you know, I don't ... I also know that I didn't come from a family trust fund and my parents worked incredibly hard to be able to give that to my brothers…"*

1.2. Observations

Most respondents experienced a similar upbringing as White people in apartheid South Africa. They did not encounter Black peers in any meaningful way until they reached university, college or the workplace. Even then, for the older White respondents, engagement with Black peers was rare as there were few Black professionals entering the workplace at the same time as them. A minority of respondents spoke about an early awareness of the injustices of apartheid owing to their parents being more liberal. However, it was not surprising that most respondents tended to present their childhood recollections as one of normality, innocence and ignorance of the realities of apartheid.

Respondents who had grown up in rural areas (mainly Afrikaans-speaking) were more likely than urban children to have experienced peer relationships with Black children (playing with kids on the farm) in their formative years. Respondents who grew up in urban areas were generally more insulated from peer relationships with Black children, their exposure to Black people being more through domestic worker relationships. All respondents who spoke of such interactions were keen to present them in a positive light. What was apparent from most respondents, however, is that prior to attending university or entering the workplace, they had very little exposure to or knowledge of the circumstances and lived experiences of the majority of Black people in South Africa, particularly Black African people. Even at university, most respondents did not develop strong peer relationships with Black people and their experiences of Black people were largely in terms of political protests and campus disruptions.

While many respondents accepted that they were privileged, only a minority of respondents accepted the concept of White privilege specifically as White skin privilege (as opposed to economic (class) privilege). Many of the respondents cited their own humble beginnings as a basis for arguing either that they did not benefit from White privilege or that White privilege did not give them particular advantages in life. Several respondents were equivocal in their answers – not wanting to deny White privilege but also minimising its impact.

2. Respondents' attitudes to EE and their views on the dominance of White people in executive management

This section is divided into two parts. The first part sets out the views of respondents on EE as a concept while the second part deals with respondents' beliefs regarding the reasons for the continued dominance of White people in executive management after 30 years since the advent of democracy in South Africa.

2.1. Respondent views on EE as a concept

2.1.1. Findings

Respondents were asked about the first thought that came to mind at the mention of the term 'employment equity'. Most of them supported the ideal of EE and many of them spoke about it in terms the value which diversity adds to the workplace. The majority of respondents stressed the notion of workplace diversity as representing best business practice globally and they justified their support for EE in that context. A few respondents mentioned the importance of redress for apartheid and said that it was important for businesses to be representative of the demographics of the country. Those respondents whose businesses focused primarily on a Black consumer market stressed the commercial imperatives of ensuring that Black people were represented at customer-interfacing levels within their business. A few of the respondents also spoke about the importance of representation within the company – where younger Black employees could look up to and be inspired by more senior Black employees.

BRETT	*"As a philosophy ... I believe that it is the only way to go ... for the reasons, you know, because it's how you guarantee cognitive ... or not guarantee, but it's how you support and ensure cognitive diversity."*
GRAHAM	*"The outcome and the objective is, I'm right behind, absolutely behind it ... and not for the reasons in that it's not only to address the injustices of the past, that's not ... that's one thing, it's fine. Not only for economics and that, but I've seen the value of proper integrated and diverse teams operating and we're far far, far better teams when you do that. Much better, you know. So for those reasons, is why I support it."*
MARTIN	*"... we've become quite good at I suppose the diversity equity and inclusion, but it was driven largely by business imperatives, um not by the fact that somebody said you need a board with the right number of you know, diversity, or inclusive people on the board."*

In the interviews, most respondents spontaneously qualified their support for EE by explicitly or implicitly associating it with reservations about merit, competence and worthiness.

HANNES	*"... I'm against BEE appointments just for the fact of getting the ... you know, you have to be competent."*
LAURA	*"I'm quite happy with employment equity, if you .. are the right person for the job..."*
CAMERON	*"... one of the biggest challenges in affirmative action is balancing opportunity with high expectations. Because I think that what I've certainly done and what I've observed others doing is expecting less and accepting less of Black people ..."*

A significant number of respondents believed that EE in South Africa was 'not working' and expressed frustration with what they regarded as onerous requirements of EE and B-BBEE legislation. Many respondents believed that EE and B-BBEE were politicised and that the government was antagonistic and unsympathetic to business challenges.

ANDREW	*"I think the first thing that comes to mind for me is the is the legislation around it, as opposed to redress, as opposed to transformation. You know the fact that it's been legislated and it's law.... Um, and then with that, the .... what I think drives a lot, a lot of the, of the thinking is ... or the the negative thinking towards that ... is around the fact that government failure at so many levels, you know, yet this is being promoted and pushed. And that's probably got a negative kickback on Black people who are applying."*
HEINRICH	*"I think it became most probably more weird when they started to regulate things and label everything. So I think when we started to work with ... especially in the mining area where we were saying that Black people enter that middle management space or specialist space, most probably quicker than the steel side of the business. And, er, it wasn't that topical. So it was more normal if I can say it that that way. It wasn't politicised, like it's today."*

Several respondents expressed concern that the government pressure to increase representation of Black Africans in executive management was resulting in discrimination against Black minorities.

DANIEL	*"So, I mean, what we seeing is that, because there's a tremendous focus on this particular group [Black Africans], there a couple of negatives. The one is that both Indians and Coloureds are feeling marginalised. And they they have a view that suddenly they are not Black enough. And there's there's been incidents where, at different levels, people have said, well, you know, we have too many Indians, or we have too many Coloureds or ... But generally, it's been around Indians, for whatever reason. I think a lot of listed companies have a lot of senior Indians, male and female, and suddenly they they told, 'no hold on you're over represented', which I think for for both those groups within within listed companies, if you if you not at top or senior, you probably would start questioning if you're ever going to get there because you know that you're going to be overlooked. So I think there's, I think there's a lot of negative that has resulted from, from the push for Black African. The push for Black African is certainly warranted. And I feel that what what we're seeing is that there's a fast track approach, which I think is which I think is very, very bad. I think for anyone to be fast tracked, who doesn't have the experience is, is a real problem."*

Many respondents spoke about the use of ‘window-dressing’ or tokenism in some corporates to meet EE targets or gain B-BBEE points. Some admitted it occurred in their own companies while others expressed disapproval of the practice. However, most respondents, when asked, said that transformation in the private sector would not have happened at all or would have happened at a much slower pace if it were not for legislated EE and B-BBEE. Several of them candidly attributed this to corporates being comfortable with the status quo, implying that it would have been easier simply to employ White people.

FRANCOIS	*“… , I think in general, people fall back to status quo. So in general, without some sort of pressure for transformation, you wouldn't see the transformation that's necessary.”*
HANLIE	*“...I almost think, had it not been for EE, White people would have just employed more people like them. They wouldn't have employed Black people.”*

2.1.2. Observations

Most respondents supported the concept of EE but their approaches to it differed. While some acknowledged the importance of redress, most spoke about it in terms of global best practice related to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) and the benefits which this provided to businesses. Some respondents whose businesses served primarily Black consumer markets, said that EE was important for the growth of their businesses or the aspirations of more junior Black staff. However, all these respondents tended to approach EE from a business strategy viewpoint, as opposed to acknowledging the uniquely South African situation where White people (a demographic minority) enjoy a disproportionately high representation in executive management, whereas the Black (specifically Black African) majority was critically under-represented. Respondents also tended to avoid the transformational aspects of EE by adopting language which implied 'fairness to everyone'. In these cases, even where the need for historical redress was acknowledged, there was a notion of fairness which was coy about situating EE in the philosophy of redress. Only a few respondents referred to the moral imperative of EE as a means to make amends for past injustices and to ensure that the private sector economy was representative, at all levels, of South African demographics.

Most respondents qualified their support for EE with the statement that its implementation must always take account of merit. In several cases, respondents repeatedly made this point. The spontaneous mention of merit as a qualifying condition for EE, implied an underlying assumption that EE, as a concept and in reality, did not prioritise merit and essentially risked a lowering of standards. This was implicit in most responses while a minority of respondents explicitly made direct and sweeping generalisations that EE facilitated lower performance and lower expectations of Black employees.

Despite their discomfort and frustration with EE regulations, most respondents acknowledged that, without legal enforcement, there would have been no, or much more limited, transformation in the private sector. Respondents implicitly acknowledged that the private sector workplace represented a comfortable status quo in relation to racial representation (or the absence thereof), which could be disrupted only through legal enforcement of EE targets.

2.2. Respondent views on the dominance of White people in executive management

During the interviews, respondents were referred to statistics of the Annual Reports of the Commission for Employment Equity indicating the race breakdown of senior and top management in the South African private sector. As the interviews spanned the period 2021 and 2022, *Figure E* below includes the relevant statistics at the time of the interviews, and, for the purposes of completeness, the most recent statistics from 2023. Respondents were asked why they thought White people dominated executive management in South Africa and why Black African people in particular had low representation in executive management compared to their percentage of the economically active population (EAP).

Figure E

2.2.1. Findings

(a) Many respondents believed there is insufficient availability of skilled Black people

Most respondents attributed the absence of meaningful transformation of the racial profile of executive management to a lack of suitably qualified Black people owing either to poor education or a lack of interest by Black people in certain industries.

HARRY	*"... it is just very, very, very hard to find Black talent."*
LAURA	*"Too few people have been educated or have been educated to understand there's lots more than just becoming a nurse because you're [Black] African or a, whatever it might be."*
CAMERON	*"... I think that actually, the most fundamental problem is a gross failure of our education system, primary, secondary, and to a lesser extent, actually, I'm inclined to cut the universities some slack. Because I think that what they have to work with is so poor. So I think that's the most fundamental problem ... is actually that Black people are ... those that that form the pool of high potential recruits are massively advantaged actually, because there's so few of them and massively over-represented in the field ... in the tiers of top and senior management, relative to the number of potential candidates there are."*

Some respondents rejected the argument that there were insufficient skilled Black people to fill executive management positions.

THEO	*"... I think there is an element in the issue of the pool not being broad enough. But I think that is also ... that's bordering on a bit of a cop-out. I think one can do enough to go and source the right Black skills."*
CHARLES	*"... when one looks at the South African context, I'd be intrigued to see what skills an executive can't find. They there. Sometimes they expensive. And sometimes they're working for better institutions than the one you represent. So they mustn't say the skills aren't there. They just haven't figured out how to get them."*

(b) Many respondents believed that Black people lack exposure to corporate culture

Many respondents spoke about Black people having a lack of exposure to the corporate or business environment and therefore attributed the poor representation of Black people in executive management to 'cultural' issues. These views were often expressed in the context of generalised assumptions about the family and cultural background of Black (particularly Black African) people, including migrant labour systems and rural or working-class backgrounds.

DANIEL	*"... I just think there's inherent stuff that's happened in this country that's driven people into different careers that ... I don't know, maybe they're not suitable for business and ... ... So I think you've got this apartheid legacy to a point around broken families and and what people were encouraged to study or whatever it might be. I think it's a factor."*
DIRK	*"... they the first people in their family to not be digging dirt or ironing somebody's clothes. It's the first time they work in an office. So, you know, you have no frame of reference."*
LAURA	*"..., what can we expect from somebody who has a mother who's a domestic, a father who's a gardener, you can't expect more. And it's not because these people are not intelligent. They've just never been exposed to, to the way of the world. And please, I do not intend to sound dismissive of people. But for me, that's, that's why we are where we are."*
GRAHAM	*"And there's a massive clash, you know. So the lack of understanding on that, you know ... if you're late for a meeting, or if you, you know, if you perform, or you act out in a certain way, you know, we might frown upon that, but for others, it's absolutely fine you know. So I think that systemic nature ... the way we were brought up, you know, in our, in our White suburbs and schools, and you know, even the workplaces back then has, ... will follow us for another generation or two, you know."*
ETHAN	*"... so we got we've actually got like still a very large cohort of people who are ... I would say authentically [Black] African. They are not hybridised. They're not they they, what ... they are what their parents were. And I suppose how on earth do you embrace them in this modern project..."*

Several respondents felt that White people were more naturally ‘socialised’ into business.

MELISSA	*“My parents were teachers so they don't come from a business world. But the, they have been teachers so they have been exposed to a more business-orientated mindset. How do I expect a person growing up in a shack ... let's call it what it is ... growing up in a shack, to understand how corporate function, when nobody has given you an orientation around how does a corporate function.”*
ALISTER	*“... the White population socialised their children growing up in terms of introducing them to the fundamentals of commerce. Whereas in the [Black] African family structures, that kind of learning from your, from your principals is not there, to the same extent. And I think that plays out in that there just aren't enough Africans to go around.”*
DIRK	*“We grew up in a family where Dad goes the office and Mom, ... you know, does this ... and we hear the conversations, we understand how to deal ... if you late you make a phone call, if you're not gonna be in, you let someone know.”*

(c) Many respondents expressed doubt about the competence of Black professionals

Many respondents directly or indirectly questioned the competence of Black professionals as a group, stating that this impacted on their suitability for executive management. Several felt that EE targets had resulted in Black (particularly Black African) professionals being appointed to management positions when they were not ready for corporate leadership. As a result, the ability of Black professionals, generally, to succeed in executive management was therefore doubtful.

FRANCOIS	*"... people were pushed into positions, which they were clearly not ready for. Then they fail. You know, so it's a negative reinforcement of, 'Ja, that's why it doesn't work', and also confidence that's that's lost, of these young Black managers that were put into these positions."*
ARNO	*"I also see a lot of those businesses who was run by White people and then Black people put it in in charge and a year later, the company almost drowned. So ... because people were given the keys, and they haven't been trained how to drive."*
CAMERON	*"... the reality is that if you look across South African corporate business, I have no doubt that expectations on Black people are lower than they are on White people, and that they are promoted in advance of objectively more competent White people ... a as a general rule ... it's not true in every instance, of course. So so if that is the reality, how do you get away from that mindset? It's so hard. Because you got to say, you got to actually say, 'I'm different. Me, I'm different.' And that's hard."*
HANNES	*"The young orthopedic surgeon that comes out of Wits today or out of any university, that's Black. We don't know if he's that good anymore. You know, is Wits still that good?"*

Respondents often referred to the government's failures or mismanagement to support their argument that Black professionals, generally, were being prematurely appointed to management positions.

ZANDER	*"... what I would tell you, you know, the politicians and government generally - that doesn't help the Black cause. Because they put incompetent people. I mean look at some of the ... look at the IT lady at SARS and stuff like that. I mean, some of our ministers in the cabinet you know ... if I had those cabinet members on my exco, the company would be down the drain here, in whatever time. So, I'm just saying you know, that's ... you know the politicians ... and sometimes somebody must maybe hold up a mirror against them ... they doing, not doing, they not doing Black advancement any favours or the Black cause or whatever."*
ARNO	*"So bulk of your business, that's actually income generates, where the, where you've got boots on the ground is [Black] African, you know. But where you go strategically levels on strategies, that's where it's still a lot predominantly White . I mean, I can take Eskom now. If you look at the Eskom board, and the Eskom CEO. I mean, that changed. It was [Black] African. Now it's back into expertise - I don't want to call it White but I think it's that experience ..."*
WILLIAM	*"... the image projected by a lot of these leaders is not great. You know, I mean ... And it's prevalent in ... it's quite pervasive through the society, whether it'd be a nonprofit organisation or a sports company, a business or, you know, whatever business ... It just is ... it does sort of leave a sense of suspicion, you know, about individuals."*

Several respondents put the onus on Black professionals to demonstrate their competence against expectations that they would not succeed.

CAMERON	*"... over time, if Black people succeed, broadly, some of those assumptions and lower expectations will disappear."*
RUBEN	*"So so it's very important for the for the Black people to, to understand that I've got to, I've got to really, really ... you know, I've got to work hard and take the opportunities that I get."*

(d) Several respondents believed there was a tendency by Black professionals to 'job-hop' and make unreasonable remuneration demands

Several respondents attributed the low Black representation in executive management to the fault of the Black professionals themselves. The primary issue raised here was the belief that Black professionals were job-hoppers and demanded high salaries. Some respondents supported these general views with individual examples.

TERTIUS	*"... way back I was the general manager of Port Elizabeth and I took in a [Black] African young, bright guy, incredibly bright guy. The company paid for his studies and, and we put him through development courses and and he walked into my office and he said [Tertius] I'm resigning today. And I said to him, 'Come on. I mean, that's, you're the last ... if anyone told me, Jim, Jack, and and Cindy would resign, I would, maybe but you?'. And he said to me,' You need to understand', ... and and it was an eye opener for me. ... 'You need to understand that I got to work for an insurance company, I got to work for a bank, I got to work for a mining company and now I've got retail. Now I'm going to join government and I'm going to ... they're going to pay me three times what you're paying me and there's nothing that any of you can do about it'. And I said, 'But what about when we sent you overseas, and when we developed you and we paid for all the programmes and you got a bright career and we will promote you'. 'Nah, you guys you're not going to touch the salaries'."*

A minority of respondents disagreed with the notion of job-hopping among Black professionals.

DANIEL	*"And it's around the recruitment and I think around a lot of the the the generalisations that we've all heard at certain stage stages. 'Well we bring in Black guys, they they always come at a premium, they don't stay long, they job-hop...' I can tell you from my experience, which is extensive. All of that, in my world is completely false."*
THEO	*"So the, the job hopping that you speak of. I think there was an element of that to begin with. And maybe there's an element of that now, but I'd like to think it's in the minority. I think it's a cop-out to use that as an excuse for not transforming."*

(e) Many respondents believed that executive management would become more representative over time

Many respondents attributed the dominance of White people in executive management to the historical tenure of White executives. They argued that there was no space available for Black people in top management, as these positions were held by White people who yet had to retire. Most of these respondents were in their 50s and 60s and some of them said they would most probably be replaced by a Black person when they retired.

Several respondents argued that it would take time to significantly change the racial profile of senior and top management and that this would happen from the mid-levels of the organisation. These respondents felt that there should be patience with transformation at executive management level.

ANDREW	*"... the transformation is probably going .. it needs to be generational. More than anything else. And it's, ... But it's difficult to sell that story to someone who was in the 76 uprising. They've seen the change, and is going to be told 'well actually you're not going to enjoy it, but your grandchildren will'."*

Many respondents argued that, despite the statistics in the EE reports, their organisations were making good progress in transformation at an executive level. Some respondents mentioned the number of Black executives on their executive level and the changes in the demographic make-up of their management structures to demonstrate increases in racial diversity.

DANIEL	*"If you if you look at the [Company] exco, of which, which is made up of myself and my other divisional colleagues, and you look at the numbers, we we well over 50% Black African. Now that's that's happened in a period of let's say, 18 months. And if I go back two years, you'll see that maybe maybe the ratio was 20%? It's now well over 50. And that's very quick."*

(f) A few respondents believed that corporate omissions had led to lack of transformation of executive management

A few respondents attributed the continued dominance of White people in executive management to failures by the private sector itself, either at a company level or on an industry-wide basis. Some respondents felt that, historically, companies had not done enough to ensure racial representivity in their organisations and that this had led to a present-day situation where companies were under greater pressure to ensure compliance with EE targets, specifically regarding Black African people.

GRAHAM	*"Had it happened 25 years ago, we wouldn't even be having this discussion now. But it never did."*
DANIEL	*"Should we have maybe done it 10 years ago? Probably the answer would have been yes. It would have been better 10 years ago, if we would have said, 'Listen, 50% of your, of your of your top and senior management needs to come from Black African'. I think, I think it would have really helped."*
FRANCOIS	*"So, as White people, we paid lip service, you know, when ... depending whose ears were there ... to transformation. Pretended to do the right things. It wasn't done in the right way.."*

A minority of respondents acknowledged racial prejudice as a factor in the recruitment of Black people into executive management positions.

DEON	*"... you have to understand that when you are undoing a system from which people have benefited from for years, that system is not going to take kindly to being undone."*
DANIEL	*"I do think a certain element of it is due to systemic racism, which, which is so problematic, because unless people really get drunk and say something inappropriate, you'll never actually know what goes on in, in, in people's heads. We don't know, we don't know who's a racist and who's not."*

Some respondents felt that having more Black people represented at senior levels in the private sector would change the attitudes of White people towards Black people.

DANIEL	*"You know, when I, when I go to some of the conferences or events that some of the businesses have, the landscape has changed really significantly. It really has. And that's from, let's say, middle management up. You're looking at, definitely the majority of people who are attending are Black. And that's, that's come, I think, in the last five or six years. It's really, really changed. So I think that's ... for me, that's, that's the best way that people will get through their biases. Because they'll just be working and relating to Black people. And I think, I think, I think it's, I think it's positive for many people. I think people who've got inherent bias, I, unfortunately, I'm of the view that it's very difficult to change that."*

2.2.2. Observations

Some respondents were surprised at the EE statistics showing the dominance of White people in senior and top management. Almost all of them acknowledged that the under-representation of Black people in executive management was problematic and that it had to be addressed. A significant number of respondents believed that their own company was making progressive steps in transformation. A minority of respondents were in executive committees whose members were predominantly Black executives, although it often appeared that many of the Black exco members were from Black minorities. Many respondents remarked that this was the first time they had had to consider the lack of racial representivity in the context of the private sector as a whole and several remarked that engaging in the interview had motivated them to give this issue deeper consideration.

The majority of respondents said that poor education and lack of skills among Black (specifically Black African) people limited the available supply of Black professionals in the private sector and was the primary reason why executive management is dominated by White people. A minority of respondents emphatically denied that there was a lack of skilled Black professionals in the market.

Many respondents tended to generalise about Black people in a way that implicitly associated all of them with an inferior education and lack of skills. In addition, while the discussion was about Black representation in executive management, respondents often veered into comments about lack of skills among junior level employees or even their own domestic staff. While some respondents discussed transformation at an executive level, most focused on diversity among the general staff of the organisation – i.e., as something which happened below the levels of executive management.

Numerous respondents also made general assumptions about the culture of Black African people, including references to township or rural upbringing, single parents and the absence of a 'business culture' in Black African families. The discussions often veered into general statements about the 'suitability' of Black people in a corporate environment, in the context of levels of social 'sophistication' or Western standards. While, in these portrayals, apartheid legacy was often explicitly or implicitly acknowledged, references to Black African people stressed socio-economic disadvantage as opposed to Black skin disadvantage (irrespective of socio-economic background). Conversely, while respondents acknowledged that White people had better access to education, the success of White people in executive management was primarily attributed to White cultural socialisation and not to White skin advantage.

A significant number of respondents immediately raised the issue of competence when discussing Black representation at executive management level. The implication was that achieving representation in

executive management necessarily involved compromising on merit. This association between representation and implied lack of competence or merit mirrored the comments made about merit during the general discussion on EE in paragraph 2.1 (above). Some respondents provided isolated examples of their own experience where Black managers had failed to perform in their positions and used this to generalise about their views of Black managers not being ready for senior and top positions. Respondents also implied that poor performance by the government's managers was indicative of Black management as a whole.

A few respondents expressed the view that Black African professionals needed to prove themselves so that they would be taken more seriously in the workplace. Implicitly, this placed the onus on Black African people to prove themselves against a preconceived notion of lack of merit. Among these respondents, some expressed appreciative surprise about the quality of some of the Black professionals they had worked with, and they said that this had encouraged them to pursue transformation in their companies. A few respondents who were part of racially diverse executive committees spoke highly of their Black colleagues.

Commonly held stereotypes of Black employees as job-hoppers and demanding higher salaries were also mentioned by many respondents. In a few cases, respondents used anecdotes of experiences with individual Black employees to illustrate this generalisation. In several cases, respondents spoke directly about, or implied that there was, a 'sense of entitlement' among Black professionals. A minority of respondents emphatically denied that job-hopping or high salary demands was a factor in the lack of representation of Black people in executive management. Some respondents also said that the notion of a 'sense of entitlement' was a generational issue which was common across all younger employees, regardless of race.

A common issue raised by respondents was that Black representation in executive management was currently inhibited by the tenure of White people and that this would change when the current generation of White executive management retired. Several of these respondents also held the view that the private sector would be racially representative in their lifetime. Others were pessimistic that executive management would ever represent the demographics of South Africa. Those who adopted a more positive outlook said that there should be patience with transformation as it would not happen 'overnight'.

A few respondents felt that failures by White management, especially in the early years after 1994 was a factor in the lack of transformation at an executive level. These respondents tended to believe that things could have been done differently and that transformation had not been taken seriously enough by White executives. The same respondents felt that regulatory pressure to compel transformation was punitive and was negatively impacting on the employment and career prospects of White people and Black minorities.

3. Respondents' views on the reported experiences of Black professionals

In the focus group research set out at *Annexure 1*, Black professionals reported negative lived experiences of being Black in the private sector workplace. This included a range of issues including stereotyping, lack of trust, formal and informal exclusion, being overlooked for promotional opportunities, and being required to present themselves as 'Whiter' in order to progress in the workplace. During the interviews, respondents were requested to respond to these reported experiences as well as examples from academic research which were consistent with the focus group research.

3.1. Findings

The findings in this section are set out in two parts. The first part reflects the initial or general responses by the respondents on the reported experiences of Black professionals. The second part deals with respondents' answers to certain of the specific issues raised by Black professionals.

3.1.1. Initial reaction and general responses to the reported experiences of Black professionals in the workplace

Only a few respondents either accepted most of the reported experiences of Black professionals or completely rejected them. Most respondents adopted a middle ground approach by acknowledging what was being said by the Black professionals but qualifying these experiences in various ways.

Among those respondents who generally acknowledged the reported experiences of the Black professionals, some said that they had personally observed this in the workplace.

JONATHAN	*"Ja . ... my my my sense of ... having read the responses of the focus group that that was put together, I can endorse probably ... and have witnessed a lot of what they talk about."*
ARNO	*"Ja, um, maybe on executive level. I won't be surprised if if you've been surrounded by Whites in the boardroom and you're the only Black guy."*
WILLIAM	*"I think a lot of that is is is very accurate.. is a very true reflection."*

Respondents who were generally dismissive or doubtful of the reported experiences of Black professionals claimed that they had not seen any evidence of these experiences.

THEO	*"... I don't believe certainly as in my role as a leader or as manager, and certainly my own personal experiences coming through corporate South Africa, I've not seen a lot of evidence that would give cause for those feelings. And again, I'm not saying that those feelings are wrong. Please, please know that upfront. But I think, ja, I'm very saddened that that is the feedback that you're getting."*
CAMERON	*"... that hasn't been my experience at all, either personally, or in terms of observation."*

Other respondents hesitantly accepted the views of the Black professionals but were equivocal in their responses. Among these respondents, several raised doubts that the reported experiences of the Black professionals were based on their race.

TERTIUS	*"... I think factually you probably right. But I do believe that it moves slightly away from, call it favouritism versus racism, if that's the right ... I think that's that's probably more favouritism now than than actually racial orientated."*
BRETT	*"But if you speak to some people, they'll argue, and it's regardless of their race, they'll argue that they don't have a ... you know, their, their mandate is not equal to their their responsibility level, either ... you know what I mean. Look, it's obviously, not as blatant as the example you just gave now, but it's .... Where I'm going is that you know, sometimes the way things are interpreted and felt are not how they intended."*
RYNO	*"... when I read through that commentary I smiled because I thought a lot of this resignates with me too and I'm not Black."*

A few respondents expressed some frustration at the views expressed by the Black professionals and felt that they were biased or erroneous.

LAURA	*"... I don't want to sound offensive, but I' m now going, 'Do they not maybe have biases? Are they not maybe reading more into that than it is? I don't know. Maybe not. But, because for me, that's not the case at all. I'm like, okay, you're the person I deal with. If you're not doing your job, I, sure I'd love to speak to your manager, but I don't particularly care what colour they are. For me at the end of the day, I just want it to be resolved. Whoever's resolving it. So, we all have biases. It's not just White people ... that have biases."*
HANLIE	*"I always wond... also wonder if you start looking for things, whether you actually see more of it. Is it a self fulfilling prophecy? It's ... Is it the way that you speak? Is it the way that you bring your ideas across. It might be the race thing. But it could also be that, you know you umm and you aah while you say something. Um, or because you don't have your facts straight."*
RUBEN	*"... I've got to, I've got to, I've got to accept the research that that experience is valid. It's difficult for me to comment on it, because I really try to not be the person that would make someone feel like that at the workplace. You know but, also, on the other hand, an experience could, sort of, if you want ... if you are lazy, and you're not doing your job, it's also an easy excuse to say, 'Well, the manager, I'm Black and the manager doesn't like me'. So it's one of those very, ... it's, it's ... I don't know, it's ... I accept that many of those comments are valid, but some would probably in some certain circumstances not be valid, because that's just how it is."*

Several respondents attributed the views of Black professionals to youthful entitlement which they felt was prevalent among all races. They automatically assumed (incorrectly) that the issues in the focus groups had been raised primarily by young Black people who were new to the workplace and lacked experience.

JONATHAN	*"And look, I do hear some of these young professionals ... Some of the stuff that they saying about advancement and all the rest, I hear the same messages from Whites, from from the White youth, or the White young .. younger people than me ... because there is this sense of entitlement to advancement at a ... very often at a pace that's unrealistic."*
ADRIAAN	*"... it's not a race-related thing. It's, it's the, it's the inability of companies to trust people with responsibility and to give them ownership from a young age. Because people come in and they don't have the experience and they don't have the know-how."*
CAMERON	*"If you put yourself in the shoes ... ... because because I was in the shoes to some extent ... if you put yourself in the shoes of a chief executive ... I've got a young Black woman who I really want to succeed. However, I've also got a critical function that needs to be performed with excellence and and I ... perhaps I don't have ... I want her to succeed so I want to give her the opportunity and build her. But I can't allow that that because because because I'm acknowledging maybe internally, and hopefully this is an honest discussion that at least takes place internally... I'm promoting her beyond her abilities and experience and expertise right now. Therefore I need to give her support. But the fact that I give her support undermines her. How do you win?"*

Some respondents attributed the Black professionals' experiences to the fault of EE legislation and said that pressure on companies to comply with EE targets created difficulties for Black professionals by putting them in positions for which they were not ready.

BRETT	*"... coming back to our earlier conversation about whether employment equity should be legislated or whatever, you know ... that is, that is the problem that comes with it ... is that it makes it harder for the for the individual to really prove themself and get that self-acceptance rather than the acceptance around them."*
CAMERON	*"And I would say that, to the extent that I've experienced, let's call it prejudice or racism, what that has been, actually, has been something that was touched on by some of the ... in your paper was, I think, what's called the soft prejudice of lowered expectations. And I do think that, that definitely, and partly, that's a product of affirmative action, by its very nature."*
RUBEN	*Some of them are, a lot of them are obviously true, because just in just because of Whiteness in the workplace and, and, and bad White managers. But some of them might might be a result of having been put in a position but not really been ready for that position and then they don't really have the voice in the boardroom - I think is what I'm .... So, so that/ those comments, you know, it comes from that comes from both sides."*

Many of the women respondents identified with some of the views of the Black professionals by referring to their own experiences of gender discrimination.

ANNE	*"Ja, it did sound to me a little bit as if you could have been speaking about women in the workplace rather than Blacks in the workplace."*

In almost all cases, and independently of the extent to which they accepted the views of the Black professionals, respondents did not perceive any relationship between White executive management and the workplace difficulties raised by the professionals. Some respondents made direct statements in this regard.

THEO	*".. I can't put myself in the minds of a Black person and I'm not about to dismiss their feelings. So as much as I say to you that myself and my peers, I don't believe that we um we are responsible for for that feeling, I'm not about to say that it doesn't exist. And and we need to better understand how people, how Black people are feeling in the workplace."*

3.1.2. Respondents' views on specific issues raised by Black professionals

The number of issues canvassed with the respondents was limited by the time available for the interviews. Therefore, the findings do not contain a comprehensive list of responses to all issues raised by Black professionals in the focus groups and in the available academic research. The issues selected for discussion were those which would require considered substantive responses rather than simple yes/no answers without further engagement.

This section is set out under the following sub-headings reflecting reported experiences of Black professionals:

- They are not taken seriously and have to work harder to prove themselves;
- They are regarded as 'EE appointments' or are appointed solely to meet EE targets;
- They are not trusted;
- Their workplace contributions are subjected to validation by White colleagues;
- The failure of one Black professional casts doubt on the competence of all Black professionals;
- The government's failure is regarded as Black failure;
- They are appointed to 'soft' jobs;
- They experience formal and informal exclusion in the workplace;
- They experience racism in client-facing jobs;
- They have to present themselves as 'Whiter' in order to succeed in the workplace;
- Black African professionals experience increased racism in the Western Cape;
- Workplace racism affects their emotional and physical health.

(a) Black professionals are not taken seriously and have to work harder to prove themselves

Several respondents agreed with this view.

DANIEL	*"... I have definitely seen it with with Black African appointments, is the narrative around all of them are there simply because of their colour and and not on ability. Which I think is is is pure prejudice."*
ANDREW	*"If you know, if I bring in a good teacher, a Black [African] teacher, they almost need to prove themselves to the parents for at least a year or two ..."*
ZELDA	*"I do believe that, whether it be women, or whether it will be Black people, or any people, any person of colour, or, or even just a different way of thinking. I think that they will always find it, that they need to prove themselves a bit better, or that they need to, like, you know, they need to be better."*

While some respondents acknowledged that it was unfair that Black people were judged as a group, they felt that this was an inevitable consequence of EE targets. In other words, they attributed this perception of Black people to EE policies.

ANDREW	*"... I do wonder though how much of that is brought about because employment equity is legislated? And then how much is the ... is, is that person in fact, just tokenism? And employers are aware of that and um ... And you know, after a period of time, if enough of that is happening, an entire race gets painted with the same same perspective ..."*
OLIVER	*"Ja, I think I think there's definitely a perception of that. I think anyone who says otherwise is, is not being truthful. I think there's definitely a perception. And I think it's for a few reasons. I think, one, in corporate South Africa, employment equity is a big thing, right. So it's, you know, it's a, it's a, it's a big topic. So, you know, there is naturally this, this inclination - it's like, are you there based on, you know, merit, or you there based on, because because it's part of the policy. So I think definitely in corporate South Africa there is that."*
CAMERON	*"... whether we like it or not, the incidence of Black people being promoted in advance of their ability, experience, expertise is far greater than the reverse, in my experience and view. But you you you can't say that.... So I think that when I read the, the, the, you know, the product of the research, I think, um ... what what do you ... you you know, it must be impossible to be a Black candidate of ability and potential because you've always got discretion mark, you've always got this, the Siya Kolisi thing that I referred to, is that you've always got this question mark, as to with you there because people think you're the best or not. And and and and you're right to have that question mark, because it's true."*
DANIEL	*"And and I've heard a lot of people who ... Black people who will sit there, and they'll talk around the fact that they think the scorecard has done them no favours. Because a lot of people view them as ... 'Well, you're only here because of your colour', but they've actually made it on their own merits and so ... I just think there's a there's a failure with the with the scorecard."*

Some respondents said that Black professionals were not taken seriously because there were assumptions that they would not perform in the workplace.

GRAHAM	*"… there is that pressure on them to perform. To perform as an individual, you know, you know, 'I am not what maybe your preconceived, you know, or stereotypical idea of, you know, a Black Black female might be. I'm not that'."*
CAMERON	*"… it's interesting to see what what, you know, what you've written in people's experience of saying they have to do more ... my experience is the reverse. I think that almost without exception, and obviously, there are some exceptions, but almost without exception, White managers expect less. And because they expect less, they end up getting less actually, from Black candidates. And therefore, my experience is that Black people are required to do less in order to progress."*

(b) Black professionals are regarded as 'EE appointments' or are appointed solely to meet EE targets

Many respondents agreed with the view of Black professionals that they were treated as 'EE appointments', i.e., that they held their positions solely to meet EE targets and not on merit.

GRAHAM	*"… I think there are EE candidates in roles that feel significant pressure to perform, um .. themselves. Because people are looking, you know, are waiting for them to fail, you know, and that might just be a societal historical thing. So I know that they feel, you know, a disproportionate amount of prepare, of pressure compared to maybe a White compatriot or counterpart."*
DIRK	*"What I think is difficult for ... for ... er .. young Black people in the business is accepting that they're there because of competency, because I think the perception for them is that, 'I know I'm competent, and my colleagues know I'm competent, but ... I think everybody else thinks I'm here because ... you know, I ...' ... and it's, that's hard. I mean, one of my close colleagues expressed that to us in a little closed strat session, it's like I , uh, uh ... it's hard."*
DEON	*"Because when a younger Black woman is appointed as your boss, you know, there's always going to be a murmur of 'Oh, okay ...'. Alright. So so when I was 33 years old, and I became an MD, and I had 50 year olds and people that used to work for me were reporting to me, no one said anything. They said, 'of course, jeepers, [Deon] is such a capable guy. Look at what he's done.' But when it happens to a Black person, they go, 'whooff, it must be because you're you're Black', you know."*
FRANCOIS	*"Ja, so they know, that's how they are viewed. And I mean, we often hear some of the sports stars, the Black people, you know, talking about that because, you know, unfortunately, this is now the predicament, you know. You want to believe you're in a position based on merit. But the system sort of is set up. So there's always a question whether you're in that position on merit, and, nobody's honest with you to tell you, and actually you there as a token, right?"*

Some respondents remarked that Black people were sometimes appointed purely to meet EE targets.

GRAHAM	*"I've got some friends that are very senior, Black female marketers that have sat on these big financial institution boards. And they're expected to just sit there, you know, and to be compliant. So that is a reality."*
MARTIN	*[Transformation] is a tick box. That's just like, we put in our Equity Plan correctly, and we're gonna hit these levels in five years from now. That's just .. that's just rubbish. It's complete rubbish. And that's why all these Black execs are feeling the way they are. That they they're not recognised. They they feel inferior. Because they ... at the end of the day, they know that they've been put in those jobs, because they happen to be Black. They know it."*
CHARLES	*"… I've even got Black people who work for me now to say, 'Don't put me in this job, because I'm Black'.."*

(c) Black professionals are not trusted

Many respondents denied that Black professionals were not trusted in the workplace. Some respondents said that while this may have happened in the past, nowadays Black professionals were trusted as much as their White counterparts.

Other respondents attributed issues of questionable trust to questions about whether Black employees had been appointed on merit or because of the requirements on companies to meet EE targets.

CAMERON	*" ... the quantitative requirements for admission to jobs, promotion, etc., are lower for Black people still. But until that, until that changes, like it has in [sport], I suspect you're going to end up ... you're going to continue with this well-intentioned, but less trusting and lower standards attitude to Black candidates in general. Because, because, again, in general, and on average, they are less qualified, or less competent or whatever it is than the White candidate that they're competing."*

Some respondents admitted that they were more likely to trust White colleagues than Black colleagues but they denied that this constituted racial prejudice, attributing it instead to familiarity or cultural preference.

MARTIN	*"But then the other part that I think people misplace where they say distrust ... it's not so much the person because they're Black, it's because they're different culture. So they're coming from a different culture. So I understand my own culture. So I have a trust for it. When I have a different culture, be it a Black, a Black culture and Asian (you know there are 13 different cultures in the in the country) ... anyway or an Indian culture or even a religious culture like a Muslim versus, versus, er, the way I grew up ... I will have a, I'm not going to give the same amount of leeway to the person who I know what they're going to do, because I grew up with them ... I grew up like that."*

(d) The workplace contributions of Black professionals are subjected to validation by White colleagues

This issue elicited a mixed response from the respondents. Some denied that this ever happened in their companies and said that they had never seen or heard of such a situation. Others said it may be true, but they cast doubt on whether it had anything to do with race. These respondents felt that the Black professionals were being over-sensitive.

ANNE	*"You know, I can see that happening, but I don't necessarily see it as a race thing. ... It might be that, you know, if I present something and somebody ... if I present something to a ... just turning the tables a bit ... to a White male, and he turns turns to another male and says, 'Do you agree with what [Anne] is saying?' I'm not going to be saying they testing it because I'm a woman. Or because I'm, because I'm Black. I mean, why are they not entitled to test it? It might be an extreme form of sensitivity that. It might be true. But I wouldn't necessarily accept it ..."*
LAURA	*"Like I wonder sometimes, is that a race thing or just by chance that that's happened? Because I think that happens to ... that happens to, to ... I think it's happened to me before. Ja, I was probably a bit peeved and go like, 'why did you have to ask a second opinion', but I didn't for once think it was a race thing. Because the person they asked was possibly White."*

A few respondents acknowledged that this did happen and attributed it to the perception that White people had more authority.

MARTIN	*"... if a Black executive comes in with a business plan to, for some change in the business, the other White executives will listen to the whole thing. And then they'll go and discuss it afterwards. Do we agree with it? Now if a White person came in, and did the business plan, they, they would probably agree with it, then and there."*
ZANDER	*"I think I think it's where where there's almost like a, there's still a little bit of a pecking order there. Sometimes it's not directly related to title. And and there the the important voices are probably still you know, there would be lots of you know, White people that can maybe ... whose voices count a little bit."*

One respondent referred, self-reflectively, to an instance where he had personally questioned the contribution of a Black colleague.

HANNES	*"Somebody had a discussion with me yesterday - a Indian lady who wanted to clarify something with me. She said because exactly this happened to me. So she said, look, I asked her a question, and she gave an answer. And then I asked the White male just to confirm whether the answer she gave was correct. You know, I did unconsciously. But I think it's true. So I was confronted with it yesterday."*

(e) The failure of one Black professional casts doubt on the competence of all Black professionals

Some respondents agreed with this perception.

CHARLES	*"... it won't happen in anything I'm responsible for. But I promise you it happens. And it's actually worse, it's worse than you think. Secretly, some of the kind of mediocre White executives that never make, made it, properly, celebrate every time a Black guy fails. It's a, it's a shocker. And you kind of, you know ... I've had to .... I can't tolerate it. I gotta speak up because I can't run with this kind of like ambition statement of making things right and then you just accept people talking like that. 'Ja, he failed because he's Black'. You just ... Bullshit. That's not true."*
EDWARD	*"...you hear the other things, 'ja, well you know I tried these two Black guys, and it didn't work, so now I've gone back to White.' Well, how many of your White guys don't make it?' So I do think ... I think that's definitely in play."*

Others misinterpreted the question to mean that Black professionals were under pressure from their own community to perform and several respondents linked this issue to 'black tax'. In other words, they attributed the fault of this perception to Black people themselves.

EDWARD	*"... I've always been amazed at the pressure that they had to feel not just for themselves, but for the community at large. And again, success in your career, I think, particularly for Black people ... and not just Black people in South Africa for other cultures as well, in other certain parts of the world ... is, 'you doing it for all of us and so your success is our success'. And so, ja, they feel the pressure."*
GRAHAM	*"... it's a real thing, you know, just like Black tax where, you know [inaudible], they're representing a big family that have not economically, you know, you know, well, off enough to look after them, and then that individual's got to look after them."*

Paradoxically, in other parts of the interview, several respondents used anecdotes about individual Black professionals to illustrate their general doubts about Black executives.

LAURA	*"I had a conversation with somebody on Saturday evening. I just saw them in the, in our little local shopping centre, and he was like, 'Oh, well'. I'm like, 'How's it going at work?' And he rolled his eyes a little bit. And this is a guy that finished an MBA with me. He's a bright guy. I can't really say how he performs at work. But I mean, I'd imagine ... ja, he's had a few roles over the years - good roles. And he said, 'Oh well. All's fine. I don't have to worry too much. I'm getting paid to do a job. The person that used to report to me is now the executive of digital and hey, that's okay'. And I was like, 'whoa!'. 'No well, she's an [Black] African female'. So, but he was like, 'That's the way it is. It's okay, I'm getting paid'. He'd sort of resigned himself to the fact that she was definitely not placed in that position because she was the best candidate. She was placed in a position because she was a person of colour."*
CAMERON	*"You know, and I'll give you, I'll give you a a a ... I had lunch with a friend of mine the other day, and this is the difficulty that comes with the affirmative action is ... so he was a senior partner at one of the big accounting firms, he left and went into commerce, but that accounting firm appointed a Black African candidate to take over as Chief Executive now. And he had spent 10 years of his career trying to push and promote and advance this person. Um, and he said he is ... his his personal view ... and I really, you know, this a good person ... was that there's no way this person is competent to be running the firm. But he was the most senior Black African candidate and the politics of the situation meant that they had to appoint the most senior Black African candidate."*

(f) The government's failure is regarded as Black failure

The responses of most of the respondents to this issue, was contradictory. While they agreed that this was a stereotype, and that it had an unfair impact on Black professionals, they proceeded to explain why they felt that this perception was reasonable.

DIRK	*"... you see delivery failures, I mean, failures in government, and unfortunately, it's predominantly Black and it's driven by the ANC. So I think that's ... that, unfortunately, creates a very bad perception of of of er, of er ....of ... senior level management."*
HEINRICH	*"... unfortunately, the track record in government is not good, so ... And to an extent, one can un... one can assume that that label can be put to a corporate executive that fail as well."*
RUBEN	*"These state-owned entities will make you think that if you get a Black manager, it will fail."*
ARNO	*"[pause] Ja ... You know [the stereotype].... er, erm ... That that is not ... I wouldn't say ... ja, it's maybe playing a role er unconscious bias. But it's based on facts. I mean, the corruption is fact-base. If you like ... if you if you if you if you look at the state owned enterprises, you know. Nothing is a success. I mean, Telkom, Eskom, the South African Railways, you know."*
LAURA	*"I would agree [with the stereotype]. Ah, you know, it's just it ... I tend to not watch the news anymore. It pains me because it's like another corrupt, corrupt Black official. And I often say to my husband, 'Ah, they're doing themselves no favours here, like dammit.' Oh, you know, I've been so, been for 'come on Cyril, come on show us what you can do'. Like, change people's, people's thoughts and, and ideals about the Black man. Change it. And damnit they haven't done it. You know, it's been given to you on a silver platter! Fix it! Employ whoever you need to employ, regardless of their colour. Fix it, you know. Give yourself a legacy - have a legacy for the future. And they just haven't done it. So there I agree with them 100%."*
HANNES	*"[The stereotype is] True. The fact that, the fact that ... you know, my view ... the fact that they not not everybody ... you have to be very careful ... but the fact that we have Eskom um ... I know it's being run now by White people, and we still have loadshedding, so it's not .... but the perception is they can't run the country properly, you know. And then people go to this argument they haven't, they they not running one country in Africa well. You know, so what does that tell you? So that makes ... that does stereotype."*

Other respondents did not defend the stereotype but felt that it was accepted as true by most White people.

MARTIN	*"... I think that White people look at government and say, Black people are incompetent, so let's not give them a chance in private sector."*
OLIVER	*"Ja, I am ... I think there's definitely that [stereotype]. I think .. I think you'd be naive not to think um that people don't ... ja, don't, you know, don't er don't link the two ... you know, wrongly, but, you know, I think there's, I think that that definitely is er, you know, perpetuates that kind of commentary. Absolutely."*
ETHAN	*"... I'd say [the stereotype of Black government incompetence] it's er the default position [among White colleagues]. Not only is it common ... I mean you know, I think everyone's got that."*
ALISTER	*"Sjoe! ... Ja, [the stereotype is] probably true. ... Which is, ja I guess that's just ... ja I think that plays to that whole narrative about third world, you know, and failed states, failed governments. So if I think about, you know, the social groups, that I would be participating in. You know invariably, there's always a discussion around corruption, failed states ... this is the African way.... So it definitely ... the stereotypes are are there."*

A minority of respondents differed from these views and felt that most reasonable people did not associate the government's incompetence with Black private sector professionals.

GARY	*"... I'm quite shocked that that actually, that actually is still in some people's minds, you know. It's definitely not, definitely not here. I mean, you just have to look at corporate South Africa ... and some of the shenanigans ... actually going on there and whose been committing those those those those crimes, so to speak to be able to say it's definitely not governmental Black people that are that are involved in fraud. I mean, it's just ridiculous, you know. So, no there's there's no perpetuation of that stereotype here."*
IAN	*"... I think I think people much more clearly see that the failures of government, you know, have been due to, well, I personally think largely cadre deployment, and, and, you know, sort of lack of skills in the sector, which which has been a migration out. And I think people, you know, Black and White can can see that. So ja. You know, people, ill informed people can maybe throw that up as a, as a perception."*

(g) Black professionals are appointed to 'soft jobs'

Most respondents agreed that companies appointed Black (specifically Black African) people to 'soft jobs' and often referred to their own companies as examples of this. Several respondents agreed that there was a perception that it was a risk to appoint Black people in strategic and revenue-generating roles and it was assumed that White people would do a better job.

WILLIAM	*"… at the executive level, you're right. I mean, the people that make the, the on the decision, on the ground decisions ... um, ja .... the, there's definitely, from my point of view, a view that, you know, the, those positions are given to the White individuals ... perception that they, you know, they they don't have, they don't have to worry, because they know they'll get the job done."*
RUBEN	*".... there, there may be truth in just the fact that there is the perception that the White technical manager is, is better. I've seen exceptions in the mining industry. But it certainly seems to be the rule. Look, whether whether whether there, whether it is because they had previously received the better training and the better positions, and therefore they are now better skilled .... But surely by now, you know, that that shouldn't be like that anymore. …. I think that there is a measure of truth in that, that, you know, that that is a bit of a perception in that, you know, the White person is going to do the job you know."*
ARNO	*"And with the experience being built, I think the, we [White people] far more objective and risk alert than, you know, er .... that experience, that that molding is ... the the Africans are a couple of years behind. It's like the same as as, as on experience. You know. And, and I think that's, that's what's making it difficult. So it's good to put somebody on HR rather than putting him in the head of strategies or finances, you know, because of lack of that solid experience - making the right decisions."*
ZANDER	*" ... if we need to make these EE targets, I can tell you now I'm going to have a Black, you know, person and, you know ... er, etc. So it is a little bit your non-essential services. It's almost like, you know, if human capital doesn't function, we don't go under. It's a little bit, you know, almost like let's say, if you take Eskom, you follow. If Eskom doesn't pay its bills, or whatever, but the power stations still operate, maybe we would have lights, you know what I mean? It is a, it's a reality. If I, you know if I almost like ... you, you ..., if I'm put under a lot of pressure to just, call it, get the right colour faces in, in the executive, on the exco. Er, you know, you'll start there."*

A few respondents attributed this practice directly to racial prejudice.

DANIEL	*"... if an HR position comes up, all the guys say we're definitely getting Black, because we can find Black. There's always a million stories around why we can't find Black Finance Directors or Sales Directors or something, which I think is, is really based on nothing but bias."*
MELISSA	*"... there's certain positions that us as senior management identify that we can place people of colour in. Because it's easy positions that 'they can't mess up too much there'. So the CFO, that's something ... No, no. .... It's gonna be a White male. But your HR person, your transformation person, your marketing person, your public relations person, your communications person.... Your HR team can be ... 'you can be my transformation team'."*

(h) Black professionals experience formal and informal exclusion in the workplace

Because there are many types of exclusion, this issue elicited a wide range of responses from respondents and some respondents focused more on certain issues than others. The findings below indicate the most common issues discussed.

Some respondents flatly denied that there was any exclusion of Black colleagues in their workplaces as their executive team was racially mixed and it would not be tenable.

DIRK	*"I can't imagine there being a group of White guys getting together talking about business to the, with the exclusion of I mean, particularly Coloured, Indian and then Black [African]… that that that just. We can't do that. We're too, it's too diverse already."*

A few respondents admitted that Black executives were excluded in the workplace by their White peers – most often when White executives were interacting informally and started to discuss work matters or make business decisions during the informal discussions.

MARTIN	*"In the actual offices the the, you know, the the White people collect together to discuss a topic, but they won't necessarily invite the Black the Black executive. And he would find out afterwards that, you know, five of the board members or the exco members met. And then um says why wasn't I invite, and they say 'no, it was just informal, we just ended up having a cup of tea together'. You know. But meanwhile, they all deliberately got together to decide whether they agreed with whatever was put on the table."*

Informal discussions between White colleagues at work also extended to social gatherings outside the workplace where work issues might be discussed. Most of those respondents justified it as simply wanting to be with one's 'own', denying that it had anything to do with the race of those who were included or excluded.

OLIVER	*"... I still think it's probably linked to my comments on, you know, to my my tribe. So I, you know, I feel more comfortable, you know, having informal chats with, you know, probably White colleagues ... Not, not I feel more comfortable, it's just I, you know, you gravitate, you now, more towards, you know, those sort of people. So then, and then that, you know, probably, you know, leads to, you know, discussions around work and, you know, maybe stuff that's happening that's, that's not kind of widely known, etc. So I, I don't think it's necessarily linked to racism. I think it's probably, it's linked to, you know, more, those are the people you feel comfortable with."*
RUBEN	*"And [after work], when you want to relax, then you you want to not have to work at things. You know, you want to just be able to say what you want, you want to be able to ... and it's just easier doing it amongst ... and that's that for me, often a cultural thing. I mean one has to make effort to invite the the the the the other people ... other .... well, any other people. It's not only, it's not only ... necessarily Black people, but people that aren't as close in your, in your inner, you know, in your circle. So one tends to want to just go back to your mates, and end the day that way. And there, there you also discussing a lot of things and you actually also making a lot of decisions there and you actually excluding other people."*

When it came to social interaction between work colleagues outside of work, almost all the women respondents mentioned social exclusion of women but not race-based exclusion.

ANNE	*"I see that network between sexes. Not races."*
MELISSA	*"That's not a racial thing. That's gender thing as well. ...So yes, that is that is a real thing. Very much still prevalent."*
LAURA	*"I think everyone has a bit of a boys club. But again, you see, I don't .... now, and this is the difference. I'm not seeing that as a race. Boys Club. Boys being boys look ... I'm not seeing it because I'm ... ja... that it's a race thing."*

The use of Afrikaans in the workplace was also raised by Black professionals as an issue which caused formal and informal exclusion. Almost all Afrikaans-speaking respondents were sensitised to this issue. Most of their companies had language policies which directed the use of English as the workplace language. However, the respondents were also conscious of the complaints by Black professionals about the informal use of Afrikaans in and around the workplace.

ADRIAAN	*"... we're not even talking about anything, we just got a easy conversation going on here. But the impact of that on people standing on the other side hearing that we are talking in a different language, that's the, that's where you need to be sensitive."*
HANNES	*"... it's a difficult one because if me and my White colleague who are both Afrikaans males are standing in my office talking about the weekend in Afrikaans and now [CEO] walks in. And he doesn't understand Afrikaans then ... you know, must we now switch to English to talk about the rugby? So now we start talking in English. So, ja ... while, I see if the two Black people are talking to each other, they talk in English. They don't talk Tswana or Zulu or ... they talk in English. So I think there's a lot of work that needs to be done there. ... So I feel for them because I know they excluded - informally, not formally."*

Respondents acknowledged that while White executives may be sensitive about not using Afrikaans at an executive and corporate level, this often did not filter down to the operational environment.

DANIEL	*"... if I have work with some senior teams, where there's a lot of Afrikaans, when I'm there, they'll swop .. to English. Whether they would do that for the Black HR director? I don't know."*

Most respondents disconnected the use of Afrikaans in the workplace from the issue of race.

ADRIAAN	*"... you find in in some engagement, when there's a team of people, that two Black people get isolated. Why? It's not because they're Black, because they English. Conversation happen ... on the side and then then that natural exclusion."*
HANNES	*"It's not a White ... or it's not a race issue, it's a language issue. It's a diversity issue."*

(i) Black professionals experience racism in client-facing jobs

Numerous respondents agreed that there were instances where White professionals were preferred by certain clients over Black professionals or where Black professionals were undermined by White clients.

MARTIN	*"I get er phoned, where they say, 'Okay, we're giving you the job. Don't send Black consultants. We want White ones'. To this day, hey. To this day. And they and they, and the person always says, 'I never said this. I never said this - send White consultants'. … So so now you telling me a BEE Level Two company, you employing more and more Black people and you've got industry leaders out there, who are White, who are telling you, I'm using you because I want White people."*
WILLIAM	*"… when you look at a place like the Atlantic Seaboard, or maybe a Waterkloof in Pretoria or suburbs in Sandton, you know, those sellers, or buyers, would would not necessarily want to work with a Black individual. By their choice, you know. And we've had a lot of cases where we've had to turn down business because a seller has said, 'just don't send me a Black agent'. And we've had it with rentals as well. You know, 'I don't want Black people renting my property'. We walk away from those deals now. Because it's too ... you know, it's it's just not ... (a) it's not right ... but it's risky as well, you know, from a brand damage ... image/ damage point of view."*
GARY	*"... probably 10 years ago, we did battle to get our Black professional, in other words our Black lawyers, introduced to our big corporate clients. And the feeling was, and this is actually not a [Firm] issue, but this is this is maybe a corporate South Africa issue ... is that the people that, you know, in our clients that were at that time responsible for handing out the instructions or, you know, engaging with the law firms were at that time still predominantly White, White males. And it was a struggle for us to get to get our clients - and obviously, you can't push that too far - to, to brief our Black attorneys, you know, but ... for a whole ... probably a whole variety of reasons."*
IAN	*"…, when, for example, a Black female who's the lead on a transaction, but the client keeps deferring to the White junior that works for her ...um, it ... I can ... it it it can be, it can be a little bit awkward to manage."*

Some respondents admitted that clients disguised the real reasons for objecting to a Black representative of a company and that the veiled nature of their client's objections made it difficult for them to manage.

WILLIAM	*"... if a client turns around and says, I don't want this agent, they don't always say she's Black, but you know, and, you know, we would say things like, you know, she's the one that's allocated to this area. We can't put anybody else in ... we don't address it head on I don't think. You know from from ... in the context of racism."*
THEO	*"In that in that kind of situation, I would think ... the way you describe it, there is subtle, racist .. racism. But because it's not so blatant or overt I would have the conversation with the client, I would talk to him about how competent the individual is, how we have faith and trust in the individual to fulfil the responsibility .. or fulfil the task that the client is expecting of us, that they're paying for the service they're paying to us. And I would hope that most clients ... And I've rarely come across clients that have pushed back on conversations like that."*
IAN	*"... there is no doubt that that does happen. And that is the lived experience of some of our Black professionals. And the good thing is that they tell us that. Er, er ... and it, you know it, it can be, um, ja, it can be subtle. So sometimes, sometimes I think, you know, where we talk about these unconscious biases, sometimes the client just um prefers to call a particular person, you know, that may be more similar to them. And, and, and ... or in meetings may um sort of point more questions to, to the White person, if it's a White client. So there's definitely, that definitely does happen from time to time, both internally and, you know ... in the organisation where it can be more more actively managed, and with clients where it's a little harder to, to manage."*

Several respondents who worked in customer- or client-facing companies referred to 'matching' clients with the 'right' person, based on fostering good customer or client relationships. Some respondents referred to outright racial preferences while others spoke more about cultural and language preferences. The respondents said that this was not about racial exclusion but about ensuring a relationship between customers/clients and the relevant executive.

ARNO	*"I can't go put a White manager in Tembisa [Store] or in Du Noon - to be closer to where you stay and me stay. And I need to put the right person in the right store as a manager. It's also very difficult, like in a Wynberg to put a [Black]African bank of cashiers in a, in a, in a, in in a more expat environment. Or put [Black] Africans with Coloured people on the same ... in the same store - that creates tension. So I've learnt that over the years. It's the right profile for the right customer we serve. If you go to Boston, you go to Tyger Valley, or you go to that areas, and you put [Black]African people behind the tills because of of boxes to tick, your store doesn't grow - as getting a young cashier woman, and she might be White and she understands how to speak to the Afrikaans lady because she relates, she understands, she can speak the language. So, I'm dead honest with you." ARNO*
OLIVER	*" ... in terms of matching people to our clients, I do it actively. Um, and, you know, whether, you know, White females, White males, you know Afrikaans males, you know ... I do it, you know, across the board."*

Respondents said that ‘matching’ professionals to clients not only involved White clients preferring White professionals but also putting Black professionals in client-facing positions with Black companies or clients or the government.

GRAHAM	*So you've got to cast the right people with the right client - that's gender, it's background, it's interests, it's experience, it's diversity, it's all of those things, you know. So unfortunately, the racial thing is just such a big deal at the moment, it defaults to, 'Oh well, you're only putting me in this role, because I'm a Black person', you know, and ...”*
IAN	*“ ... we are, we're quite deliberate about er creating deal focus, deal teams, if you like, that are quite mixed, or racially balanced, if you like. And we can see, I mean, obviously in certain, you know, in some, in some, you know, in the parastatal, in some of the state owned, it's a little bit, you know, one has to tilt it more, but that, that, but, but even across, you know, corporate South Africa, our corporates like to see that and they like to see a balance in those teams, and they like to see all of the people participating in the teams.”*

(j) Black professionals have to present themselves as 'Whiter' in order to succeed in the workplace

Many respondents agreed that Black professionals who presented themselves as 'Whiter', were more likely to be successful in the workplace. Several respondents related this to the ability of a Black professional to fit into the social context of the organisation.

WILLIAM	*"I remember, one guy we had, I had in in Johannesburg and [Suburb], a young guy, bright, but also he sort of did all the White things, you know, he supported Chelsea, and you know, those are the sorts of discussions you could have. And and then we had another guy. I can't remember his name now. But a Black [African] guy very quiet that was unable to … you know … he would sort of be on the side all the time."*
DEON	*"… why did I find [African Male Executive] and [African Male Executive], why, why did they resonate with me early on. Is it because, you know, they both played rugby. So absolutely. They went to private schools, their accent is a lot easier to understand. So I'm sure that there is an unconscious bias in that."*
GARY	*"But once again, I can I can, I think I can see that, you know, if a Black [African] person talks more like a White person or goes, enjoys, I don't know, let's take a a stereotypical ... enjoys rugby, or hunting, and I'm thinking about maybe the more conservative elements, then then possibly, you know, would be more acceptable to certain to certain people in society, I don't know. It's beyond something that happens in this environment, and that we even need to think about here."*

Others referred also to the physical presentation of Black professionals.

HANNES	*"...let's look at our transformation executive that joined us two years ago. She talks like us. She was in the private schools. You know, her values are the same. She grew up in a good family. You know name is [White English name] so it's not [African name] or something like that, which is difficult to understand sometimes. She talks English. She was in a private English school, you know. So, she's very much like us. She likes fine dining, you know, or ... she likes going overseas on holidays like me. So I like her. Now if you bring me somebody ... the fact that she's skinny or tall or fat doesn't really matter but ... if you bring somebody which is, you know .... they go, they go to ... slaughter sheep on weekends, you know, we will ... then it will not fit in."*
HEINRICH	*"… I do think a more refined looked [Black] African woman has got a much better position er opportunity….. as got a sexy White blonde, er, has got a better chance of success."*

A few respondents stated that this was not a South African issue but related to what was acceptable in the global environment.

ETHAN	*"I could not afford, representing a foreign principal nogal, to send somebody into the ... into combat, who is gonna, you know, get the get the maths wrong and the presentation wrong. They need it to be presentable in a European way. I mean, we are, this is a colonial situation. We are ... we still playing out by the rules set in the, in the north, in Europe, in Washington."*
JOSH	*"... we do international business, we're on Zoom calls to international people, they expect a certain vernacular when they're talking in order to understand and want e-mails to be written a certain way. And, you know, cultural perceptions around tidiness and, you know, African ... jokes around what is African time and this and that, and all of these, it's like cliches. And you know, it's, it's complex. It's not something that like I'm flying a flag or like I certainly go out of my way to to not like, force people when it is conscious, like into being more Western or less African. I mean, on the contrary. But I can understand why things trend that way. And I don't necessarily think it's a South African condition. You know."*

The primary discussion on this issue related to accents. Respondents agreed that Black professionals who had a White English accent would enjoy better success in the workplace. However, most of these respondents were adamant that this was not about race. In most cases, the issue of accent was immediately associated with the level of articulateness in English or acceptability in a global corporate environment.

ALISTER	*"...accent is one thing but you still have to be ... you can have an accent, but you have to be coherent. In other words, you've got to be able to express yourself and articulate."*
ANNE	*"You know, I think the the dilemma or the question is probably what is the, what is the detail of the position and the requirement of the position? So does 'more like me', as in White English-speaking mean speaking English without an accent - although we all have accents whether you, I mean, where you come from, wherever even if you're speaking English... Is it speaking without an accent, or is it just being eloquent even with an accent? Because to me, depending on your job, but once you are in a position of leadership I think there is a very large requirement of being eloquent. You have to be able to convey a message, be persuasive, you know, get people to do what you want to try and achieve. And if you speak poorly, that people don't understand you, that they can't grasp what you're getting at, then that's not going to fly in a position of leadership. But that's that's not speaking with an accent, that's about ... being eloquent."*
JOSH	*"I deal with Indian companies all the time. These are like 300 developers working for Amazon, based in, you know, Delhi. Trust me, they go out of their way to sound English and behave in, like Americans and do things in an American way. And they changed their names, and they don't introduce introduce themselves in their Gujerat names. They have shorter names like .. they do, you know."*

Several respondents linked accent and level of education. In such cases, having a White-sounding accent was juxtaposed with a Black African accent which was described in terms of lack of sophistication.

HARRY	*"So I think there definitely is that sense that if you've got the Model C [White English] accent, you're better educated, you're more intelligent. So I ... ja, I think it's the same thing. It's .. the ... it's a it's unconscious bias or a subconscious bias or something like that…"*
LAURA	*"... And they speak… a …. lot …. slow…er ... And, depending on your personality, you're like 'OK, can you get to the point!'. And what happens is, we tend to finish their sentences for them, which is also not great."*

White English accents were also often regarded as neutral 'non-accents' while accents that were not White were regarded as 'accents'.

DIRK	*"Accent, I can believe that. I think ... even for myself, I think someone with a very strong accent versus a private school accent."*
HANLIE	*".. having a very heavy accent does make you sound like you're very foreign. And sometimes that can be a good thing. You know, if you're French and you've got this like really sexy accent, then it's great, interesting enough. But having a very heavy Zulu accent, it might, you know, not be perceived well."*

Some respondents said that Black professionals who had a White English accent could relate better to White people.

DEON	*"So when you have a rural Black [African] accent, you can say what you want..... And it's not just .... well I when I say it's not just White people, I don't even know, you know, because it's.... because what's interesting for me is a week ago, I was interacting with a with a Black American guy, you know. And again, aren't your views of those people completely different. People's views on Will Smith or Denzel Washington ... it's completely different. I promise you something ...you see them more as as White people. Right. So, so ja, my comment on that is is, I think it's valid. I, I think it's unconscious. I don't think it's a conscious bias. But I think, I do think it is valid. Because if a guy from Sebokeng Primary pitches up here with a heavy you know, struggling to speak English accent, didn't play rugby at all, you know, you'd go 'whfff you know, okay'. But then a guy from you know St. Stithians pitches up, you know, talks a bit of rugby with you and you go ja/no this is the guy. Let's er, let's hire him, ja."*
MARTIN	*"... when they talk to White people, if they, if they don't talk with a nice private school accent, the White person may be prejudiced towards them. And we don't want the White person to be prejudiced towards them, because we're wanting to please our clients and them to pay us. So so [chuckling] that's quite funny that we literally look for ... for those people."*
WILLIAM	*"You know, when you when you meet with some of these young Black [African] kids today, you wouldn't even know they're Black [African], if you're talking to them on the phone, because they present themselves so much better. But I think there was a stage when, you know, the perception was ... and it was probably a language thing as well, you know, the perception was that they, they didn't present themselves well. And, you know, then a lot of that was was was wrong, but they didn't present that ... it was easier just to go for, you know, the people that that sounded better, and, you know, and culturally, us Whities could relate to better, I think..."*

Some respondents denied that White-sounding accents were more acceptable to them personally. But they admitted that having a White-sounding accent would be an advantage in succeeding to executive management.

IAN	*"I I I I do think um the one that does come through more strongly in an [Ian's Company] context is this Model C school um ... and that it's um er er easier for people from Model C schools to succeed. Um er ... And I'm not sure whether that's accent-related or whether it's just, you know, more familiarity and confidence that those schools bring. You know, better education, better confidence, more willingness to, to question."*
RUBEN	*"... I do think, I think that maybe in general, someone that speaks well and speaks ... has a has an accent of a White person, maybe that person is likely to do better in the workplace."*

A few respondents admitted outright that they had a preference for Black professionals who had a White-sounding accent. Some were self-conscious about it whereas others were bolder in asserting that it was a business requirement. In all cases they agreed that it was a prejudiced position.

MARTIN	*"And I say, for this particular job, I only want a Black [African] person, I only want a woman and I want somebody who speaks with a private school accent. I I don't want to know they're Black [African] when I speak to them on the phone."*
MELISSA	*"What do we, as HR people say, when we bring a candidate to the table? If you speak to her on the phone, you won't even know she's [Black] African. … Ok. So it's a fact."*
HARRY	*"I would probably be a, a sucker for the Middle, er the Model C accent."*

In contrast to the English-speaking respondents, most Afrikaans respondents were generally less likely to feel that having a White-sounding accent enabled Black professionals to do better in the corporate space.

ADRIAAN	*"… I'm Afrikaans and I don't care who says any anybody else, they must feel me and they must, must experience me and anybody in the business knows that. If you're a Black [African] person and you and you you've got an accent, actually, it's beautiful for me. I like it. It's not a ... I mean a Black [African]person that speaks like an English person is sort of for me sort of weird."*

(k) Black African professionals experience increased racism in the Western Cape

Most respondents agreed with this statement, but they generally regarded it as an issue of Black African people not assimilating into the Western Cape (Cape Town and Stellenbosch), as opposed to racism. Most accepted it as an unavoidable characteristic of the province.

CAMERON	*"Cape Town is really hard. I think that people - let's call them aspirant professional, well, educated Black [African] people - do not have a large network of people who look like themselves and are of a similar background in Cape Town. And there's a reluctance and a difficulty to ... a reluctance on their part to be employed here."*
ADRIAAN	*"... , when Black [African] people come down to ... the one thing that you need to also look at is it's very difficult for a Black [African] person to adjust in the Western Cape. We lose a lot of people because they ... the social environment, they're just unhappy."*
ANDREW	*"... the Black [African] person in Johannesburg appears far more confident than the Black [African] person in Cape Town. And there's that sense of identity that they don't have in Cape Town. Cape Town, they've, they've all, they've all travelled in, migrated in - they're there for a reason. Very much the Black [African] identity in Johannesburg is it's home. This is, this is theirs - there's a sense of belonging, there's a sense of ownership."*
HANNES	*"I think, in the Western Cape specifically, I think, I think there we've done some research long time ago, but it's more difficult for Black [African] people in the Western Cape to adapt, than maybe in Joburg. So um so we've had some senior people that joined our company that moved down here with their families and then after a year they say look, they can't, you know, they can't survive - there's no friends you know, all that..."*

(l) Workplace racism affects the emotional and physical health of Black professionals

Respondents differed in the way that they responded to this issue. While a few respondents agreed that the reported experiences must have a negative personal impact on Black professionals, others were dismissive of the notion that Black professionals were under any more pressure than their White counterparts.

THEO	*"… I can assure you that some of my White .. colleagues, they come to me and talk about them being ultra stressed about their, their responsibilities in the workplace."*

Some respondents accepted that the reported experiences of Black professionals were a reality, but they put the onus onto Black people to meet it as a challenge.

BRETT	*"… I think some people would obviously see it as a problem. And I think others would, would, you know, probably try and learn from it."*

Other respondents attributed these difficulties to the personality or cultural attributes of the Black professionals themselves. Several emphasised a difference in cultural background with Black professionals who had not had a family history in business. Others attributed it to lack of confidence or lack of competence.

ZANDER	*"Because the departure point is so strongly ingrained of, 'Listen I, because I'm Black, I'm not accepted', you know, 'I feel uncomfortable'. There's almost like a little bit of an ... I wouldn't say an inferiority complex ... but we can call it the minority complex. This thing of, 'I'm not one of them'. That, er, the belief is so strong that I ... that that that I think some of it has become the making, maybe of Black people that are not advancing, but but but, you know, it doesn't come from nowhere. So it's definitely, it's definitely there - it is more difficult it is."*

3.2. Observations

A significant number of respondents acknowledged the veracity of many of the reported experiences of Black professionals. Several were familiar with the issues raised in the research as they had been made aware of it on an anecdotal level or during workplace engagements. They were, however, surprised that these issues were as prevalent as demonstrated by the focus groups and in academic research. Several respondents realised that while they had been aware of some of the issues raised, they had not considered it in the context of hardships experienced by Black professionals in the workplace.

While these respondents acknowledged the workplace difficulties for Black professionals, few of them spoke about the root cause of those difficulties. For these respondents it was clear that the Black professionals had valid points but they avoided speculation on what was responsible for their experiences. Some respondents mentioned incidents of workplace racism but these were largely individual anecdotes. The concept of unconscious bias was discussed as a possible cause of some Black professionals' experiences but, again, this was dealt with on an individual basis as opposed to in the environment of the workplace as a whole. To the extent that corporate behaviour was held accountable for the Black professionals' experiences, respondents pointed to weak leadership or poor corporate strategy and denied that the experiences were rooted in race. In general, most respondents offered explanations other than racism for the reported experiences of the Black professional.

Some respondents acknowledged the Black professionals' experiences but attributed them to the responsibility of the Black professionals themselves. This was often done in a paternalistic manner by mentioning that Black professionals were not ready for the workplace or was attributable to cultural issues. A few respondents related the issues raised by Black professionals to experiencing pressure to perform from their own communities and identified this as relating this to 'Black tax' or other pressure from Black families and communities to prove themselves. Again, this attributed the Black professionals' experiences to their own social circumstances and to other Black people while deflecting focus from power structures in the workplace.

Another paternalistic response was to compare the issues raised by the Black professionals to those raised by young employees of any race. The (incorrect) assumption underlying this was that the Black professionals expressing these lived experiences were generally young and inexperienced and that the difficulties raised were about youth and not race. This was a recurring theme in the research where White respondents generally spoke about Black professionals in terms which juniorised them, often assuming that they were young and lacked experience.

While most of the White women respondents agreed with the views of the Black professionals, these respondents also tended to defer to explanations that were not race-related. These women also tended to emphasise that gender was more of an issue than race in the workplace and felt that the hardships experienced by Black professionals were no greater than the difficulties experienced by White women.

Several respondents attributed the experiences of Black professionals to corporate pressure to meet EE targets. These respondents said that EE created a perception that Black professionals were put into their positions on the basis of race and not merit. They largely attributed this view to the practice of window-dressing or token appointments to make up legislative EE targets. In many cases, this simply reinforced the view that any Black professional was assumed to be a token appointment. In all cases, the respondents did not name the source of this perception – it was just presented as an indisputable fact.

In discussing the Black professionals' experiences of exclusion in the workplace, respondents were divided. Some said that this did not happen formally or informally in their workplaces. Others acknowledged that this happened but claimed it only happened informally and was centred on cultural familiarity and not race. With several of these respondents, it was implicit that part of this cultural familiarity was having the freedom to speak about 'Others' in an unguarded manner. However, none of the respondents used the words 'Whites only' to describe their interactions. White women respondents felt that women were most often excluded from the informal social interactions of men, and it was therefore an issue of gender exclusion rather than race exclusion.

Respondents were generally sensitive to the potential exclusionary impact of workplace language. This related specifically to the use of Afrikaans by those in senior positions within companies which had adopted English as a formal medium of communication. While several respondents argued that an English-only policy in the workplace excluded all non-English languages, this avoided the issue of how the use of Afrikaans – even informally – enjoyed more informal protection in the workplace than the African languages. In cases where Afrikaans-speaking employees were unable to or refuse to speak English, the same 'protection' and understanding was not extended to other non-English South African languages, in other words, African languages. At a professional level, Afrikaans was more 'tolerated' in the working environment than, for example, isiZulu or SeSotho and the use of Afrikaans was excused as unintentional.

Several respondents acknowledged that clients or customers often had racial biases which impacted on Black professionals. This included patterns of preference where Black professionals were subject to racism from clients, as in where clients explicitly or implicitly request to deal with White company representatives. Most client- or customer-facing respondents also spoke of a more subtle practice of 'matching' company

representatives with clients and that this also involved preferring Black company representatives over White ones (especially when dealing with the government). While, at face value, this appeared to be a strategic business decision which applied to all professionals regardless of race, in practice, it appeared to have a disproportionate effect on Black professionals. Implicit in such a 'matching' practice was the minimising of Black representatives in relation to White clients. In business-to-business relationships, this would be the majority of clients in the private sector. In other instances, Black professionals would deliberately be included in teams to 'please' a client who was seeking Black representation on the team. Respondents played down this 'matching' as less to do with race and more to do with language and culture. However, it was evident that this practice tended to disproportionately 'race' Black employees.

Most respondents agreed with the observation by Black professionals that 'the Whiter you are, the higher you go'. Respondents tended to focus on the issue of White-sounding English accents. The dominant view among the respondents was that this related not so much to accent but to whether a person was eloquent and articulate. However, implicit in this view was the assumption that if a person had an African accent, they would be likely to lack eloquence. Inversely, White accents were given the benefit of the doubt in that they were implicitly equated with articulateness regardless of the content of what the person was saying. In essence, White accents were seen as neutral and reflective of a good command of English whereas African accents were assumed to indicate a poorer command of English. Interestingly, Afrikaans-speaking respondents – who themselves had experienced accent prejudice – were less likely to be impressed by an African person speaking with a White accent. Nevertheless, in discussions with all respondents it was evident that accent was indicative of a range of factors that would determine corporate suitability, including the perception of level of sophistication, where a person went to school, and how well they would perform in the workplace.

Respondents generally acknowledged that Black African people experienced difficulties in the Western Cape metropoles, but they did not regard it as racism. They attributed it to the demographics of the Western Cape and euphemistically said that Black African people found it difficult to adjust to the Western Cape. The majority of the respondents attributed this to a cultural 'disconnect' between Black African people and Cape Town and their inability to assimilate. Only a handful raised the issue of racism as a factor. With regard to Stellenbosch, respondents generally attributed the difficulties faced by Black African people as economic rather than racial.

The few respondents who were instantly dismissive of most or all of the Black professionals' experiences, claimed that they had personally neither observed nor 'experienced' such issues. These respondents did not attempt to view the issues from an empathetic perspective and they centred their views as objective, neutral

and preeminent. A common pattern in these respondents' views was scepticism. These respondents tended to attribute the lived experiences of Black professionals to them being oversensitive or exaggerating their experiences. Some of these respondents also felt that the Black professionals were being biased in their views.

Those respondents who qualified their agreement with the experiences of Black professionals did so in a way which diminished the lived experience of the Black professionals and sought to absolve White executives from any role in the difficulties faced by Black professionals. In several instances, respondents said they could not offer any explanation for why the Black professionals felt that way and that they simply did not know why they had had these experiences.

4. Respondents' beliefs and attitudes regarding racism and Whiteness

This section situates the responses of the respondents to the issues of EE and the reported experiences of Black professionals within the context of covert racism and Whiteness. To facilitate analysis, it is divided into two sections: the first sets out the respondents' beliefs regarding racism; the second deals with respondents' beliefs and attitudes on the issue of Whiteness.

4.1. Findings

The findings regarding the respondents' beliefs about racism and Whiteness should be considered within the context of the general self-perception and self-presentation of the respondents in regard to issues of EE and transformation. Many respondents were eager to stress the positive intentions of White managers in this regard. Several of them related anecdotes in which they had played a positive role in transformation or had intervened in a particular incident of racism. Most of these respondents defended White managers against any notion that bias could play any role in the progress of Black professionals at senior levels.

HEINRICH	*"I think people underestimate the the ... what's the English word ... how White corporate leadership fully understand the need for this change and stuff to happen. And the effort that we put in to assist. And yes, we make mistakes. But er ... and and the disappointment that we have when we get all the backlash from .. 'we are the racist and untransformed and not doing...'"*

Most of the respondents were eager to participate in the research as they felt they could express themselves confidentially on sensitive issues regarding race. Many feared being branded racist and raised that as a reason why they did not have open conversations about race with Black people. For most of them, racism was an issue of morality - and the idea of being regarded as racist was akin to them being judged as immoral individuals.

ALISTER	*"I think people are so guarded about racism. And people are ... I think a lot of Whites, including employees ... and I think to my friends, relatives, in the broadest context, not only just colleagues that I've that I've worked with, people fear that, you know, it's a punitive thing. So if you participate in anything around race, particularly if you White, and possibly even if you're Indian, and Coloured, there's no upside for you. There's only a downside. Because, you know, at least you're going to have to apologise for what you were, over the years, that you were going to have to be apologetic for the upbringing that you had, the opportunities you had in terms of education, and opportunities and such like. And that, at the end of the day, anything you say would be potentially be twisted."*
OLIVER	*"I think we scared of it. I think it's um ... And I and I can't I can't speak about the generation below me. You know, I'd be interested to understand their views to that question. But I definitely think my generation and certainly older, I think it's difficult for us to be vulnerable, because I think we're worried about what people might think about us or certainly Black South Africans might think about us, and they might think it's um, you know, probably coming from an inauthentic place, if that makes sense."*
RUBEN	*"I think from from a from a, from a, from a White person's perspective, it's it's it's (i) you feel feel scared that you're going to, to, to um .... you know ... I think ... you know, you feel you feel scared that you're going to offend someone. But I think secondly, you you, you feel that one ... one feels that one doesn't really have a voice. That you're not allowed to say something because you are part of the ... you depicted as part of the problem. Which is, you know, which which is wrong."*

Most respondents believed that they had acted with integrity in regard to transformation in the workplace and several of them used personal anecdotes to illustrate this. Among these respondents were several who recognised prejudice in other White people but not in themselves.

In this general context, the findings below are set out under the following headings:

- **Respondent beliefs concerning racism**
    - Explicit racism;
    - Covert racism;
    - Unconscious bias;
    - Attributing racism to Afrikaners and Afrikaans culture;
    - 'Both sides' responsibility for addressing racism;
    - Blaming media and politicians for inciting racism;
    - 'Reverse' racism.

- **Respondent beliefs concerning Whiteness**
    - Preference for White professionals;
    - Preference for Black minorities.

4.1.1. Respondent beliefs concerning racism

Respondents generally acknowledged that racism persisted in South Africa, including in the private sector but they differed as to whether this was widespread or limited to isolated incidents. Most respondents understood the term 'racism' as meaning hateful or openly prejudicial thoughts or behaviour and while several were aware of unconscious bias (including their own) they tended not to refer to this as racism. The use of the term 'racism' was generally confined to describing the explicit actions and attitudes of other White people, or White social groups other than the social group of the respondent (e.g., White Afrikaans-speakers or White people who were less educated). Respondents also saw racism as something which could be expressed by Black people towards White people and references to the concept of 'reverse racism' were common, even if that term was not always used.

(a) Explicit racism

Some respondents acknowledged that explicit racism persisted in the private sector workplace.

HEINRICH	*"...unfortunately, we have a lot of racism in the management of the organisation. I mean, there's there's people that think Black people can't do certain things."*
MARTIN	*"... there are a whole lot of people that just speak the right words. But if you get them on their second bottle of wine, you find out exactly that nothing's changed since apartheid. They still think they superior…"*

A minority of respondents made statements which would be regarded as racially offensive, socially taboo or explicitly racist but which they personally would not likely consider racist.

HANNES	*"… will you take your children to a Black paediatrician versus a White paediatrician? You know, most White people want to take ... that's just the way it is - not right or wrong."*
LAURA	*"... you don't want to employ someone that snorting every five minutes. You know, you don't want to employ somebody when you say, 'Let's walk to the interview room' and you get to the interview room, and they're miles behind you. But you're going okay, 'You walking slowly, which means you're thinking slowly, and you're going to work slowly".*
MARTIN	*"... I will not take a person if they went to a rural school. I don't care what they got in Matric. I don't care whether they got cum laude Masters. I will not take them. Because there's something missing. And it's just a fact. … if a Black [African] person went to rural school, they're unemployable here. That's my bias."*
ETHAN	*"…it may well be that there's something in the DNA, which makes certain people better at certain things than other people."*

A few respondents implicitly acknowledged their own racist behaviour in specific instances which they described during the interviews.

JONATHAN	*"... when when, when the compositions of boards changed or compositions of excos changed, I was very uncomfortable disclosing confidential corporate information initially. And that's, that's an admission of ... I'm I'm happy to make. Because I always wondered how confidential that information remained, when it went out of the boardroom. .... and, and, ja, I had to get over myself. It was it was a transformation I had to make."*
HANLIE	*"... I have found myself falling into the trap of racism, and then being so shocked at it."*
MELISSA	*"... I can say I've been desensitised through my upbringing. I have that in in, built into me as well. I interrogate an [Black]African candidate, much more than I would interrogate a White candidate and my direct team, and I talk about this a lot."*
WILLIAM	*"... I remember at at [Johannesburg Suburb]. I had a number of agents in my office who were ... still are pretty racist. And I would sit down with somebody coming in and say, Look, I need you to tell me if people are creating obstacles for you. And, you know, so basically, what I was saying is, in a way we think about it now, I was saying, 'It's fine, you can continue to be a racist'. You know, if you take these people they they will come to me and tell me and I will manage through it somehow or other, you know, and, and that's what used to happen. And sometimes they would they would come to me, and, you know, I would then sit down and try and resolve it with the agent, whereas if I had the chutzpah to do it, I should have been saying to them, 'Listen, you'd better shape up or ship out, you know'."*

In discussing racism, some respondents made statements that acknowledged explicitly racist attitudes or language but excused it on the grounds that the people involved were kind or benevolent.

LAURA	*"So we have some Afrikaans friends who grew up, you know, they, you grow up on a farm, you speak the language, you do everything. They still refer to Black people by that K word. And the first time they were, I heard, I heard it, I actually ... you know when you go hot and ... I was [gestures] and they just carried on talking. But they, they treat their staff, their their farmworkers brilliantly. They don't, they don't, they don't not eat from the same plates. You know, they don't .... but it just, it was the word they grew up with. And no amount of me ... I understand it looking now that they don't treat Black people differently, or as lesser. A Black person will say, 'of course, you do because you're using that word'. To them it's just, 'well that's just ...' you know. Anyone can wake them up in the middle of the night, and they'll rush them to the hospital. But try and explain that to people. How do you explain that?"*
ADRIAAN	*"[Afrikaans Name] is, is as is probably as close to somebody that you would categorise in these terms as being different or a White person that's extreme. But how he treated his [Black] people and how he looked after them, he's still very popular with them."*
ARNO	*"My Dad was also involved in, you know, getting kids from town to come and stay over on on weekends, unprivileged and so far and so on. So I didn't grew up in a so called racist environment. You know, my Dad was really good at his workers because the workers, you know, at those stages they build houses for the workers and they were slaughtering once a week a sheep for them and, or a calf, um. So I was never aware of hate, or discrimination or racial upset in the house."*

(b) Covert racism

Several respondents recognised the existence of covert racism in the workplace and used terms like 'structural racism' and 'unconscious bias' during the interviews.

RYNO	*"There's some people that says ja, but we've removed all barriers, we advertise all positions, across a myriad of, of platforms, and all people do have access and they can apply as they deem fit. That's not what I'm referring to. I'm referring to, in many cases, also unconscious bias that many of us has, because you linger to align yourself with people similar to yourself. That's, that's a basic principle of nature. And, and in some cases, we have to work hard at removing even those barriers."*
RUBEN	*"... in a lot of White-owned, in a lot of a lot of the private sector businesses, they've still got the structure, which doesn't easily allow an incumbent ... someone to, to come into that. So it must be very difficult for a Black professional to join a team of White people on an exco and try to operate at that level. So the structure is inhibiting. I totally agree with that. And if if, if White managers don't go out of their way to, to, to create that structural adjustments necessary for for for, for enabling the Black manager to operate in their, in that society, it's going to be very difficult."*
ALISTER	*"...I think institutional racism, racism is the really difficult one. Because it's the one that often happens unconsciously and that's built into your systems and, and your processes, you know."*

A minority of the respondents referred to conversations which they had had with Black peers which made them aware of issues like structural and covert racism. Some of them spoke about how they had previously been blind to these issues but were now able to recognise them.

ADRIAAN	*"... I wouldn't have opened my eyes or I wouldn't have got rid of my blind spot if it wasn't by interacting and listening and being actually friends [with Black peers]."*
GARY	*"You need to think about, you know, in discussions and meetings and stuff, you know, coming from a perspective of of a White male. And in the irony is that I've had many, many discussions with some of our um our senior senior Black directors, and, you know, some of the input and guidance and advice and pragmatic approach has just been phenomenal. That those guys have given me in particular, and I know, some of the some of my other White colleagues. You know, just ... and the and, you know ... from their point of view, and the, that's just ... That, to me, has been my biggest learning is engaging with with my Black colleagues and um getting, you know getting real real, pragmatic, practical input, and guidance."*

Other respondents implicitly acknowledged that their previous stereotypical view of Black people had changed once they had come into contact with Black people who were their intellectual peers.

ZANDER	*"... exposure to smart, educated Black people change your views though."*

Some of the respondents were sceptical about using the term ‘racism’ in the context of the experiences of Black professionals in the workplace.

ETHAN	*“… if you put [the Black skills deficit] aside, how much of this is actually racism? And, and I see. I don't think I don't think we're racist.”*
RUBEN	*“…for me to be lumped into a class of racists is not … And if people are saying well, they're trying to figure me out because they wonder is is that racist or isn't that racist, is worrying for me. You should also be given the sort of advantage of not being a racist until you clearly show that you're a racist maybe.”*

Several respondents acknowledged the issue of racial exclusion in the workplace but attributed this to cultural or class preferences and not racism. These respondents spoke about natural group affinity which was based on language, social culture and ease of familiarity.

OLIVER	*“And again, I mean I … Ja, it's probably, it's probably a factor of, you know, I don't know like .. I mean almost like, for lack of a better word, kind of the tribe that you come from, right? You you've got this tribe, you you grew up with them, you went to school with them, you know you generally socialised with these individuals. And that's why I think when somebody sounds different, um you ... You know I wonder if it's ingrained in us? You know - that you you naturally, there is some skepticism or ... you know, some unconscious bias that comes into it. I think that's, I think that's, I think that is probably a fair and accurate perception, in my view. Ja.”*
HANNES	*“.. I've got White glasses on. I don't hate them [Black people], I don't think they are less worthy than me or whatever the case might be. So, um but I've got White glasses, which has been White, you know, for the last 50 years. So that's the problem. It's like sports, you know, if you support the Blue Bulls, the Blue Bulls, you know, you're not changing your team, you know. So that's just the way it is.”*

A minority of respondents were acutely aware of covert racism and presented their thoughts in a self-reflective manner.

RUBEN	*“So, so people, I mean, White people still have very … and I think that that bad attitude amongst White people, although they'll say I'm not a racist, that sort of whole systemic racism that exists, and they're just not interested. Alright?*
ADRIAAN	*“I think the biggest challenge is the … is how uninformed and how … and, and I don't like to use the word White and Black or White and non-White ... but but we as as, as probably White people, are ... We don't know what we don't know. I think that's the thing. And because you don't know what you don't know, you don't know that you need to care about it, you don't know that you need to do something else about it.”*

Others were defensive about the notion that the experiences of Black professionals could be attributed to covert racism or that White people could or should take any responsibility for racism.

THEO	*" I don't know that there's any of my White colleagues that go out of their way to make Black colleagues feel the way they're feeling in terms of the feedback you're getting."*
CAMERON	*"…my own experience has been that White managers have been very well intentioned and very determined … for Black people to succeed."*

(c) Unconscious Bias

During the first round of interviews, only a few respondents mentioned the concept of unconscious bias. In later interviews, the respondents were asked specifically whether there was unconscious bias training at their companies. For most of them, unconscious bias training was a relatively new concept in their corporate environment and several of them spoke of it making them aware of prejudices that they had previously been unaware of.

HARRY	*"It [unconscious bias training] was quite an eye opening thing for me in terms of some of the things ....You know, it's always when you go, 'oh shit, I do that', you know, 'I didn't, and I didn't realise that it was an issue' and stuff like that. So ... and then you'll get others who deny it happens completely, you know. And we're in a ... there's 110 people here, so you're gonna get a good mix of the deniers, the acceptors and the people who just go 'oh my God, it's the end of the world'. So ... ja .. um... I I I've seen I've seen both sides of the coin so to speak, in this."*
OLIVER	*"I was quite um, I was quite shocked to to say that the [Harvard bias] test came back and said that I was slightly biased towards White people."*
JOSH	*"... I think .... it was complex because ... you default to being insecure. Like so, so, so you like, 'Okay, this is what unconscious bias is'. And then they go through the behaviours. And it's like, 'Have you ever felt this way? Or at least been unaware that you have been feeling this way etc, etc.' And of course you have. And you walk away going like, 'I understand how.....' I mean, I'm pretty, like, centrist in my thinking, you know, maybe even somewhat like liberal and as I say like, conscious of the underdog and all of those things, and I'd hate to think of myself as biased. But the fact is, you are ..."*

Those who had done the training were receptive to the idea, several of them accepting that they had racial biases but stopping short of naming it as racism.

GARY	*"... that unconscious bias thing I promise you [chuckles], you just actually don't realise it as a as a as a ... predominantly as a White person. You, you might not have a racist bone in your body, but you, you just, you just not, sometimes just don't come from the the right, context, you know, and it's er things that you actually don't even think about."*
OLIVER	*"...we went through this training, er which was, which was really interesting. I mean, it wasn't a ... you know, it wasn't like, well, you're a, you know you're a White racist, and you actually don't belong in this company. It was more about everyone has got these biases. And, you know, it's um, it's important to to acknowledge them and to, you know, try and check them."*

While the unconscious bias training appeared to make respondents more self-aware of their prejudices, their understanding of the concept of unconscious bias tended to focus on ‘everyone has biases’. Many of them also included a wide range of unconscious biases which diluted the element of racism. Moreover, several stressed that unconscious bias was a global problem and not unique to South Africa.

CHARLES	*“The real social research is around er, subconscious or unconscious bias. And that's not just, that's not just a South African problem. You know, that is worldwide. And this notion of what good sounds like, or what good looks like, you can do the ... [Charles] you gotta be over six foot two to become, you know ... Taller people get bigger job. Good looking people get paid more. And that's not just ... that's not a South African problem. That's a global problem.”*
LAURA	*“We are all so mindful of diversity and inclusivity. We are, we are, we've, we've got it. But the biases are there. And they not only around race and gender. The biases are there around - you see somebody ...you know, I'm slightly more rounded, but I'm very, I'm fit. I'm a lot fitter than a lot of thin people. You know I can go into a gym class and a little skinny malinx can come in next to me, and I can do that class, you know. So that in itself is an unconscious bias. You know, you see an older person, you think they're going to be slower, or they're going to be technologically challenged. So all those things. And my take is - and it's my bit of a kumbaya moment - if we can get rid of that, I think we really are ... we've got a good chance of actually succeeding here. And stop treading on eggshells around anything that has to do with with race. Because we tend to still do that. But there's so many other things as well, you know, it can't just be about the race issue.”*

Others focused on how Black people were equally as biased against White people.

DEON	“*… they would tell you what Black people think White people are liars and crooks. And the White okes say, 'oh but that's kind of what we think Black people er ... that's what we kind of think Black people are' ... you know, so it was quite interesting.”*
LAURA	*“So, you know, as soon as you have to say, 'Well, there were tons of White kids that didn't get to go to university', you're going to be jumped upon to say, 'ja, but they lived in houses and....' But there were tons that didn't get the opportunity. They just, they didn't. Likewise, there's tons of [Black] African people that haven't gotten the right opportunities.”*

Some respondents spoke about how awareness of unconscious bias had resulted in them being more mindful of the way they conducted themselves in the workplace.

TRACEY	*"I used to say, you know, um, 'I don't see colour'. And and and and ... I don't know, that is a very negative um term to a lot of people. It ... and and I wasn't aware of that, you know. And I meant it like, not as in like, physically, I don't. Because because of course I can. I can see, you know, you physically whatever. But like it doesn't, doesn't change my opinion of people. But on the training that we've had, that that particular statement is is incredibly offensive."*
ZANDER	*"I'll tell you what, I'll tell you what. You know, I've got to, I've got to guard even what I say, because I mean, sometimes I would say things that can be interpreted in many ways plus, because I still have my own unconscious biases and I, you know, probably still have, you know, some stuff in my head, whatever."*
MARTIN	*"So one of the things that I do, which is quite interesting, I, when I interview um people in my company, at any level, it doesn't matter er um what level they are, um I always have um one of my Black directors in the interview, because I don't understand the culture that I'm interviewing. So when a person comes in, and they're White, they went to a Model C school in the northern suburbs, and they went ... and they they Methodist, I know exactly what they like. I can ask them five questions, and I can determine whether I can trust them. So it doesn't mean I trust them more, it just means I can work out whether I can trust them. A Black person, I ... I've got no idea after five questions whether to trust them or not. So so that's I think what comes into the workplace."*

Some respondents spoke of a fear among White staff or a resentment which arose during unconscious bias training or workshops.

HARRY	*"And the discomfort [amongst White staff] manifests itself in a denial, you know. It's not like an outright er er discomfort, but it's the, it's the manifestation of it that you notice. You know, a nerve got touched or something like that, you know."*
IAN	*"... it's often the White male voice that is the hardest to tease out in these sessions. Because, um, it is seen as, as, as, if you like, a risky, an ultra-risky space for White males. And, and, so often they would prefer not to voice their fears, than than ... and so they often have to be drawn out a little bit in these sessions."*

(d) Attributing racism to Afrikaners and Afrikaans culture

A significant number of English-speaking respondents often used references to Afrikaans people or culture as a proxy for racism.

DANIEL	*"I've, I've had one very large business, which I got six years ago. And we just knew that the senior guys were, I mean, they were always regarded as the Broederbond. And they weren't all Afrikaans. But they were ... it was very bad. And they actually had the best scorecard. But if you really sat with the senior team, there was no, there was no acceptance around employment equity or transformation in any form."*
JONATHAN	*".. there's always been a huge Afrikaans componentry in the management of the motor industry. Um, and hence, I think ... the the speed of transformation in our industry has been slower than in many."*
ANDREW	*"But what I do need to guard here is very much a White Afrikaans culture. So a lot of my younger staff and senior staff have grown up in Afrikaans households um, and tend to go back to that as well. So they tend to want to employ um young White women um, rather than go beyond that. And I got to constantly remind them to come back to, you know, what are we looking for, what our outcomes what are we wanting to achieve?"*

These views were discussed with some of the Afrikaans-speaking respondents. They were all aware that Afrikaners were often held responsible for apartheid and racism more than other White people and they were also conscious of a tendency of White English-speaking people presenting themselves as more liberal and enlightened. Afrikaans-speaking respondents felt that White English-speaking people were more likely to engage in covert racism.

TERTIUS	*"...in companies that's been run by by English CEOs for many many, many, many decades - not years, decades. There might not be a lot of transformation and then they can't blame Afrikaans people for that. They can't blame apartheid for that. They can't blame ... I don't say apartheid was right - I'm not, I'm not trying to justify it. I know very little of it to be very honest. All I know that what I've heard about it was sounds horrible and wrong. But but to exonerate English people and say they haven't done it and they're not part of it and therefore they can't be blamed is absolute nonsense. Absolute nonsense."*
ADRIAAN	*"... what I find with and now with with the [Cape Town] southern suburbs, 'we are the so-called liberal English Whites, we don't believe in all of these things', but back at the ranch, it's a completely different thing. And Black people see through that."*

(e) 'Both sides' responsibility for addressing racism

During the interview discussions, many respondents said that addressing racism in the workplace required work from 'both sides', meaning White and Black people, and that Black people were equally prejudiced against White people.

FRANCOIS	*"I think, you know, you can mentor that, you know, both sides, you know to try and sort of build those bridges and to create that, you know, that common understanding of where things should be going."*
GRAHAM	*"... as much as the Black community was, you know, kind of in this bubble, their own bubble, we were in our own bubble, and we were kind of missing each other. And, er, and there's a lot of ignorance on both sides, you know. It's not not just it's not just a one-way thing, you know."*
HANNES	*"...I think, as as White people have got certain historical hangups, or I don't know what the word is, so Black people have got. Um unless we sit down, and we can talk about it openly, which is not that easy, because the moment that you start talking about it, people start putting things around your neck. And it's not a White thing. It's a White and Black thing, you know."*

A few respondents spoke about Black professionals 'playing the race card'. These respondents felt that Black professionals would claim that they were experiencing racism as a defence against poor performance or conduct.

GRAHAM	*"If if somebody, you know if, maybe a Black person is slighted in any way, and they push back on the corporation or an individual, you will see the majority of people get behind that, and it gets blown out of all proportion."*
EDWARD	*"So the person's got this agenda and the person's got that one, and they can't come together then it's going to be a messy thing. And often then people put that under the umbrella of racism. But, you know, it's a easy place to go and say it's racist. But it's actually the the, the misunderstanding between each other of what the purpose is that they're there together, or working together, etc."*
HEINRICH	*"A White suit don't want to discipline a Black guy because he will be charged with racism. So there will be a complaint lodged against him. So you get to a point and I mean this is very prevalent ... that people are not managing consequences, because they will be viewed as racist if they do that."*
RYNO	*"So, so the problem is, I see the racial discussion, sadly, in a very similar vein. You know, the moment that I express discomfort with you for something which truly is maybe inconsistent with my own value system, if you do disagree with me, it's as easy as you playing the race card, and I will be seen as the villain. Irrespective of what you did. It will, it will be the case."*

Some respondents believed that a good business culture and strong leadership would reduce the impact of racism in the workplace.

ADRIAAN	*"If you can make performance the top priority, and the [Company] success the top priority, people buy into that and they would not now go and say I'm going to be prejudiced towards a Black person, even though I know he's better than the White person and appoint a White person just because I'm a White manager."*
CHARLES	*"Those that have made the most progress on this topic, whether it's here or sitting internationally, tend to be outstanding managers. But it will just ... it just happens. You know. They see it as ... they see it as part of delivering a competitive organisation. And I know that if the lightning conductors here .. and Black talent wants to work here because it's progressive, exciting, great things on offer, and, and, and ... you can then pick and choose."*

(f) Blaming media and politicians for inciting racism

Regardless of the extent of their acknowledgement of the persistence of racism in the country, there was a tendency for respondents to be annoyed at the race discussion, feeling that it had been politicised and that 'everything was about race'. Many respondents felt that the government, politicians and the media cynically advanced racial agendas and that, absent this, racism would be less of a problem in South Africa. These respondents also felt that racism was exaggerated or that Black people were oversensitive.

ADRIAAN	*"Ja, I think the media has played a role in portraying ... let's call it ... that made this racism thing, the most obvious thing that's so easy to see - it's those guys that are racist, and these guys that are not racist. And ... I also ... I also think, which is which is quite interesting, I think that we we've got a much bigger core of White people that are enlightened that are, that think the same way we do or try and be the same way we are. The the so called hardcore racist that people are portraying on the farms, I think it's becoming a minority ... I think there's a there's a growing White individual out there that that are a lot more to the sensitive side and a lot more educated because of exposure, and we don't always give that any credit."*
HEINRICH	*"I think if if if you take away the noise the politicians made to further their own personal agendas, whether they left or right, we'd have a lot less issues, because I think fundamentally, underlying, that there's a lot less racism. I think racism are being ignited by ... I don't want to say they silly politicians, but mostly politicians. I mean, if you don't have people in lecture halls making noises and stuff like that, er .. you'll, we'll get along much better in the communities and stuff like that. So I think it's ... it's over emphasised, and it's created unnecessary, er, um, airtime, as a result of the weakness that we have in government and politicians who by default, are all Black. And it's easy to divert attention somewhere else, especially if you are unable or incapable to perform, to find the problem somewhere else, and then you create that unnecessary tension. Because I mean, 80% of Black people, 80% of White people just want to make a living, and enjoy life a bit and go forward. Nobody wakes up in the morning and say, I want to do this to a White person, I want to do this to a Black person. But that impression still gets created."*

(g) 'Reverse racism'

Almost all respondents felt that White people were experiencing loss of opportunity in the workplace or in South Africa as a whole. For many respondents this was raised in relation to their children's future. Several respondents felt that race quotas across the workplace, educational institutions and sport, involved discrimination against White people in favour of Black people. Others felt that EE targets meant a substantial or complete loss of opportunity for White people and several respondents felt that there was resentment among White employees about fewer employment and promotion opportunities because of EE requirements.

IAN	*"… the White male underlying fear is, is there space for, for my career in this organisation? And, you know, am I am I fighting a kind of losing battle because as soon as there's anyone, you know, I'm always going to have to make space, you know, to kind of address the demographic imbalance."*
BRETT	*"I think that I think the glass ceiling might have turned the other way around. Er, I certainly ... I think about conversations with friends, old varsity mates who particularly still working in Joburg, they, um .... they feel, you know, that as a White male, they're unlikely to get into a top management position at a listed company ... purely on on the basis of gender and race."*
GRAHAM	*"You know, at the lower ranks, we're almost entirely transformed. You know, I think there's very few White individuals. It's almost, it's almost like apartheid in reverse in that young White interns or candidates coming out of school will not get a job with us. Just they will not."*
TERTIUS	*"I'm told there's no need for well educated, knowledgeable, White males."*

Despite unemployment statistics which show that Black African people are by far the most unemployed group in the country, many respondents felt that White people were most discriminated against when it came to employment.

HANNES	*"But you know, you hear all these stories, at braais, you know, the Blacks got this job again, you know, and White children can't get jobs. So that does not sit down well with them."*
RUBEN	*"And look, I ... the problem for me if you, if one sets the context again in in in where we are, is that although White people are the privileged people that are still sitting (on your on your percentages and are the managers) you know in some ways the White people are also the ... Ja, and you can talk about White fragility and whatever but but but the White people are also a lot under pressure and under and feeling excluded from from many things. And the labour market is one of them, you know. So, so the, just ... the perspective that the White people are all the haves is not, is not a very, is not, is not true in every circumstance - in all circumstances."*
ZANDER	*"... if I take that generation of 30 to 40 year old executives in our group group now, there's no question that every White individual there, and including ladies to some extent although, you know ... there's no what's it denying, I mean there's ... everybody understands that, that they, you know, I mean, they've been impacted. They just don't have the same chance. You know, it's almost like, you know, you could almost say, you know, there is a little bit of a quota system. So, so they've been impacted. So I would say the next generation has definitely been impacted by reverse, call it reverse discrimination if that's what you wanna call it, or whatever. Whereas our generation have not. I mean, in my generation, you know, my peer group, whatever, was still when 90% of executives were White…"*

Many respondents felt that, because of targets and quotas to ensure racial representation, Black people were being unfairly advantaged ahead of White people. Respondents often used South African sports analogies to illustrate their argument.

CAMERON	*"You know, and again, you look at even some of the figureheads. You look at a guy like Siya Kolisi. Now the truth is that Siya Kolisi would never have got his opportunities early in his career, if he hadn't been Black. He was pushed very hard as a 20-year-old. The problem is now he's desperate ... and I think correctly so ... to be to be recognised as somebody who's there on merit. But the difficulty is that if your history is ... and he's smart enough to acknowledge it ... that he's been given opportunities he may not have been given if he'd been a White candidate. You've got that constant uncertainty and lack of confidence in him.."*

Several respondents felt that White women were the most disadvantaged by EE targets and B-BBEE targets.

ANNE	*"... I think White women are being disadvantaged on more than one occasion. I'm I'm actually quite distressed by it. [pause] Because prior to EE legislation, we were completely disadvantaged. And it's as if, as if it's regressive. Ja. And I think one can say, one can say, well, now one just sort of feels what White men felt like, you know. You get to understand their position."*
HEINRICH	*"...I think [White women] were the biggest losers in this whole employment equity thing. So you can look at the boards ... all boards in South Africa is ... well, that I know of ... is very transformed. And it's not about skills base. It's about complying with some JSE or King Commission or BEE Commission thing. And it's, as I said, it's mainly unfair to women ... er, White women."*

Some respondents also felt that Black minorities were in the same employment position as White people as their opportunities were limited in favour of the employment of Black Africans. Respondents felt that this had intensified with expected amendments to the EE legislation which would more strictly enforce workforce representation according to population demographics and therefore require companies to appoint more Black African people.

HANNES	*".... It's like the Coloureds always said, you know, in the old apartheid, they were too White to count under the Blacks. Now that the Blacks are going, they too ... you know they still too White to go with the Blacks, kind of thing. So, they've also lost out on both opportunities or both cases." HANNES*

Some respondents said that White people couldn't be blamed for resisting transformation, in several cases justifying racial prejudice because of the perceived victimisation of White people.

CHARLES	*"..transformation was so badly handled. Because it victimised White people. okay. So they're pissed off. So what do pissed off people do? They'll rock the system, and they'll just eat it away!"*
FRANCOIS	*".... So, can I, can I blame the White, you know, guy running his financial firm and only employing White people? You know, because, you know, he's probably lived through his child not getting into a sports team, because he's White, or his his daughter not getting into the, the university course that she wanted to get into because she's White. And, you know, you name them. And that's what we, you know, that.... So .. he would feel, 'I don't owe the system, anything', you know, 'I'd rather give you know, White White people jobs'. And it's very difficult to even try to have that conversation anymore. You know, it's just, it's just reached that point, where it just almost feels a little bit late."*

A few respondents felt that, despite EE targets, there were still opportunities for White people within the private sector environment and a handful of respondents were philosophical about the impact of EE targets on their personal progression in the workplace.

DANIEL	*"... I mean, when we when we brought in us this 50%, Black African. I did say to our guys, you, you still ... there's nothing stopping for every two people, one certainly can be one of you. So it's not like it's a 70 or 80% ratio. At 50%, you, you've still got a very good opportunity. And we have seen, we have seen White execs being promoted."*
RYNO	*"Is it, is it, is it, a unfortunate position to be in? Yes, it is. But such is life. I have got many African friends that that have had to absorb that for years. So so I'm not that special. So surely hardship can come to me as well. Or my ethnic community. So so I don't ... ag, it doesn't discourage me. I .. it is part of life, it is part of reality. But I do think we can manage it better."*

Most respondents were concerned about the impact of education or sports quotas on their own children where they said that their children were being overlooked for places in university or positions in sports teams because they were White. They often offered personal anecdotes to illustrate their views.

ANNE	*".. very often the topic of conversation is in the line of, you know, 'my, my child's got...' - I'm talking about Whites now - 'my child's got six distinctions in Matric and not getting into university, you know, because of the quotas'. And, er 'there's no point in me applying for a job elsewhere because I'm not going to get it' or 'because I'm a White male', or ... so it's it's actually seen as extremely negative with no recognition of the ongoing privilege of the background in which one grew up. It's like almost, 'Well, I couldn't do anything about it. That's history. Now let's move on.'"*
MELISSA	*".. my very wise, 16-year-old said the other day, 'Mom, it's actually reverse racism now'. And it's very difficult to acknowledge that. And it's very hard to swallow for children who's been born post with this whole thing. And ... I think that's the, that's the reason. It's because it is absolute reverse apartheid. That is playing out at the moment. And it's a phase, it will settle again. But it's difficult for people to talk about it because as adults, we might be able to absorb it, but it's difficult for us to absorb it for our children."*
RUBEN	*"They're going to be, there's going to be five, four players in [my son's cricket] team that are going to be picked up above him. They're going to be from Black and Coloured and maybe Indian backgrounds. But what's their ... what what what distinguishes them at this point in life? They're in a private school, they're not in a semi-private school. Their parents are all in our socio-economic class. Is that fair to still be discriminating against my son and their children at that level to fill up a certain quota? I would say it's not."*

Some respondents felt that White privilege was something that was weaponised against White people even though they hadn't asked for it.

OLIVER	*" ... it's very difficult, you know, as, as a, you know, as a, as a White male, you, you do feel like ... not the world's anti-you ... but there's, there's a lot of pressure right? Around, you know, transformation, not just from, again, the perspective of race perspective, etc. Um, and I, and I fully get, I fully get the privileged background that I am, that I was born into, both from a race, both from a gender perspective, as well as you know, where I was born. Um, but I can't, you know I can't change that background, there's nothing I can do about it."*
ALISTER	*"... if you if you've worked hard and applied yourself, and you know, maybe you didn't have - even as a White - you didn't have the opportunities of some of the more wealthier Whites, the feeling is that, you know I, er ... everything I have is because of my race, not because of my my effort. And, and you can't ... that's a bit of a generalisation, because there are plenty of of White people who also grew up with very little and have kind of pulled themselves up by their own bootstraps and and done and amazing things. And so they weren't necessarily the benefit the beneficiaries of lots of privilege. I guess the privilege that they had is that they were White, because they were born White. And the feeling is that if you, you know, the fact that you White you ... the generalisation is that you've got all these benefits, and all this privilege, but many people feel that they worked really hard for whatever it is they've achieved, only to find people saying to you well, you, you're there because of your privilege. Whereas people are saying, well, ag actually it didn't work like that. You know, my father, I didn't have a father or I ... you know, there's a whole lot of reasons. And those kinds of things all get, they get lost in the wash now, because everybody, it's because, you know, White equals privilege."*

4.1.2. Respondent beliefs concerning Whiteness

Few respondents used the term ‘Whiteness’ during the course of the interviews. Their attitudes concerning Whiteness in the workplace had to be inferred from their responses to issues such as preferences for White professionals or preferences for professionals who were closer in proximity to Whiteness.

(a) Preference for White professionals

Implicit in many of the discussions regarding the appointment of Black professionals, was the notion that appointments on merit or jobs requiring complexity or international suitability, were associated with White people.

ADRIAAN	*“I mean … [African Man] appointed a White guy, because it was a very complex environment in our cash environment. And he just said to me 'Listen, [Adriaan], I'm not going to appoint an affirm... and this is a Black person speaking to me ... I'm not going to appoint an affirm... I need this thing to work, otherwise you're going to fire me'. So, you know, so it's, it's .. again comes back to the performance.”*
CAMERON	*“... if everybody's scrambling, always, to meet their quotas or targets, whether you like it or not ... and these are the things that people you know, don't like to have open discussions about ... but whether you like it or not, the the competence, potential ability, education, whatever you want to call it, of the Black candidates is going to lag that of the White candidates, because we're ... people are scrambling to make up the numbers. And the honest truth is that whether it's admissions to educational institutions, or the ... let's call them the quantitative requirements for admission to jobs, promotion, etc., are lower for Black people still..”*
ANDREW	*You know, you go to any of your independent international schools, and, and they’re White heads. Generally male. And that’s, that’s what they’re wanting. That’s that’s more Western aspiration.”*

Some respondents admitted that, EE requirements aside, White executives found it easier to relate to other White professionals. This applied specifically at the executive level where an element of trust was central to the executive relationship. Some respondents spoke about how White professionals were given the benefit of the doubt whereas Black professionals had to prove themselves first.

HARRY	*"You select, you choose people who are like you. People ... you know ... it's a conscious effort to hire people who are not like you."*
MARTIN	*"... that Black person enters into the C suite. And and the White ... um ... C suite directors ... it's not that they don't trust them, they just don't know whether they can trust them. And then they have to earn the trust. Whereas the White person who comes into the C-suite, is generally given the benefit of the doubt, and they actually lose the trust. But the Black person has to gain the ... deserve ... or, or gain the trust, and the White person has to lose it if they mess up. And that's quite a big difference."*
HEINRICH	*"I think you always have ... I don't want to say a inner circle, but there's a trust relationship in a organisation to people. I mean, I have two or three executives with whom I can share things and who I can bounce things off because I trust them. Not because they White. And there's a few, which I won't do it. So I think those those things are natural in an organisation. And I think the fact that, by default, the majority of senior people, managers is White people ... you, you ... people view that as 'they don't trust me because I'm Black'. But you don't trust you because, er, you trust other people more. And it's by default, just because, er ..... It's, it's not, it's it's it's more comfortable to have a trust relationship with with your own. I mean, my wife won't complain to my male friends about our issues, but she will talk to our female friends. Not because she hate men. So I think those things are naturally overblown."*

Most respondents attributed the preference for other White professionals to familiarity, as opposed to racism. They spoke of how it was easier to hire White professionals because of the greater potential for inter-personal relationships.

JOSH	*"... it's so easy to hire White talent. It's it's it's unconscious bias, it really is. It's because, structurally, it's learned through your network and experience. You have people that you have a rapport with, they know ... you know, you're under, you're under pressure to deliver, you're getting swamped with CVs. And there's a handful of candidates that you have a rapport with, either directly or indirectly through reputation and whatever."*
ZANDER	*"You know, I can say to a White guy, 'Okay, where were, where did you matriculate?' You know and then that, the, the whole, you know ... I, I place that person, you follow? I mean, I've got like ... If I asked the same to a Black person, you know, okay, I'll have to follow it up by asking okay which province is that. ... And then I would, okay, at least then I would say okay it's a Zulu or a Xhosa or whatever? And that's almost the limit, you follow? So, I think those are ... I think those things are real, you know."*
DEON	*"It's common interests. Because they also like rugby. You know, and that's when you start going into the race debate. And I said, 'but guys, it's not about race'. I mean, the reality is, you know, you go to school, there's groups. There's a group who likes sports, there's the academic group, there's the anti- social group, there's a druggie group, you know, ... So if you put a gun to my head, I think it's probably because it seems less different than you are, if that makes any, any any sense, if that makes ..... You you you ... right, you know. And there typically tends to be that kind of common interest."*
HANNES	*"... it's the way that I've been brought up, you know, of ... I suppose we think Whites are better. We just trust Whites easier than we trust Black people."*

Several respondents said that it was natural for White executives to prefer White professionals as this was simple group behaviour.

OLIVER	*"I think we've got a natural preference to people that look like us, that sound like us, that went to the same schools as us, you know, that, you know, do the same things on weekends, you know. So I I definitely ... and I and I feel that myself and I think it's a, it's a, it's an unconscious bias that I think you've got to check, you know, on a ... and and you you've got to acknowledge."*
GRAHAM	*"Look, I mean. It is just basic consumer, er not consumer, human behaviour, in that, you know, from caveman days that you identify, you know, whether it's your own tribes back then, or whatever it is, but you identify with individuals that look, sound, act like you. If you didn't conform, you know, you go and kill, you know, one of the tribesmen, you out, you know. So if you didn't conform, you left. So I think that's just human, it's just natural human behaviour .. that you, you become, you judge, and you, you um, you know you judge by stereotypes. And that's not necessarily a racial thing."*
TERTIUS	*"... I think a lot of people [pause] with different backgrounds in the way they were brought up. I think me and you were probably brought up very similar and have similar value systems. [pause]. I think a lot of people that don't have that will, will appoint and promote people that look like them, talk like them, and dress like them. Where where people then don't allow other groups to come in."*

Several respondents attributed the same racial prejudices to Black people.

HEINRICH	*"I mean, people like the same ... I mean, Black people employ Black people, White people employ White people, women employ women."*
TERTIUS	*"... where the majority of the of the leadership is is people of colour, you will find that the discussion is exactly the same the where where some White males would say 'they just don't take me take me serious', 'they got a majority', 'I give my input, they don't ...'. I think it's just a natural thing, isn't it?"*

(b) Preference for Black minorities

Many respondents acknowledged that Black minorities were better represented in their organisations than Black African people and that, in meeting EE targets, companies would prefer to employ a member of a Black minority.

WILLIAM	*"... if there were two people sitting in front of an employer, an Indian person and the Black [African] person, there is a very good chance that the Indian would get the preference above the Black [African] person still, even now. I think the the the the ... um ... employers that are serious about transformation and building within their group, will see it differently and do what needs to be done."*
GARY	*"... Look, I'm not naive to think that there are certain employers out there that when er looking for, for Black people, would prefer to go with a with a Coloured or an Indian person, you know. I suspect that could that could be the issue. And then they then they think they fine, you know."*

When respondents were asked why Black minorities outnumbered Black African people in executive management, most said that Black minorities (particularly Indian people) had received better education both during apartheid and since 1994.

RYNO	*"... historically, Indian people have gone through a very good schooling system. Many of them either went to private schools from an early age or they went to Islamic schools, which also held a very high academic record. The consequence of that is that they got into universities a lot easier and quicker than many of our Black [African] counterparts. The consequence is they entered the work market at a very different level than many Black [African] people."*

A significant number of respondents said that Black minorities were culturally more suited to business than Black African people. Black minorities, specifically Indian people, were spoken of highly by respondents with an implicit presumption of merit. This included generalised attributions to Indian people, such as a strong work ethic, knowledge of finance and high performance.

CHARLES	*"... I think the context within which Indians have performed historically, not just South Africa, it is a nation of builders and nation that ... they work bloody hard."*
FRANCOIS	*"...I can't think of an Indian ever that I've met, that had an entitlement mentality. Right? So from the start, they would, they would want to do a good job before getting the position."*
HEINRICH	*"Well, I would think most probably, there's more skilled Indians. Secondly, Indians are clever people. I mean if I look for a financial person I would like a Indian guy. They they know their numbers. They sharp."*
MELISSA	*"It's a fact. If I, if you, if you, if EAP doesn't come in, if you have to pick, you're going to pick the Coloured above the Black [African], you're going to pick the Indian above the Black [African] because of the accent and because of the perception that you're going to get a better quality of work out of that person."*
ZANDER	*"So, maybe they, you know ... maybe also they look at it, Coloured people are, you know, Coloured people are a bit more advanced. So maybe it's the inferiority thing again, I don't know."*
ARNO	*"So the Indian population is hard working, they're not lazy people."*

Several respondents felt that Indian people and Coloured people were culturally close to White people. They attributed this to similar socialisation and similar family dynamics. A few respondents pointed to home language - English and Afrikaans - as a common factor between White people and Black minorities.

ALISTER	*"...frankly, I think if you, if you look at what an organisation is looking for, in terms of people at that sort of executive level, I think they probably find what they're looking for, in Indians and Coloureds before they find that with [Black] Africans. Because I think the socialisation process with the with the Coloureds and Indians is probably quite similar to historically what the White population, how the White population socialised their children growing up in terms of introducing them to the fundamentals of commerce. Whereas in the [Black] African family structures, that kind of learning from your, from your principals is not there, to the same extent. And I think that plays out in that there just aren't enough [Black] Africans to go around."*
GARY	*"I suspect that there still could be some, you know, some, possibly some White employers (people who are making those decisions), who say to themselves, well you know, okay, if I have to employ a Black person, I'll go ahead and employ a not-so-Black person. In other words a Coloured person or an Indian person. You know, I'll be surp..., I won't be surprised if there is if there is some of that. Um, you know I think, you know, I think maybe historically, you know, that sort of that that White individual feels that they could maybe, I don't know, get on, get on relationship-wise, or maybe there's some subliminal thinking that this person is of a better quality. I don't know, you know. It's difficult for me to comment on this because I don't think like that, you know."*
MARTIN	*"... you know, the the the cultures are closer to also to the White culture. So, so, if you, if you get into the Black [African] cultures, they they very distant from us. Whereas in Indian culture, most White people can go around to, to mates who are Indians and and even Coloureds for that matter and it's pretty much not that different."*

4.2. Observations

While most respondents acknowledged individual or industry-wide cases of racism, there was little recognition that racism and Whiteness impacted on the prospects of Black professionals in the private sector. Many of the responses were contradictory in that respondents who had agreed with aspects of the reported experiences of Black professionals did not regard racism as a widespread issue in the workplace. Only a handful of respondents made any direct connection between workplace racism and poor representation of Black professionals in executive management. This included the few respondents who were honest in their personal anecdotes of how they had previously behaved in a racist manner.

Most respondents were averse to attributing the term ‘racism’ to their own conduct or to White managers (or White people) generally. While some of them acknowledged the existence of structural or institutional racism in the workplace, the term was used in such a manner as not to attribute responsibility to White management, either personally or as a group. The general exception to this pattern was when English-speaking respondents associated the presence of White Afrikaans-speaking managers or a White ‘Afrikaans culture’ with racism. Most avoided taking responsibility for racism against Black people other than accepting the principle of unconscious bias. Most did not admit to any personal prejudice against Black (specifically Black African) people whether explicit or covert.

Respondents also often struggled with language in discussing racism and their responses were frequently hesitant or disjointed. Afrikaans-speaking respondents were generally more likely to use direct language in their responses to issues of racism, whereas English-speaking respondents used more cautious language. It was evident from most responses that respondents regarded racism as an attitude which was motivated by malicious or hateful conduct. While they recognised racial bias in the workplace, they did not name it as racism unless it could be identified as hateful.

Many respondents attributed racism in the workplace to poor corporate culture and felt that a constructive and responsive corporate environment would be a panacea for racism. These respondents tended to adopt an idealistic view that if all employees simply worked together for the benefit of the company, this would reduce racial differences. These respondents also tended to attribute racial prejudice equally to both Black and White employees and felt that Black employees had to make an equal effort to minimise racial tensions in the workplace. The impression given was that racism was about two equal sides (Black and White) that needed to reconcile. This approach by respondents ignored the history of racism in South Africa, as well as the power differential between White and Black people in the private sector workplace.

Many respondents were aware of the concept of unconscious bias and several had recently undertaken unconscious bias training in the workplace. These respondents had been receptive to unconscious bias

training and felt that they had learnt from it. Almost all of them stressed that unconscious bias was something which all people had, regardless of race, gender or any other social attribute. In this sense, while unconscious bias training had made these respondents more aware of their own prejudices, the respondents appeared relieved that unconscious bias was a universal problem and not limited to White people. This notion that all people are equally biased seemed to minimise the historical and contextual fact that racism involves both prejudice and power. In fact, several of the respondents emphasised Black biases against White people as well as a range of non-race related biases (such as physical features) to illustrate their argument that unconscious bias was not just about racism or White people. Importantly, only a handful of respondents made a connection between their own prejudice and the lived experiences of Black professionals while no respondents made a connection between their own unconscious bias and the low numbers of Black professionals in executive management.

A significant number of respondents felt that the prospects of White people in the private sector workplace were limited by EE imperatives. Given that most respondents had reached their career peaks and were in their 50s and 60s, they were less likely to have experienced this personally. Only a handful spoke of instances when Black executives had been appointed ahead of them and they had personally experienced this as unfair discrimination. The issue of limited career prospects was primarily raised in respect of younger White professionals who were still advancing in their careers. This included White women and Black minorities who respondents felt were being overlooked in favour of African people.

Most respondents were pessimistic about the future of their children in South Africa and believed that because they were White, they would be overlooked for opportunities. Several of these respondents felt that race quotas in spheres like education and sport were unfair on White children who were born after apartheid formally ended. Respondents felt that legislation and regulations, which promoted opportunities for Black people, conversely limited opportunities for White people (including children) and were punitive and discriminatory (‘reverse racism’). Despite South Africa’s high unemployment rate which disproportionately affects Black people, most respondents felt that White people (who form the largest employed race group in the country) experienced greater difficulty in finding employment than Black people.

While some respondents openly admitted that, barring EE requirements, they would be more likely to employ White professionals, they were adamant that this was not racism but merely a preference for one’s own. It appeared that respondents did not regard this as racism as they felt that it was not motivated by prejudice against Black professionals but rather preference for White professionals. Some respondents added that Black professionals would act in the same way, by preferring ‘their own’. Many respondents

regarded racism as an immutable and unavoidable fact, attributable to basic human behaviour, while overlooking power dynamics. In this sense, it was deproblematised and divorced from the prevailing domination of White executive management in the private sector.

When discussing the relative success of Black minorities (specifically Indian people) compared to Black African people, most respondents attributed the success of Indian people to better education. Several referred to a cultural stereotype of Indian people as clever and hardworking, implicitly regarding them as more meritorious employees than other Black people, including Coloured people. Several respondents perceived greater social and cultural affinity between White people and Indian/Coloured people than that between White people and Black African people, although they were not always sure why this was so. Most respondents avoided attributing this to anti-Black African racism and rather stressed what they perceived as cultural similarities between White people on the one hand and Coloured and Indian people on the other.

5. Respondents' discourse on race, racism and Whiteness

It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to engage in a comprehensive discourse analysis of 55 hours of respondent interviews. However, the language used by respondents in relation to race is an important element in identifying covert racism and normative Whiteness. In this context, the section below highlights some of the key discourse used by respondents under the following headings:

- 'Othering language';
- Language which reinforced racialised stereotypes;
- Language which minimised racism;
- Discourse patterns which normalised the 'minoritisation' of Black African people.

5.1. Findings

5.1.1. 'Othering' language

While some respondents differed in the racialising terms that used, the commonality of the terms was that they all were used as a proxy for racially defining Black people, specifically Black African people, as other than White people. Some respondents used the word 'non-White' in reference to Black people – which presented being White as the norm, something which is specifically notable in the South African context where White people are in the minority. Others used more subtle terms which would be understood as meaning other than White, for example, 'diverse' as an adjective to describe Black people. Similarly, the word 'cosmopolitan' was used to describe situations or spaces where White people were not in the majority. In the table below, the relevant 'Othering' language has been emphasised in bold for ease of reference.

THEO	*"... the two recent hires that I made to our top management... um were **non-Whites.** So they weren't Black Africans, but they were **non-Whites** in Cape Town.*
JOSH	*"... **non-White South Africans** are being trucked in from the rest into Cape Town to like please help us run this business.*
ADRIAAN	*"the one is a **White person, and the one is a non-White**, we're going to promote the **non-White** because that works for the businesses."*
ANDREW	*"And they had no sooner appointed a **non-White** executive, when he was brought back as a consultant." ANDREW*
BRETT	*"... in our broader sort of sales team we've got numerous non **non-White sellers** ...."*
GRAHAM	*"So if I look at our last 12 months or 16 months or so, I think 95% of our employees hired into the business, are **diverse,** you know, transformation - hate using the term transformat ..., but ... they're Black candidates, you know."*
OLIVER	*"... I spend time with my recruiters, and their mandate is **diverse talent** - female, [Black] African male, [Black] African female."*
MARTIN	*"... we've become quite good at I suppose the diversity equity and inclusion, but it was driven largely by business imperatives, um not by the fact that somebody said you need a board with the right number of you know, **diversity, or inclusive people** on the board."*
JOSH	*".... this [Durban] was a thriving South African and African town. If I walked into a bar or a restaurant or a workplace, it was **cosmopolitan.** Joburg, the same. The agency was **cosmopolitan.** It was Black creatives and Black strategists and Black designers and and they were interesting."*
RYNO	*"When I used to live in Joburg, that was very different, because it was for, **far more cosmopolitan.**"*

Almost all respondents used a version of 'Othering' language. While a variety of words or terms were used (as seen above), the effect was the same in that it racialised Black people as 'different'.

This type of 'Othering' language should be viewed against the 'normalising' language used in relation to White people. Respondents had a tendency frequently not to race White people in their discourse even though the race reference was relevant to the discussion. In many cases, while not racing the White person, they would mention the race of the Black person. In the table below, the word 'White' has been inserted in bold with square brackets in the place where the respondent omitted the term, but it was evident from the context that the respondent was talking about a White person/people. Any reference to Black person/people has been highlighted in bold and underlined.

CAMERON	*"So so I suppose that relative to most **[White]** South Africans, I had more experience of **Black** people and a kind of very much a ... I wouldn't call it a left wing, but necessarily a liberal upbringing."*
ADRIAAN	*"What has happened in South Africa is racists and racism is being used as a weapon, okay. For consequences. So so **[White]** people shy away from that, because they don't want to confront that. Because if you accused of being racist, it's the, it's the end of the world for you.*
DANIEL	*"for me, that's, that's the best way that **[White]** people will get through their biases. Because they'll just be working and relating to **Black** people. And I think, I think, I think it's, I think it's positive for many people. I think **[White]** people who've got inherent bias, I, unfortunately, I'm of the view that it's very difficult to change that."*
MARTIN	*"And the problem becomes worse because ... when **[White]** people ... when you speak to those **[White]** people - and I'm sure you'll pick it up from your your interviews of other **[White]** people - they believe they doing the right thing, but they they ... so they've got a blind spot about it. So they don't know that they're not being inclusive. They think they're being inclusive*
OLIVER	*"... I'm seeing um, you know, a high number of **[White]** people in our business, probably in their mid to late 20s, emigrating."*
RYNO	*"Sjoe, because I do think most **[White]** people feel exceptionally vulnerable when you speak about race."*
ZELDA	*"I mean **[White]** people are scared of change, man, that's the problem. **[White]** People are so scared."*
GRAHAM	*"And in, again, in our instance, in our case, we've found **[White]** individuals that have got or had experience, you know, in, in the advertising industry, in business, you know, well educated, etc. And it's really, really tough finding the same experience in **Black** individuals."*
CAMERON	*So **[White]** people are terrified about being branded prejudiced or racist, and therefore, they tend to avoid having the hard performance conversations that they might have with a White man.*
ADRIAAN	*" ... what I never knew is that up to 1994, so **Black** people couldn't study anything except teaching. How many **[White]** South Africans know that?*

'Othering' language in reference to Black people was evident also in the use by many respondents of the term 'EE appointment' or similar language as a descriptive term for Black employees. This was an issue specifically raised by the Black professionals in regard to the stereotypical racialised perceptions of them in the workplace. The relevant terms are highlighted in bold in the table below.

EDWARD	*"I mentor a lot of **transformational candidates**, right up to the senior executive level."*
HANNES	*"And we've got good **employment equity junior people**, but they're not ready to move to the next level."*
JOSH	*"**And the best candidates that were EE,** were so sought after that they would be parachuted straight into the Vodacoms and the MTNs and the banks…"*
GRAHAM	*"… there are **EE candidates** in roles that feel significant pressure to perform"*
TRACEY	*"So, mails come out for training that saying it's only, you know, **EE candidates** - it doesn't apply to everyone else. That kind of thing. I do think there's some resentment around that. It's, you know, ja."*

One respondent remarked on the use of the term 'EE candidate' by White executives and how that diminished Black employees.

DANIEL	*"I've seen people talk openly in in, let's say, subsidiary board meetings, where there a number of Black people around the table. And they'll talk about "oh, but this was ... this is this is an equity candidate'. And I've always ...I always go berserk with it. Equity candidate, what does that mean? You only hired this person because they were Black?"*

5.1.2. Language which reinforced racialised stereotypes

White respondents sometimes used stereotypical language to associate Black people in general with corruption, disciplinary failures, crime and violence.

The use of this language started early in the interviews. For example, in referring to university protests against apartheid in the 1980s, respondents portrayed campus protests as inherently violent and disorderly (with the violence coming from protestors). Such descriptions were made in a subtle matter-of-fact manner – without apparent judgment (and often with approval for the protest action) – but the implication was an association of Black protestors with campus trouble and violence, thus upsetting the stability of the predominantly White campus. In this sense, violence was associated with opposition to apartheid, as opposed to violence being associated with the apartheid state. For example, in discussing their university experiences, several respondents used language that emphasised 'unrest' or 'foment', 'rioting' and 'racial confrontation'.

In other instances, respondents used common tropes which linked crime, drugs and violence to Black stereotypes and White fears. For ease of reference the relevant stereotypical language is marked in bold in the table below.

ARNO	*"You can see the youngsters* ***- tik under the Coloureds is a huge problem in the Western Cape****. Talented people that you want to put on a store manager programme, but the the the the situation on drugs and tik prevent them to grow, you know."*
JOSH	*"… . You know, Mandela and rainbow nation and like, what he stood for, and his his like, no revenge, forward- looking, practical, pragmatic, then Thabo Mbeki which like was an age of technocrats, which were like, intelligentsia doing super smart things, actually rescuing a failing government from the Nats and doing better with it. Like all of these things are like, you know, powerful signals to a White minority that like actually there's an incredibly powerful Black class here. Then* ***when it swings the other way, and you've got rampant looting and this and that, and crazy [inaudible] then it becomes like factions again and laager mentality, and I'm forced to protect myself first****.*
HANNES	*"… in Bloemfontein, the White people in the university is very few so they hate it when the Black people dance and those kind of ... which doesn't bother me.* ***As long as they don't burn down the place."***
HANNES	*If you are the only two Black people in a white coffee shop in Stellenbosch on a Saturday morning, you surely must feel ... you must feel differently, because if I'm the only White couple in a black ...* ***if I go to a coffee shop and I'm the only White people there, I would feel uncertain or you know, most probably scared.***
LAURA	*I mean, there's no secret ... [inaudible] the front page of the newspaper all the time, money has been used for the wrong thing, that's just ... And unfortunately,* ***most of the money has then been taken by Black individuals.***

A few respondents used stereotypes in relation to the corporate behaviour of Black people: unreliability, being late for work or for meetings, or not conducting themselves appropriately in the workplace. For ease of reference the relevant stereotypical language is marked in bold in the table below.

GRAHAM	*"And, you know, I think a lot of those systemic issues are still following us around, you know. Because we have been brought up and we as in as White managers, and even as Black employees, or even Black managers, you know, they've been brought up and socialised in very different ways, and some things are acceptable to us and some things are not, and vice versa. And there's a massive clash, you know. So the lack of understanding on that, you know ...* ***if you're late for a meeting, or if you, you know, if you perform, or you act out in a certain way,*** *you know, we might frown upon that, but for others, it's absolutely fine you know."*
LAURA	*"I think often there's just a frustration that you so badly want to meet those targets. But you interview and you like ... (ok this is being recorded, but I'm not recorded as [Company]) ... You go 'WTF!' Like, ... 'I want to employ you, I want to, but:* ***you've arrived late for the interview; you've ... walked in as if you've got all the time in the world; you've snorted through the interview****...'. Like, 'I can't employ you, I actually can't.'"*
MARTIN	*... you know, the worst CFOs I deal with ... the worst. I mean the worst, worst worst. Black woman CFOs. Jeezlaaik! They they so rare. Because they like hens teeth.* ***They are bitches from hell. Bitches from hell!*** *You just ... you can look on the JSE and you'll find them and then you'll know who I'm talking about.*
JONATHAN	*"... sometimes Black clients actually ask for a White salesperson,* ***because they think they're gonna get ripped off by a Black salesperson.****"*
GRAHAM	*"And I especially find that with young Black females actually, more than the males, males ... is that, you know, often I get to, 'Look, I, you know, I'm a strong, Black, individually-minded female, and, you know, the way I carry myself, you know, with, with pride, um I do things well', but* ***sometimes that can come off as sometimes quite aggressive for people,*** *and pride versus aggression, you know gets played out, you know…"*
HANLIE	*"... we've got one Muslim woman, she's quite senior, but she's constantly making like, a lot of mistakes and she's never sure of herself.* ***She's very power driven and like very power hungry.*** *But she, you know, she says she wants to be very controlling, but then, you know, she somehow never knows what's going on. And she asked questions over and over again, which makes us think. You know, we give her the benefit of the doubt - she's got the power - but then she kind of just .. she makes the wrong decisions. Whether it ... you know ... we don't ever say ja it's because she's Muslim. I mean, that would be ridiculous. It's because of her."*
ZANDER	*"... we would do strategic planning, and we would like have a strategy session and staff could ask questions, because we like to share this. And then you see ... when I open for questions, then five or six junior, you kno****w,*** *Black people will in a* ***like a aggressive approach****, ask affirmative actions ... it's got nothing to do with the strategy.*

This stereotyping was inversely evident in the exceptionalising language used by White respondents when speaking about Black employees whom they held in high regard. Respondents used unusually hyperbolic superlatives in relation to these employees, stressing their abilities or competence. This came across as compensatory language to justify that the Black person concerned was different to the accepted negative stereotype. Respondents would also sometimes emphasise that the particular employee had been appointed on merit or that they could operate unsupervised. For ease of reference the relevant exceptionalising language is marked in bold in the table below.

ADRIAAN	*"… the support centre, for instance, which is one of the biggest businesses in [Company], call centers, client care, you know, that help desk kind of thing ... it's run by one of the [Black African] guys that I appointed in Umtata in the year 2000.* ***And and I don't have to watch out for him****."*
ZANDER	*"of the five business leaders, two of them are Black, and they you know,* ***they they there, they do it on merit. I mean, there's no question****. They've got the T shirts, they've earned it*
ARNO	*"My financial chief accountant is a Coloured guy… and* ***he's doing a phenomenal job****."*
CHARLES	*"The heir apparent in the CFO function happens to be a Black African woman out of Eastern Cape. Not because she's Black, not because she's African, because* ***she's bloody good at her job****. And you can't fiddle around with a CFO job. It's bloody important"*
DANIEL	*"…we now have a Black African woman, who's the Group CEO… and* ***she is fantastic."***
DEON	*"I mean, our FD in South Africa, [Name] is a is a Coloured female. And again,* ***absolute, absolute merit****. I mean,* ***suma cum laude CA*** *from the University of KZN.."*
DIRK	*"… my my senior ... that was while I was studying, er was [African male], their head of PR was a was a black guy.* ***Brilliant manager*** *and, and .. you know I mean, if I say* ***... he was er really outstanding and well respected****, so that was ... [pause] um ... It was still unusual at the time, but it wasn't* ***.... I mean, he was incredibly competent*** *…"*
HANLIE	*"I've worked on a [Company] project with with a guy – [Black African Male], he's a Black guy, and* ***he was he was brilliant, he's absolutely amazing****. But* ***he speaks with authority, you know, he knows what he's doing****.... I'm working with um, on a project at the moment with, on [Company] , and there's a testing manager [Black African woman].* ***She's incredible.*** *Like, you know, not because she's Black, but you know, just because she is****. ....* ***They are brilliant. They happen to be Black, but they are just on the ball. They know their stuff. They get stuff done."***
HANNES	*"We had a HR executive that retired five years ago, and we filled in from an outside person -* ***employment equity candidate, on merit, nice guy, solid, doing his job****."*
HANNES	*" ... our chief HR officer, has become our group ... has become our CEO now.* ***He's a Black man that become our CEO. Very competent, everything above board****."*
JOSH	*The MD of [Company] is a Black guy [Name] who's an* ***amazing, amazing dude, and, and, and is hugely respected****" JOSH*
MELISSA	*"In my previous company,* ***I had a brilliant CA – [Black] African lady****. … But she doesn't like working."*
OLIVER	*"… I had a White male vying for the role. And I had a Black [African] female. And both incredibly talented individuals on the same level, and they, they applied for the role. And we went through three rounds of interviews, we had a panel that interviewed these individuals. And the the White male was was successful - he came through and he was appointed. And I was immediately accused by this by this African*

	female candidate of being anti transformation. … And [she was an] ***exceptional - exceptional individual****."*
RUBEN	*"But then I've met other people in the Black, erm, Black people in the mining sector which* ***which are which are terrific, you know that ... which are which are which you don't, ... like I say, I don't really see the colour there*** *... you work with the people and it's, it's excellent."*
RYNO	*"I reported to a Black woman, and I reported to a Black male. Um,* ***both, by the way, excellent executives, let me not create any other impression****."*
TERTIUS	*"You know, I had I had, way back I was the general manager of Port Elizabeth and I took in* ***a [Black] African young, bright guy, incredibly bright guy****."*
ZANDER	*"But I'm just saying the .... at a junior management level and Iat the ... you know, people, people at university now ... and* ***the Blacks are fantastic, you know****, as good as you want…"*
ZELDA	*"… in the last two years I have appointed two Black women in positions. I appointed them. Yes, White ..., you know, people have got lots to say. And* ***they're very efficient in what they do. Very efficient in what they do****."*
TERTIUS	*"… if you listen to Rabada and you don't look at a screen, you would think he's a he's probably been raised in London. He's got an* ***incredible way of speaking*** *and pronouncing um, a lot better than mine."*

5.1.3. Language which minimised racism

Respondents used a variety of discourse to avoid, deny or minimise the existence of racism. In many cases, respondents would use euphemisms or would engage in complex descriptions to avoid using the word 'racist' or 'racism', particularly when it came to people or issues that were close to them. Examples of such euphemisms are marked in bold in the table below.

ZELDA	*"My folks are **very conservative**, especially my Dad, he is um, ... ja he's very, very conservative."*
WILLIAM	*"I'd appointed a Black individual, and **she picked up a lot of strife** from from from, you know, White personalities in the office."*
GRAHAM	*"You know, I've heard a lot of people of, you know, young executives of colour moving to the Cape, **feeling really like a fish out of water**, feeling quite uncomfortable in the environment that they're in and then moving back to Johannesburg."*
MARTIN	*"... we've got a pub that's underground, and we say what goes underground stays underground. So you're allowed to, you're allowed to express, let's call them non politically correct er, um, attitudes and ideas - **not be racist, but just say things**."*

A common means of avoiding awkward discussions on racism was the use of the word 'political' by respondents, as highlighted in bold below. Racism was also minimised through references to it being 'politicised'.

DEON	*"... my Black mates now, you know, I mean they want to get into this debate, they get incredibly .... I said 'listen guys to be honest, if you asked me about **politics** when I was at high school, it was ... the politics was the NP and the KP'. That was, that was **politics**..."*
ADRIAAN	*"Ja, what I ... what ... ja ... [Company] tries to stay away from from making **political statements**, we ... because it's something that is that is ... ja, so it's it's always taken out of context.."*
MARTIN	*"So we ...Ja ... So we've we've, we've been over sensitised through the ... and we overly careful, and **we are overly politically correct**."*
HEINRICH	*"I think racism are being ignited by ... I don't want to say they silly **politicians, but mostly politicians**. I mean, if you don't have people in lecture halls making noises and stuff like that, er .. you'll, we'll get along much better in the communities and stuff like that."*
DANIEL	*"... look, I think discussions around race ... I mean, we don't have them. We always say 'listen, **we don't want to talk about politics within the business**, whatever'. I still think it's, it's taboo. People don't want to talk about it. And they frightened of, of actually really saying what they feel."*

Respondents would often go to considerable lengths to seek alternative explanations to racism or to dilute the racism by placing it in the context of other, seemingly as important issues. In this sense, racism was downplayed or minimised.

ANDREW	*"You know, for me, the biggest racist, or the most racist environment I've ever lived in is in fact, the Middle East, where it's purely divided upon colour."*
ANNE	*" I'm guessing Blacks maybe don't want to live in Stellenbosch or don't want to live in ... certainly in my neighborhood in Cape Town there are very few Blacks. ... But, but I think, you know, there are many areas where I don't want to live either."*
HANNES	*"But you know what's also interesting is I think there's a lot of racism between between Blacks [Black Africans] and Indians and Coloureds. Specifically, the India ... you know, I sit on a few hospital boards with doctors. And I must say those Indian doctors are racist - a lot more than me. And I say a lot more .. I mean I don't think I'm a racist, but I most probably I am. But I mean, they will be open about it."*
OLIVER	*"... I obviously saw the headline, you know, yesterday in terms of the, that boy being expelled but ... um .. ja, I mean, I I think there class issues there. I think there's ... you know, I think there's, I think there's an education, you know, issues there ... I can't comment on where the, where the white boy came from, you know, but, you know, I just, um, I just think it's it's quite, it's the ... I think the the racial issues we've got are so multifaceted, you know."*

Several respondents sometimes used language which asserted that race was not relevant or that they did not 'see' race.

ANDREW	*"... the world is, world is governed by economies, nothing more than that. Money, money doesn't know colour, and everyone wants money, regardless of colour. It's what they work for."*
RUBEN	*"... I I sometimes don't see colour. I work with people and then and then, you know, I don't say like ... I don't ever say, yoh that's not a bad piece of work for a Black person or, you know ... in the workplace often don't see colour."*
THEO	*"I can honestly say hand on my heart that there wasn't a moment in the interviews and that where colour was an issue for me. Um, I favoured these individuals over other candidates that ... some of them were White ... but purely on the grounds of competency, attitude, what they could bring to the business. I was, honestly completely colourblind."*
ZELDA	*"I actually couldn't be bothered whether you White, green, purple, pink, black ... it doesn't bother me. It's never bothered me."*

During the course of the interviews, topical issues regarding race and racism were often discussed. For example, a particular issue that arose at the time of the interviews was an incident at Stellenbosch University where a White student had urinated on the belongings of a Black African student. On this and other issues, respondents often engaged in a pattern of awkward and uncertain language involving hesitation, trailing off without addressing the issue, or diverting the conversation in a way which avoided dealing with the issue at hand. This awkward language was noticeable as the respondents were generally eloquent and coherent

when not discussing racism. In many cases, implicit admissions of racism were preceded, followed by or contextualised within explicit denials of racism, thus leading to contradictory statements by respondents.

5.1.4. Discourse patterns which normalised the 'minoritisation' of Black African people

In the course of the interviews, respondents often used discourse which minimised Black African people as the vast majority (80%) of the South African population and thus marginalised the representation of Black African people in the workplace. Some respondents expressed this in terms of actual internal targets they had set for EE in the workplace. Others marginalised Black Africans through claiming diversity in a variety of situations where Black Africans were very much under-represented or not represented at all. The relevant sections have been marked in bold.

DANIEL	*"Well, I mean, the approach I'm taking is that ... I mean, when we when we brought in us this **50%, Black African**. I did say to our [White] guys, you, you still ... there's nothing stopping for every two people, one certainly can be one of you. So it's not like it's a 70 or 80% ratio. At 50%, you, you've still got a very good opportunity."*
ANNE	*"So, um, you know I run the legal department of the company, and we are, ... so I've got 10 people who, you know, directly or indirectly report to me within the department. And it's, **it's quite mixed in ... well, ... it's, it's White, and Coloured** ... um, and mixed races ... ag, not mixed races, mixed genders - male and female."*
CAMERON	*"Almost every [rugby] team, essentially **every team plays Black [African] players above quota**. So, which is the proof ultimately, that they're there on merit ... is that you know very practically**, if you're required to have seven and the teams on average have 10**, it proves that something in the system has changed, allowing for people to come through and to be overrepresented, relative to the quotas at least."*

These language patterns did not occur only in references to the workplace. Some respondents who had gone to schools or sports clubs that only had a few Black children regarded this as a 'mixed' non-racial upbringing. This included instances where the black children concerned were only from Black minority groups and where the number of Black African children was minimal. Other respondents observed diversity in situations which in practice excluded Black African people or included only a few Black African people.

CHARLES	*"And at that particular point [the 1980s] the [private school] had broken convention, and we actually had Black African children in our class. …. So the notion of a, of a mixed race education is not something that passed me by ... I got it."*
DIRK	*"But it was it was interesting, because the Navy was a lot more mixed in terms of er, er, er, you know, the race being much more mixed. So in our unit we had Coloured guys, Indian guys ... I can't remember if we had Black [African] guys in our unit, I don't think so. But Coloured and Indian for sure."*

This minoritisation of Black Africans was apparent also in discourse which regarded majority Black African spaces as 'non-diverse' or threatening to other racial groups.

DEON	*"But the point is, when we have a fast track programme, that people say 80% of the people on that programme must be Black. You are going to create tension in in in the organisation."*
CHARLES	*"Well, so maybe you've got to start, you gotta ... the truth starts at home. So why does the Civil Service have to be black? Why can't it be diverse? And, you know, if you want, if you want corporates to be diverse, why can't, why can't, why can't the civil service be diverse?"*
RYNO	*"I'm very pro the fact that diverse teams solve problems better. But but it doesn't help you creating a team which is non diverse to the other side, because then it's not diverse."*

Respondents also used language which affirmed and promoted a concept of diversity modelled on Western notions of accommodating demographic minorities, while also reducing race to one among many issues of diversity. This discourse often reflected a tension between EE and what respondents observed as best global practice.

EDWARD	*"... we trained in unconscious bias on bringing minority groups into the debate."*
ALISTER	*"But a lot of it is moving on to to gender diversity, you know, in management, and disabilities. Which is, I think, part of that maturity curve. Where it's not, it's not about colour so much anymore. It's now about, what about, what are you doing in terms of embracing people from different walks of life and people who've got disabilities?"*
HEINRICH	*"It's not how do you equalise ... equalise through bias, certain wrongs. But how do you try and create more fairness and that's not necessarily black and white, it's also young and old, it's also women and men."*
MARTIN	*"So it's equity in terms of across all of the different elements of diversity, inclusivity being gender, race, religion, even transgender, not so much in South Africa, but in Europe, all of those things. So so it's a much bigger, it's a much bigger ... let's call it intervention than I think people apply to it. Now, I think South Africa kind of went wrong because it was driven by this whole BEE um concept, if I can call it that, because you've got your scorecard."*

5.2. Observations

The terminology and language patterns set out in the findings do not, as noted, constitute an exhaustive analysis of the discourse used by respondents in relation to race, racism and Whiteness. Moreover, not all respondents used all of the terminology and language identified above and a few of the respondents appeared to be more cautious of using language which they were aware – through unconscious bias training – could cause offence. Nevertheless, most respondents used versions of this language which, on the one hand, racially stereotyped Black people while 'not racing' White people and, on the other, used complicated discursive manoeuvres to deny or minimise racism.

An important observation in the context of this study was a pattern of language which implicitly minimised Black Africans, despite them being the largest race demographic in South Africa. In the context of 'best practice' approaches to workplace diversity which emphasised Western models of minority-group inclusion, this mindset among respondents tended to 'minoritise' Black Africans in the workplace.

The focus in this section on specific language used by respondents should not be regarded as excluding the discourse used in relation to the findings in sections 1 to 4 (above). All discourse used by the respondents will be evaluated during the course of the analysis and this section merely served to highlight specific terminology and patterns of communication in relation to race, racism and Whiteness.

CHAPTER FOUR: PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

1. Introduction and theoretical context

> *"A racial hierarchy in which Whites are normatively dominant has been remarkably durable and continues to be embedded in institutions in ways that make it difficult to achieve relative equality across groups" (DiTomaso, 2021, p. 2035).*

An analysis of the phenomenon of normative Whiteness in the South African private sector necessitates the situating of Whiteness in the historical context of European colonisation, slavery and apartheid (Steyn, 2001; Feagin & O'Brien, 2003; Nkomo & Al Ariss, 2014; Mills, 2016). Whiteness does not simply refer to a skin colour or phenotype. It is a historically constructed identity, based on the assumed superiority of Europeanness over 'Others' (Frankenberg, 1993; Nkomo & Al Ariss, 2014) and it is socially reinforced through a "master narrative of Whiteness" (Steyn, 2001, p. 24), "inherited patterns of thought" (Feagin & O'Brien, 2003, p. 22) and "racialized social systems" (Bonilla-Silva, 1997) which are reproduced "across many generations of societal structures and processes" (Feagin & O'Brien, 2003, p.8), including within organisations (Ray, 2019). Whiteness is normative because it presents itself as a "set of cultural practices that are usually unraced and unmarked" (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 1), "the legitimization of everyday practices as natural, not racialized" (Nkomo & Al Ariss, 2014, p. 397). Its power is self-perpetuating through its "constructed naturalization – the way we do things around here" (Nkomo & Al Ariss, 2014, p. 397) and its invisibility through being regarded as a universal experience (Nakayama & Krizek, 1999).

Normative Whiteness must be traced to the historical construction of White supremacy which required that Europeans be defined in contrast with those who were subjugated by colonisation, slavery and apartheid - in other words, people who were not White Europeans. Frankenberg (1993) notes that "[c]entral to colonial discourses is the notion of the colonised subject as irreducibly Other from the standpoint of a white 'self' " (p. 16). In this context, the existence of the 'Other' is a prerequisite for the existence of Whiteness and one can only 'be' White in relation to a racial 'Other' who is not White.

Giving meaning to Whiteness therefore required people of European origin to create, reinforce and reproduce a set of beliefs, or 'racialized knowledge' (Feagin & O'Brien, 2003) about themselves in relation to racial 'Others' which justified White supremacy. This includes the stereotypical beliefs of biological or 'scientific' racism (Byrd & Ray, 2015; Blum, 2023) that Black people were 'barbaric' and 'irrational' in contrast to 'civilised' and 'rational' White people; that Black people lacked intelligence and were physically suited to menial labour in contrast to White people who were intelligent and intellectually suited to strategic and leadership roles; that Black people were child-like and required White guidance or supervision; that

Black people were lazy in contrast to the presumed work ethic of White people; and that Black people were prone to criminal behaviour in contrast to the moral rectitude of White people.

Despite the demise of legislative racial discrimination, these stereotypes remain embedded in White thought and discourse. Although modified and adapted in line with liberal Western ideology which notionally regards all people as equal, they are deeply internalised and collectively reproduced in the worldview, attitudes and approaches of White people, however well-meaning, who adopt them as "sincere fictions", regarding them as "faithful representations of societal realities" (Feagin & O'Brien, 2003, p. 10). The social normalisation of these stereotypes, which are often unstated, though tacitly taken for granted, "conceal the underlying realities of racial discrimination and oppression by portraying these realities as normal and natural" (p. 10). As a consequence, ideological notions of White race superiority and stereotypical Black race inferiority, though no longer enforced through formal discrimination nor explained by means of biological racism, become normalised as 'just the way things are'. Green, Sonn and Matsebula (2007) argue that the association of Whiteness with "rationality and civilisation" endures in the organisational environment where "Whiteness has become integral to what is meant by truth, knowledge, merit, motivation, achievement, and trustworthiness" (p. 397).

'Sincere fictions' about Whiteness and stereotypical Others permeate White racialised knowledge globally. While the views of White South Africans may differ in degree to the views of White Americans or White Europeans, the discursive fundamentals of the 'sincere fictions' and 'racialized knowledge' relating to White people and racialised 'Others' remain the same (Feagin & O'Brien, 2003). Studies of Whiteness and racism in America, the United Kingdom, Europe, New Zealand, Australia and South Africa indicate remarkable similarities in the manner in which White people across these countries regard themselves and others (Wetherell & Potter, 1992; van Dijk, 1993; Bonilla-Silva & Forman, 2000; Steyn, 2001; Feagin & O'Brien, 2003; DiTomaso et al., 2011; Dovidio & Gaertner, 2011; Nkomo & Al Ariss, 2014). Feagin (2013) describes this as the "white racial frame" - "an overarching white worldview that encompasses a broad and persisting set of racial stereotypes, prejudices, ideologies, images, interpretations and narratives, emotions, and reactions to language accents, as well as racialized inclinations to discriminate" (p. 3). In relation to White people with institutional authority, van Dijk (1993) refers to this phenomenon as a "white elite consensus" (p. 128).

In this sense, normative Whiteness is collective and transnational (Mills, 2016). White people across the globe are socialised within 'white bubble[s]' (Feagin & O'Brien, 2003) of "Eurocentric values, beliefs, standards and norms [which are] invisible to them, and represent a default standard by which all other group norms and behaviors are consciously and unconsciously compared, contrasted, and made visible" (Sue, 2010, p. 114). White people have "internalized the values and attitudes of white supremacy" (hooks, 2004,

p. 69) and, for most White people, "the experience of whiteness is like being a fish in the water - that is, it is usually lived without much reflection" (Feagin & O'Brien, 2003, p. 132). Feagin and O'Brien (2003) note that even powerful and influential White elites "are born into a highly racialized society that is *not* of their own making" (p. 26). Moreover, the worldview, values and discursive expressions of Whiteness are extended to all people as the paragon of objectivity, everydayness and aspiration. Indeed, "Whiteness defines itself as the **human norm**" (Liu, 2022, p. 779) (emphasis added).

> *"... whiteness has been theorized as the racial norm, the invisible center that deflects attention from itself by racializing the margins, and constructing them as the problem. Whiteness then believes in its own homogenous neutrality" (Steyn, 2001, p. 62).*

Central to problematising normative Whiteness is the understanding that it holds power (Macalpine & Marsh, 2005) - "the power to impose a [White Western] worldview on those in society (Whites and non-Whites)" (Sue, 2010, p. 120). Within the liberal principles of Western democracy, this power rests in its "unmarked status" (Trechter & Bucholtz, 2001, p. 5). Nevertheless, it constitutes a post-colonial continuation of domination by White people of racialised Others and is evident in the extent of the control by White people over political, social and business institutions in the global West and elsewhere. In South Africa, White people no longer control political institutions, but they retain vastly disproportionate control over the powerful private business sector which also affords them significant influence in politics and society. While a persistent tension exists between the democratically-elected government and the minority White-controlled private sector, the disproportionately high living standards of White people and the vast discrepancies between White people and Black people in terms of income and life opportunities, are evidence of the continued privilege and power of White people in South Africa (Leibbrandt et al., 2012; Statistics South Africa, 2019).

Many White people today would argue that they hold an egalitarian worldview - accepting the equality of all people regardless of race. However, the embeddedness of normative Whiteness - which necessarily requires the naturalising of racialised stereotypes of people who are not White - is the cornerstone for continued racism in the post-colonial, post-slavery and post-apartheid society. In the context of normative Whiteness, the continued existence of racism is not contingent on the existence of explicit insults, racially discriminatory laws or racial hatred or violence (Feagin & O'Brien, 2003). It is evident in "the everyday, mundane, negative opinions, attitudes, and ideologies and the seemingly subtle acts and conditions of discrimination against ['Others'], namely, those social cognitions and social acts, processes, structures, or institutions that directly or indirectly contribute to the dominance of the white group and the subordinate position of ['Others']" (van Dijk, 1993, p. 5). In this context, racism most often presents itself in a covert manner. Like normative Whiteness, covert racism is denied, taken for granted, or deproblematised while it

"hides behind the façade of 'politeness', political correctness and expediency" (Coates, 2011a, p. 10). Even those White people who consciously regard themselves as not racist and who condemn racism, may still engage in practices of covert racism which are precipitated by normative Whiteness (Feagin & O'Brien, 2003; Sue, 2010).

Because racism is regarded as morally indefensible in the 21st century, recognising its continued existence not only threatens the perceived moral neutrality of normative Whiteness; it also risks exposing the 'Whiteness' of normative Whiteness. Maintaining the invisibility of normative Whiteness requires racism to be ignored, denied or minimised. In this regard, covert racism in society and in the workplace performs a dual function - it upholds normative Whiteness through racial stereotyping, tropes and prejudicial discourse, while simultaneously enabling the "plausible deniability" (Coates, 2011a, p. 2) of implicitly (and sometimes even explicitly) racist behaviour and thus delegitimising Black experiences of racism. Racism is often euphemistically regarded as something which Black people experience, as opposed to something which is enacted by White people, thus exonerating White people from responsibility. The result is that White dominance of existing workplace power structures, together with the overarching paradigm of normative Whiteness, is seldom problematised in discussions on workplace racism, thus exonerating White people from collective responsibility.

The prevalent existence of normative Whiteness is most often evident in the discourse used by White people in relation to themselves and to racial 'Others'. Discursively, Whiteness "takes its meaning from this surrounding categories to which it is structurally opposed, such as Blackness, indigenousness and foreignness" (Trechter & Bucholtz, 2001, p. 5). As a group, White South Africans employ a sense-making rhetoric in regard to themselves and Black people which, despite their status as a demographic minority, presents Whiteness as normative while applying racialised stereotypes to the Black demographic majority. Within these binaries "Whiteness is not opposite and equal, but opposite and unequal" (p. 5). In the South African private sector, understanding how normative Whiteness is encompassed within the beliefs, attitudes and discourse of the dominant White executive management, is critical to addressing racism and its concomitant effects on Black professionals in the workplace.

In summary, an analysis of the phenomenon of normative Whiteness must contextualise it within:

(i) The **history** of European White supremacy spanning colonisation, slavery and apartheid;

(ii) The **global persistence** of racialised systems and White superiority;

(iii) The **embeddedness** of Whiteness, whether conscious or unconscious, in the worldview of White people;

(iv) The **invisibility** of Whiteness and its presentation as unmarked, morally neutral and epistemologically authoritative;

(v) The continuation of **privileged** socio-economic status for White people despite the demise of legalised racism;

(vi) The disproportionate **power** which White people exert and which is formally represented in White control of institutions;

(vii) An understanding that normative Whiteness is **not contingent on explicit racism** or racial hatred; and,

(viii) A recognition that normative Whiteness is the ***sine qua non* for covert racism**.

The analysis set out below considers the influence of normative Whiteness on the perspectives of White top and senior managers in the South African private sector workplace. Section 2 concerns matters in which normative Whiteness is apparent primarily in what is **not said** by the respondents. In other words, normative Whiteness is silently evident only in relation to sceptical presumptions about employment equity and in the racialised stereotyping of Black professionals. Section 3 concerns concessions to Whiteness in the workplace which are regarded as unproblematic by the respondents. Section 4 relates to respondent discourse concerning the denial or minimisation of racism. Section 5 addresses the 'mainstreaming' of normative Whiteness through the dilution of employment equity initiatives, the 'minoritisation' of Black Africans, the elevation of White concerns and the presentation of White leadership as race-neutral and objective. Section 6 presents a discussion on 'outlier' or alternative views expressed by some respondents. Finally, Section 7 makes final conclusions and recommendations which may inform a 'transformative redefinition' (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000) of workplace practice.

2. Employment equity (EE) presumptions and racialised stereotyping

Despite expressing support for the broad concept of EE, most White respondents held stereotypical views of Black people which perpetuate the status of Black people in the workplace as racialised 'Others' whose competence is in doubt, who are assumed to come from a homogenous background and who are suited only to particular types of jobs. While certain Black individuals may attain success in a White-controlled workplace, they are generally required to prove themselves against these stereotypes to be accepted in executive management.

The analysis below deals with the following unquestioned assumptions of White respondents:

- Associating EE with lack of merit;
- Assuming homogeneity in the social background of Black South Africans;
- Stereotyping Black professionals in the corporate environment;
- Associating the government's failures with Black failure;
- Pigeon-holing Black professionals into "soft" executive positions;
- Use of 'othering' language

2.1. Associating employment equity (EE) with lack of merit

Studies in the United States and Europe have shown that while many White people express support for the ideals of equal opportunity in the workplace, they oppose government legislation which promotes affirmative action (van Dijk, 1993; Feagin & O'Brien, 2003; DiTomaso et al., 2011). In Feagin and O'Brien's wide-ranging study of the racial attitudes of elite White men in the United States, the authors observed a widespread denial by White men in the United States of the necessity of affirmative action. According to these men, racial segregation in the USA occurred in the distant past and that, in the present, all races had equal opportunities and should be treated the same. Socio-economic statistics showing the continuation of racial discrimination against, for example, African Americans in access to education, social services and jobs were attributed to the fault of African Americans as a group through inherent cultural deficiencies (Feagin & O'Brien, 2003).

In the present study, White South African respondents presented a more complex and more sympathetic viewpoint. As a principle, they recognised the need for EE measures to promote a workforce representative of the demographics of the country. Some of them situated this in the policy of redress for apartheid but most argued for it in terms of workplace diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) being a sound and progressive business practice. Most of them appeared concerned at the slow pace of racial transformation in the South African private sector. In addition, they acknowledged that apartheid legacy had resulted in vast socio-economic disparities between White and Black South Africans resulting in South Africa being regarded as the most unequal country in the world; although they also universally blamed the government for failing to address these issues.

When asked about their views on EE, most White respondents spontaneously qualified their support through statements like '… but it must be on merit'. In their discourse, White respondents made an immediate and automatic association between EE and a compromise of the principle of appointing people on merit - a phenomenon which van Dijk (1993), in his discussion on 'corporate talk' among White elites, referred to as "routine counter-arguments" (p. 156). Given that EE policies are essentially based on the recognition of the existence of dominant Whiteness in the workplace (Ray, 2019), the respondents' scepticism regarding EE and lack of merit constructed an inherent assumption that Black people lacked merit unless proven otherwise. Conversely, an implicit - but unspoken - assumption was that White employees were inevitably appointed on merit, in the normal course of business, while Black employees were appointed primarily to meet EE targets. This general view of EE as merit-reducing was prevalent across almost all the White respondents in the present study. It is consistent with the findings of studies where White elites generally believed that affirmative action is a "violation of the merit principle"(Feagin & O'Brien, 2003, p. 196) and White corporate executives believed that "affirmative action supplants merit" (Collins & Davis, 2011, p. 152).

This inherent assumption by White respondents translates into practice in the workplace. Myeza and April (2021) studied the lived experiences of Black leaders in South Africa who spoke of being regarded as 'employment equity' appointments and who were therefore assumed to have been appointed to meet EE requirements and not on the basis of their own merit and competence. In the present study, many White respondents used the terms 'EE candidates' or 'transformational appointments' as a discursive proxy for Black employees, thereby racialising these employees and raising doubts about the merit of their appointments. When asked to comment on the reports from Black professionals that they were regarded as 'EE appointments' in the workplace, White respondents blamed legislated EE as responsible for this perception. In their view, EE compelled companies to appoint unqualified or unsuitable Black people into corporate positions for the purposes of improving their EE standing and therefore assumptions which questioned the merit of Black professionals were unfortunate but understandable.

For many respondents, EE policies and legislation in South Africa were presented in the context of a general discontent with the government (often referred to as 'the ANC government') and concerns about the government's incompetence and corruption. In this context, EE was regarded as a regulatory nuisance which compelled the private sector to lower its standards or to manipulate appointments to meet EE requirements. Several of them believed that the private sector should be left alone to proceed at a more 'natural' pace of racial transformation.

Nevertheless, it is significant for the purposes of this study that most of the White respondents agreed that without legislated EE, there would have been far less racial transformation in the workplace to date. Respondents acknowledged that this was because companies would have been comfortable with 'business as usual' and that transformation required an effort. Respondents therefore implicitly recognised that, without the pressure of EE regulation, the private sector workplace would remain predominantly White. Interestingly, those respondents who worked for entities which required government-issued licences (and which have stricter EE requirements), admitted that EE targets had resulted in their companies being more racially representative than non-regulated entities.

Although White women are also beneficiaries of EE under South African legislation, White respondents (men and women) did not apply the same merit-related reservations about EE when it came to White women. Instead, White women were seen as having been victimised by EE in that while they had experienced gender exclusion in the pre-1994 period (where jobs were largely reserved for White men), they now experienced race exclusion on the basis that they are not Black. Similarly, several respondents also felt that Black minorities (Coloureds and Indians) had been prejudiced by the EE focus on Black Africans. This was sometimes referenced through the common saying that during apartheid, Black minorities were not 'White enough' and in the post -1994 era, Black minorities are not 'Black enough'. White respondents presented this as factual despite EE statistics which show that White women and Black minorities enjoy far higher representation in senior echelons of the private sector than the Black African majority (Commission for Employment Equity, 2023). It is evident, through these statements, that White executives' inherent doubts about EE and merit were targeted primarily at the Black African majority. This perception automatically places Black African professionals in a disadvantageous position, not only in relation to their White male counterparts, but also in relation to White women and Black minorities.

2.2. Assuming homogeneity in the social background of Black South Africans

White respondents tended to express a stereotypically homogenous view of the background of Black (specifically Black African) professionals, assuming that they came from a social background characterised by:

- Poor education;
- Poverty;
- Township, informal settlement or rural upbringing;
- Single parent or migrant worker family.

Although the conversations with respondents were about the lack of Black representation at executive management level - and therefore concerned Black professionals - respondents constantly generalised about Black people in the context of poor education, poverty, townships, informal settlements and rural areas. Some respondents, in discussing the backgrounds and ability of Black African people, referred to their domestic workers (or their domestic workers' children) as examples of Black African people who would struggle to get ahead because of inadequate education or exposure to corporate experience. Few respondents mentioned Black people living in suburban areas or cities, and references to townships implicitly alluded to informal housing and shack dwellings. Not only did this assumption associate township or rural origins with a limited ability to achieve executive management status, it also excluded a sizeable minority of Black people who live in suburban areas (both in townships and in former White suburbs) for whom, at least socially and economically, executive management would be more within reach. In so doing, it assigned Black African people to 'Black' spaces, associating Black African people with those residential areas to which they had been confined during apartheid - urban townships and rural bantustans.

In reference to the experiences of the Black middle class in America, Anderson (2015) observed that "… despite the growth of an enormous black middle class, many whites assume that the natural black space is that destitute and fearsome locality so commonly featured in the public media, including popular books, music and videos, and the TV news - the iconic ghetto" (p. 10). While Anderson's observations relate to the physical presence of middle-class Black people in 'White spaces', it is relevant in the present study in the extent to which White respondents immediately associated Black people with 'the township' or 'rural areas' and all the stereotypical connotations of those spaces, including poverty, broken families, poor education and crime. In this sense, while verbally acknowledging the socio-economic impact of apartheid on Black people, most White respondents also consigned, via stereotype, **all** Black people to the Black spaces 'reserved' for them under apartheid - the townships and the rural bantustans. This view extended to White respondents attributing the racist exclusion experienced by Black African professionals in Cape Town to Black people feeling 'out of place', or 'uncomfortable' in Cape Town because, presumably, the Eastern Cape was their home. Inversely, this township/rural stereotype reinforced the idea of suburban spaces (those areas which surround or are adjacent to many of the private sector workplaces in South Africa) as 'White spaces' to which White people 'naturally' belonged. In this regard, Anderson (2015) notes that: "[w]hile white people usually avoid black space, black people are required to navigate the white space as a condition of their existence"(p. 10).

Many White respondents also referred to a background of broken families, including single parents and the migrant labour system, as a factor in inhibiting the progress of Black professionals in the private sector workplace. Not only did this stereotype all Black professionals as originating from broken families with

working-class or indigent parents, it also assumed that being raised by a single parent somehow necessarily predisposed one to inadequate preparation for corporate life. Several respondents opined that, unlike White children who had, in the opinion of the respondents, been exposed to business within their families, Black people lacked exposure to corporate culture which put them at a disadvantage in the workplace. Ironically, some respondents had themselves been raised by single parents while others said that they had relatively poor backgrounds and only a few had grown up in business-orientated families.

These stereotypical assumptions about Black people were presented as ostensibly reasonable socio-economic reasons (as opposed to racial reasons) for Black (particularly Black African) South Africans having low representation in the executive structures of the private sector workplace. These assertions were made sincerely but usually in a paternalistic manner, in effect attributing a lack of sophistication to Black people which rendered them generally less suitable for executive management. The implication by White respondents was that Black people, as a group, needed time to 'catch up' with White people as their backgrounds worked against them being suitable for business, in particular executive management. Inversely, the respondents argued or inferred that White professionals in executive management had had the benefit of a socio-economic background which prepared them to succeed in the workplace and were therefore 'naturally' socialised for business.

Feagin and O'Brien (2003) observe that White people "prefer a focus on troubled families, values, and culture as sources of black problems, rather than confronting persisting discrimination and systemic racism" (p. 128). While the inherited socio-economic disadvantage of Black people is undoubtedly a significant factor in the workplace, particularly in South Africa, the manner in which it was raised by White respondents in relation to the representation of Black professionals in executive management, effectively deflected consideration of the influence of racism and normative Whiteness, in favour of external factors.

2.3. Stereotyping Black professionals in the corporate environment

In addition to stereotypical views of the socio-economic background of Black professionals as a group, White respondents expressed stereotypical views of the status and conduct of Black professionals in relation to the workplace. In the course of reflecting on the reasons for continued White dominance in executive management and the negative experiences of Black professionals in the workplace, White executives attributed the following professional stereotypes to Black professionals:

- Assumption of youth or junior status;
- Culture of entitlement;

- Job-hopping and unreasonable salary demands;
- Unprofessional corporate behaviour.

Many respondents felt that the substantial under-representation of Black professionals at an executive management level, was due to a lack of **young** qualified Black graduates in the market. In addition, when responding to research on the negative experiences of Black professionals in the workplace, most White respondents inaccurately assumed that the Black professionals interviewed for the research were **young** and therefore inexperienced.[1] In both instances, the current existence of senior Black professionals in the workplace was regularly ignored or minimised. This automatic assumption of junior status frequently enabled White respondents to explain away the negative lived experiences of Black professionals as generational issues which affected all young people in the workplace, regardless of race. It also positioned the concerns of Black professionals as issues which required sympathetic guidance or correction - and not as evidence of the continued manifestation of racism in the workplace. This stereotypical juniorisation of Black professionals perpetuates a power dynamic where White executives are generally perceived as more senior, more knowledgeable and more experienced corporate participants while Black professionals are still 'learning the ropes' and therefore, regardless of tenure, are not yet experienced enough to attain executive management status. It also reinforces a normative view that White executives 'know better' because of their age and experience and that complaints by Black professionals can be simply attributed to youthful disgruntlement.

Several respondents stated or alluded to 'job-hopping' by Black professionals in South Africa as a reason for the dearth of Black professionals in executive management. This included a common view that Black professionals demanded salaries and benefits which were not commensurate with their position, and that they therefore had an entitlement mindset. Most respondents presented, as self-evident truths, a version of these stereotypes when discussing Black professionals in the workplace. In a detailed examination of the constructed notion of Black professionals as job-hoppers, Ndzwayiba, Ukpere and Steyn (2018) referred to this perception as "baseless rhetoric" which "discredits an entire subordinated social group as unreliable, greedy and lacking loyalty and work ethic in relation to their white counterparts that are constructed in positive terms" (p. 1275). Ndzwayiba et. al (2018) note that discrediting Black professionals as job-hoppers perpetuates the dominance of White people in strategic positions and executive management through a rhetoric which is "fashioned, circulated and valorised to create unwarranted organisational reluctance to

[1] The age range of the Black professionals in the focus groups (*Annexure 1*) conducted by the researcher was 25 to 55 years old, with a median age of 38. The age range of the Black professionals in research conducted by Myeza and April (2021) was 33 to 45 years old with a median age of 39.

hire black professionals into the senior positions of authority and strategic influence in fear of this manufactured disloyalty" (p. 1275).

Several respondents also used individual examples of unprofessional corporate behaviour by Black professionals to cast doubt on the suitability of Black professionals for executive management. A minority of these respondents used openly racist behavioural stereotypes while others raised issues relating to corporate professionalism or stereotypical tropes such as 'the aggressive Black woman'. These were presented as personal anecdotes which included specific instances where individual Black professionals were appointed to jobs for which they were apparently unqualified, individual Black professionals expecting high salaries, shares or other benefits and individual Black professionals who were subject to disciplinary proceedings. These isolated examples were used in the context of casting doubt on the corporate suitability of Black professionals as a group.

Research based on leadership stereotyping (Carton & Rosette, 2011; Lowe, 2013) has shown that negative performance of individual Black leaders is attributed to a generalised stereotype of Black incompetence. Carton and Rosette (2011) observe that such attributions do not occur in the case of the failure of White leaders, as no general stereotype of incompetence exists for White leaders. Contrary to Black leaders, White leaders are regarded as representative of a leadership prototype (April et al., 2023). Nkomo (1992) discusses how negative behaviour by Black individuals is seen as representative of Black group characteristics whereas positive behaviour by Black individuals is seen as exceptional and contrary to the general, stereotypically negative characteristics of the group. The use of negative anecdotes by White respondents to illustrate their general arguments about Black professionals followed the same pattern. Remarkably, in the course of the discussions, none of the White respondents referred to well-known successful Black executive peers outside of their own organisations.

One respondent was remarkably candid about his view of Black professionals, justifying his position in the context of poor educational standards for Black people in South Africa which, he believed, was a fundamental reason for poor representation of Black professionals in senior positions:

> *"... the reality is that if you look across South African corporate business, I have no doubt that expectations on Black people are lower than they are on White people, and that they are promoted in advance of objectively more competent White people ... as a general rule ... it's not true in every instance, of course. So so if that is the reality, how do you get away from that mindset? It's so hard. Because you got to say, you got to actually say, 'I'm different. Me, I'm different.' And that's hard." CAMERON*

It is important also to note how White respondents exceptionalised individual Black professionals whom they regarded positively by adopting superlative language in relation to such employees or colleagues. This rather patronising language portrayed these Black professionals as extraordinary, by describing them variously as 'fantastic, 'outstanding', 'amazing', 'brilliant' and 'exceptional', with White respondents often making the point that a particular Black professional was **definitely** appointed 'on merit'. Ironically, by celebrating these Black professionals through a pattern of excessive praise which would rarely be used with such vigour in relation to White employees, White respondents indirectly reinforced the negative stereotypes that are used in relation to Black employees, as a group. In applying Pettigrew's attribution theory (Pettigrew, 1979) to race in organisations, Nkomo (1992) observed that positive behaviour by a member of a workplace minority could be attributed, among other factors, to "the exceptional, special-case individual who is contrasted with his or her group" (p. 494), thereby not invalidating the general stereotype of the group. Additionally, it could be argued that White respondents' use of affirming superlative language about individual Black professionals constituted a compensatory discourse which simultaneously disguised stereotypical prejudice ('I am speaking positively about a Black person') and reinforced it ('this Black person is not like the others'). In other words, those Black professionals who had risen above the stereotype were outstanding Black individuals who had demonstrated their competence against the unstated but assumed lack of corporate suitability of Black people as a whole.

A minority of respondents also resorted to common social stereotypes of Black people as lazy, having poor family values and engaging in anti-social behaviour such as violence and criminal activity. Often, the laziness stereotype in relation to Black African people was inversely implied through positive stereotyping of Black minorities, particularly when respondents stated that Indian people had benefited more than Black Africans from EE initiatives because they were 'smart' and 'hard-working' and did not have an 'entitlement mentality'. The 'criminal' and 'violence' stereotype was implicitly present in some respondents' references to Black African strangers, generally in social situations outside the workplace, where respondents spoke about being fearful of Black people. In describing their first interactions with Black peers at university in the 1980s, several respondents referred to anti-apartheid protest action by using words like 'foment', 'unrest' and 'cauldron'. Some respondents also referred to situations where being White in a Black majority space involved feelings of fear. While these comments were generally made in reference to situations outside of the workspace, they indicated the persistence of deeply-held prejudices regarding Black people, in particular Black African people.

Interestingly, several respondents placed an onus on Black professionals to prove themselves in the workplace. This was based on the idea that if enough Black people performed well, then perceptions of Black incompetence or lack of performance would change or fall away. This view ignores the fact that

White people are never subject to such prejudgments on the basis of their race, as they, conversely, are presumed to be competent until shown otherwise. Thus, normative Whiteness grants all White people the benefit of the doubt while judging Black individuals against pre-existing racialised stereotypes unless and until they improve themselves against these stereotypes.

2.4. Associating the government's failures with Black failure

Several White respondents referred to failures in the government to corroborate their reasons for the poor representation of Black (specifically Black African) people in senior echelons of the private sector workplace. While seldom explicitly stated, these respondents inferred that failures in what they regarded as the Black government demonstrated that Black people cannot inherently be trusted to perform at executive management level.

In Myeza and April's (2021) study of Black leaders in the South African workplace, Black professionals asserted that "their experiences of marginalization in the workplace … were encouraged by government failures and corruption, which served to perpetuate white stereotypes about black leadership" (p. 11). When White respondents in the present study were directed to this assertion, many of them, paradoxically, confirmed that this was an unfair or unfortunate stereotype but that it was understandable given the poor performance of the government. Only a minority of White respondents rejected this stereotype outright and opined that the government's failures could not be regarded as Black failure. Remarkably, none of the White respondents countered this stereotype with reference to any of the success stories of businesses owned or controlled by Black people in South Africa.

This perception highlighted a unique aspect of negative Black stereotyping in South Africa. Unlike in most other countries where Whiteness has been studied, White people in South African form a small demographic minority at just 7% of the total population (Statistics South Africa, 2022) and 8% of the Economically Active Population (Commission for Employment Equity, 2023). The frequent references by White respondents in executive management to 'the ANC government' and common vague tropes about failed states in 'Africa', reflected not only the racialised tension between the largely White-controlled private sector and the democratic state, but also underscored the deeply-embedded prejudice of White people that inherently associates Black Africanness with incompetence. Stereotypes which generalise poor individual Black performance to all Black people, normative ideas of Western cultural superiority and 'third world' inferiority, together with the factual shortcomings of the South African government, have combined to create an incontrovertible belief among White people of the inferiority of Black leadership capacity. While not recognised by the respondents, this belief self-evidently inhibits the progression of Black

(specifically Black African) individuals in the private sector workplace.

2.5. Pigeon-holing

Myeza and April (2021) noted the "diminished aspirations" of Black African leaders in the South African workplace owing to the propensity for organisations to appoint Black professionals to positions which were not regarded as strategically important, such as "HR and Risk" (p. 16). The practice of placing Black professionals into 'soft' jobs or 'pigeon-holing' arises from a baseless presumption that Black employees are seen as more suitable for certain kinds of work based on their perceived abilities, or lack thereof (Collins, 1997; Mayorga-Gallo, 2019). These 'racialized jobs' (Collins, 1997) most often relate to positions which require interaction with primarily Black employees, clients, customers or suppliers, or dealing with diversity initiatives or EE compliance. Racialised jobs should be seen in contrast to 'mainstream' jobs which are business-critical and strategic. It is self-evident that, if Black people are pigeon-holed in racialised jobs, White people are normatively regarded as the most appropriate fit for 'mainstream' jobs.

White respondents in the present study acknowledged that placing Black people in 'soft' jobs was a widespread practice in South Africa. Many implied (and some even stated) that this was a 'safe' place for companies to put Black executives where they could not 'mess up'. Several respondents either bluntly avowed or intimated that Black people were 'not ready' for strategic jobs. Among these respondents were some who associated Africanness - directly or implicitly - with a lack of business cognition and appropriate corporate conduct. However, most respondents were nonchalant when admitting the existence of this practice and did not attempt to rationalise it.

Implicit in this admission by White respondents was the recognition that organisations needed to demonstrate (in terms of their EE compliance), that they had Black people in senior and top management. Placing Black people in 'soft jobs' was regarded as a means to achieve this. One respondent spoke about how the HR position in his company was not one which merited inclusion on the executive committee but that as it could be easily filled by a Black person, he had come under pressure to include HR in the otherwise exclusively White exco. Myeza and April (2021) referred to the experiences of Black professionals who felt compelled to take certain positions, even if they did not desire to, because of pressure by their companies to use them to fulfil EE targets. These practices reinforce the perception that many Black appointments are symbolic and tokenistic, and serve to reinforce racialised stereotypes. Ultimately, they impact directly on the self-worth of Black professionals and the extent to which they are valued in the same way as White 'mainstreamed' professionals.

Several respondents stressed the importance of ensuring that Black markets were served by Black managers with whom they could relate. Many also spoke of 'client-matching' which very commonly included placing Black professionals in lead client-facing positions when their company was dealing with representatives of the South African government or parastatals, or a Black-owned entity. While, at face value, these appear to be strategic corporate decisions, 'client-matching' when considered together with 'pigeon-holing' and tokenistic appointments, disproportionately racialises Black professionals compared to their White counterparts. As Collins and Davis (2011) pointedly observe: "Racialized jobs are a form of job segregation" (p. 150).

2.6. Use of 'othering' language

The findings in this research showed the tendency of White respondents to 'other' Black professionals in the workplace in a manner which presents Whiteness as neutral and unraced. This is evident not only in the opinions that they expressed but in the language used to express them.

The analysis in sub-section 2.1 (above) noted the use of terms like 'EE candidate' in reference to Black professionals which gratuitously racialises them and assumes they are in the workplace solely for the purpose of EE compliance. Respondents used other terms as proxies for Black people which identified them as 'Other'. Several respondents repeatedly used the term 'non-White', defining Black people according to what they are not - White - thus affirming being White as a norm and being Black as a deviation from that norm. Aside from the fact that 'non-White' is a term which was used in apartheid legislation, and that it normalises being White, the use of such a term in a country in which 92% of the population is Black, is empirically illogical but nevertheless regarded as completely natural. The ease with which some respondents used the term is indicative of the embeddedness of unchallenged Whiteness in South African discourse (to illustrate this point, one would argue that if one is to use any 'non' term in relation to race in South Africa one should use the term 'non-Black' to refer to White people who are a demographic minority). Other language which served to 'make strange' Black people in the context of normative Whiteness included references to places where there are greater numbers of Black people as 'cosmopolitan' or referring to Black employees as 'diverse candidates'.

Conversely, references to White people often excluded their race as they were presented simply as unraced people. Respondents would often refer to 'South Africans' or 'people' or 'communities' in a context where they clearly meant White people and where the race of these people was pertinent to the conversation. For example, one respondent said the 'best way that **people** will get through their biases' was if they were 'working and relating to **Black people**'. Another mentioned that 'relative to **most South Africans** [he] had

more experience of **Black people**'. This discursive pattern indicated a naming convention among White respondents in which, habitually, race is recognised in the case of Black people and ignored in the case of White people. Commenting on how research on White people in organisations is customarily generalised to all people without regard for race differences, Nkomo (1992) notes that "[t]he prefix 'white' is usually suppressed" (p. 489). While Black people are 'raced', White people are assumed to reflect an unraced norm. In the context of the workplace, this reinforces the notion of a natural-born 'belonging' by White people while Black people are persistently perceived as outsiders or 'Others'.

2.7. Summary

The racialised stereotypes of Black professionals which were commonly held and reiterated by most White respondents, reflected deeply embedded collective beliefs, incorporated in what Feagin and O'Brien (2003) referred to as a "collective white consciousness" (p. 192). In all cases, they were presented as self-evident truths. While these stereotypes were often expressed benignly - in the context of a sympathetic understanding of the adverse socio-economic circumstances of the vast majority of Black people in South Africa - they indicated a propensity for White executives to judge Black professionals according to racialised stereotypes attributed to all Black people. Moreover, White respondents admitted that organisations are inclined to appoint Black people to racialised 'soft jobs' to meet EE requirements. Such combination of negative stereotyping and pigeon-holing of Black professionals results in the persistent racialisation of Black professionals in the private sector workplace.

The cumulative effect of the stereotypical views expressed by White respondents is the persistent racialising of Black professionals in a way which prevents Black people from being judged as individuals. Conversely, but **silently**, it reinforces the notion that White professionals have been appointed on individual merit, that their socio-economic background is either irrelevant or presumed to ensure their readiness for the workplace, that they do not have any inherently negative characteristics that arise from being associated with a stereotypical White group and that they are suited for a wide range of jobs, including strategic and operationally critical positions. Essentially, White people are regarded as unraced individuals in the workplace whereas Black people are regarded as racialised representatives of their entire race. It goes without saying that not only does this generate uniquely stressful experiences for Black employees in the workplace (Sue, 2010; Myeza & April), it also creates serious obstacles to the progression of Black professionals into executive management.

3. Conscious concessions to normative Whiteness

White respondents often tacitly or explicitly acknowledged the normative nature of Whiteness in the workplace but they generally regarded it as unproblematic. This was most evident in responses to the concerns raised by Black professionals that, in order to progress in the private sector workplace, Black people had to present themselves as 'Whiter'. It was evident also in reasons offered for the higher representation of Black minorities (as opposed to Black Africans) in executive management. In addition, with regard to concerns raised by Black professionals that they were not trusted in the workplace, or that they were excluded from informal workplace gatherings, numerous White respondents deproblematised this in the context of a natural human affinity to trust and to associate with 'one's own'.

3.1. The expectation that Black professionals become 'Whiter' in order to progress in the workplace

In their study of atypical leaders and exclusion in the South African workplace, April, Dharani and April 2023) as well as Myeza and April (2021) noted how Black professionals were evaluated according to the extent to which they matched a prototype of leadership which is historically understood as White, male and heterosexual. This research is consistent with the findings of the focus groups in the present study (*see Annexure 1*) in which Black professionals felt pressure to be 'Whiter' in order to be accepted in the private sector workplace. Essentially, this meant that Black professionals needed to speak English with a 'White' urban accent so that they could 'sound intelligent', often be able to speak or understand Afrikaans while avoiding their own (African) languages, and to engage in the same sports and social interests as White people.

> *Employees whose communicative competence is deemed inadequate to navigate the hybrid discourses of the workplace often find themselves at the receiving end of subtle and overt discriminatory practices, linguistic profiling, unable to fully partake in or even given opportunities to attend workplace learning and development courses and conferences, and as a result experience limitations to their career progress – sometimes even condemning them to workplace exploitation, as they are unable to sufficiently voice the contravention of their human rights and labour rights (April et al., 2023, p. 24).*

As Ahmed (2007) notes: "[W]hiteness is what the institution is orientated 'around', so that even bodies that might not appear white still have to inhabit whiteness, if they are to get 'in'" (p. 158).

While it was evident that most White respondents had not previously considered this issue, most confirmed the veracity of the Black professionals' views. Some respondents readily admitted to a preference for Black

people with ‘White’ accents and one even unashamedly indicated that it was a strict prerequisite for employment in his consulting business. However, respondents downplayed its significance in relation to race, and instead stressed that this was simply an unfortunate necessity for fitting into the private sector workplace. For example, many respondents automatically equated the absence of a White English accent with a lack of eloquence or an inability to speak English. Moreover, English-speaking respondents often associated a White English accent with ‘not having an accent’ while ‘having an accent’ meant not having a White English accent, thus discursively reinforcing the assumed neutrality and normativeness of White English accents. Afrikaans-speaking respondents, however, were less likely to indicate a preference for Black professionals who spoke with a White English accent, with some respondents indicating that they had also experienced prejudice from White English-speakers in relation to their Afrikaans accents.

Several respondents argued that the expectation to be ‘Whiter’ to succeed in the corporate space was a global problem and not uniquely South African. In this regard, White normativeness was simply painted as a condition of global commerce that was immutable and inevitable. This followed a pattern in interviews where some White respondents constantly referred to international examples of Whiteness and racism as a deflection from the unique challenges of the South African workplace. The requirement to be ‘Whiter’ in order to progress in the private sector of a country which is 92% Black, is an irony that appeared to escape these respondents.

In the course of the interviews, several respondents referred to Black individuals in society whom they regarded as more like White people - ‘better Blacks’, as it has come to be known in South African parlance. One respondent said that ‘if everyone looked like Denzel Washington, there would be no racism’. Another respondent referred to the urbanity of former South African President Thabo Mbeki as a ‘walking antidote to racism’. In both instances, the implication was that the more acceptable a Black person is to White people, the less racism there would be. In other words, the more a Black person aligns with White expectations, the less likely that White people would need to see that Black person as an inferior ‘Other’.

3.2. Higher representation of Black minorities

The assumption of Whiteness as a normative professional standard extended to White respondents’ explanations for the greater representation of Black minorities (as opposed to Black Africans) in senior echelons of the private sector workplace. Latest EE statistics (Commission for Employment Equity, 2023), following a general trend over many years (see *Figure F* below), show that the representation of Indian South Africans in executive management - at 11.6% of top management and 13.3% of senior management - significantly exceeds their 2.7% of the Economically Active Population (EAP). Coloured South Africans

remain somewhat under-represented but are approaching demographic representation in executive management, constituting 5,8% of top management and 8,3% of senior management with a 9.3% EAP. However, in contrast to the dominant White group and to both Black minority groups, Black African South Africans are vastly under-represented in executive management. While they represent 80% of the EAP in South Africa, Black Africans constitute only 13.8% of top management and 20% of senior management.

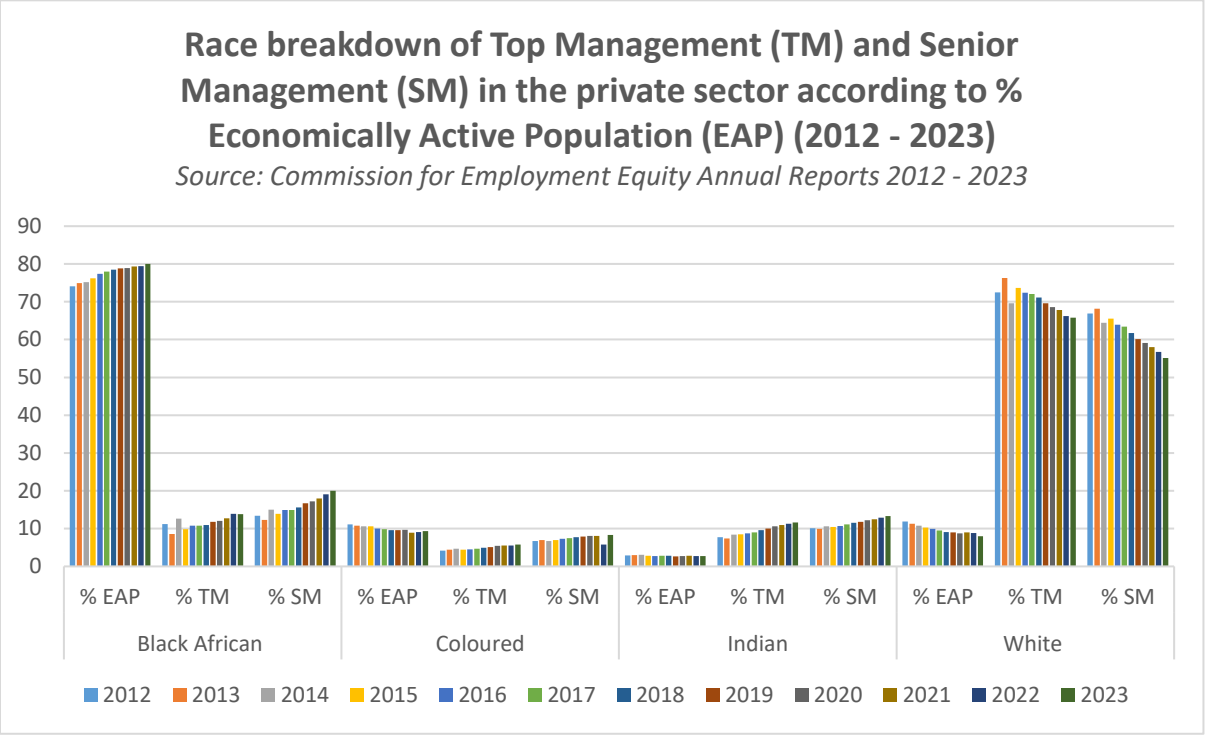

Figure F

Although most White respondents attributed the higher representation of Black minorities to better education than Black Africans (and, in the case of Indian people, to positive stereotypes of them as hard-working and clever), several also regarded Coloured and Indian South Africans as more relatable to White people. White respondents were not always certain about what made Indian people, and to a lesser extent Coloured people, more similar to White people although some speculated that it might be related to language. Many White respondents in the current study expressed annoyance at recent legislative amendments which effectively require businesses to pay more attention to addressing the dearth in representation of Black Africans at senior levels. Respondents regarded this as racial discrimination against Black minorities, with one remarking that this could only be achieved through the 'absolute marginalisation of non-African'. The sentiment expressed against the impetus for greater emphasis on Black African

representation in the workplace was echoed in the objections by White respondents in relation to their perceptions that South African EE requirements discriminated against White women.

An analysis of the phenomenon of 'model minorities' in the South African workplace is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, studies in America have noted that model minorities have enjoyed greater success than other minorities (including Black Americans) on the basis of their perceived proximity to Whiteness (Ng & Lam, 2020; Kim et al., 2021; Garay et al., 2023; Prasad, 2023). In the current study, respondents regarded as unproblematic their perception of cultural proximity between White people and Black minorities. Moreover, they did not make any connection between these perceptions and the negative lived experiences of Black African professionals in the workplace . It could be argued that, given the general findings of this study, it is not unreasonable to infer that Black minorities (who constitute small population groups in the country) are viewed as a lesser threat to White dominance of the workplace than Black Africans who form the vast majority of the population.

3.3. Natural inclination to 'one's own'

White respondents were surprisingly candid about why, in the absence of EE compliance imperatives, they would prefer to employ or to work with other White people. This extended to justifications of White 'exclusivity' (although this term was not used) in certain social contexts related to the workplace. In both instances, this preference for other White people or exclusively White spaces was presented as unproblematic.

Feagin and O'Brien (2003) note how informal racial segregation is often explained away by statements that people " 'naturally' gravitate to their 'own kind', or 'that's just the way things are' " (p. 162). Bonilla-Silva (2018) refers to this as "naturalization" - a means of allowing White people "to explain away racial phenomena by suggesting they are natural occurrences" (p. 56). Such beliefs and statements, while ostensibly reasonable, fail to take account of the historical context within which such group preferences occur. Critically, it also fails to take account of the power dynamics in the workplace, where White people remain in control. This is exceptionally relevant in the South African workplace where, despite representing only 8% of the EAP, White people constitute 66% of top management and 55% of senior management (Commission for Employment Equity, 2023) (See *Figure F* above).

In the present study, numerous White respondents argued that it was 'natural' to prefer one's own and that this was not racist but merely human nature. In response to the concerns raised by Black professionals that they were excluded from informal workplace discussions, several White respondents said that it was

socially natural for White people to gravitate to 'their own' although some admitted that this did lead to the exclusion of Black people when business was discussed in informal gatherings. Others said that, in informal work circles, they felt more comfortable if they were among groups which included only other White people. Notably, some White women respondents felt that informal exclusion was a male phenomenon with White women seldom being included in such groups too.

With regard to the formal workspace, some respondents spoke about ameliorating measures which they had put in place to avoid White bias towards White people, for example, ensuring that interview panels were racially representative. However, even within the workplace, several White respondents justified closer relationships with White executive peers than Black executives. For example, in response to assertions by Black professionals that they were not trusted in the workplace, White respondents either dismissively attributed this to tokenism (i.e., the Black professionals had not earned their position and therefore the right to be trusted) or simply asserted that it was natural for White executives to trust 'their own' and that this did not constitute exclusionary behaviour. While these admissions were often presented in a slightly uncomfortable self-conscious manner, respondents went to considerable lengths to justify them as unproblematic. In all instances, respondents did not associate these beliefs or behaviours in any significant way with the negative experiences of Black professionals in the workplace.

The ease of employing from one's 'own network' was a constant undercurrent in several interviews. Some respondents spoke about White people leaving the corporate sector to set up small businesses where they could 'escape' EE requirements and be unfettered in employing from their own (presumably White) network. Moreover, as observed in Section 2.1 (above), most respondents admitted that, without EE legislation, the private sector would not have reached even the currently limited levels of race representivity at senior levels, as White executives would have naturally preferred people like themselves and would have been happy to go along with the 'status quo'.

Inherent in the admitted preference for 'one's own' was an automatic assumption that other White people would be most competent for the job at hand. From this perspective, suitability for a corporate position was not based on individual performance but on giving the benefit of the doubt to White people for corporate roles. Ray (2019) refers to Whiteness as "a credential" enjoyed by White people, "providing access to organizational resources, legitimizing work hierarchies, and expanding White agency" (p. 41). This Whiteness 'credential' automatically assumes that a White person will be 'the best person for the job', while stereotypical views of Black professionals assume the direct opposite – that a Black person is not the best person for the job until proven otherwise. One respondent explicitly stated what other respondents were implying:

> *"..... there's a White notion of merit ... used to call it meritocracy .. patriarchal meritocracy ... White patriarchal meritocracy ...* ***it's felt as just meritocracy****. And... it's got a frame, which does include an ability to relate to customers and/or suppliers and/or people who are going to judge you and engage with you." (emphasis added) ETHAN*

It is also evident from this quote, as well as from statements made by other White respondents about client relationships, that 'race-matching' White clients with White organisational representatives was not seen as problematic. Several respondents spoke of clients or customers preferring to deal with White representatives in their company. While most respondents were adamant that blatant racism by clients would be unacceptable, veiled (covert) racism was more difficult to manage and sometimes organisations would feel compelled to pander to such clients. Most respondents did not view any significant problems with such issues and tended to regard them as normal organisational challenges. This downplayed the issue of White client preferences for White professionals, without regard for the impact it would have on the experiences of Black professionals in the workplace.

3.4. Summary

In all instances where Whiteness was tacitly or expressly acknowledged, respondents presented the issue in a straightforward manner, relating it either to the normative requirements of the workplace or to a natural instinct to relate to other White people. No association was made between the low representation of Black African people in the private sector hierarchy and these presumably unproblematic presumptions. The next section of the analysis deals with these assumptions, together with the stereotypes of Black professionals in the context of covert racism.

4. Denial and minimisation of racism

Van Dijk (1993) and Mayorga-Gallo (2019) note that most White people, including elites, regard racism as acts of explicit race prejudice, "as something only morally objectionable individuals … perform and benefit from" (Mayorga-Gallo, 2019, p. 1797). Van Dijk (1993) observes that, for White people in authority, the notion that they may be engaged in covert racism "is hard to swallow, being fundamentally inconsistent with their normative self-concept" and contrary to their view of themselves as "moral leaders". As a result they "generally dissociate themselves from anything that has to do with racism as they define it" (p. 9).

It is important to state that White people are generally unaware of their own covert racism and, indeed, would take offence at the idea that they may engage in racist behaviour (Sue, 2010). In the current study, even those respondents who were self-reflective and accepting of their own racial bias would be reluctant to agree that their attitudes or conduct are racist (although it should be noted that a handful of them admitted they may be racist but did not see it as problematic). On the contrary, most respondents viewed themselves as relatively liberal thinkers on matters regarding race and racism. Almost all of them regarded racism as an act of hate or overt prejudice and, among more progressive respondents, a structural socio-economic problem. However viewed, it was generally deemed as a problem that was external to themselves. While several admitted to having racial prejudices, they adopted a matter-of-fact, benign view of these prejudices as 'natural' and/or resignedly attributed them to their upbringing. Paradoxically, such 'racial prejudices' were not viewed through the lens of racism and, in many cases, were accompanied by statements to the effect of 'we all have prejudices'. Moreover, most respondents only used the term 'racism' as a vague reference to an ongoing social problem 'out there', or, notably, in the context of what they saw as 'anti-White' racism.

To the extent that racism was recognised in the workplace, it was generally attributed to the acts of White others. Several English-speaking respondents identified or implied racism in referring to an 'Afrikaans' business culture or to Afrikaans people. Steyn (2001) notes that White English speakers have a tendency to absolve themselves from racism by conflating it with Apartheid which is regarded as an Afrikaans creation. Afrikaans-speaking respondents in the current study were sensitive to this issue and sometimes disdainfully referred to the more 'polite' racism of English-speakers. Both English and Afrikaans-speaking respondents tended to regard less-educated White people or more rural White people as prone to racism, but the underlying inference was that these were White Afrikaans-speaking people.

Several respondents regarded acts of kindness and generosity towards Black people as proof of absence of racism, even in those instances where racism was obvious. As such there was no recognition that, for example, sympathetic but condescending behaviour towards Black people could be regarded as racism. Trepagnier (2001) in reflecting on the relationship between White employers and Black employees, notes the paternalism inherent in such interactions and observes that "racism is not fundamentally hateful; indeed, it often arises from goodwill" (p. 154).

Denial or minimisation of racism is most often evident in discursive conventions which are common among White people globally (van Dijk, 1992; Wetherell & Potter, 1992; Bonilla-Silva, 2002; Feagin & O'Brien, 2003). Therefore, the analysis below will focus primarily on the language used by White respondents in relation to the issue of racism. It will be addressed under the following headings:

- Denying or avoiding racism;
- Admitting racism but minimising it;
- Defending prejudice as 'not racism'.

4.1. Denying or avoiding racism

The emphasis on racism as an act of hatred led some respondents to avoid acknowledging racism even in those situations where words or behaviour would be regarded as racist in generally accepted (including White) social norms. Acts of kindness by those behaving in an overtly racist manner were seen to somehow diminish or absolve their racism. Some respondents spoke about the fondness expressed by Black employees for 'conservative' White managers (and vice versa), regardless of the evidence which showed the relevant manager's racism. This negation of racism was evident also in anecdotes about White friends or family who, despite using racist epithets and holding racist views, were kind and generous to Black people who worked for them. For example, one respondent spoke about acquaintances who used racist epithets but who 'treat[ed] their workers brilliantly'. She was adamant that these acquaintances did not treat Black people as inferior and she expressed frustration that they would be perceived as racist. Interestingly, among those respondents defending overt racist statements or behaviour were some who unhesitatingly attributed racism to Black individuals (primarily politicians) who had criticised Whites.

In discussing incidents of racism, White respondents would often seek explanations for the incidents which did not involve racism, or at least raised questions about whether the incident or behaviour concerned really constituted racism or something else. For example, in a discussion about a widely-reported incident at Stellenbosch University where a White student urinated on the belongings of a Black student[2], one respondent asked whether there would have been such a big outcry if both the perpetrator and the victim had been White. This approach to racism came across as a vain attempt to attribute 'anything but racism' (Bonilla-Silva, 2018) to the incident, and is perhaps indicative of the sensitivity of White South Africans to accusations of racism.

Respondents used a variety of rhetorical mechanisms to avoid discussing racism in relation to specific areas of discomfort. A common 'escape phrase' was to refer to racism as 'political'. Inherent in this dismissive answer to racism is the trivialisation of racism as a partisan issue and that by dismissing it as 'political', one was demonstrating one's neutrality and not 'taking sides'. The phrase 'I'm not political' allows White

[2] https://www.sahrc.org.za/index.php/sahrc-media/news/item/3117-sahrc-to-investigate-stellenbosch-university-urination-incident-amid-growing-calls-for-student-s-expulsion

people to maintain a façade of ignorance about racism and its one-sided power, thereby avoiding confronting the issue. DiTomaso (2021) refers to this as an "epistemological ignorance" in terms of which White people "[keep] understanding of racial problems below their consciousness" (p. 2039).

Several of the White respondents, in referring to their early childhood, used versions of the phrase 'we weren't political' in implicitly absolving their families of responsibility for supporting apartheid and maintaining White innocence. Ironically, other respondents whose families had opposed apartheid, referred to their upbringing in terms such as 'politically conscious household'. Therefore, regardless of the position of the respondents' families on apartheid, growing up with a passive acceptance of apartheid was regarded as being 'not political' while recognition of White supremacy or opposition thereto was seen as 'political'. Similarly, campus protests against apartheid in the 1980s were referred to by respondents as 'political'. This discourse supports a subtle White historical viewpoint which unconsciously normalises apartheid and regards opposition to it as a partisan issue, thus decoupling White supremacy from its power. This deeply embedded normative view inevitably extends to contemporary views on South Africa where race and racism is often regarded by White people as 'politicised'. In many cases, respondents blamed the continued existence of racism on the politicisation of race by politicians, specifically 'the government'.

The use of the term 'political' was also used to avoid contemporary engagements with racism, including on topical incidents. When asked whether his company should take a position on the 'Stellenbosch urination incident' (referred to above), one respondent stated that his company preferred not 'making political statements'. Some respondents avoided commenting on other issues pertaining to racism by asserting that they did not get involved in politics.

Respondents used various types of euphemistic language - often awkwardly - to avoid naming racism. For example, the racism experienced by Black African professionals in Cape Town and Stellenbosch was not acknowledged as racism but was attributed to these cities being 'difficult', 'challenging' or 'not welcoming' to Black African people. In some cases, it was evident from the conversation context that the respondent indirectly acknowledged that these experiences were due to racism but was desperately seeking alternative terms. Van Dijk (1993) refers to a pertinent example of such euphemisms in his own study where a respondent referred to people in his company "hav[ing] difficulties with people from different cultures" (p. 147) . He notes that neither the word 'discrimination' nor even the word 'racism' is used in this statement and that even the statement itself was softened by the hesitancy of the respondent. It should be noted that, in the case of discussions of racism in Cape Town, several respondents avoided even implicitly accepting that Black professionals had been subjected to racism and their experiences were simply attributed to them not feeling a sense of belonging.

4.2. Admitting racism but minimising it

White people often admit that racism exists, but they minimise its significance (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). Even when White respondents acknowledged the existence of racism in the workplace, most did not regard it as significant enough to be regarded either as the root of the negative lived experiences of Black professionals, or as a factor in the poor representation of Black professionals in executive positions. Several respondents entered into protracted painstaking arguments to show that the issues raised were not that serious and could be attributed to factors other than racism. This included contentions that Black professionals were too sensitive and that they were 'playing the race card'. Feagin and O'Brien (2003) note how often White executives regard complaints raised by Black employees as "fallacious" issues which are used by Black employees to "excuse their own shortcomings and inadequacies" (p. 160). In addition to this, some respondents in the current study asserted that the issues raised by the Black professionals showed that the Black professionals themselves were in fact racially biased.

Many respondents spoke of their companies' zero tolerance attitude to incidents of racism and several offered anecdotes of racist incidents in which they had personally intervened. These incidents were generally seen as isolated disciplinary problems which were contrary to expected corporate behaviour. When acknowledging incidents of overt racism, several respondents often expressed flabbergasted disbelief to indicate their dismay over what they regarded as an individual behavioural transgression. Some respondents tended to trivialise these anecdotes, using dry humour which presented the respondent as a reasonable outsider, looking in on the reprehensible and ignorant conduct of a 'bad' White person. However, this was not the case for all respondents. A few respondents expressed discomfort and unease when relating stories of overt racism and some said that they had questioned themselves as to why they had not intervened at times when such incidents had occurred.

Respondents had a tendency to attribute racism to 'both sides', thus minimising racism by removing the power differential between White people and Black people and resorting to an interpretation of racism as openly expressed racial hostility or resentment. In this sense, racism was seen as a prejudicial position which could be adopted by anyone regardless of race. This was also often accompanied by glib references along the lines of 'why can't we all get along' and assertions that it was the responsibility of 'both sides' to improve race relations. Some respondents believed that racism could not survive in a good business culture as, in such an environment, the only thing that mattered was performance. These views of racism fundamentally misconstrued the nature of structural and covert racism and the normative Whiteness which enables it.

When viewed across the respondents as a group, the minimising of racism was often apparent in what was not said. This was particularly evident in the manner in which most respondents dealt with the research on the lived experiences of Black professionals and in convoluted and uncomfortable discussions on racism. Several respondents engaged in circular discourse which first acknowledged racism and then dismissed it, in the process further reinforcing racism. For example, although they stopped short of using the word 'racist', most respondents agreed that associating Black people with the government's incompetence was an unfortunate stereotype. However, many then went on to justify the stereotype on the basis that the government was incompetent, thereby tacitly confirming their unspoken prejudice which associated the (Black) government's incompetence with Black professionals purely on the basis of skin colour.

4.3. Defending prejudice as 'not racism'

In addition to denying or minimising racism, respondents used a range of discursive patterns in defending prejudice. While the effect of this was the same as in the denial or minimisation of racism, the intention of the White respondents differed. Firstly, it involved a more complex self-effacing argument in which respondents accepted their own racial prejudice. Secondly, respondents argued that 'racism' was a universal human trait and therefore it was unfair to single out White people.

In this discursive context, while most respondents avoided using the word 'racist', many were generally willing to state that they had racial prejudices or bias. These terms were consciously presented as a 'softer' more benign form of prejudice than what most respondents understood as racism. Several respondents spoke about having become aware of their own racial bias, primarily through unconscious bias training programmes in the workplace. While this seemed to have led to a greater level of introspection by respondents, their candour regarding their own racial prejudices appeared to have been emboldened by the notion - revealed in the unconscious bias training programmes - that all people have biases, regardless of race, gender or other social identities. In this context, the respondents' honesty in admitting their personal racial bias was likely enabled by a sense of relief that unconscious bias was not unique to them as White people.

The difficulty with this perception of unconscious bias is threefold. Firstly, it is ahistorical in that it presents unconscious bias as an innate human trait without explaining the historical reasons why such biases exist in the first place. Secondly, it tends to individualise the notion of bias instead of laying bare the fact that, in the case of White people's views about Black people, such biases represent a common ideology among all members of the group. Thirdly, and critically in the South African context, it ignores the elements of

privilege and existing power relationships in the workplace where White people (particularly White men) remain dominant.

According to DiTomaso (2023; 2021), one of the shortcomings in organisational approaches to implicit (unconscious) bias is the notion of a "no-fault bias" where "everyone is subject to such biases and, as such, that no one is really at fault for past decisions because it is not consciously intended" (2023, p. 8). This understanding of unconscious bias also provides a conceptual and rhetorical escape from the use of the word 'racism', often distinguishing bias as separate from racism or at least providing a euphemism for racism which negates it as simply an inevitable weakness of individual humans. In addition, the failure to contextualise unconscious or implicit bias within a socio-historical context disregards "the historical origins of intergroup relations and ... the structural, institutional, and social psychological dimensions that together have shaped and reproduced existing inequality" (2021, p. 2038).

Ironically, in the case of some respondents, their perception of bias on the part of Black people actually reproduced and reinforced White stereotypes of Black people in corporates as is evident from the following quote:

> *"... it's not on one side or the other, it's on both sides, you know. So to a White cohort, it might be ... you know... understand your biases around, you know, accent, or whatever it might be, but on the other side, also to ... you know, it's also, you know ... these are, this is the way these individuals, you know, see you ... you know, if you arrive late for a meeting, or you do this, or whatever, this is the way people interpret you is that you ... you know, you're ... you're not being conscientious, or whatever it might be. So I think that's going to happen on both sides." GRAHAM*

Several respondents also emphasised that unconscious bias was not limited only to race but to other social factors such as gender, sexuality and disability. Some of them trivialised biases by extending them into a never-ending list including factors like 'height, good looks and dress sense'. It was evident by the manner in which many respondents engaged with the notion of unconscious bias, that, for them, it diluted racism as a critical issue in the workplace by making it simply one of a long list of actual and potential biases. In her discussion of academic literature on DEI, DiTomaso (2021) argues that "there has been so much emphasis on inclusion that each type of difference has tended to be treated similarly rather than acknowledging that some differences make much more of a difference to life chances and to well-being" (p. 2032).

The incongruity of applying simplistic equivalence to a list of unconscious biases in an ahistorical context which ignores disproportionate power relationships, is aggravated in South Africa where the private sector workplace remains controlled by a White racial minority and is vastly unrepresentative of the Black racial majority. A 'we are all biased' approach to racism which relegates race bias to one of a multitude of individual prejudices, minimises the impact of racism within the South African private sector and absolves White executives from taking responsibility for it in any meaningful way. Moreover, a focus on Western approaches to unconscious bias, while simultaneously minimising or ignoring South African race demographic realities and existing workplace power structures, creates a perfect recipe for the diminution of fair representation of Black people as a critical factor in South African organisations. While this is ameliorated by the government's EE requirements that compel racial transformation, it does not take away from the fact that the embrace of Western DEI models as 'best business practice', reinforces normative Whiteness in the workplace and removes focus from minority White control. As noted by DiTomaso (2021), while attention has been focused on the elimination of bias **against** workplace minorities, the existence of "bias that works **for** Whites and men" (emphasis added) has been largely ignored (p. 2038).

4.4. Summary

Sue (2010) makes the following observation in relation to the non-acknowledgement of racism by White people: "The resistance to acknowledging racist attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors in oneself is linked to a major conflict dealing with self-image and self-identity" (p. 124). Such self-identity is based on a fervent but sincere belief "in their own morality and decency as human beings" (p. 125). The White respondents in the present study came across as genuinely considerate and thoughtful people who held their beliefs about race and racism in good faith and without malice. It is doubtful that they would have participated in the research if they held overtly racist beliefs. Nevertheless, their equivocal approach to racism and their need for positive self-presentation inhibited their ability to reflect insightfully on the likely impact of their beliefs on Black professionals in the workplace. This approach to racism results in what Bonilla-Silva (2018) refers to as 'racism without racists' and prevents White people - particularly those with institutional power - from taking responsibility for their role in the perpetuation of racism (Trepagnier, 2011).

The inability or unwillingness of White respondents to acknowledge covert racism denies the reported experiences of Black professionals, downplays continued racism in the workplace and creates the conditions which reinforce normative Whiteness. In Sue's (2010) words, "covert racism hides in the background of Whiteness" (p. 115).

5. Mainstreaming of normative Whiteness in the workplace

Nkomo and Al Ariss (2014) note that "whiteness positions the workplace as a raceless space … that naturally belongs to the dominant group" (p. 395). Paradoxically, in South Africa, the dominant group in the private sector workplace constitutes only 7% of the working population (Commission for Employment Equity, 2023). Therefore, continued White control over the South African private sector can be legitimised only through: (i) the marginalisation of the interests of the Black majority population, (ii) the concomitant centring of White interests and (iii) the mainstreaming of Whiteness as the natural, authoritative and 'way of doing things' in the private sector workplace.

This section deals with the extent to which White dominance is preserved through the mainstreaming of Whiteness in the private sector workplace while critical issues involving Black representation are relegated to the periphery. It will be addressed under the following headings:

- The adoption of Western DEI approaches;
- The 'minoritisation' of Black Africans in the workplace;
- The presumption of White employment and employment opportunities;
- The presumption of White moral authority and race-neutral knowledge.

5.1. The adoption of Western DEI approaches

While objecting to government-imposed EE requirements but supporting, in principle, the concept of workplace diversity, most respondents drew significantly on models of DEI from the global West. While this was presented as organisational best practice it fundamentally ignored the primary difference between South Africa and the global West - the histories, contexts and race demographics of the respective populations. DEI models in the global West are based on demographics where White people constitute a majority of the population and where DEI is a means to include demographic minorities within the White-dominated workplace. Even in the West, the DEI business case has been critiqued and challenged as inadequate (Thomas & Ely, 2020) and this has been echoed in South Africa too (April, 2022). In South Africa, White people make up just 8% of economically active people. In these circumstances, the fact that White people constitute 66% of top management and 55% of senior management in the South African private sector (Commission for Employment Equity, 2023) attests to the fact that the DEI policies of the global West are fundamentally unsuited to the South African context as far as the critical issues of racial representation is concerned. To put it bluntly, South African EE policies are aimed at fundamental changes

in the balance of power in South African companies – an objective which threatens continued White dominance in the private sector workplace.

Western approaches to DEI have themselves been criticised in organisational academia as "a concept that undermines policies for racial equality by covering white employers with a gloss of inclusiveness" (Collins, 2011b, p. 520). Collins observes that when race is prioritised above other objectives "that gloss is removed – and white privilege to monopolize valued jobs is reasserted and protected" (p. 520).

The tension between the transformative objectives of South African EE legislation and company-driven DEI philosophies was evident in many of the discussions with White respondents. It was apparent across the conversations with most respondents that their notion of a diverse workplace was one where Black people (including Black minorities) would be accommodated within a management structure in which White people would continue to exercise significant influence, either through a simple numerical majority or through control over key strategic positions. While not explicitly stated, many respondents inferred that 'diversity' meant an approximately equal mix of Black and White professionals. The use of such language resists the notion of White people as a minority in executive management - at worst, it regards the inclusion of a minority of Black African people as sufficiently 'diverse' and, at best, it sees diversity as an equal distribution of races in executive management. It goes without saying that this concept of 'diversity' does not reflect South African demographics and that, to be racially representative, South African workplaces would have to be predominantly controlled by Black (specifically Black African) people with White people representing less than 10% of executive management.

White respondents also stressed that DEI was 'not just about race'. A few respondents argued that, in global terms, gender had become more important than race, but they notably omitted attaching any race to gender, e.g., recognising that Black women are by far the most under-represented group at executive levels. Several respondents ticked off a list of categories which should be included in the understanding of diversity, including disability, religion and sexual preference. Numerous respondents stressed the importance of cognitive diversity and having people from different backgrounds in the organisation. Collins (2011a) notes that "[d]espite the rhetoric of inclusiveness, diversity is not necessarily expansive but is reductionist when it subsumes the problem of race under less provocative statuses". She continues: "The etiquette of diversity may not disadvantage blacks in an overt form but in the way it functions. It disadvantages blacks and marginalizes race through submerging and dismissing it using a new rhetoric for labeling equality" (p. 536).

While the inclusion of previously excluded groups is important in approaches to diversity, the manner in which they were raised by respondents in the present study indicated a diversion from the most pressing and significant issue for South Africa: the under-representation of Black people (including Black women) in corporate executive management. Moreover, the argument for diversity presented by several respondents rested more on the notion of people with different ways of thinking and 'best business practice' and less on the principle of redress for historical inequalities. In her discussion of how Whiteness is centred in DEI, Mayorga-Gallo (2019) notes that such corporate approaches to diversity are ahistorical, ignore power structures and protect "the structural advantages and privileges of those in power" (p. 1795), thus reinforcing dominant Whiteness.

5.2. The minoritisation of Black Africans in the workplace

The extent to which South African workplace diversity is undermined by the critical deficiency in Black African representation at mid to senior levels was underestimated by White respondents. When reviewing their own company's progress in racial transformation in senior positions, it was evident from many of the respondents that Black representation often referred mainly to Black minorities and not to Black Africans. The dire lack of representation of Black Africans generally only came up as an issue in the context of regulatory pressure to improve Black African representation and was generally presented as a 'problem'. As far as the respondents were concerned, this problem concerned not only the perceived challenges involved in increasing Black African representation but, more significantly, that such moves would 'discriminate' against Black minorities as well as creating additional obstacles for White women.

Black Africans represent by far the majority of the South African population at 80% of the EAP but they are a minority in the senior echelons of the private sector - constituting only 13,8% of top management and 20% of senior management (Commission for Employment Equity, 2023). On the other hand, Black minorities fare considerably better. At 11,6% of top management and 13,3% of senior management, Indian South Africans significantly outperform their 2,7% of EAP, while Coloured South Africans constitute 5,8% of top management and 8,3% of senior management against an EAP of 9,3% (see *Figure F* above). These figures indicate that the relegation of Black African representation to an irksome regulatory problem, tangential to business imperatives, is predicated on a reluctance or failure to imagine a 'diversity' in which the South African workplace is primarily controlled by Black Africans. At best, this comes across as an oversight based on the invisibility of Black Africans in White spaces - a legacy of apartheid spatial planning and bantustan policy. At worst, it represents a deep-seated trepidation by White executives that they will ultimately lose control of the private sector.

5.3. Presumption of White employment and employment opportunities

White respondents generally acknowledged that they were privileged although many of them attributed this to class privilege as opposed to White skin privilege and White affirmative action under apartheid and colonisation. Given that many of them, particularly the older respondents, had achieved substantially in their careers, this acknowledgment is perhaps not surprising. What was incongruous, however, was the concern of many respondents that White people in South Africa were being discriminated against in the form of 'reverse racism', a common, yet unsubstantiated, refrain among White South Africans.

Some respondents asserted that it was difficult for White people (White men in particular) to find employment opportunities because of the corporate focus on meeting EE targets. These assertions were presented as casual facts without any reflection on the current levels of employment in South Africa or consideration for the extent to which White people disproportionately dominate the senior and top levels of South African companies (see *Figure F* above). South African employment statistics indicate that, of the 7.9 million unemployed people in South Africa, 91% are Black African, 6% are Coloured, 1% are Indian and only 2% are White (see *Figure G* below).

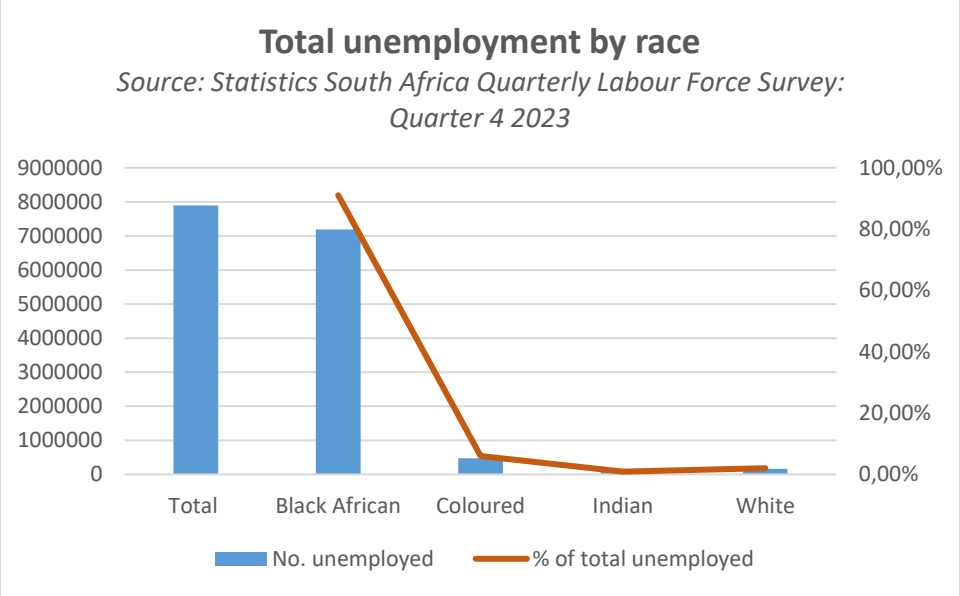

Figure G

Statistically, therefore, unemployment is clearly an issue which affects Black African people at significant levels with almost four in every ten Black Africans unemployed (Statistics South Africa, 2023, p. 22).

Comparatively, White people experience minor levels of unemployment (less than one in every ten White South Africans are unemployed) and are more likely to be employed at professional and executive levels than Black people. In this context, claims of 'reverse racism' and employment difficulties for White people indicate that there is an implicit expectation by White people of guaranteed employment. This notion centres White interests and normalises an entitlement of White employment in an employment environment characterised by high levels of unemployment.

Several respondents also complained that White women were being discriminated against, particularly in the context of the government's pressure to increase representation of Black Africans at senior levels. Again, this was presented as a casual, though often emotional fact, even though EE statistics show that White women not only outperform their EAP in top and senior management but they also equal the total (men and women) representation of Black Africans at these levels (see *Figure H* below). Beliefs, assumptions, perceptions, hearsay and collective group mental models appear to trump actual evidence and facts for many of the research respondents.

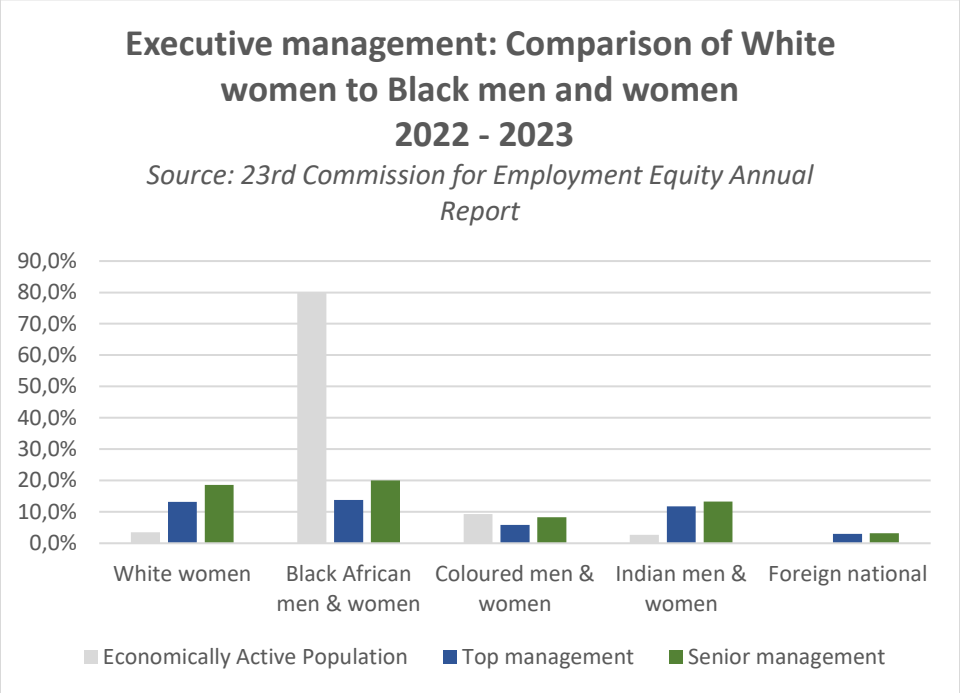

Figure H

Feagin and O'Brien (2003) remark that White people sometimes only recognise that they are White when they believe that they are experiencing race prejudice. At this point "they begin to see whiteness as a besieged and beleaguered identity" (p. 84). As a minority, White people in South Africa are constantly

aware of 'being White', unlike parts of the world where White people are in a demographic majority (Steyn, 2007). Nevertheless, the current study shows that awareness of being White is more acute in relation to issues where White people are regarded as victims, than in situations where White people are dominant and privileged.

A few respondents adopted a philosophical acceptance that White people no longer enjoyed the advantages which they had in the past. In commenting on the unlikelihood of further promotion in his organisation, one respondent stated: "…is it a[n] unfortunate position to be in? Yes, it is. But such is life. I have got many African friends that that have had to absorb that for years. So … I'm not that special". Others, particularly older respondents, noted that they had not been affected by EE policies and had had the benefit of rising to the top of their organisations. However, a consistent refrain across all respondents was a concern for the future prospects of their children in South Africa. Most often, this was raised in the context of race targets for sports teams or university admissions requirements which limited the number of White participants. White respondents felt that, given the passage of time since democracy dawned in 1994, this constituted unfair discrimination against their children who bore no responsibility for apartheid. While it is natural to elevate one's children's interests above others, the expectation by respondents that their children would enjoy the same benefits as they had, reflected a generational extension of White privilege in a country which remains the most unequal society in the world.

5.4. Presumption of White moral authority and race-neutral knowledge

While several White respondents acknowledged that they may have implicit bias, this recognition did not appear to extend to them questioning the assumed authority of their personal beliefs and assumptions regarding EE and issues of race in the workplace. This was most evident in dismissive or self-absolving responses to the lived experiences of Black professionals. However, as shown above, it was also apparent in the racialised stereotyping of Black professionals, the unproblematic association of being White or Whiter with better corporate suitability and in respondent views of what did or did not constitute racism. Feagin and O'Brien (2003) note that racialised stereotypes and prejudices "offer a make-believe foundation for white dominance" and that perceptions of racism and issues like racial representation, rather than being neutral, are approached from a "white-interested point of view" (p. 18).

An additional key element of normative Whiteness is the presumption of race neutrality in dealing with organisational matters. Some respondents occasionally admitted to the limitations of being White in fairly assessing Black employees and indicated measures that they had taken to ameliorate this, for example, including Black colleagues in interviews with job applicants. However, most White respondents tended to

present their views as authoritative and objective with limited regard for the extent to which their thoughts and worldview were rooted in an 'ideology of Whiteness'.

A few respondents expressed the view that Black managers were racially biased while White managers were neutral and objective. One respondent, in remarking why he was the right person to drive transformation in his company, stated that he did "not have the vested interests of a black chief executive trying to get an executive looking like him or her". He did not see himself as having any racial bias but assumed that a Black CEO would inevitably be biased in favour of other Black people (ironically, this respondent had appointed a foreign White specialist as his deputy as he regarded this specialist as the 'best person for the job'). This idea of authoritative White neutrality was deeply embedded in the manner in which most respondents spoke about themselves, others and the workplace in general.

Such doubts about neutrality extended - together with stereotypes about Black incompetence - into issues of trust. When asked directly about whether he could see his company being majority controlled and managed by Black African people, one respondent hesitatingly responded as follows:

> *"Remember my ... it's interesting, my wealth and my, or what I have, is invested in [the Company]. So it's also important for me to make sure that [the Company] can can stand the test of time in South Africa. So it's a it's a it's a, it's a, it's an interesting question, it's it's .... Any business will have ... there will be people with control. We must just make sure that those people with control, exercise those controls in the right way. Or that they influencing, or that they become the people that are, that are open minded, and that are not prejudiced, if I ... for lack of better words." ADRIAAN*

The hesitancy in relation to this direct question is reflective of implicit doubts about Black Africans, in particular, which permeated discussions in this study. Another respondent, on being asked if he could see a Black person replacing him on retirement, responded affirmatively but qualified it with the metaphoric words: "If I can feel comfortable giving the keys to him and he will not make an accident". These two examples demonstrate a mindset which was evident in many White respondents which naturalises corporate authority, objectivity and trustworthiness as a White credential (Ray, 2019).

6. 'Outliers'

During the course of the interviews, several views were expressed which challenged the inexorable nature of normative Whiteness in the South African private sector workplace. 'Outliers', in this context, refers not to individual respondents but to occasional opinions expressed by a range of respondents that contradicted familiar White patterns of expression.

Some of the respondents recognised that, as a result of their socialisation and upbringing, they had previously accepted truisms regarding Black people which they now questioned. A few of these respondents were actively engaged in trying to learn more about their own prejudice or unlearn former assumptions and to address them in the context of the workplace. One of them chaired her company's employment equity committee and was acutely aware of the offence caused to Black employees by racist microaggressions in the workplace. Another admitted that he would not have got rid of his "blind spot" if it was not for interacting with Black peers. It should be noted, however, that while their companies were making strides in Black representation at senior management level, these respondents' companies remained predominantly controlled by Whites.

A few of the older respondents were reflective about past personal views and behaviour which reflected a prejudice against Black employees or a tolerance for racism. One respondent spoke of how he had been deeply disgruntled by EE requirements when they were first introduced but having seen the quality of Black talent in his sector, he had learnt not to judge Black professionals before they had been given an opportunity to perform: "I've seen enough smart Black people to know that I can't judge them on the colour of their skin". Another expressed regret and embarrassment that he had been complicit in racism at his former organisations by not speaking out against racist comments and in handling racist White employees with kid gloves. Yet another scornfully commented that companies gave "a million reasons" why they couldn't find Black Finance or Sales Directors but this was "really based on nothing but bias". And one respondent candidly admitted that he had had to "get over myself" when he distrusted senior Black colleagues when they were first appointed to his exco.

Some respondents hotly disputed assertions by other respondents that there was a lack of skilled Black professionals available in the workplace, with some saying this was a 'cop-out' to avoid transformation. These views often came from respondents who worked in regulated private entities and who were therefore under greater pressure to demonstrate compliance with EE requirements. A few respondents spoke about White people being ignorant of Black people's experiences and two respondents even quoted Black Consciousness philosopher, Steve Biko, when reflecting on issues of racism and Black representation in the workplace. Several respondents felt that White companies had not done enough to advance racial

transformation in South Africa.

In their study of elite White men in America, Feagin and O'Brien (2003) observed that respondents occasionally expressed a nuanced understanding of the continued existence of racism in organisations and society, even as their general discourse was consistent with their socialisation into Whiteness. This pattern was evident in the current study where almost all respondents, regardless of the 'outlier' views described above, contradicted themselves to a greater or lesser extent by reiterating racialised stereotypes and centring Whiteness in the workplace. Feagin and O'Brien noted that "… the complexity of the views of large numbers of whites … encompasses their inability to disentangle their own frequently antibias or anti-discriminatory inclinations from the understandings pressed on them by the influential racial ideology constantly reiterated and reinforced in key white reference groups" (p. 237). Nevertheless, the 'outlier' views expressed by respondents in the current study reflect a prospective departure point for White executives to accept that, in the words of one respondent, "we don't know what we don't know" and to actively and candidly engage with the elephant in the room that is normative Whiteness.

7. Conclusion, Limitations of Research and Recommendations

The analysis above has demonstrated the extent to which normative Whiteness pervades the conscious and unconscious beliefs, attitudes and discourse of White respondents in the South African private sector workplace. When viewed against the experiences of Black professionals, it is evident that normative Whiteness cannot be discounted as a significant factor negatively impacting on the experiences of Black professionals in the workplace and hampering the representation of Black people at executive levels.

The difficulty facing most White executives in South Africa, and indeed around the world, is that they have grown up and continue to live in a dominantly White social bubble which is removed from the realities and lived experiences of most Black people. Feagin and O'Brien (2003) speak of the social echo chamber which this creates, where White people "participate in inherited patterns of thought" (p. 11). Most respondents indicated that they did not have personal friendships with Black people and did not socialise with Black people outside of the workplace. Few of them had engaged in discussions of race and racism with Black peers, often regarding the topic as off bounds or too sensitive. Many of them regarded discussions on race as perilous with the potential of being branded as racist and even placing their jobs at risk. Yet almost all of them expressed a genuine interest in this research and felt that it concerned an important but neglected issue.

An unavoidable limitation of this research is that it obviously reflects the views of only those White executives who were willing to be interviewed. While most executives who were approached agreed to participate, it is possible that there are other executives who hold significantly different views. However, this concern is ameliorated by the extent to which the views expressed in this research are consistent with those expressed by White people - including elites - in other research referenced in this study. Another inevitable but more significant limitation - in the context of the longevity of the research - is that the majority of respondents were aged 50 years and older. While this is inevitable in the context of research on senior executives, the life experiences of those White people who grew up during apartheid and those who primarily grew up in a democracy, may differ. The researcher attempted to probe this issue to a limited extent in this study, but the age demographic of the sample size counted against this. It is recommended that research on normative Whiteness among senior White executives who grew up in a post-apartheid environment would constitute useful future research.

Normative Whiteness is not an ideology which is predicated on being phenotypically White. Given its global pervasiveness and invisibility, and its position as 'the normal way of things', it is entirely possible for Black people - both Black minorities and Black Africans - to adopt the stereotypical beliefs and White-centred thinking that has been discussed in this research. The researcher has deliberately chosen not to address this in the present research because of the risk of downplaying Whiteness as 'something that everyone does'. This would relieve White executives of the responsibility to give precedence to their own role in reproducing Whiteness and to recognise that both their White privilege and their workplace power places on them a unique responsibility to 'undo Whiteness'.

The lived experiences of Black professionals as reported in the focus groups for this research (see *Annexure 1*) as well as in the research of Myeza and April (2021) show that racism remains pervasive in the workplace, and that it has a deleterious effect on the lives of Black professionals but that it is often covert and difficulty to identify. Covert racism is disguised in the cloak of normative Whiteness but simultaneously reinforces the myths and stereotypes from which normative Whiteness derives its presumed credibility. Addressing covert racism in the workplace therefore requires an honest and comprehensive engagement with the tenets and assumptions underpinning normative Whiteness and a candid recognition that normative Whiteness primarily protects the interests of White people to the detriment of Black people. In practical terms, such engagement should situate normative Whiteness squarely within workplace diversity programmes so that it can be exposed, unpacked and acknowledged as a factor inhibiting the well-being and progress of Black people in the workplace. Simultaneously, it is imperative that White executives, individually and collectively, engage openly and regularly with Black peers in the context of an explicit recognition that normative Whiteness is particularly damaging in the South African context.

Given the psychological, conceptual and structural embeddedness of normative Whiteness such an undertaking by White executives requires constant self-vigilance, questioning and active engagement with personal prejudices (as suggested by April, Dharani & April, 2023, p.178-181, in their chapter on 'Leadership for Inclusivity' and the list of self-awareness behaviours and self-confrontational practices). It requires sincere reflection of how unfounded beliefs can influence decisions which have a devastating impact on Black professionals. Importantly, in the current global 'whitelash' against critical thinking and engagement, it necessitates an open and somewhat vulnerable engagement with White and Black peers without resorting to kneejerk denials of racism or seeking comfort in dismissing 'political correctness' or 'wokeness'.

Writing in 2001, Steyn observed the following: "…. white South Africans cannot move forward unless they confront the extent to which their identities and personal expectations have been shaped through asymmetrical power relations, both internally within South Africa, and globally, through enmeshment within Western historical processes and ideologies" (p. xxxii).

To move forward, it is not sufficient simply to recognise or to acknowledge White privilege. Addressing the effects of White advantage and anti-Black racism requires the making visible of normative Whiteness and acts towards equity. Exposing normative Whiteness requires a self-conscious problematising of White identity and its relationship to power. It requires a collective questioning of everything White people take for granted in the racialised social order. It requires a humble acceptance that there is a White worldview which, far from being the natural order of things, is ideologically constructed in a way that preserves the power of Whiteness and subordinates people which do not accord with it. It is an acceptance that normative Whiteness is the enabler and *sine qua non* of covert racism and that racism cannot be undone until normative Whiteness is made visible.

References

Ahmed, S. (2007). A phenomenology of whiteness. *Feminist Theory*, *8*(2), 149–168. https://doi.org/10.1177/1464700107078139

Al Ariss, A., Özbilgin, M., Tatli, A., & April, K. (2014). Tackling whiteness in organizations and management. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, *29*(4), 362–369. https://doi.org/10.1108/JMP-10-2013-0331

Alvesson, M., & Deetz, S. (2000). *Doing critical management research*. SAGE Publications.

Alvesson, M., & Kärreman, D. (2000). Taking the linguistic turn in organizational research: Challenges, responses, consequences. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, *36*(2), 136–158. https://doi.org/10.1177/0021886300362002

Anderson, E. (2015). "The White Space". *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*, *1*(1), 10–21. https://doi.org/10.1177/2332649214561306

April, K., Dharani, B., & April, A. (2023). *Lived experiences of exclusion in the workplace: Psychological and behavioural effects*. Emerald Publishing.

April, K. (2021). The narratives of racism in South Africa. In P. Daya & K. April (Eds.), *12 Lenses into diversity in South Africa* (pp. 11–31).

April, K. (2022). The new diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) realities and challenges. In *HR: The new agenda* (pp. 119–132). KR Publishing.

Bazeley, P. (2021). *Qualitative data analysis: Practical strategies* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications, Ltd.

Blum, L. (2023). "Cultural racism": Biology and culture in racist thought. *Journal of Social Philosophy*, *54*(3), 350–369. https://doi.org/10.1111/josp.12370

Boatcă, M. (2017). The centrality of race to inequality across the world system. *Journal of World-Systems Research*, *23*(2), 465–473. https://doi.org/10.5195/jwsr.2017.729

Bonilla-Silva, E. (1997). Rethinking racism: Toward a structural interpretation. *American Sociological Review*, *62*(3), 465–480. https://doi.org/10.2307/2657316

Bonilla-Silva, E. (2002). The linguistics of color blind racism: How to talk nasty about blacks without sounding "racist." *Critical Sociology*, *28*(1–2), 41–64. https://doi.org/10.1163/156916302320277592

Bonilla-Silva, E. (2003). New racism, color-blind racism and the future of whiteness in America. In A. A. Doane & E. Bonilla-Silva (Eds.), *White Out: The continuing significance of racism* (pp. 270–284). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203412107.

Bonilla-Silva, E. (2018). *Racism without racists: Color-blind racism and the persistence of racial inequality in America*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Bonilla-Silva, E., & Dietrich, D. (2011). The new racism: The racial regime of post civil-rights America. In R. D. Coates (Ed.), *Covert racism: Theories, institutions, and experiences* (pp. 41–67). Koninklijke Brill NV.

Bonilla-Silva, E., & Forman, T. A. (2000). "I am not a racist but . . .": Mapping White college students' racial ideology in the USA. *Discourse and Society*, *11*(1), 50–85. https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926500011001003

Bonnett, A. (2021). *Multiracism: Rethinking racism in global context*. Wiley.

Booysen, L. (2007). Barriers to employment equity implementation and retention of blacks in management in South Africa. *South African Journal of Labour Relations*, *31*(1), 47–71. https://doi.org/10520/EJC59603

Bordas, J. (2012). *Salsa, soul, and spirit: Leadership for a multicultural age* (2nd ed.). Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

Byrd, W. C., & Ray, V. E. (2015). Ultimate attribution in the genetic era: White support for genetic explanations of racial difference and policies. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, *661*(1), 212–235. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716215587887

Carr, P. R. (2016). Whiteness and white privilege: Problematizing race and racism in a 'color-blind' world, and in education. *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy*, *7*(1), 51–74. https://libjournal.uncg.edu/ijcp/article/view/975

Carton, A. M., & Rosette, A. S. (2011). Explaining bias against black leaders: Integrating theory on information processing and goal-based stereotyping. *The Academy of Management Journal*, *54*(6), 1141–1158. https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2009.0745

Coates, R. D. (2011a). Covert racism: An introduction. In R. D. Coates (Ed.), *Covert racism: theories, institutions, and experiences* (pp. 1–16). Koninklijke Brill NV.

Coates, R. D. (2011b). Covert racism: Theory, types and examples. In R. D. Coates (Ed.), *Covert racism: theories, institutions, and experiences* (pp. 121–139). Koninklijke Brill NV.

Coates, R. D. (2011c). Covert racism in the U.S. and globally. In R. D. Coates (Ed.), *Covert racism: theories, institutions, and experiences* (pp. 239–265). Koninklijke Brill NV.

Collins, S. M. (1993). Blacks on the bubble: The vulnerability of black executives in white corporations. *Sociological Quarterly*, *34*(3), 429–447. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1533-8525.1993.tb00120.x

Collins, S. M. (1997). Black mobility in white corporations: Up the corporate ladder but out on a limb. *Social Problems*, *44*(1), 55–67. https://doi.org/10.2307/3096873

Collins, S. M. (2011a). Diversity in the post affirmative action labor market: A proxy for racial progress? *Critical Sociology*, *37*(5), 521–540. https://doi.org/10.1177/0896920510380075

Collins, S. M. (2011b). From affirmative action to diversity: Erasing inequality from organizational responsibility. *Critical Sociology*, *37*(5), 517–520. https://doi.org/10.1177/0896920510380072

Collins, S. M., & Davis, G. (2011). Protecting white power in a corporate hierarchy. In R. D. Coates (Ed.), *Covert racism: theories, institutions, and experiences* (pp. 143–154). Koninklijke Brill NV.

Commission for Employment Equity. (2012). *12th Commission for Employment Equity Annual Report: 2011-2012*. South African Department of Labour. https://www.gov.za/documents/commission-employment-equity-annual-report-20112012

Commission for Employment Equity. (2013). *13th Commission for Employment Equity Annual Report: 2012-2013*. South African Department of Labour. https://www.gov.za/documents/commission-employment-equity-annual-report

Commission for Employment Equity. (2014). *14th Commission for Employment Equity Annual Report: 2013-2014*. South African Department of Labour.

https://www.labour.gov.za/DocumentCenter/Reports/Annual%20Reports/Employment%20Equity/2013-2014/14ceereport_part1.pdf

Commission for Employment Equity. (2015). *15th Commission for Employment Equity Annual Report: 2014-2015*. South African Department of Labour. https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201507/15-cee-annual-report-2015.pdf

Commission for Employment Equity. (2016). *16th Commission for Employment Equity Annual Report: 2015-2016*. South African Department of Labour. https://www.abp.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Commission-for-Employment-Equity-Annual-Report-2015_2016.pdf

Commission for Employment Equity. (2017). *17th Commission for Employment Equity Annual Report: 2016-2017*. South African Department of Labour. https://www.labour.gov.za/DocumentCenter/Reports/Annual Reports/Employment Equity/2016-2017/17th CEE Annual Report.pdf

Commission for Employment Equity. (2018). *18th Commission for Employment Equity Annual Report: 2017-2018*. South African Department of Labour. https://www.labour.gov.za/DocumentCenter/Reports/Annual Reports/Employment Equity/2017-2018/18ceereport_amended.pdf

Commission for Employment Equity. (2019). *19th Commission for Employment Equity Annual Report: 2018-2019*. South African Department of Labour. https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/19th CEE-Annual Report_.pdf

Commission for Employment Equity. (2020). *20th Commission for Employment Equity Annual Report: 2019-2020*. South African Department of Labour. https://www.labour.gov.za/DocumentCenter/Reports/Annual Reports/Employment Equity/2019 - 2020/20thCEE_Report_.pdf

Commission for Employment Equity. (2021). *21st Commission for Employment Equity Annual Report: 2020-2021*. South African Department of Labour. https://www.polity.org.za/article/21st-commission-for-employment-equity-annual-report-2020-2021-2021-07-05

Commission for Employment Equity. (2022). *22nd Commission for Employment Equity Annual Report: 2021-2022*. South African Department of Labour. https://csggroup.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/22nd-cee-anual-report.pdf

Commission for Employment Equity. (2023). *23rd Commission for Employment Equity Annual Report: 2022-2023*. South African Department of Labour https://www.labour.gov.za/DocumentCenter/Reports/Annual Reports/Employment Equity/2022-2023/23rd Annual CEE Report.pdf

Cook, A., & Glass, C. M. (2014). Analyzing promotions of racial/ethnic minority CEOs. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, *29*(4), 440–454. https://doi.org/10.1108/JMP-02-2012-0066

Cotton, J. L., O'Neill, B. S., & Griffin, A. E. C. (2014). Whiteness of a name: Is "white" the baseline? *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, *29*(4), 405–422. https://doi.org/10.1108/JMP-03-2012-0086

Creswell, J.W. & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed). SAGE Publications.

Daya, P., & April, K. (2014). The relationship between demographic groups and perception of inclusion in a South African organisation. *The South African Journal of Business Management*, *45*(2), 25–34. https://doi.org/10.1080/0376835X.2012.645639

Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (2000). The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.) *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 1-32). SAGE Publications.

DiTomaso, N. (2021). Why difference makes a difference: Diversity, inequality, and institutionalization. *Journal of Management Studies*, *58*(8), 2024–2051. https://doi.org/10.1111/joms.12690

DiTomaso, N. (2023). Rethinking " woke " and " integrative " diversity strategies: Diversity, equity, inclusion — and inequality. *Academy of Management Perspectives*. https://doi.org/10.5465/amp.2023.0013

DiTomaso, N., Parks-Yancy, R., & Post, C. (2011). White attitudes toward equal opportunity and affirmative action. *Critical Sociology*, *37*(5), 615–629. https://doi.org/10.1177/0896920510380070

Dovidio, J.F., & Gaertner, S.L. (2000). Aversive racism and selection decisions: 1989 and 1999. *Psychological Science*, *11*(4), 315–319. https://doi.org/ 10.1111/1467-9280.00262

Dovidio, J. F., & Gaertner, S. L. (2011). When good people do bad things: The nature of contemporary racism. In R. D. Coates (Ed.), *Covert racism: theories, institutions, and experiences* (pp. 111–120). Koninklijke Brill NV.

Essed, P. (1991). *Understanding everyday racism: An interdisciplinary theory*. SAGE Publications, Ltd.

Fairclough, N. (2001). The discourse of New Labour: Critical discourse analysis. In M. Wetherell, S. Taylor, & S. J. Yates (Eds.), *Discourse as data: A guide for analysis* (pp. 229–266). SAGE Publications, Ltd.

Feagin, J., & O'Brien, E. (2003). *White men on race: Power, privilege and the shaping of cultural consciousness*. Beacon Press.

Feagin, J. R. (2013). *The white racial frame: Centuries of racial framing and counter-framing* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Feagin, J. R., & Sikes, M. (1994). *Living with racism: The black middle class experience*. Beacon Press.

Ferguson, M. W., & Dougherty, D. S. (2022). The paradox of the black professional: Whitewashing blackness through professionalism. *Management Communication Quarterly*, *36*(1), 3–29. https://doi.org/10.1177/08933189211019751

Foster, J. (2009). Defending whiteness indirectly: A synthetic approach to race discourse analysis. *Discourse & Society*, *20*(6), 685–703. https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926509342062

Fournier, V. & Grey, C. (2010). At the critical moment: Conditions and prospects for critical management studies. *Human Relations*, *53*(1), 7–32. https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726700531002

Fram, S. M. (2013). The constant comparative analysis method outside of grounded theory. *Qualitative Report*, *18*(1), 1–25. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2013.1569

Franchi, V. (2003). The racialization of affirmative action in organizational discourses: A case study of symbolic racism in post-apartheid South Africa. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, *27*(2), 157–187. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0147-1767(02)00091-3

Frankenberg, R. (1993). *The social construction of whiteness*. University of Minnesota Press.

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Herder & Herder.

Gallagher, C. A. (2000). White like me? Methods, meaning, and manipulation in the field of white studies. In F. W. Twine & J. W. Warren (Eds.), *Racing research researching race: Methodological dilemmas in critical race studies* (pp. 67–92). New York University Press.

Garay, M. M., Perry, J. M., & Remedios, J. D. (2023). The maintenance of the U.S. racial hierarchy through judgments of multiracial people based on proximity to whiteness. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *49*(6), 969–984. https://doi.org/10.1177/01461672221086175

Gill, M. J. (2015). Elite identity and status anxiety: An interpretative phenomenological analysis of management consultants. *Organization*, *22*(3), 306–325. https://doi.org/10.1177/1350508413514287

Golash-Boza, T., & Bonilla-Silva, E. (2013). Rethinking race, racism, identity and ideology in Latin America. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *36*(10), 1485–1489. https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2013.808357

Green, M. J., Sonn, C. C., & Matsebula, J. (2007). Reviewing whiteness: Theory, research, and possibilities. *South African Journal of Psychology*, *37*(3), 389–419. https://doi.org/10.1177/008124630703700301

Grimes, D. (2001). Putting our own house in order: Whiteness, change and organization studies. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, *14*(2), 132–149. https://doi.org/10.1108/09534810110388054

Haritaworn, J. (2016). *The biopolitics of mixing: Thai multiracialities and haunted ascendencies.* Routledge.

Ho, K. (2016). "Studying up" Wall Street: Reflections on theory and methodology. In L. L. M. Aguiar & C. J. Schneider (Eds.), *Researching amongst elites: Challenges and opportunities in studying up* (pp. 29–48). Routledge.

hooks, B. (1990). *Yearning: Race, gender and cultural politics*. Southend Press.

hooks, B. (2004). Overcoming white supremacy: A comment. In L. Heldke & P. O'Connor (Eds.), *Oppression, Privilege & Resistance* (pp. 69–75). McGraw-Hill.

Islam, N. (2000). Research as an act of betrayal: Researching race in an Asian community in Los Angeles. In F. W. Twine & J. W. Warren (Eds.), *Racing research researching race: Methodological dilemmas in critical race Studies* (pp. 35–66). New York University Press.

Kenny, L. D. (2000). Doing my homework: The autoethnography of a white teenage girl. In F. W. Twine & W. Warren, Jonathan (Eds.), *Racing research researching race: Methodological dilemmas in critical race studies* (pp. 111–133). New York University Press. https://doi.org/0814782426

Kim, J. Y., Block, C. J., & Yu, H. (2021). Debunking the 'model minority' myth: How positive attitudes toward Asian Americans influence perceptions of racial microaggressions. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *131*(July), 103648. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2021.103648

Langdridge, D. (2008). Phenomenology and critical social psychology: Directions and debates in theory and research. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, *2*(3), 1126–1142. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9004.2008.00114.x

Laverty, S. M. (2003). Hermeneutic phenomenology and phenomenology: A comparison of historical and methodological considerations. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *2*(3), 21–35. https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690300200303

Leibbrandt, M., Finn, A., & Wollard, I. (2012). Describing and decomposing post-apartheid income inequality in South Africa. *Development Southern Africa*, *29*(1), 19–34. https://doi.org/10.1080/0376835X.2012.645639

Liu, H. (2022). How we learn whiteness: Disciplining and resisting management knowledge. *Management Learning*, *53*(5), 776–796. https://doi.org/10.1177/13505076211061622

Lopez, K. A., & Willis, D. G. (2004). Descriptive versus interpretive phenomenology: Their contributions to nursing knowledge. *Qualitative Health Research*, *14*(5), 726–735. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732304263638

Lowe, F. (2013). Keeping organizations white. *Journal of Social Work Practice*, *27*(2), 149–162. https://doi.org/10.1080/02650533.2013.798151

Macalpine, M., & Marsh, S. (2005). "On being white: There's nothing I can say": Exploring whiteness and power in organizations. *Management Learning*, *36*(4), 429–450. https://doi.org/10.1177/1350507605058138

Mayorga-Gallo, S. (2019). The white-centering logic of diversity ideology. *American Behavioral Scientist*, *63*(13), 1789–1809. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764219842619

McIntosh, P. (1988). *White privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack.* https://med.umn.edu/sites/med.umn.edu/files/2022-12/White-Privilege_McIntosh-1989.pdf

Meghji, A., & Saini, R. (2018). Rationalising racial inequality: Ideology, hegemony and post-racialism among the black and South Asian middle-classes. *Sociology*, *52*(4), 671–687. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038517726645

Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2020). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications

Miller, D. A. (2021). Black British female managers—The silent catastrophe. *Gender, Work and Organization*, *28*(4), 1665–1682. https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12688

Mills, C. W. (1997). *The racial contract*. Cornell University Press.

Mills, C. W. (2016). Global white supremacy. In P. S. Rothenberg (Ed.), *White privilege: Essential readings on the other side of racism* (5th ed., pp. 119–125). Worth Publishers.

Morgan, D. (1996). Focus groups. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *22*, 129–152. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.22.1.129

Morgan, D. L. (2001). Focus group interviewing. In J. F. Gubrium & J. A. Holstein (Eds.), *Handbook of Interview Research: Context & Method* (pp. 141–159). SAGE Publications.

Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. SAGE Publications

Myeza, A., & April, K. (2021). Atypical black leader emergence: South African self-perceptions. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *12*. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.626473

Nakayama, T. K., & Krizek, R. L. (1999). Whiteness as a strategic rhetoric. In T. K. Nakayama & J. N. Martin (Eds.), *Whiteness: The communication of social identity* (pp. 87–106). SAGE Publications.

Ndzwayiba, N., Ukpere, W. I., & Steyn, M. (2018). Debunking the myth of job hopping amongst black professionals in corporate South Africa. *International Journal of Social Economics*, *45*(9), 1266–1282. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSE-03-2017-0071

Ng, E. S., & Lam, A. (2020). Guest editorial. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion*, *39*(7), 729–739. https://doi.org/10.1108/EDI-09-2020-297

Nkomo, S.M. (1992). The emperor has no clothes: Rewriting "race" in organizations. *Academy of Management Review*, *17*(3), 487–513. https://doi.org/10.2307/258720

Nkomo, S.M. (2021). Reflections on the continuing denial of the centrality of "race" in management and organization studies. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion*, *40*(2), 212–224. https://doi.org/10.1108/EDI-01-2021-0011

Nkomo, S.M., & Al Ariss, A. (2014). The historical origins of ethnic (white) privilege in US organizations. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, *29*(4), 389–404. https://doi.org/10.1108/JMP-06-2012-0178

Nkomo, S.M., Bell, M. P., Roberts, L. M., Joshi, A., & Thatcher, S. M. B. (2019). Diversity at a critical juncture: New theories for a complex phenomenon. *Academy of Management Review*, *44*(3), 498–517. https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2019.0103

Op't Hoog, C., Siebers, H., & Linde, B. (2010). Affirmed identities? The experience of black middle managers dealing with affirmative action and equal opportunity policies at a South African mine. *South African Journal of Labour Relations*, *34*(2), 60–83.

Ospina, S., & Foldy, E. (2009). A critical review of race and ethnicity in the leadership literature: Surfacing context, power and the collective dimensions of leadership. *Leadership Quarterly*, *20*(6), 876–896. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2009.09.005

Ozturk, M. B., & Berber, A. (2022). Racialised professionals' experiences of selective incivility in organisations: A multi-level analysis of subtle racism. *Human Relations*, *75*(2), 213–239. https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726720957727

Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Pettigrew, T. F. (1979). The ultimate attribution error: Extending Allport's cognitive analysis of prejudice. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *5*(4), 461–476. https://doi.org/10.1177/014616727900500407

Prasad, A. (2023). The model minority and the limits of workplace inclusion. *Academy of Management Review*, *48*(2), 336–356. https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2021.0352

Ray, V. (2019). A theory of racialized organizations. *American Sociological Review*, *84*(1), 26–53. https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122418822335

Reitman, M. (2006). Uncovering the white place: Whitewashing at work. *Social and Cultural Geography*, *7*(2), 267–282. https://doi.org/10.1080/14649360600600692

Rosette, A. S., Leonardelli, G. J., & Phillips, K. W. (2008). The white standard: Racial bias in leader categorization. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *93*(4), 758–777. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.93.4.758

Rothenberg, P. S. (2016). Introduction. In P.S. Rothenberg (Ed.), *White privilege: Essential readings on the other side of racism* (5th ed., pp. 1–5). Worth Publishers.

Schmitt, M. (2018). From privilege to precarity (and back): Whiteness, racism and the new right. *Coils of the Serpent*, *2*, 48–64. https://d1wqtxts1xzle7.cloudfront.net/56524997/Schmitt_From_Privilege_to_Precarity-libre.pdf?

Schwarz, E., & Lindqvist, B. (2018). Exploring the phenomenology of whiteness in a Swedish preschool

class. *International Journal of Early Childhood*, *50*(1), 1–14. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13158-018-0210-3

Solórzano, D. G., & Yosso, T. J. (2002). Critical race methodology: Counter-storytelling as an analytical framework for education research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *8*(1), 23–44. https://doi.org/10.1177/107780040200800103

Starks, H., & Trinidad, S. B. (2007). Choose your method: A comparison of phenomenology, discourse analysis, and grounded theory. *Qualitative Health Research*, *17*(10), 1372–1380. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732307307031

Statistics South Africa. (2019). *Inequality trends in South Africa: A multidimensional diagnostic of inequality*. http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/ Report-03-10-19/Report-03-10-192017.pdf

Statistics South Africa. (2022). *South African Census 2022*. https://census.statssa.gov.za/#/

Statistics South Africa. (2023). Quarterly Labour Force Survey. In *Quarterly Labour Force Survey* (Issue March). http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0211/P02111stQuarter2019.pdf

Steyn, M. (2001). *Whiteness just isn't what it used to be: White identity in a changing South Africa*. State University of New York Press.

Steyn, M. (2007). As the post-colonial moment deepens: A response to Green, Sonn, and Matsebula. *South African Journal of Psychology*, *37*(3), 420–424. https://doi.org/10.1177/008124630703700302

Steyn, M., Burnett, S., & Ndzwayiba, N. (2018). Mapping capacity to deal with difference: Towards a diagnostic tool for critical diversity literacy. *African Journal of Employee Relations*, *42*(1), 1–23. https://doi.org/10.25159/2520-3223/4266

Sue, D. W. (2004). Whiteness and ethnocentric monoculturalism: Making the " invisible" visible. *American Psychologist*, *59*(8), 761–769. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.59.8.761

Sue, D. W. (2010). *Microaggressions in everyday life: Race, gender and sexual orientation.* John Wiley & Sons.

Sue, D. W. (2016). The invisible whiteness of being: Whiteness, white supremacy and racism. In *White privilege: Essential readings on the other side of racism* (5th ed., pp. 19–28). Worth Publishers.

Syed, J., & Özbilgin, M. F. (2019). *Managing diversity and inclusion: An international perspective* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Thomas, D. A., & Ely, R. J. (2020). Getting serious about diversity:Enough already with the business case - It's time for a new way of thinking. *HBR Magazine*. https://hbr.org/2020/11/getting-serious-about-diversity-enough-already-with-the-business-case

Trechter, S., & Bucholtz, M. (2001). Introduction: White noise: Bringing language into whiteness studies. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, *11*(1), 3–21. https://doi.org/10.1525/jlin.2001.11.1.3

Trepagnier, B. (2011). Silent racism. In *Covert racism: Theories, institutions, and experiences* (pp. 353–364). Koninklijke Brill NV.

Trepagnier, B. (2001). Deconstructing categories: The exposure of silent racism. *Symbolic Interaction*, *24*(2), 141–163. https://doi.org/10.1525/si.2001.24.2.141

Twine, F. W. (2000). Racial ideologies and racial methodologies. In F. W. Twine & J. W. Warren (Eds.), *Racing research, researching Race: Methodological dilemmas in critical race studies*. New York

University Press.

van Dijk, T. A. (1987). *Communicating racism: Ethnic prejudice in thought and talk*. SAGE Publications.

van Dijk, T. A. (1992). Discourse and the denial of racism. *Discourse & Society*, *3*(1), 87–118. https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926592003001005

van Dijk, T. A. (1993). *Elite discourse and racism*. SAGE Publications.

van Dijk, T. A. (2004). Principles of critical discourse analysis. In M. Wetherell, S. Taylor, & S. J. Yates (Eds.), *Discourse theory and practice: A reader* (pp. 300–317). SAGE Publications, Ltd.

van Dijk, T. A. (2011). Discourse studies and hermeneutics. *Discourse Studies*, *13*(5), 609–621. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461445611412762

van Manen, M. (2014). *Phenomenology of practice: Meaning-giving methods in phenomenological research and writing*. Routledge.

van Manen, M. (2016). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Wekker, G. (2016). *White innocence: Paradoxes of colonialism and race*. Duke University Press.

West, M. E. (2011). One rainbow, one nation, one tongue singing: Whiteness in post-apartheid pulp fiction. *Literator*, *32*(3), 17–35. https://doi.org/10.4102/lit.v32i3.208

Wetherell, M. & Potter, J. (1992). *Mapping the language of racism: Discourse and the legitimation of exploitation*. Columbia University Press.

Williams, C. (2012). *Researching power, elites and leadership*. SAGE Publications.

Zschomler, S. (n.d.). A critical hermeneutic phenomenology of adult migrant language learners ' experience of social class in London : struggles for value and values and the potential transformative impact of the language classroom. In *Masters Dissertation, University of Cambridge*. https://doi.org/https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/mda2017_university_of_cambridge_silke_zschomler.pdf

ANNEXURE 1

Focus group research on the experiences of Black professionals in the South African private sector workplace

1. Introduction

1.1. Prior to conducting interviews with the White respondents, the researcher engaged in focus group research among Black professionals on their workplace experiences. The researcher engaged a reputable independent research agency, the Kantar Group ('Kantar'), to select the participants for the focus groups and to provide an independent moderator for the focus group discussions. The decision to engage Kantar to manage these aspects of the focus group research was based on the importance of emphasising the independence of the research when the findings were presented to the White respondents.

1.2. The focus group results were used to elicit responses from and facilitate discussion with the White respondents. Accordingly, the narratives from the focus groups are not a formal part of the PhD research. Rather, they presented a means to achieve the following objectives in the interviews with the White respondents:

1.2.1. Present the perspectives of Black professionals directly and in an unmediated manner.

1.2.2. Capture anecdotal reports of workplace experiences in a research setting.

1.2.3. Encourage the White respondents to respond comprehensively to issues which they might otherwise attempt to avoid, gloss over or deny.

1.2.4. Introduce an alternative reference point (independent of researcher questions and insights) to elicit more honest and open disclosure from the White respondents.

1.3. Importantly, in view of the self-conscious and self-reflexive nature of the researcher's work, the focus groups enabled her to remain focused on the lived experiences of Black professionals while engaging in interviews with the White respondents. As a White researcher, it was natural for the researcher to relate to the White respondents' viewpoints and discourse. The focus group research provided her with an empathetic reference point (the lived experiences of the Black professionals) which would 'check' her own Whiteness and assumptions when engaging in the respondent interviews. The valuable knowledge which the researcher gleaned in the focus groups would, for want of a better term 'keep her honest' during the respondent interviews.

1.4. The researcher's involvement in the focus group process was as follows:

1.4.1. Providing a briefing to Kantar on the purpose of the focus groups in relation to the PhD research.

1.4.2. Specifying the demographic requirements of the focus group participants and the sampling approach according to the following categories:

- Race
- Gender
- City of residence
- Minimum qualifications and experience

1.4.3. Describing the range of industries in the private sector from which the focus group sample should be selected.

1.4.4. Ensuring that UCT ethics requirements were met in the recruitment of the sample.

1.4.5. Drafting of the focus group discussion protocol.

1.4.6. Reviewing and analysing the findings presented by Kantar.

1.4.7. Anonymising participant quotes and drafting the final report.

1.4.8. Drafting this thematic summary in a format appropriate to guide the interviews with White respondents.

1.5. Kantar's role in the process was as follows:

1.5.1. Recruiting focus group participants according to the demographic requirements presented to them and subject to UCT ethics requirements.

1.5.2. Setting up the Zoom links for the online discussions.

1.5.3. Making available an independent facilitator for the focus group discussions.

1.5.4. Transcribing the focus group discussions.

1.5.5. Providing the first draft of the findings from the focus groups.

1.6. The focus groups were initially planned as in-person meetings in March 2020 but were cancelled because of the Covid pandemic. They were eventually conducted via Zoom from 23 to 25 November 2020. Participants were independently and randomly selected according to the following criteria:

- Black (excluding Indian[3]) professionals in the South African private sector
- Mix of women and men
- University degree or other tertiary qualification
- Employed at senior level
- Minimum five years' work experience
- Working (or having worked) at a private sector company where most top/senior managers are White

1.7. Participants were drawn from the following industrial sectors:

- Financial services/banking
- Advertising/marketing
- Property (estate agencies)
- Hospitality and tourism services
- Retail
- Manufacturing/construction
- Medical profession
- Education
- Legal

1.8. During recruitment, participants were not informed of the topic or purpose of the focus groups.

[3]This thesis uses the race terminology of the Employment Equity Act (Act 55 of 1998) which recognises Black African and Coloured people as Black. Indian people (also considered as Black under Employment Equity legislation) were not included in the focus groups as this race group is not under-represented in senior positions in the private sector. The quotes cited from focus group participants indicate the race and gender of each participant as follows: Black African Female (AF), Black African Male (AM), Coloured Female (CF), Coloured Male (CM).

1.9. Six focus groups were held (split evenly between Gauteng and the Western Cape)[4]. The table below shows the race breakdown of the focus groups:

GAUTENG	WESTERN CAPE
2 x Black African-only groups[5]	2 x Black African-only groups
1 x mixed Black African/Coloured group	1 x Coloured-only group[6]

1.10. The demographics of the focus group participants were as follows:

- Total: 42 participants (20 in Johannesburg and 22 in Cape Town)
- Race: 79% Black African and 21% Coloured
- Gender: 57% female and 43% male
- Age range of participants: 25 to 55 years old
- Median age of participants: 38 years old
- Sectors in which participants are employed:
    - Advertising (3 participants)
    - Education (5 participants)
    - Financial services (7 participants)
    - Legal (5 participants)
    - Manufacturing (6 participants)
    - Medical (4 participants)
    - Property: (4 participants)
    - Retail: (8 participants)

A complete schedule of focus group participants by city, race, gender, age, sector and pseudonym is attached as a schedule to this document.

1.11. Each focus group session was two hours long and was facilitated by an experienced independent moderator appointed by Kantar. The moderator was a Black African woman. The topic of discussion was 'Experiences of Racism in the Workplace by Black Professionals' and a discussion framework (developed by the researcher in consultation with Kantar) was used to guide the conversations. The sessions were conducted on weekday evenings to enable maximum participation. While the researcher listened in to the focus groups and the participants were aware of her presence, she did not contribute

[4] Even though the focus groups were conducted via Zoom instead of in person, they were still split between Gauteng and the Western Cape because of the differing demographics of the two provinces.

[5] Given that Black African people represent the majority of South Africans and yet are the least represented in senior and top management in the private sector, Black African-only focus groups were held in each province to facilitate discussion specifically among Black African professionals. *Source: 20th Employment Equity Commission report 2019-2020*

[6] A "Coloured-only" group was held in the Western Cape because the Economically Active Population (EAP) of Coloured people in the Western Cape significantly exceeds the EAP of Black African people in the province. *Source: 20th Employment Equity Commission report 2019-2020*

to discussions. The moderator used a storytelling approach (as opposed to a question and answer session) to facilitate open and unmediated disclosure of experiences among the focus group participants.

1.12. The procedure followed in each focus group can be summarised as follows:

1.12.1. Introduction

At the beginning of the focus group sessions, the moderator set out the purpose of the focus group as a discussion of the experiences of Black professionals in the South African private sector workplace. This included issues regarding race discrimination and racism in the processes of recruitment, remuneration, management, promotion and in the workplace in general. The point was made that some of these experiences may be obvious, but others may be subtle and hard to define. The confidentiality and anonymity of the discussions was emphasised from the outset and participants were advised that they need not mention names of individuals or companies in their contributions.

1.12.2. Experiences of racism in specific employment processes

Participants were asked if they had experienced racially differential treatment in recruitment, remuneration, promotions, training, performance evaluation and job descriptions.

1.12.3. Experiences of racism within the workplace

Participants were asked to speak about instances in the workplace where they had felt uncomfortable because of their race. They were also asked about how they felt about their position, treatment and prospects in the workplace, compared to the position, treatment and prospects of White colleagues. In addition, they were encouraged to talk about their experiences if and when they had raised issues of racism, as well as whether they were able to speak with White colleagues or seniors about racism. Black women participants were asked about experiences which were unique to them based on their race and their gender.

1.13. It is important to note that the purpose of the focus groups was not to prove or disprove racism in the workplace. The fact that racism exists in the workplace is well-established in academic research which has been covered in the literature review for this dissertation. The primary purpose of the focus groups was to gather stories of the lived experiences of Black professionals in the South African private sector workplace so that these could be used to elicit views from the White respondents in the subsequent PhD interviews.

1.14. Kantar transcribed the focus group sessions and prepared a preliminary report. The researcher reviewed all transcripts and prepared the final report in consultation with Kantar. The key findings are summarised into thematic statements, and each statement is supported by a range of quotes from the participants. The names used in the report are pseudonyms to protect the anonymity of the focus group participants. The race, gender, age and home province of each participant is indicated next to the relevant pseudonym.

2. Thematic summary

Black professionals say:

2.1. they have to work harder than their White counterparts to prove themselves in the workplace.
2.2. they are required to have better academic qualifications than their White counterparts.
2.3. they receive lower remuneration than their White counterparts.
2.4. despite their education and experience, they are consistently overlooked for opportunities which are available to White professionals.
2.5. their contributions are not taken seriously, are mistrusted, or are subject to validation by White people.
2.6. racist behaviour towards them by White clients, colleagues or other White professionals is indulged, excused, ignored or minimised by other White people in the workplace.
2.7. they are subjected to assumptions of inferiority, racist stereotyping and resistance to their authority.
2.8. White management engages in tokenism to meet employment equity requirements, deliberately limits the numbers of Black employees at senior level and prefers more passive Black employees who won't 'rock the boat'.
2.9. they experience exclusion and hostility in the workplace on the basis of language.
2.10. they experience exclusion in relation to workplace-related social events.
2.11. they are judged on their accent, name and skin tone to evaluate whether they have the aptitude or suitability for a job.
2.12. 'being Whiter' is an unnamed requirement for success and progress by Black professionals in the workplace.
2.13. they experience subtle or indirect racism which cannot easily be identified.
2.14. they still experience explicit racism from White colleagues or managers in the workplace.
2.15. they feel that HR/management do not take claims of racism seriously and/or that complaining about racism could result in victimisation.
2.16. they experience emotional stress as a result of their experiences but most of them are resigned to workplace racism.
2.17. they do not believe that South African private sector companies will ever be racially representative at a senior/top management level.
2.18. they experience everyday racism outside of the workplace in shops, restaurants, at their children's schools, and in their own enterprises.
2.19. they feel that White people in general refuse to recognise or discuss racism and instead try to avoid or minimise it.

3. Thematic statements with relevant quotes

3.1. Black professionals say they have to work harder than their White counterparts to prove themselves in the workplace.

Angela, AF, 38, Jhb	*".. the fact that you have to work twice as harder, you are qualified, you still need to get into the space, you come with experience [to] prove yourself, in terms of what your capabilities are … there is a lot of that."*
Debora, AF, 42, Jhb	*"You have to constantly prove yourself to these people just that you can get what you are worth."*
Kgosi, AM, 30, Jhb	*"To actually get to where I am now I needed to constantly prove that I can do the same thing each and every single day."*
Palesa, AF, 28, Jhb	*"I always feel the need to prove that I deserve to be here."*
Karabo, AF, 36, Jhb	*"I need to work twice or three four times as hard as they do … for me to be glorified for my expertise or being … whenever I walk through the door I have to prove myself and I have to prove that I am worthy enough. Because I am not worthy because I am Black … and no matter what I do and no matter how much money I make and no matter where I go (especially with me as my friends are predominantly White) … I still have to prove myself twice as hard and I still have to prove myself three times as hard and I still have to justify why I am entitled to half the things that I am entitled to, or justify why I am allowed to live where I live, or justify why my parents did not do the stuff that they do and that is the type of thing you know."*
Gertrude, AF, 52, Jhb	*"To get into that very same college, it was a challenge. For your parents to take you to university it was a challenge. Now that you are qualified, you are a professional, you are still faced with the same challenges.."*
Dumisa, AM, 27, CPT	*" … with us Black people … you have to work two or three times better than your white counterparts …"*
Mbulelo, AM, 33, CPT	*" … you always have to do ten times more to even try to get any amount of credibility, that respect. And you find, no matter how well you do in certain spaces, you are always that Black dude in the business. So it is what it is."*
Michelle, AF, 44, CPT	*" I know my KPI's clearly, and my mandate, and I ensure that I exceed it. If it means I have to work twice as hard, I will do it. Yes I feel the pain and that is what I get to tell my White colleagues when they say you are probably where you are because you are this and that …"*

3.2. Black professionals say they are required to have better academic qualifications than their White counterparts.

Lakela, AF, 46, Jhb	*" …when I got into the advertising space (I think it was 19 years ago), it was when Black people were being accepted … you were supposed to have a 3 year qualification whereas the people we found there who were predominantly White had a standard 8 and making more money than we did. So as a Black person you have to work very hard and be very qualified to do work.. a job that is been done by somebody who is way, way under qualified than you are."*
Palesa, CF, 28, Jhb	*" …we can't get … a job straight after High School we need to go and study because we are not privileged enough – ' my mother's best friend sister who can put me in a position that is well paying'. We don't have that; White people don't need to go to school to get the position that they have. In my company I think … 80% of the [White] people that are working in our company don't have a qualification."*
Ngozi, AF, 52, Jhb	*"You get suggestions [from your superior] like 'why don't you get a Master's degree', 'why don't you go for something more because the company can use …', 'they want to use people like you, but maybe get an education degree and study*

	education'. I sit there and think that you want me to get a degree that you don't have."
Kgosi, AM, 30, Jhb	*"Most [White] people who are there have a certificate or grade 12. It is never a requirement that they go and do a MBA."*
Khwezi, AM, 38, CPT	*"… so a White person with only standard 10 will be in the same [salary] scale as us with degrees. And you'd find that for us as Blacks it's difficult to get into any industry without any qualifications from the institutions of higher learning. But for them it's … even without a Matric they get in."*
Luzuko, AM, 30, CPT	*"The process of employment, I would say it's designed for Black people. One, you become an intern, a graduate intern, for a whole year. And from then on you become a trainee, from a trainee you become a designate… You can stay as a designate for four years, if you choose to, with no benefits, nothing in the private sector especially in retail. Then they decide to employ you permanently, guess what, the person you came into the company with, the White person, became a trainee, with you and earned R10000 when you were on R5000. And there was a position designed for that person; instead of going through the training programme there was a position designed for them to be permanently employed. Do they have qualifications, most of the time? No. They are straight from high school. We need requirements. We need to meet certain requirements to even be part of the training programme …"*

3.3. Black professionals say they receive lower remuneration than their White counterparts.

Angela, AF, 38, Jhb	*"… when it comes to salaries, by virtue of you being White, you are just given, you are started with a certain salary. Whereas a Black person would start at the bottom of the income range, and you have to work 20 years to get to the end of the range …"*
Luzuko, AM, 30, CPT	*"Half of the building, its half Black Africans, young graduates who are not permanently employed by the organisation … In their level, they don't have the benefits. [But] their counterparts in the same level, the White counterparts, have the benefits. They are all trainees and the others don't get the benefits, don't get the bonuses whatsoever, but some do get them, the White counterparts …"*
Aletta, CF, 39, CPT	*" … myself and one of my [White] work colleagues, we do the exact same thing. … So the two of us do the exact same job .. but her title is Account Executive and I am a Junior Account Executive. With the 'junior' in front of me it automatically changes the salary scale."*
Mary, AF, 30, Jhb	*"… it was a mix of Black, Coloured and White. We had the same job description but the salary was not the same."*
Ayanda, AF, 38, Jhb	*" …you can be in the same position as … your White … colleagues but that colleague can earn almost as twice as your salary … and then you will have to work hard … to get into the better salary or to get a raise. But still when it comes to the salaries, I might be earning R500k per year and the same colleague would be earning R900k a year but we are in the same position…"*
Bheki, AM, 29, Jhb	*"… racism has now become less face value and more of an economical issue because it is all about how we get paid and how things are happening, in the work place and all of those things …"*

3.4. Black professionals say that despite their education and experience, they are consistently overlooked for opportunities which are available to White professionals.

Gertrude, AF, 52, Jhb	*"… they would bring probably a new educator, fresh from the college, a White person and then you train the person. After that that person will also be calling shots, telling you what to do, forgetting that you are also in a senior position…"*

Themba, AM, 46, CPT	*" … if you are working in manufacturing in Cape Town, … the manufacturing sector is still for the White people. [There are] very few Black people that are on the senior position."*
Madoda, AM, 48, CPT	*"In senior management there are no Blacks here. Blacks are just there to consume the product."*
Anton, CM, 31, CPT	*"My issues that I normally experienced with my White bosses was the racism and the nepotism … and also that they would use you because you are a good worker and you have great idea but you would never get that acknowledgment for it."*
Wendy, AF, 32, Jhb	*" … [White] counterparts [who] came three years after me are selling way more … expensive houses than I am …"*
Kgosi, AM, 30, Jhb	*"I can … mentor as many people as I can and just the opportunities are not going to come. It is not a matter of they are not there – the opportunities are not going to come".*
Dumisa, AM, 27, CPT	*"So the Black applicant had managerial experience and he had years of experience as well, but he just started working for this company because he had been retrenched from his previous job. So he was qualified for the position, but he wasn't successful in the application. The person who was successful was the White counterpart who had no managerial experience, he had no degree he had a grade 12 in terms of level of education but he got the job. And when he [the Black applicant] challenged that, within the next 3 months, he was dismissed for something very small that a lot of people get away with at work."*
Thembeka, AF, 55, CPT	*" … whenever they employ these White managers, they will send them to you for training. Now you train them and everything and once they know - once there are positions - they will promote the people that you trained because they are trying to deny that you are good enough."*
Victor, AM, 30, Jhb	*"… you have instances where you find somebody [Black person] has been working in a certain [dental] practice for a while. And then the White boy comes in, fresh out of school, and they are automatically a senior, because the staff is told that this person is now going to be the owner…"*
Themba, AM, 46, CPT	*"We come as graduates from school, joining in the industry. Then … the White guy will come and join the company with no qualifications. You train that guy and in a matter of a year or two the guy is going to be your superior you understand?"*

3.5. Black professionals say that their contributions are not taken seriously, are mistrusted, or are subject to validation by White people.

Wendy, AF, 32, Jhb	*"… the discussion was done without me knowing, by the time they came to me, they had already decided what they were going to do. They consulted you but it is not a consultation, it is more like say yes or nothing, so you are like … that is the decision that was already made for me."*
Gertrude, AF, 52, Jhb	*"… whenever you brought things onto the table, you were disregarded*"
Mary, AF, 30, Jhb	*"… they would ask me to write a report, and then give it to my junior to translate it in Afrikaans, and then after that they can talk to the client and they won't even invite me because they have changed my report…"*
Palesa, CF, 28, Jhb	*"… people just dismiss … whatever it is that I bring to a Board of Directors who are all White. They listen to what I am saying, they will hear me, but still want to speak to someone who is superior to me, assuming that would be a person who is of fairer skin."*
Zintle, AF, 40, CPT	*"… it's something that is happening on a daily basis; you can see even … when a White person comes to you and asks a question (you are appointed to this job because you are a specialist) but when you give an answer you feel*

	that the person doesn't even trust your answer. You hear that the person went to validate your answer to someone else. And also you're (I experienced it even in the meetings) sometime you find you're even not sure whether you should be part of the meeting or not - if you're raising a point you see that no one is interested to your point. … so I have a way of dealing with things now so that I can make sure that … I don't get offended. When I go to the meeting I'll just keep quiet."
Themba, AM, 46, CPT	*" … they will always wait until Japan [head office] confirms what you are saying - whether it is true or not, you understand? Always. They cannot rely and trust on your information until someone is saying 'Ja, that is correct and that way I agree with you', you understand? So that's a life we've accepted, there's nothing we can change about that, absolutely nothing."*
Lindelwa, AF, 45, CPT	*"I'm Xhosa speaking, [my White colleague] is Afrikaans, not educated. But every time I found that she wanted to read my e-mails when I was writing my e- mails, thinking that her English is better than my English."*
Thembeka, AF, 55, CPT	*" … these people have been undermining us for all these years. If you're Black, you're not good enough for anything. I agree with the others where they said that you need to work twice as hard as the other people. You're being undermined by your staff that work under you, so you need to prove yourself, you need to be strong."*
Karabo, AF, 36, Jhb	*"… you hear it in a way that they [Whites] communicate to you … they don't communicate to you they communicate above you…"*

3.6. Black professionals say racist behaviour towards Black professionals by White clients, colleagues or other White professionals is indulged, excused, ignored or minimised by other White people in the workplace.

Wendy, AF, 32, Jhb	*"… there is one job that I needed to do, and I was supposed to be responsible for that job but the client decided not to work with me, and they did not verbally say why. But it was clear because they chose two [White] ladies, and I was working in the background. And the deal was … I work in the background, [I] will get paid but the client is not supposed to know …"*
Karabo, AF, 36, Jhb	*" … a large part of racism that we experience comes from the parents of the kids that we teach."*
Lakela, AF, 46, Jhb	*" … when we are sitting in the boardroom people think that certain accounts will be handled better by a person of fairer skin because our clients out there would relate better to that type of a person. And then our clients themselves would actually prefer to deal with White people instead of Black people, so you deal with racism in both internal and external factors of your organisation."*
Palesa, CF, 28, Jhb	*"I have tried [complaining about racism] once … and the response that I got was 'but that is just how they are', ' it's okay that is just what they do and it's how they are'. That is the industry and you just need to get used to it."*
Palesa, CF, 28, Jhb	*"Or it is just a matter of 'you know, I don't think he meant it in that way, maybe he meant it in this way'. So when it's always a thing of 'you are being too sensitive', … 'don't take things too personally it is just business'.*
Lakela, AF, 46, Jhb	*"Remember senior managers in the marketing space and in the advertising spaces are White and the people who making decisions to advertise. Big brands … are owned by White people. These big brands are what the companies are dependent on for revenue. So if they have to make changes that are going to suit a minority of us in the middle to senior management so that they can address racism it's not going to work. Because they are going to lose their customers and it's not an easy thing that can be dealt with in this industry… So, whether you complain about it or you don't, it won't make a*

	difference because they not going to do anything about it. They are going to tell you that 'you know this is the nature of the beast and we need these customers and we need their money and so we have got to make the customer happy'. After all the customer comes first."
Patrick,AM, 47, Jhb	*"…Black attorneys will never get instructions from White companies unless you are working for a big law firm in South Africa."*
Mbulelo, AM, 33, CPT	*" … this one lady who was actually even junior to me literally went on a rant, basically she threw her toys out her cart and she just went crazy. And then my CEO pulled me to the side after work and said to me, 'yes [Mbulelo], don't read too much into this, you know these Cape Town girls, how they are at times.' And that was it… How can she be reprimanded? They are in the same WhatsApp group that I'm not a part of."*
Gertude, AF, 52, Jhb	*"Just because the person is White, he dominates and then we just have to take everything from that particular person."*

3.7. Black professionals say they are subjected to assumptions of inferiority, racist stereotyping and resistance to their authority.

Victor, AM, 30, Jhb	*"… patients would walk in, and they happen to be White, and they won't greet you. Until they find out you are the person who is supposed to help them, then their attitude changes."*
Karabo, AF, 36, Jhb	*" … in education there is always a stigma attached to promoting a Black leader or somebody who is Black [as] a principal. Then it is like the institution - the high quality that they give - is no longer going to be a high quality education."*
Wendy, AF, 32, Jhb	*"… if you are my skin colour, you get those lower income housing or those houses that are harder to sell, can never be sold or what you sell for is peanuts, compared to your other [White] counterparts. But then the target that is set is the same for everyone."*
Janet, AF, 50, Jhb	" *… [when] … giving you a project they will look at you and say 'this is Government [Janet] would you mind'… I find that very condescending in the approach."*
Kabelo, AM, 37, Jhb	*"… you can get to an executive level and they are saying that [Kabelo] might be part of that group, and whatever, but my points and decisions that I make, aren't going to be taken as seriously as [White person] … I have actually seen that in other places where I have worked – that people get progressed until the very top levels, but you actually look at the guy and you are like 'Moses, Moses is just there for the sake of being there'. No one takes him seriously … The higher you go, the more you are going to have to use yourself and become part of kind of like a puppet on a string …"*
Lindelwa, AF, 45, CPT	*"… you are never good enough, as a Black person. If you become good or they see that you're good, it's a shock. Why is it a shock that a Black person can be good?"*
Mandla, AM, 28, Jhb	*"Sometimes you are even scared to park your car next to where everybody can see your car. If a White person comes in this big machine it is ok, it is expected. But if you do then you get the remarks of [not being paid] that much to drive a car like that."*
Kgosi, AM, 30, Jhb	*"I will give you a scenario when I started out as an intern. I'm from a well-off family, so when it was casual Friday I would wear … designer clothes. And I would get these remarks from them like 'we don't pay you very well, how do you afford such things?' And that for me made me think that just because I wear certain brands you don't have to look at me differently or … I am not deserving to wear such …"*

Luzuko, AM, 30, CPT	*"It doesn't matter how qualified you are, if you are Black you are Black to White people. It doesn't matter the amount of experience you have, that mam' [Thembeka] has. As long as she is Black, she is Black. She must be the subordinate, she must report to someone who is White."*
Thembeka, AF, 55, CPT	*"They [White people] don't see themselves reporting to you."*
Michelle, AF, 44, CPT	*"I once had a [White] team member that was moved from my team to a different business [because] she didn't want to report to me."*
Anton, CM, 31, CPT	*"… some of the White management have a real superiority complex and what happens is that if they see that you are Coloured, young and you are educated then you are immediately a threat and they don't like you."*
Mia, CF, 27, CPT	*"What I have noticed is that in the legal profession your intellect gets judged on your colour without … whether you are young, Coloured … a guy or female, you get classed accordingly because you literally experience the division or the segregation in the legal community. The older White folks will be more friendlier to one another and speak … and you … if you work for one of them and he is well respected, the mere fact that you are associated with them, you get treated with some minute bit of respect. But if you are not associated to that specific White male then you are seen as a nothing literally…"*

3.8. Black professionals feel that White management engages in tokenism to meet employment equity requirements, deliberately limits the numbers of Black employees at senior level and prefers more passive Black employees who won't 'rock the boat'.

Debora, AF, 42, Jhb	*"It is a tick in the box because Labour [the Department of Labour] was on their back about not complying with the score. … more than anything I know that I was hired because of colour and for them to reach the score."*
Zintle, AF, 40, CPT	*" … they are just appointing Black people because they are forced by the Department of Labour to do so; otherwise they still think as a Black even if you are educated you don't know more than a White person."*
Lwazi, AM, 49, CPT	*"[Regarding] the employment equity committees that are in the workplace. What I wanted to say is that these positions that are created more especially because of the balance of the inequity or inequality - these become a problem. Because you'll find out that they don't have authority - as much as the position is there, they don't have authority. It's just to redress the problem that is there … these positions are created for the sake of balance…"*
Fundiswa, AF, 46, CPT	*"I think in most instances we get to these positions and we are placed there and we know that we are just there for numbers and nothing else. So we know 'I'm just the face', … the person who is actually running this organisation is not me, as senior as I am, whether I know my story and what I should be doing or not. I know I'm just there. … I'm the only one up there with these White people who seem to know it all and I need them in my corner therefore I will do what they want."*
Lakela, AF, 46, Jhb	*" … if strategic changes means that companies have to comply with EE they will look at White females first before they look at us and put Indian females and Coloured females first …"*
Angela, AF, 38, Jhb	*"… I used to sit in an EE Committee at work, and we would sit there and they will tell us on the top management, it is very White, we are not compliant, and as a business you need to do A,B,C, D … but every time you keep going back and you see the same picture…"*
Fezeka, AF, 28, CPT	*" … all the junior posts are now being filled with Blacks; but all the senior posts are still predominantly … White male."*

Anton, CM, 31, CPT	*"On the outside it looks like it is more Black people that have more jobs but it is because there is authority and power that stems through White people in generations."*
Aletta, CF, 39, CPT	*"The forms are completed but some of the people of colour are there as window dressing so that lots of the organisations can attain their BEE certificates."*
Matthew, CM, 25, CPT	*" ... you have your laws that govern the private sector, but then I think those regulations allows room for this window dressing ... the equity remains the same because there is that poster boy that is placed in a senior position but you are still not the owner ..."*
Kabelo, AM, 37, Jhb	*"... the White people would employ not the smartest Black person, because they want to manage through them. So basically the person would just be there and be a front and just relay whatever the boss wants ... It is difficult to engage with the person who can't even reason to the same level that you reason in, but that person would be your manager, just for stats and for EE percentages."*
Mary, AF, 30, Jhb	*"... management doesn't want a smart person who can challenge them when they do things, because they know we know our rights and all that…. And immediately you voice out, they feel like you are disrespecting them ..."*.
Debora, AF, 42, Jhb	*"... White people have put a system in place that will always pressurise us in these positions. We cannot even fight for our fellow Black sisters in below positions because we know the reason you are there is not because of your qualification but it was a BEE matter or just to comply."*
Mandla, AM, 28, Jhb	*" ... this fear of one position [reserved for Blacks] makes us think there can only be one person. So then we stop mentoring people, we stop helping, we stop teaching because we feel like this person is going to take my spot ... I am the favorite person."*
Dumisa, AM, 27, CPT	*" ... for the company to meet the BEE scorecard in terms of representation and diversity within the company, sometimes they tend to take a person that they can manipulate and undermine and them not having a huge say. So it's kind of hard for that person to actually come with their own perspective or their own point of view. We've heard previously people mentioning that whenever they are in meetings, they would say things, but their point would be overlooked. Not to say that they are token Blacks but some people that are put on those positions are token Blacks, and they are put on those positions with no authority."*
Thembeka, AF, 55, CPT	*" ... you are sitting in the same boardrooms as them around the table but when you look around the table, how many Blacks are there, maybe two out of ten. It's still the same, and the way they address you, sometimes they forget, they don't care, the language they use it's like they don't care and if you...the language, then they will tell you, if you don't like the way I speak you know what to do."*

3.9. Black professionals say they experience exclusion and hostility in the workplace on the basis of language.

Mary, AF, 30, Jhb	*"... where [the] majority of top management are White, they really check whether you speak English and Afrikaans ... you find a smart person who is qualified, being overlooked, and then they take someone [White] who can speak Afrikaans, even if he doesn't speak English properly. They really need that person because it is someone they can communicate with efficiently."*
Themba, AM, 46, CPT	*" ... they speak Afrikaans. Some of us we are from the rural areas; we really don't understand Afrikaans and we have an attitude for Afrikaans you understand? Because we have been tortured in Afrikaans, and we have been*

	forced in Afrikaans, so … we are not interested to learn anyway. I'm one of the people that am not interested. I've been in Cape Town from 1996 until now. I'm not interested to learn Afrikaans, because of that reason you understand; because they will speak Afrikaans, talking something that they don't want you to understand."
Khwezi, AM, 38, CPT	*" … you'd find that they'd exclude you in terms of language. They just wanted to speak Afrikaans. And the worst part was that, we're in a meeting, and maybe let's say a Coloured person is presenting right? Okay, she's presenting in English. Now the … Finance Director would pose a question on that person in Afrikaans. It is expected that that person … is gonna answer in Afrikaans."*
Nandipha, AF, 43, CPT	*" … the meetings would be conducted in English… Then one person would ask a question in Afrikaans and after that it'll continue - the person that would respond, would respond in Afrikaans, and then everyone now will start speaking in Afrikaans. And I kept on reminding them that guys please speak in English. And they would say 'oh sorry [Nandipha]' - then continue to speak in English. A few minutes later, Afrikaans comes again. Then I have to remind them again, and I did that for quite some time up to a point where I said, okay fine, they will continue with their thing. I kept quiet."*
Dimpho, AF, 45, Jhb	*"It is a problem for them when we start to speak our [Black] African languages; they seem not to understand. Whether you are having general conversations with your colleagues, they will say that rather we speak English which I find it very offensive. When they speak in Afrikaans nobody intervenes, we let them be."*
Dumisa, AM, 27, CPT	*" … our colleagues are able to speak Afrikaans in the workplace, but we are not able to speak isiXhosa. So for instance there are a few Black people and we speak isiXhosa - it's not allowed."*

3.10. Black professionals say they experience exclusion in relation to workplace-related social events.

Mbulelo, AM, 33, CPT	*"I once worked where I only discovered towards my last days that within the office, people used to meet up on the weekend and they have grills, and I never got an invite. All those things happen on the weekend and I have no idea. Imagine you are working with people who have a WhatsApp group of their own in the office."*
Luzuko, AM, 30, CPT	*"In the private sector we don't have coffee with White people. If there are many Black people and there are many White people, it's segregated - White people there and we are there."*
Zintle, AF, 40, CPT	*" … we are divided. Even in the canteens you will not find a White person just come to you to talk about things, not about work. It's like friends White to White; Black to Black …"*
Madoda, AM, 48, CPT	*" … retail is probably the worst in terms of sectors for being untransformed and I live in an environment where the older I get the more exhausted I feel. I go to a function here I got invited by suppliers and then you're going to be that Black guy in this pool of White people …"*

3.11. Black professionals say they are judged on their accent, name and skin tone to evaluate whether they have the aptitude or suitability for a job.

Kabelo, AM, 37, Jhb	*"… on the issue of accent and being able to speak in English, because I think most times you often confuse that with intelligence, you will find people saying that 'oh, so and so is so smart'. Meanwhile all they are doing is just that they speak in a different accent and they use words that are … (I am not even sure*

	that they fit for the particular conversation), but immediately intelligence is ascribed to them."
Dimpho, AF, 45, Jhb	*".. when we communicate on an e-mail… we strike a good relationship … Then when it's time to meet, I almost feel like there is a silent disappointment because they didn't expect me to be as Black as I am."*
Karabo, AF, 36, Jhb	*"Even in education when you talk to learners … I always ask them the same question. You saw my name and I teach English home language and what is their impression when they first saw that I would be their teacher? And they then say they didn't think they would get the same quality education and the term that they use is Black English …"*
Mbulelo, AM, 33, CPT	*"And then comes back to those little cheeky comments, 'oh my God, you speak so well'."*
Kgosi, AM, 30, Jhb	*"I know I'm selected to do certain things because of the way I speak and then it separates me from my Black peers … you know they will select you because you don't sound like the other Black people who speak with an accent"*
Janet, AF, 50, Jhb	*" … with our accents … we are classified as better Blacks which is so disgusting and you get your White counterparts saying you are not like other Blacks"*

3.12. Black professionals say that being 'Whiter' is an unnamed requirement for success and progress by Black professionals in the workplace.

Kgosi, AM, 30, Jhb	*"… it is a much harder effort in coming in as a Black person into a corporate environment because I am the one who is always attending the White braai. I'm the one who is always attending the White events. I am the one stretching myself far into social activities just to create that relationship. But I don't see it coming back, I don't see folks hanging out at the location… I have never heard of two or three team members reporting to a Black manager/Black director and going to the location for the very same reason an [Black]African person would have to, in order to maintain that relationship in the office."*
Debora, AF, 42, Jhb	*"It's not only the racial thing; it is also the burden of having to work extra to create the relationships, the golf, the braais, rugby. "*
Lakela, AF, 46, Jhb	*" … yes you have got to be Whiter because you've got to do certain things that are done by your White counterpart like watching cricket. I know nothing about cricket but I make sure that appease my bosses so that they see that I am enthusiastic [that] I want to hang around with them …"*
Lakela, AF, 46, Jhb	*" … you either conform or you are out. You need to be speaking a certain way and you need to be thinking a certain way. You cannot offer your own ideas and you cannot bring your own freshness into a culture that has been set. They will tell you that things have been done this way and they won't change because of you."*
Palesa, CF, 28, Jhb	*" … basically watering your Blackness down to accommodate White people …"*
Luzuko, AM, 30, CPT	*"You must be a coconut to make sure that you are Black on the outside but White on the inside."*
Luzuko, AM, 30, CPT	*" … the friends you make within the organisation determines the path you are going to take. White people … you get better when it comes to positions. But if you are always against, they won't even consider you. If you don't play tennis with them, if you don't visit them, you're a nobody. It's that segregation - unless you abandon who you are and try to mimic someone else, to mimic a White person. Then it is easier for them to consider you."*
Mbulelo, AM, 33, CPT	*" … how far are you willing to go, in order for you to fit and be accepted? So if you sit in the business space right now you will be told that as a Capetonian, I probably need to join a cycling club, buy an overpriced bike. I need to probably play tennis and then drink on the weekend with a few people. And go*

	to whatever places in order for me to co-exist in places of potential opportunity. And then you will wake up one day and feel so dirty and strained because you have drifted so much from your Blackness space and how do you now fix that? That's why they say with a lot of us young Black people, a lot of our culture, a lot of our traditional rooting has been lost, has been diluted and washed away basically. We are trying to conform so much into this space where we fit …"
Anton, CM, 31, CPT	*"[With] a lot of White bosses I have noticed that there would be an ethnocentric type of vibe where it is surrounded around friends, common interests, how much money, where you live as well as who you know … we had to make yourself more appealing to our White bosses."*

3.13. Black professionals say they experience subtle or indirect racism which cannot easily be identified.

Dimpho, AF, 45, Jhb	*"… we expect blatant racism, and you find that things are done in a subtle way. But if you know how to read you get to understand what people are saying or mean …"*
Kgosi, AM, 30, Jhb	*" … it is so much better to deal with blatant racism … [with] White people you can never know where you stand, because that is where the subtleness is"*
Sisipho, AF, 33, Jhb	*"The problem with racism is the loud silence of racism. You can feel it but you can't really explain."*
Angela, AF, 38, Jhb	*"… there is always that underlying tone, that no one is saying what it is … but you kind of feel it…"*
Themba, AM, 46, CPT	*" … although it's not direct, the racism; it can be indirect but it's an everyday, day to day thing you understand."*
Zintle, AF, 40, CPT	*" … it's so difficult to respond to something that it has to do with your emotions; you know when someone plays with your emotions, it's difficult to point it out that this person did this …"*
Dumisa, AM, 27, CPT	*"There are subtle racism incidents that have happened where [they say] 'you people speak too loud'. They always address you as 'you people'. So there are small things that happen that you kind of let go at times that you don't wanna necessarily challenge because you might be in trouble."*
Mbulelo, AM, 33, CPT	*"… it's those little disgusting jokes, if I can call it that, which are meant to be funny. But they actually are not funny, it's quite distasteful stuff."*
Madoda, AM, 48, CPT	*"There is overt, there is subtle - one in my view which I think is a lot more dangerous than the one that comes to your face."*
Michelle, AF, 44, CPT	*"At times it would be something as small as coming up with a great idea that could be implemented in the organisation. But, if you look at where this great idea is coming from, it is coming from [Michelle] who happens to be a Black female. But maybe in the way that I have articulated this great idea, it's not as good as how my White counterpart would articulate it. Basically I would share the idea but my White counterpart, 40 minutes down the line she would say the very same thing that I have just said and then someone says, 'you're actually right, that is how we need to do it'. But I just said the same thing, and everyone just ignored me. So that is the subtleness and those nuances that you can't touch and pinpoint. And then obviously, how are you going to feel after that? As a Black female, in that meeting? You feel so demotivated and so powerless."*
Khaled, CM, 28, CPT	*"I feel the White person will always wait for you to slip up slightly and then there is that [other White] person waiting to fill up your position … then you will be without a job."*

3.14. Black professionals say they still experience explicit racism from White colleagues or managers in the workplace.

Fundiswa, AF, 46, CPT	*"I was asked to sit in a panel where interviews were done for our sub-unit … the interviewee … couldn't utter a single word. That's how intimidated she was. And she had to be excused to compose herself. And while she was outside one of the members of the panel was a White lady - a very senior member from the whole group - just said, 'it's a pity that we give these Black people a chance from cleaning staff to be secretaries and all these positions, and this is what we have to deal with - just look at this, they are so useless'."*
Kabelo, AM, 37, Jhb	*" I had a friend [at work] once. He was White and we were driving from Dullstroom and somebody [cut in front of him] so in the car, in the moment of, we will then call it rage, he was like, 'you fucken k****r'."*
Themba, AM, 46, CPT	*"… they will even tell you this is not Mandela's company you understand? They will tell you straight that this is not the new South Africa - this is this company, you understand?"*
Themba, AM, 46, CPT	*" … you will even hear the remarks they make about Siya Kolisi as the captain of the Springboks. And you see that these guys - they really see Blacks as monkeys, really you understand? They see that as something that was given to him - he didn't deserve to be on that you understand? They even make jokes of him having married a White woman - he wanted to change to be a White, you understand?"*
Anton, CM, 31, CPT	*"So when I went for training when I first started my job, we were in a training and development session… I was one of the only Coloured guys there, majority was White…the person that was training us was an elderly White gentleman from Durban … when I put my hand up he would answer me but before he would answer me he would say 'yes dumb dumb' .. I ignored it then we went on and I continued interacting. After the break I wanted to speak to him but he wasn't really acknowledging me, so I sat down but then again he continued to say the same thing …"*
Fundiswa, AF, 46, CPT	*" … one of the colleagues was servicing a committee that deals with students' bursaries… The chairperson was a White lady and … the chairperson would all the time give her her back … and she would … just not even acknowledge what she said … she would just ignore it."*
Mary, AF, 30, Jhb	*"And when there are events or meetings that are serious, Blacks were left behind, and they would take Whites…"*

3.15. Black professionals feel that HR/management do not take claims of racism seriously and/or that complaining about racism could result in victimisation.

Mary, AF, 30, Jhb	*"… management is not bothered because we do report these things, these incidents of racism and all those things. But they are not doing anything about it. Even if you lodge a grievance with HR and tell them what happened, the case will just disappear, without any discipline …"*
Angela, AF, 38, Jhb	*"… at work there is absolutely nothing if you talk about it. Because sometimes they just joke about it and we will just laugh it off and it ends there - and there is nothing else you can do about it."*
Angela, AF, 38, Jhb	*"… you can start talking [but], especially if it is your line manager, tomorrow they start nailing you for every little thing that you do wrong … so you try and avoid some situations."*
Gertrude, AF, 52, Jhb	*"… so should you try and voice out anything, you know that you are in trouble. You might even end up losing your job"*

Gertrude, AF, 52, Jhb	*"Once you raise your voice …, you are victimised, you become a target … as soon as you raise issues, especially regarding racism, you become a target…"*
Debora, AF, 42, Jhb	*"… you try to speak to HR about it but still, HR will just sweep it under the carpet"*
Kgosi, AM, 30, Jhb	*"The platform is there but let me tell you, it is a procedural thing that they do it for the sake of doing it - but nothing ever happens."*
Janet, AF, 50, Jhb	*"When you do raise it with your boss who happens to be White, and you are Black, you end up being sidelined - not immediately - but when it comes to incentivising and increases you are side lined for speaking up and you are side lined for causing discord in the office."*
Zintle, AF, 40, CPT	*" … because people who are racist they do something that you cannot even point, like it's something that is so difficult to pinpoint, [to] go to HR and say this person did this …"*
Khwezi, AM, 38, CPT	*" … I did not address that because that incident was always coming from a higher level of authority, you see? So it becomes difficult especially in these White dominated industries to challenge those kinds of stuff."*
Dumisa, AM, 27, CPT	*" … whenever you start challenging things like racism, you are seen as a person who is very troublesome, a person who likes to challenge authority. And it's very difficult to challenge it because once you start challenging racism in the workplace, things can be … like you can be dismissed over small things."*
Dumisa, AM, 27, CPT	*" … what if you have a family that is dependent on you and you have to provide for the family? What happens when you lose that job? I understand that we have to get to a time where we stand up for ourselves, we change the whole scenario because if we continue letting things slide then we will never find a solution to the problem. But what about the person that has to feed their family, and they've seen what happens when you try and challenge racism in the workplace? What will you do?"*
Khwezi, AM, 38, CPT	*"I do worry about my job hence I just came to a point where I said, 'okay it's fine'. Let me just do my job, and go home. Because if I tell you the honest [truth] is that these guys, if you challenge them, if they want you out, you will be out in no time…"*
Dumisa, AM, 27, CPT	*"… in order for us to be able to challenge these things, it's actually quite a lot of work because you first have to prove yourself within your job. You first have to make yourself indispensable before you are able to challenge these things at work, and it shouldn't be that way …"*
Mbulelo, AM, 33, CPT	*" … nothing will ever be done and it's something I've come to terms with."*
Madoda, AM, 48, CPT	*" … when there are rumblings around racism in the organisation, it's just perceived as a commercial practice, a business trend. Then your HR, or your IR person will jump into action and organise that diversity training for everybody. Because I don't say there is commitment to solve the problem, but there is fear that the problem may hit the organisation financially. So it becomes a bit of a patchwork and the facilitator is called in and everyone is in peace and we like each other. And it is also official and that box is ticked. We have done diversity training and we have called this facilitator, but deep down there is no real commitment to solve the real problem. You could sit on it for the whole day and as you drive home you ask, what was that? So because there is no deep down commitment, from the leadership to say 'Guys, it is a problem'. And I think that the buck stops with leadership… The organisation is not going to transform until the leader is going to say I'm going to steer this ship in a different direction together. … the complaints or the concerns are always led to that diversity training which takes us nowhere."*
Luzuko, AM, 30, CPT	*"You find a way to sugar coat it and make sure that everything dies down. If the matter was volatile to the entire organisation, they will shift the person."*

Michelle, AF, 44, CPT	*"Sometimes it's not even a case where you want that kumbaya session. You are upset because of what has transpired. And you want your team to know, you want them to be accountable as well. 'I am informing you about this matter, I'm not saying, facilitate a diversity, an inclusivity session, I don't want that'. This is what has happened to me. And you need to know of what I have gone through."*
Matthew, AM, 25, CPT	*"So the harsh reality in the private sector if you had to be the whistle blower and speak out, then that is as good as you losing your job - because who is going to back you there."*

3.16. Black professionals experience emotional stress as a result of their experiences but most of them are resigned to workplace racism.

Lwazi, AM, 49, CPT	*"The problem is that why do you have to fight? Why do you have to fight; that is my concern. Why do you not treat another person fairly; why do you have to prove yourself, that is always my concern in terms of racism."*
Dumisa, AM, 27, CPT	*"You have to cope with it."*
Zintle, AF, 40, CPT	*" ... every day when I go to work I'm so prepared. I'm positioned for a fight, you know. Can you imagine living that kind of life? So I'm ready because I'm protecting myself. So I'm not easily approached by a White person because I've seen that you don't like me. So you know what, when you deal with me I'm not friendly to you? I'm a friendly person, but if you go to work I'm not. I'm the totally opposite so it means that ... I created another character of me because of White people."*
Zintle, AF, 40, CPT	*"I've seen the pattern of the private sector and how it's so easy to lose a job because of the racism. So I positioned myself in a way that ... you know I have a child, I'm a single mom, I don't have time for this nonsense because I've tried. I fought, I did, but now I am done. But now I just give you attitude that's all. That's all I do, I'm done, I'm done. Shame because it's 2020 and you still don't want to admit that there's a Black person that is going to be senior to you, that is your problem."*
Fundiswa, AF, 46, CPT	*" ... these kinds of circumstances that we're discussing here, this is just unhealthy - this does something towards health. Whether we like it or not. Because whether it's mentally, whether it's physically, or whatever form but once health gets affected ... I mean you actually don't have to experience these experiences. ... just watching and seeing ... our own people being treated like that, being spoken to like they are nothing, there's something that you feel and there's something that you lose as a human being. And you have to develop your own defence mechanisms, whether you retaliate or you become rude or you become a callous person or ... but something does change within a person and in my conclusion I think it's unhealthy. These are spaces--- these spaces are unhealthy for anyone; if the tables have to be turned I really have no clue how racist people will deal with what we are dealing with; it's just too big."*
Themba, AM, 46, CPT	*" ... you get to work every day and you know that you are going to be emotionally abused you understand? Even today ... my colleague ... today I wanted to discuss something with my boss and he said 'please don't start now it's still too early to now spoil my day' ... this guy is going to abuse us you understand? So you get a strategy of doing things to say 'okay, let's discuss after three' so that it's almost time to go home you understand? If this guy emotionally abuses you at 8 o'clock he'll spoil your whole day."*
Michelle, AF, 44, CPT	*" ...it is very painful for a Black person to progress in the private sector. You are where you are, having gone through so much pain and grief in your life - you don't just get there easily."*
Mbulelo, AM, 33, CPT	*"It's exhausting and draining."*

Melinda, CF, 45, CPT	*"… we go through certain things … and now with these events that are happening on a regular it is almost like those old experiences surfacing, that we have already buried. Of what we went through, so these are also triggers of what we have experienced in the past and we silently walk around with silent emotions. It is almost like that silent abuse because we want to show the world that we are okay and we are dealing with this issue okay. But now you have this outburst of these events and then it like now everyone is basically getting a chance to show what they have been feeling all along."*
Mbulelo, AM, 33, CPT	*"It definitely does affect your home life and your personal situation."*
Michelle, AF, 44, CPT	*" …every time you become anxious, what's going to happen today?"*
Debora, AF, 42, Jhb	*"… as Black senior management/middle management we need to be smart about our moves on how we say things, how we respond to things because of our colour. Because you will end up finding yourself in a situation and you are going to be alone. There is no one that is going to cover you because you are the minority at the end of the day."*
Mandla, AM, 28, Jhb	*"… we are stuck in a machine that was not designed for us, so we were never supposed to get to where we are. We were never supposed to be CEO. WE were supposed to be supervisors and shop stewards."*
Debora, AF, 42, Jhb	*"… racism is alive and well and even as professionals we have to stay in these toxic positions because at the end of the day some of us are breadwinners for our family…"*
Michelle, AF, 44, CPT	*"The private sector is not our home."*
Natalie, CF, 52, CPT	*"…it is all about power and sometimes you cannot say anything because you feel like your job is at stake so you become subdued and submissive and you just let it slide."*
Debora, AF, 42, Jhb	*"… you cannot fight it, you have to endure it silently"*

3.17. Black professionals do not believe that South African private sector companies will ever be racially representative at a senior/top management level.

Mary, AF, 30, Jhb	*"In terms of BEE compliance we will get there but when it comes to White privilege and power we will never get there because White people will never allow us to be in the private sector. They will make sure [they] just do that as part of the protocol and compliance but the power will lie on them … I believe we will never be in charge in the private sector."*
Palesa, CF, 28, Jhb	*"I don't think there is a White man who would want educated Black women to report to."*
Palesa, CF, 28, Jhb	*" … there will always be another White replacement [in top management] because the thought of having a Black person whether it be a woman or a man … in charge is something to me that seems very far-fetched in most companies. Maybe 30% - but I doubt that we find ourselves in a place where most of these corporate companies (these big corporate companies) … would have a Black person in charge."*
Natalie, CF, 52, CPT	*"With the inauguration of Mandela … we really thought we moved on … Yes a lot has changed and there are a lot of highly educated Black people and highly educated Coloured people. But it is almost like we are not given the opportunity in the workplace. It took us so many years but we are not even half way there."*
Victor, AM, 30, Jhb	*"… [our children] need to know that they are 5 or 10 steps behind … it needs to be a reality that you need to work five times as hard to have what they [Whites] have, just a bit of what they have. I know I have to work three/four times as hard just to be able to afford whatever I can."*
Victor, AM, 30, Jhb	*"… you need to tell your children that they must have this work mentality that they must work five times as hard to get even a quarter of what they have."*

Palesa, CF, 28, Jhb	*"So I think the best that we can do is prepare our children because we do not know when change will happen and we're not sure if change will happen. But if she is more prepared and she knows unfortunately that she will also have to work probably twice as hard or probably three times as hard …"*

3.18. Black professionals experience everyday racism outside of the workplace in shops, restaurants, at their children's schools, and in their own enterprises.

Victor, AM, 30, Jhb	*"Racism is there, alive, you see it every day. Call it what we may - rainbow nation and that - but these things are still alive."*
Gertude, AF, 52, Jhb	*"You look at the lifestyle that we have, we are still far much behind White people …"* .
Gertrude, AF, 52, Jhb	*"… the way our kids are raised, even today. You go to schools - from Kindergarten - the treatment is still not the same. We have had so many cases that children are not treated the same way, in a school level, primary level."*
Victor, AM, 30, Jhb	*"… it grows with them [White children] that they are superior because everything in the system is designed to make them feel superior."*
Janet, AF, 50, Jhb	*"I think at my age I probably have experienced racism on so many occasions. Like you would walk into a restaurant and you are looked at in a certain way because of your skin colour. And you also walk into a restaurant at the same time you order something slightly expensive and they look at you – '… can she afford it?' - you know, given the skin colour. So …I suppose you learn to live with it."*
Tlali, AM, 32, Jhb	*" … with me it was a friend of mine. So now you know how … he was not supposed to wear the hoodie? Well he did. And this lady at the restaurant is saying he should not wear his hoodie in the restaurant but another White guy has his hoodie on."*
Palesa, CF, 28, Jhb	*" … although it does affect me it is very hard to point it out, or address the person, or confront the person. Because I tend to want to avoid being the angry Black person."*
Janet, AF, 50, Jhb	*" … you do feel it as well and then you walk away and you say 'you know what, it's not worth it'. But it's there and it's that little subtleness that you feel - you know this person is being racist."*
Sisipho, AF, 33 Jhb	*"I can never live in Cape Town … there is so much racism, nothing really happened but you can feel it around you, you can't put your finger on it."*
Lwazi, AM, 49, CPT	*" … we need to equip [our children] … because who knows if they will be able to stand up with this. Some other kids when they grow up - maybe they won't stand with it. It can kill them psychologically, emotionally and otherwise. So in my view you better engage them about these issues as much as you can, so that they can be aware."*
Victor, AM, 30, Jhb	*"I have had the privilege of working in both White and a Black practice, to find that in a White practice you would send a claim of R30000 and you would not even get an email or be required to submit proof of work that done, or whether that was necessary or not. But then when I was working in a Black practice, even when I am claiming for myself, you find out now your medical aids are now requiring x-rays, motivational letters, letters from patients, confirmation from patients, and they even go the extra mile of speaking to the patient on the side, that are you aware that the person that was treating you is asking for this much."*
Mbulelo, AM, 33, CPT	*"So if you work for a White agency, it's easy to go and get the business … if you have a White person behind you, you get the trust. I think after seven and a half years I went on my own for a bit of time and it was cool, I got business here and there and it was from a few Black people here and there and eventually there is an issue of funding, access to this and that and before you*

	know it, your business is in a whole messed up cash flow situation. And then those same clients that you have when you work for these White-owned agencies, when you break away on your own, funny story, they are happy to do business with you if you are working under White companies but when you go on your own it's like, I'm not sure."
Themba, AM, 46, CPT	*"., we show the White people that everything that's theirs is still the better you understand? We'll leave the township schools and take our kids to the Coloured schools, to the White schools you understand? Because we say that we want them to be at better schools. And that mentality will remain to the Whites forever and ever - that they are superior by all means, by everything to us. So even the children that they go to school---- that's what I was saying last week when we were watching the videos from the Brackenfell High ---- we send our children to those schools knowing for a fact that they are going to face the apartheid. They are going to face the discrimination of colour, they are going to face everything that… they are going to be belittled, they are going to be called names, they are going to be called apies, and all those nasty names. We know that they are growing up, even if--- the Whites will never love us, the White will never, ever accept us on their comfort that that we are their friends and we are their peers and we are their colleagues and their brothers from other mothers, you understand? So that thing is going to remain as long as we still treat them as superior by everything; even if we want to go to mall you say that I can't go to Promenade if you are sitting in this suburb of this side of Cape Town, you can't go to Promenade because it's Khayelitsha, you go to Somerset it's full of Khayelitsha. You'll look for the other malls and there they're very few Black people are going you understand? Why? Because the better service is there, you'll get a White tellers and everything you understand; why we treat each other like that, why we give them that power of being better than us by everything?*

3.19. Black professionals feel that White people in general refuse to recognise or discuss racism and instead try to avoid or minimise it.

Kabelo, AM, 37, Jhb	*"… when you reach out to a White person … the first thing they are going to do is deny, deny, deny and it kills the conversation …"*
Kabelo, AM, 37, Jhb	*"… in many of the places that I have worked … will always tell you that "we don't see race" but when you turn around and you look at your top management, and it is all White people, and you are like, you cannot avoid that, surely it is glaring …"*
Kabelo, AM, 37, Jhb	*"… it is not they are not aware, but I think part of the reason … if White people were to say we are aware of racism, then they need to do something about it … So it is better to say that look, I am actually not seeing it, it doesn't exist. You brush it under the carpet, because what you are actually scared of, is not … the existence of it but rather what then should follow next. And this is a conversation that White people have never wanted to have, ever. And this is why we are still stuck on the issue of land, we can't move forward, because I think, it is an actionable thing - they don't want actionable things."*
Palesa, CF, 28, Jhb	*" … there was a discussion that we once had about it in the office and I got so angry because White people think that they have it tough for some reason. They just feel like they also have a battle to conquer, they also have to deal with the ramification of apartheid."*
Palesa, CF, 28, Jhb	*" … it is so deeply rooted in them that sometimes that they're not even aware of the fact that they are being racist."*
Angela, AF, 38, Jhb	*"Sorry to say but that [colour-blindness] is nonsense".*

Angela, AF, 38, Jhb	*"… once you start saying colour doesn't exist, it means then there are a lot of things you can overlook …"*
Victor, AM, 30, Jhb	*"… maybe it is so deep in you, that you do not even realise when it is wrong because now, you are fully indoctrinated … you are brainwashed, you do not see when something is wrong."*
Victor, AM, 30, Jhb	*"Those people who say they are colour blind, they are really lying, straight to our face."*
Angela, AF, 38, Jhb	*"… the one thing that annoys me [when] they say 'apartheid was so many years ago , you must just get over it' … If you haven't experienced that, you cannot decide on how people should heal, what journey to healing they should take, how long it should be."*
Kabelo, AM, 37, Jhb	*"I think White privilege is something that is deeply in history so your privilege is 100% derived from what I lost as a Black person … You came, you enslaved us, you took all the minerals and you appropriate to yourselves, whatever, you are guarding it closely by means of exercising racism. You are privileged because of the actions that you and your forefathers took a while ago to secure this economic advantage that you have."*
Zintle, AF, 40, CPT	*" … they don't want us to prosper, they don't want us to have nice houses, they don't want us to have beautiful cars … "*
Fundiswa, AF, 46, CPT	*" … some of them don't even attempt to do things differently because they believe that this is exactly how things should be. It's like they are so sick that they don't see anything wrong in what is happening, anything. If you look at where you're staying and look at where our people are staying and you don't see anything wrong there, and you know for sure that had we all had equal opportunities … It's just that they see that this is okay, this is normal, this is exactly how things should be."*
Thembeka, AF, 55, CPT	*"If you speak out, then they will feel offended as if you're attacking them. Then there will be words like, 'you didn't have to put it that way, it's a rude way to do it'. Because now you've had it, now you can't take it anymore, you just give it to them and they will take it as if you are rude, you are out of line because they are not used being challenged by a Black person."*
Madoda, AM, 48, CPT	*"[Discussing racism with White people] …would be like telling the fish that it's wet and it doesn't know that it's wet."*
Mbulelo, AM, 33, CPT	*" '…this race stuff makes me uncomfortable'. And the [White] person just shakes their head and shrugs it off. Kind of like 'I don't want to talk about it'."*
Madoda, AM, 48, CPT	*" …they just don't get it. 'What are you talking about? I didn't say anything.' That's what you're dealing with. With them they just normally go on to say 'what do you mean? Give me specific examples?*
Mbulelo, AM, 33, CPT	*"[The statement of colourblindness] "makes me furious… You don't see me basically."*
Lindelwa, AF, 45, CPT	*"[If you bring up race] you will be the racist one."*
Thembeka, AF, 55, CPT	*"They will turn it on you and say that you are racial."*
Lindelwa, AF, 45, CPT	"*Every time you bring that up you are racist. 'People are people', that's what I was told recently. 'Why are you seeing people as White because people are people?' So you are not supposed to see..."*

Note on alternate views:

While the focus group participants all shared some or most of the views expressed above, one participant had a different view. A direct quote from this participant is included below:

> *"I work at a company and I am always in an environment where we strive for diversity, I mean we live in Cape Town and there is diverse culture, I mean there is all walks of life here. But my opinion on racism these days is that people utilise racism as a means and a way to bully people to get what they want. Everybody knows that South Africa has made racism a very sensitive subject, so I utilise racism to stir up things … because we know that people are going to react when we use racism. Like I say in companies as well … of you don't get your way you say this guy is racist. People use it so loosely but they don't know the repercussions." Farouk (CM, 40, CT)*

ANNEXURE 2

XXXXX

Mail Address

20 April 2021

Dear XXXX

PhD Research: White South African managers and employment equity in the South African private sector

I am a PhD candidate at the Graduate School of Business (GSB) at the University of Cape Town (UCT) and my supervisor is Professor Kurt April. I am conducting research into the perceptions of senior and top white South African managers of issues regarding race, racism and white identity and how this impacts on our decision-making concerning employment equity in the workplace. This research has been approved by the Commerce Faculty's Ethics in Research Committee at UCT.

I am approaching my research as an experienced business practitioner. I spent 20 years in the media business and was involved in the launch and operation of several companies, including South Africa's first private free-to-air broadcaster, e.tv. In my most recent management role, I served as Group Chief Operating Officer of Sabido Investments (now eMedia Investments) for a period of ten years. One of my key responsibilities in group management was overseeing the design, implementation, execution and evaluation of employment equity plans in terms of the Employment Equity Act (Act 55 of 1998). My interest in this PhD was prompted by my experience in the corporate sector, together with the fact that official statistics by the Commission for Employment Equity Commission (20th Commission for

Employment Equity Annual Report 2019 – 2020) show that, as of 2019, 68.6% of top management and 59.1% of senior management in the South African private sector is white, whereas white people constitute 8.7% of the economically active population.

I would like to spend a minimum of one hour with you in a frank discussion about how, as white South African managers, we approach decision-making in relation to employment equity and what influences us in our approach to issues regarding race in the workplace.

Please note that I am approaching you confidentially in your personal capacity and not as a representative of your company or any other organisation with which you may be involved either as an employee or as a board member. Your participation is entirely voluntary and if you choose not to participate, there will be no negative consequences. If you choose to participate but wish to withdraw at any time, you will be free to do so without any negative consequence.

I would like to tape the interview to enable transcription of our discussion but you will not be identified by name in the recording or in the transcript. You will also not be requested to supply any identifiable information, ensuring anonymity of your responses. Any published data will be anonymised and all responses will be confidential and used for the purposes of this research only.

If you agree to participate, I would like to set up an online interview with you on Zoom, Microsoft Teams or Skype in the next few weeks. Please could you let me know your available days and times and whether you have any questions for me prior to the interview. I have attached (for your information) a copy of the standard consent form required by UCT post-graduate research.

I appreciate you taking the time to read this letter and I would value your contribution to my research.

Yours sincerely

Signed by candidate

signed electronically

Bronwyn Keene-Young

Principal researcher (Student No. KNYBRO001)

Contact number: 082 884 6262

email: bronwynkeeneyoung@icloud.com

Supervisor: Professor Kurt April

Contact number: 082 780 4668

email: kurt.april@gsb.uct.ac.za

CONSENT TO INTERVIEW BY BRONWYN KEENE-YOUNG, PHD CANDIDATE AT UCT GSB

By signing this document I agree that I am aware that my participation in this interview is voluntary, that the interview will be recorded and transcribed, that Bronwyn Keene-Young undertakes not to disclose my identity other than to her immediate supervisor and that they will both protect the confidentiality of my identity. I consent that my contribution to the interview and any other information provided by me may be used for purposes of Bronwyn Keene-Young's PhD research, provided that such contribution or information will not disclose my identity and will be anonymous or referenced under a pseudonym.

_____	_____	_____	_____
Signature	Name	Date	Place

ANNEXURE 3

RESPONDENT INTERVIEW GUIDELINE

PhD Research on white South African managers and employment equity in the SA private sector

This brief guideline is intended to provide you with an idea of the issues to be discussed in our interview. Please note that our conversation will be recorded but is strictly confidential and any information used will be anonymous. The research has been approved by UCT's Commerce Faculty Ethics Committee.

Background to PhD research

I am doing PhD research into the perceptions of senior and top white South African managers of issues regarding race, racism and white identity and how this impacts on our decision-making concerning employment equity in the workplace. I am particularly interested in the role that we, as white managers, play as gatekeepers to employment opportunities for senior and top professionals, specifically black professionals.

My research is motivated by essentially three factors:

- the fact that the private sector in South Africa remains controlled and managed by white people, as is evident from employment equity reports showing that 67.8% of top management and 58% of senior management consists of white people;
- my own experiences as a white manager dealing with issues of race in the workplace, not just limited to employment equity but also generally managing a racially diverse management team;
- research and anecdotal reports from black professionals in senior positions about their experiences in the private sector workplace.

I would like to have a discussion with you about these issues from your personal (not company) point of view. I am interested in the role which our white identity plays in how we deal with these issues when they arise in our workplaces. I am approaching this interview not as an objective "outsider" but as a white South African who has been in top management and who has had to deal with such issues in the workplace. While I'm aware that this is often a highly sensitive and uncomfortable topic for us as white South Africans, I believe it is an important one to engage on. I'm hoping that we can discuss this frankly during the course of this interview.

1 Personal background of respondent

I'd like to know more about your personal background as a white South African, how your views were shaped growing up and how they have changed – or not – over the years.

Q Could you share with me some information about your background - childhood, schooling, tertiary education, work life, current position and responsibilities?
Q Can you remember when you first became conscious of race/racism/apartheid? Please tell me about it. How do you feel about issues concerning race and racism in South Africa today?

2 Respondent's views on employment equity and transformation

I'm interested in your views, as a white South African, on demographic representation in the workplace – in regard to the private sector workplace being representative of the South African population as a whole.

Q Can you give me your thoughts on what immediately comes to mind on issues of employment equity, transformation and racial diversity?
Q Why do you think the private sector remains so unequal in terms of race representation at senior and top management levels?
Q What are the personal challenges which you experience – as a white manager – in dealing with employment equity? And experiences of white managers in general?
Q What are our obligations in this regard? As professionals? As citizens?

3 Experiences of black professionals in the workplace

At the end of 2020 I worked with the independent research group, Kantar, to gauge the experiences of black professionals in the private sector workplace. This was done with an independent moderator in a series of six focus groups covering 42 participants in Johannesburg and Cape Town. The respondents were randomly sourced and they were not aware of the topic of discussion until the focus groups started.

The focus group research results showed that black professionals experience both direct and (more commonly) indirect racial discrimination in the private sector workplace. Black professionals said they are under more pressure than their white counterparts to prove that they are capable of their jobs, and that that they are only employed so that their employers can comply with employment equity regulations. Specifically, they feel:

- ❖ they are not taken seriously – they are not trusted, their expertise is questioned and they often have to get a white person to validate their contributions;
- ❖ white managers don't expect them to perform well and are surprised when they do;
- ❖ they often have less autonomy and decision-making powers than white counterparts;

- ❖ their companies tolerate or excuse racism by clients and customers;
- ❖ incidents of racism are not taken seriously by their employers or are swept under the carpet (they are often told not to be so sensitive to racism);
- ❖ lodging formal complaints about racism in their company would be a threat to their career and could even result in dismissal;
- ❖ companies prefer compliant black employees to independent thinkers;
- ❖ they are often excluded from non-work-related social events attended by white colleagues.

Interestingly, black professionals also say that the "whiter" they are in regard to their skin tone, name, accent and social behaviour, the more likely they are to succeed in the workplace – conversely, the "blacker" they are, the more they struggle to be recognised.

Q Are you aware of any of these issues which have been raised by black professionals – in your workplace or in the private sector in general?
Q What is your opinion about each of these issues raised by black professionals?
Q Have you ever had discussions with black employees/colleagues/friends on these issues?

4 Closing

Q Is there anything that we could be doing as white managers to increase racial transformation and equity in the workplace?
Q Is it sustainable for South Africa to continue with the current state of employment equity statistics at a senior and top management level?
Q Do you envisage a time in the future when the majority of senior and top management positions in the South African private sector are held by black people?
Q Is there anything else you would like to add?
Q Is there anyone else who you can recommend that I approach to interview on this research?
Q Would you be willing to have a follow-up discussion if necessary?

Bronwyn Keene-Young

August 2021