An Exploration of Life and Career Narratives of Black Senior Managers: The Storied Habitus of Career Navigation

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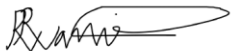
Declaration

I declare that this thesis on AN EXPLORATION OF LIFE AND CAREER NARRATIVES OF BLACK SENIOR MANAGERS: THE STORIED HABITUS OF THE NAVIGATION OF CAREERS is my own, unaided work. It is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University.



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Chapter One: Introduction

Almost thirty years since the demise of apartheid, there is still a lot that is unknown about black senior managers' lives in South African organisations. This study begins the work of knitting together life narratives that exceed and include the workplace. Importantly, it historicises senior managers by locating them in relation to their parents and their early lives before attempting to understand them as organisational beings. The social context is considered important for understanding both the employees and the organisations within which they work. This more holistic portrait may help to shed light on how black senior managers navigate their career trajectories. The central theory used to understand the motivations for black women and men's career mobility behaviours is the theory of habitus which is deployed in conjunction with the theories of intersectionality, critical race theory and narrative. This theoretical knitting of black careers to life stories is the intervention that this study makes to the field of organisation studies.

Race has been, and continues to be, at the heart of South African history, politics, society and economy. As a construct, race has guided legislation from the period of colonisation through apartheid and its salience continues in the current democratic state. Democratisation led to the opening up of opportunities in private corporations, and a gradual reduction of racial discrimination. This resulted in black people accessing opportunities and resources. This shift had led to the salience of class. This is because as more black people access opportunities previously reserved only for white people, there has been an increase in the black middle class (Canham & Williams, 2017; Seekings & Nattrass, 2008;). This illuminates issues of class structure as a product of inequality. In addition, gender is another index of inequality within the South African context. This is because patriarchy in pre-colonial, pre-apartheid era made it easier new forms of patriarchy to embed itself in the colonial and apartheid eras. Although race remains at the core of inequality due to the history of the country, in these last three decades of democracy, gender and class issues continue to emerge as subjects that need to be explored in inequality discourses in the country.

The central point of this study is the exploration of life narratives to shed light on the career journeys of black senior managers within the financial services sector. To explore black people's narratives, it is important to consider the South African context in relation to

constructs of race, gender, and class. The study takes its cue from Hawkins and Saleem (2012), who emphasise the importance of exploring personal narratives in organisational settings. They argue that workplace experiences are often read in isolation from the life narratives of employees. They demonstrated how personal, organisational, and societal narratives intersect in the lives of employees (Hawkins & Saleem, 2012). Using this frame, I turn to the challenges and the things that we do not know about black senior managers in the financial services sector. The contention here is that narrative research might shed better light on these unknowns.

1.1 Background

One of the challenges that South African organisations are faced with is the slow pace in which black people occupy top executive positions in the private sector. This is coupled with the reported high frequency with which they leave these roles (Booysen, 2007a). The under-representation of black people is underscored by the annual Commission of Employment Equity (CEE) report which indicates that white males occupy a disproportionately large percentage of top and senior management levels in the private sector (CEE, 2023). At the end of apartheid, the small number of black managers in senior and top management positions in South Africa was the result of the systematic implementation of colonisation and apartheid, where employment in South Africa was segregated along racial lines (Booysen & Nkomo, 2010; Horwitz et al.,1996). The system of apartheid ensured that black people were denied equal access to quality education and jobs. The apartheid government implemented policies and regulations that ensured that certain jobs were reserved for particular groups of employees, in particular white men (Booysen & Nkomo, 2010; Horwitz et al., 1996; Nkomo & Kriek, 2011). This practice resulted in the inequalities that bedevil organisations in the present. These inequalities are particularly pronounced within senior to top management ranks.

The lack of representation of black people in senior management positions is not unique to South Africa. In their review of four papers, based on research from Belgium, Germany, and the United Kingdom (UK); Fearfull and Kamenou (2010) explored the experiences of ethnic minority men and women in organisations within the three countries. The analysis indicated that minority and majority ethnic groups experienced their organisations differently in relation to their career paths and opportunities they were afforded. Ossenkop, Vinkenburg, Jansen and Ghorashi (2015) argued that in the Netherlands, the dominant ethnic group in

organisations advances to high levels at an exponentially faster pace than their minority counterparts. In South Africa, however, while black people are a political and numerical majority, they are a minority within senior and top management ranks within the private sector (Canham, 2014).

With just under three decades of democracy and the implementation of employment equity, the pace of change in the representation of senior management ranks of South African organisations remains a concern. Research on transformation within organisations internationally, and in South Africa, has explored the pace of transformation and the barriers to career advancement of black people (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Bell & Nkomo, 1998; Seibert, et al., 2001; Thomas, 2002). Although barriers have been identified, there remain stereotypical beliefs and negative perceptions attributed to black people's lack of career progression to senior management roles. Matuna (1996) identified the excessive job mobility of black managers as one such stereotype and argued that this could be a reason why there is a lack of progression to senior management roles.

These claims were largely speculative and do not provide sufficient evidence to attribute the lack of progression to senior management roles to the "job hopping" phenomenon. Most of the research regarding black managers' excessive job mobility or "job hopping" appears in popular literature sources, such as newspaper articles, and not in scientific and academic literature. Job mobility amongst black people in academic research has focused on understanding the barriers to the lack of progression and has not undertaken a holistic exploration of the stories of their career journeys, including their life histories. Although job hopping has been considered as a negative phenomenon in scholarship and media, this study pays attention to the voices of the black professionals to understand the factors that influence their career journeys and if these reflect their lived career experiences.

To contextualise this research, it is important to define what is meant by black people and senior managers as these are the primary units of analysis. The Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 (EEA) defines black people as people of African, 'Coloured', and Indian descent. In the South African context, 'Coloured' people are a heterogenous group signified by histories of mixed-race descent. The category is written in quotation marks to signify its contested meanings and heterogeneity (Adhikari, 2005). South Africa's history of indentured labour meant that the country has a large group on people of Indian descent who were sent here to

work on sugarcane plantations (Vahed, 2002). Black African senior managers are the unit of study because of the vexing paradox of being a majority group who consist of 79% the population but remains stubbornly under-represented in the workplace (Statistics South Africa, 2018). For the purpose of this study, the term “black” people will refer to Black African people. This means that people categorised as “coloured” and Indian are excluded from the sample of participants accessed in the study.

Senior management positions are responsible for the leadership and control of the organisation and the various businesses of organisations. People in these positions are responsible for the development of strategic goals and decision making about the direction the business should be taking. The CEE (2023) report classifies the top four occupational levels as follows: top management, senior management, professionally qualified and skilled technical levels. These occupational levels are regarded as significant for decision-making in organisations and feed into each other (CEE, 2023). For the purpose of the current study, senior managers will refer to the top management and senior management occupational levels. These are the focus of the study since they are the levels where black people are most under-represented.

Since racial categories are central to this research, it is important to provide a contextual remark on racialisation. This means recognising that race is a social construction rather than an essence or ‘real’ thing in the world. It is created by people. Racialisation occurred alongside enslavement and colonisation and was meant to subjugate particular groups in order to obtain free labour for enrichment and colonial conquest and empire building. While I agree with scholars invested in de-racialisation (e.g., Erasmus, 2017; Maré, 2014), together with others, I contend that this can only occur under conditions of equality when race is no longer salient in people’s lives. I am of course aware that the unintended paradox is that race discourse perpetuates difference and racialisation. This research is carried out in this contested discursive context.

1.2 Context

1.2.1 The employment of black people in professional occupations

South Africa is one of the most unequal societies in the world in terms of household incomes (Wittenberg, 2017). Historically, the South African labour market was characterised by racial

segregation. Swanepoel, Erasmus, Van Wyk and Schenk (2003) identified segregation as a product of colonialism. It was subsequently enforced by apartheid segregation, resulting in stringent institutionalised human resources policies and practices that saw the exclusion of black people from skilled jobs (Dubow, 2014). A long colonial and apartheid history of racialisation that codified segregation and discrimination, based on race and gender, entrenched a legacy of inequality, poverty and low economic growth that continues in the present. The underrepresentation of black people in senior managerial positions in the South African private sector is not a surprise as it is a result of the past injustice of the colonial and apartheid government.

The apartheid system provided services, such as education, housing, and health, to the minority white settler population while denying the black majority access to these basic services. Labour policies and practices, such as job reservation, were put into effect to protect the position of white workers. Black people were not only denied access to jobs that were reserved for white people, but they were also subjected to low skilled and poorly paid sectors of the labour market (Woolard, 2002). The policy of job reservation was achieved by the apartheid government through investing in the education of white schoolchildren and providing inferior quality education to black schoolchildren (Christie & Collins, 1982). White schoolchildren in the 1950s and 1960s benefitted from the investment in the education system which saw them obtaining the required skills that qualified them to occupy high skilled jobs. The economic practices of the apartheid era prevented black people from vertical mobility within the labour market which biased income distribution across race and gender towards white males. Von Holdt (2003) claimed that colonial authority and a generic manual labourer resulted in the devaluing of black workers.

Kenny (2004) described the workplace in South Africa as a critical space for the contestation of social relations. These contestations led to significant changes between the 1970s and late 1990s. She argued that workers' strategic choices changed, resulting in them being changed political beings. Further to this, Kenny (2004) emphasised how the space of work impacts the way in which workers view their political future in post-apartheid South Africa. As a result, workers are likely to find themselves bound by the sets of meanings about race, class, gender and age at work. Workplace experiences and relations are thus central to how people understand their place in the world and to how they imagine their possibilities. Workplace experiences are constitutive of identity generally.

The transition phase that South Africa has gone through from an apartheid state to a democratic state has been under the spotlight for decades. Ramphele (1995) argued that the transformation journey undertaken by the country has not been given much priority. Consequently, beyond the successful policy overhaul on the first decade of democracy, the transition process might be said to have failed in implementation across different spheres of society. Ramphele (1995) has attributed this ineffectiveness to render the necessary radical changes to challenges in political, economic, and social life. Post-apartheid, inequality continues to dog the democratic government. Three decades later, inequalities remain intractable and successive governments have failed to reverse the damage created by past policies, particularly those imposed on the labour market. For South Africa to be transformed, a radical redirection that centres economic freedom is necessary to close racialised gaps and foster employment and dignity for the large numbers of black impoverished people. This requires both state and private corporate intervention. Since corporate organisations are an important part of the bigger society, they are significant players in efforts to foster an equitable society.

The transformation journey that South Africa has been on has resulted in some changes and successes, including the promulgation of legislation to redress the past inequalities in society and to promote new rights enshrined in the Bill of Rights (Roux, 2009). A notable success in the implementation of affirmative action is the transformation of the public sector where black people now occupy pivotal positions of power and influence. This transformation is remarkable since the public sector was historically staffed by white people. On the other hand, the meaningful inclusion of black people in the private sector has been very slow and this sector has been recalcitrant in employing black men and women into senior management roles. As this study illustrates, black people remain few and far between in positions of influence.

The introduction of the EEA was one of the ways which the democratic government sought to address the legacy of job reservation and exclusion of black people from skilled and high skilled professions and active participation in the economy. The Act which focuses on promoting equitable employment opportunities for all South Africans requires employers to implement measures that will ensure that black people are provided access to jobs that were inaccessible to them in the apartheid era. The implementation of the Act has undoubtedly

yielded changes in the demographic makeup of organisations in the country (Commission for Employment Equity, 2022). It can be noted that black people have started occupying key positions. However, top positions remain very much in the hands of white males. Demographic changes are more visible in roles where there is less power and influence.

Three decades into democratic governance, there has been an expectation that the implementation of legislation that redresses past inequalities would have yielded better results than what has been noted (Espi, Francis, & Valodia, 2019). The issue of transformation has been of great interest in organisational theory as well as political theory in South Africa. Some writers, such as Grant (2007), have argued that employment equity and affirmative action in the workplace can only work if change does not only take place at an individual level by creating upward mobility but is also accompanied by economic advancement and structural changes. The subject of transforming organisations to become more representative across race and gender is a global preoccupation and extends to countries with histories of racial and gender discrimination, such as the United States, United Kingdom, Australia and Canada (Grant, 2007). The South African context differs from these countries in that their aim is to include members of minority groups. However, in the South African context, the white minority who hold the most powerful positions have been tasked to transform the workplace to be more representative of the black majority population that was deliberately excluded by colonial and apartheid laws (Grant, 2007; Nkomo, 2013).

1.2.2 Representation of black people in senior managerial positions

The status of black managerial participation in decision making positions in the private sector has been widely discussed in South Africa. In her statement, the then Minister of Labour, Mildred Oliphant indicated that although there has been progress made in the number of black people being hired in the private sector, they seem to be under-represented in top and senior managerial positions (Department of Labour, 2017). The CEE report for 2022-2023 illustrated that whites are over-represented as they occupy 62.9% of the positions at the top management level, which is almost seven times their Economically Active Population (EAP). The Department of Labour defines EAP as a group of people from the ages of 15 to 64 years of age who are either employed or unemployed and seeking employment (Department of Labour, 2023). Black Africans were reported to be occupying 16.9% of these positions which is an under-representation in comparison to their EAP. People of Indian descent occupy 11.2% which is three times their EAP. Coloureds make up 6.1% of top management which is

also an under-representation compared to their EAP. There is, therefore, an over-representation of white people. Moreover, it appears that men in general are overrepresented in top management as they constitute 73.5% of top managers across all sectors of the economy (CEE, 2023). The representation of men (73.5%) at the top management level is almost one and half times more than their EAP and more than three times that of women (26.5%).

With regards to staffing practices, the CEE (2023) report shows that the white group and predominantly white men are afforded higher levels of recruitment, promotion and training opportunities as compared to their designated groups' counterparts. At 50.1% at senior management level, white people are more than five times their EAP. They are followed by African people with a representation of 26.4% where they are three-fold under-represented in relation to their EAP. The representation of Indian people at 12.3% far exceeds their EAP. Coloured people are also under-represented at 8.2% compared to their EAP. An analysis of staffing practices, illustrates that men seem to enjoy preference in employment opportunities such recruitment, promotion and training at the senior management level were afforded to men (CEE, 2023).

1.2.3 Transformation in the Financial Services Sector

The financial services sector is regarded as a fundamental pillar of South African economic growth. The Industrial Development Corporation of South Africa (IDC) 2015 report indicated that the South African financial industry contributes 20.9% towards the country's gross domestic product (IDC, 2016). In addition, South Africa (SA) has a developed and well-regulated banking system which compares favourably with those of industrialised countries. The SA banking sector was ranked third out of 148 countries in the 2013/14 World Economic Forum Global Competitiveness Survey (Banking Association of South Africa, 2018). With a highly successful industry which dominates the economic landscape of the country, black people are under-represented in positions of influence in this industry and needs attention since national policy requires representation across all levels and sectors. Over the years, the annual CEE reports have indicated that South African financial services' senior management positions are dominated by white men and black people struggle to advance to senior management positions.

The financial success of this industry as well as its control by white men has sparked interest for researchers in organisational studies to explore the implementation of Employment Equity in South African financial institutions and the banking industry in particular (e.g., Canham, 2014; Ndzwayiba & Ned, 2017). Booysen (2007a) explored the reasons for a lack of retention of black managers at a certain South African bank. She found that retention was hindered by several factors. The most prominent reasons appear to be an organisational culture perceived as unconducive to attracting and retaining black people because of a culture of patriarchy, racial divisions in power structures, division of labour and perceived tokenism. Ramodibe (2008) also found that black bankers perceived that the organisational culture was not supportive of black people's career progression. Additional reasons for the slow pace of change in the banking sector was the gap between recruitment, development and retention processes, and generally poor structures for talent management, coaching, mentoring, and career progression (Booysen, 2007a; Jain, Sloane, Horwitz, Taggar, & Weiner, 2003; Selby & Sutherland, 2006; Thomas, 2002). An additional reason is that black managers perceive better opportunities to occur elsewhere and hence they leave (Booysen, 2007a; Ramodibe, 2008). This literature suggests that there may be multiple reasons for the reported poor representation of black people within senior management.

1.3 Research Aims and Research Questions

The aim of the current study was to explore the life and career narratives of black women and black men through understanding their habitus. The secondary aim explores how stories of career movements and trajectories might help to shed light on employment equity and its implementation and potential shortfalls in the financial services sector. Stated differently, this research has a nested aim which is to understand the life stories of black people and their working lives in particular. This is to understand how their lives dovetail and diverge with those of their parents who lived and worked during apartheid. The study therefore seeks to illuminate the intersections of life narratives and working lives using theoretical approaches that offer a multidimensional view of people's experiences.

To achieve the purpose of the study, the following research questions frame the research.

1. What do life story narratives tell us about how black people navigate professional careers?
2. How do black men and black women in senior management positions make meaning of their family and community backgrounds when thinking about their careers?

3. What meanings do black senior managers assign to their experiences of moving between organisations over the course of their careers?
4. How do gender, race and class intersect to explain the experiences of black men and black women senior managers' career journeys?

1.4 Scope and Delimitations

The present research topic resulted from my interest in race and gender in organisational studies. The focus on the financial services sector was motivated by the contribution of this sector in the South African economy as well as my personal experiences of working in the sector. Previous studies on transformation within South African organisations has explored and identified barriers on the implementation of employment equity (Booysen, 2007a; Booysen & Nkomo, 2014; Thomas, 2002). With the increasing number of black people beginning to occupy senior management positions, the objective of the present research was to explore the life and career stories of black people in these senior positions. My review of the literature suggested that a longitudinal view that explores life stories was missing and would be an important contribution towards adding new nuance and understanding of black senior managers.

The EEA classifies designated groups as black people which is comprised of Africans, Coloureds, and people of Indian descent as well as women and people with disabilities. The present study only focuses on African people and refers to them as black people throughout the study. The choice to focus on African people was motivated by the Commission of Employment Equity report which indicated that of all the black people, Africans were the most under-represented in senior management positions (CEE, 2023). In addition to the exclusion of Coloured people and those of Indian descent, white women were also not sampled in this study. While persons with disabilities were not deliberately excluded, none of those sampled indicated that they had disabilities. With research on employment equity largely centred on race and gender, I added class as an additional focus area as an area that has been underexplored in such studies.

1.5 Significance of the study

Several theories have been deployed to help unpack the multilevel explanations of inequalities. The current study expands on previous studies on the narratives of bankers in

relation to their experiences of diversity and inclusion in the South African financial sector. For example, Canham (2019) explored how the personal narratives of black bankers' experiences of inequality intersect with their experiences of societal inequality. The study found that the bankers' classed, raced, and gendered pasts continued to emerge in their current contexts. These findings were consistent with Hawkins and Saleem (2012), who showed that personal narratives intersect with organisational narratives and societal narratives in storytelling. These two studies illustrated how personal, organisational, and societal narratives intersect in the lives of employees.

The workplace has tended to be read in isolation from life narratives of employees. This research begins the work of threading together life narratives that exceed and include the workplace. Importantly, unlike it previous research, it historicises senior managers by locating them in relation to their parents and their early lives before attempting to understand them as organisational beings. Significantly, this study provides a longitudinal view that goes beyond the snapshot approach adopted by most research in organisational studies. The social context is considered important for understanding both the employees and the organisations within which they work. This more holistic portrait may help to shed light on how black senior managers navigate their career trajectories. The study contributes towards knowledge on career journeys through exploring the life stories of black senior managers within South African organisations. It expands organisational studies in the area of career advancement of black managers in the financial services sector. Importantly, the study provides a transdisciplinary theoretical framework for theorising equality, diversity and inclusion. In this regard, it borrows from narrative studies, history, sociology, organisational psychology, critical race and gender studies. This illuminates organisational beings and the systems within which they live and work.

1.6 Definitions of Key Concepts

Career

The concept of the career is shared among diverse theoretical and disciplinary perspectives. From the psychological perspective, a career is based on the dispositional differences that affect job adaptation (Holland, 1987). Gloser (1968) described a career from a sociological perspective, as role behaviours in organisational settings. From an economic perspective Becker (1975) defined a career as the manner in which human capital is accrued through

education and experiences (cited in Holland, 1987). For the context of this study, I have adopted Arthur et al. (1989) definition which defines a career as the evolving sequence of a person's work experience over time. Careers are a reflection of the relationships between people and the providers of official positions, such as organisations or institutions and how these relationships fluctuate over time (Arthur et al., 1989).

Class

Syed (2007) defined class as an analytical construct founded in reality where a set of agents who occupy similar positions in social spaces are subject to similar conditions of existence and conditioning factors. These agents will, as a result, be endowed with similar dispositions, prompting them to develop similar practices (Bourdieu, 1988). Constructed classes can affect the agent's social being based on the condition and the conditioning corresponding to their position in that certain class (Syed, 2007).

Field

The concept of field has been commonly used in disciplines such as physics, mathematics and psychology. The construction of field as used by Bourdieu in sociology, shares a common epistemology with these disciplines. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) defined a field as a system of relations independent of the populations and defined by those relations. The field implies the existence of an invisible dynamic between a totality and the elements that constitute it (Erben et al., 1979). For Bourdieu, a field is a relatively autonomous domain of activity that responds to the rules of functioning and institutions that are specific to it and which define the relations among agents (Bourdieu, 2000). According to Bourdieu (2000), each field has its specific set of rules where the political field has to maintain a close relationship with the individuals external to the field. Leander (2010) asserted that a family, a community, an organisation, or a profession may be conceptualised as discreet fields since they generally develop their own organising logics around specific activities. Each field is characterised by its own understanding of the world, implicit and explicit rules of behaviour, and judgement of what grants power on someone (Leander, 2010). For example, in sports, each game has its own rules and norms that govern the field. For the game to work, players must subscribe to the norms of the field.

Habitus

Bourdieu's concept of habitus refers to the conditions or situations that influence how individuals view their own actions as well as the actions that exist in the world in which they live (Bourdieu, 2018). Each individual's habitus is a product of their individual history, and it entails them following their own rules without referring to them (Bourdieu, 1997). For Collet (2009), the view that the agents have of the world and their actions is likely founded by their past experiences and their current position in a social field. When past experiences are incorporated in the daily lives of the agents, they help guide their actions and behaviour and influence them in thinking in a certain way (Collet, 2009).

Capital

Capital has many meanings and is normally used to define a set of economic relations. However, in this study, it is defined in Bourdieu's (1997) tradition who reads it as specific resources possessed by agents in a field in relation to other occupants of the same field. It may be viewed as the specific cultural or social assets invested with value in the field which, when possessed, enables membership to the field (Bourdieu, 1997).

Transformation

In the South African context and for purposes of this study, transformation references social change in society. It is defined by Williams (2000) as a process that aims to address inequalities that exist in South Africa as a result of the political context, in order to shift the power relations that maintain the status quo towards more equitable and just social, political and economic relations. Transformation is the extent to which there is a structural shift from dominant, exclusionary relations of power of successive colonial and apartheid regimes to a more equitable and inclusive dispensation in South Africa (Ramphele, 2008; Williams, 2000;). From an organisational perspective, the process of transformation necessitates the re-prioritisation of planning in terms of employing and deploying human skills and expertise of previously marginalised groups.

1.7 Thesis Organisation

The thesis begins with Chapter one, which introduces the study. Here, the context and background of the study are outlined. The South African transformation journey in the context of the transition into a democratic state is provided with a particular focus on the financial services industry. The rationale is articulated as the need to explore life stories of senior black managers. In addition, the purpose and significance of the study for the field of

organisational studies is given. The research aims and questions that guide the study are outlined, and key definitions provided. In chapter two, I provide a review of the literature aligned with the research questions explored in the study. This chapter is divided into Part One which is the theoretical framework and Part Two which is the literature reviewed.
In Part One, the theoretical framework begins with the exploration of the historical context of race and racialisation in South Africa. Critical race theory is employed as a theoretical basis for understanding and exploring race and racialisation within the context of life stories. The relationship between race, class and gender is subsequently explored by employing the black feminist theory of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989). The use of intersectionality as a framework, is beneficial in that it provides a deeper analysis of the potential differences in the life storis of black women as compared to black men. Bourdieu's (1990)'s concepts of habitus, capital and field are examined as a theoretical framework used in understanding life stories.

In Part Two, I provide a review of the literature that explores the histories of black people in South Africa. In this regard, the review explores the historical setting in which participants were children—apartheid and democratic South Africa. This is followed by the history of the schooling system that black managers would have likely been a part of in their formative years. As the study focuses on career journeys within the financial services industry, the historical background of South African organisations is provided and employment equity legislation and its implementation in organisations is reviewed.

In Chapter Three, the research methodology that was undertaken in the study is provided. The chapter commences by providing a rationale for using a qualitative research method. As the study explores life stories, the next section of this chapter provides an overview of what life story narratives are and why they were used. Since participants are within an organisational context, the importance of organisational storytelling in relation to the life story narrative is provided. Narrative inquiry is a method of analysis that was employed in understanding the life and organisational stories of the participants. I provide the theoretical context of this type of inquiry and also explain how it was used to explore the life stories of the participants. The final sections of this chapter explore ethical considerations made and researcher reflexivity. In relation to ethical considerations, I detail the process undertaken in obtaining the sample, consent to conduct the interviews, and the use of data in this study. I

conclude the chapter with a reflexive engagement on aspects about myself as a researcher that could have potentially influenced how I conducted the study.

Chapter Four analyses the data gathered from the interviews and then provides a discussion of the findings. This is to say that the findings and discussion are presented in an integrated manner rather than as separate. The chapter addresses the research questions of the study by engaging the theoretical frameworks and literature presented in chapter two. In this chapter, I present the life stories of the participants in four-time frames. The structure of the chapter follows these four temporal moves. Part one analyses the stories from the participants' childhood and their primary to tertiary education experiences. In part two, I analyse the participants' stories of entering the job market and their early experiences of work. Part three analyses the stories of participants' movement or mobility between jobs in their professional years. Part four presents an analysis of their experiences, as conveyed in the stories as senior managers. Chapter Five presents the conclusion of the thesis which starts with a brief description of what the study entailed. The chapter summarises the findings and discussion and presents the implications thereof for organisational studies. This is followed by a discussion of the limitations of the study and suggestions for future research in this area of work.

Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

This chapter outlines theoretical co-ordinates of the study before providing a review of the literature on the subject of interest and with which the study is in conversation. These bodies of work focus on the constructs of race, gender, and class. The first part of the chapter outlines the theoretical framework that draws from varying but interrelated theoretical perspectives. It commences with an introduction to race and racial identity as a central theme in the life stories of many South Africans. This is followed by a presentation of concepts and theoretical perspectives on race. Here Critical Race Theory (CRT) is discussed as a central theory in understanding race and racial identity. I expand on this by discussing CRT in relation to black South Africans and their racialised experiences and identifications. The second section begins with the introduction of gender and class constructs in relation to race. To decipher how the three constructs are interrelated in the context of exploring life stories, the concept of intersectionality is presented and discussed in the South African context. The next section introduces Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capital, and field. The body of research and theoretical perspectives of these concepts are then connected with the previous sections. These are discussed for their value in exploring life stories. The use of the theoretical approaches enables the illumination of complexity embedded in the life stories of the black senior managers. In presenting these concepts, I consider how financial services are organised and function as environments that represent the current life stage in the life stories of the black senior managers.

In part two of the chapter, I present a review of the literature by drawing attention to history in relation to schooling in order to depict the early life stages of the managers. Education forms an important part in the early lives of people and intersects with the political context of South African schools. It is, therefore, important to understand the schooling system that black senior managers are likely to have gone through. The section begins by presenting the historical perspective of the transition of the schooling system from the apartheid era into the democratic dispensation. I review the literature on the schooling system from a basic education level to higher institutions of learning. This is followed by the presentation of the current life stage in the life stories of the black senior managers within organisational settings. In this section on their current life stage, I present literature on how organisations are structured and controlled. I explore how they make room for black senior managers as a

group that was historically excluded. I review literature on the transformation journey that organisations embarked on towards advancing more equitable representation of black people and women. The final section of part two examines mobility between organisations as a recurring theme in the latter life stage of many black professionals, especially in senior positions. This section reviews literature that deliberates on the phenomenon and explores the reasons for its reported prevalence.

2.1 Part One: Theoretical Framework

2.1.1 Race and Racialisation

South Africa was formally governed by colonial and apartheid administrators who based their governance on the ideology of white supremacy (Dubow, 2014). Race, racism, and racialisation are therefore core features of this country (Stevens, 2018). It is against this backdrop that this study employs CRT as a conceptual framework. As a conceptual framework, CRT points to the interplay of structural inequalities and interpersonal prejudice in society (Conradie, 2016). Some of the examples of structural inequalities include how wealth has been unequally distributed across racial lines. In the context of this research, a form of a structural inequality is the exclusion of marginalised race groups and women from positions of power in society and the workplace.

2.1.2 Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory originated as a movement of liberal legal scholars from the minority background in the 1960s United States (US). Delgado (2010) attributed the development of CRT as an academic field to legal scholars in the US in the mid and late 1970s. He argued that these legal scholars saw the achievements of the 1960s civil rights movement under threat of being rolled back and eroded (Delgado, 2010). As a result, they developed a new approach to challenge the forms of elusive, unconscious, or institutional racism that existed in the legal domain at the time. These critical race scholars formulated this theory as a response and as criticism of the laws that were perceived to promote white supremacy and uphold gender and class hierarchies (Syed, 2007).

The waning influence of the Civil Rights Movement in the late 1980s in the US coincided with the rise of CRT into prominence as a counter strategy of resisting white supremacy (Bell, 1980). When a number of lawyers and law professors in the US realised the decline in gains of the Civil Rights era, they saw a need for new theories to manage the emerging forms of ‘colour-

blind', subtle, or institutional racism. The movement was a result of a workshop held by the group of lawyers and law professors in 1989 in Madison, Wisconsin (Delgado, 1990). The workshop was led by Kimberle Crenshaw and organised with Neil Gotanda and Stephanie Phillips (Onwuachi-Willig, 2009). Participants of the workshop included Anita Allen, Taunya Banks, Derrick Bell, Kevin Brown, Paulette Caldwell, John Calmore, Harlon Dalton, Richard Delgado, Linda Greene, Trina Grillo, Isabelle Gunning, Angela Harris, Mari Matsuda, Teresa Miller, Philip T. Nash, Elizabeth Patterson, Benita Ramsey, Robert Suggs, Kendall Thomas, and Patricia Williams (Onwuachi-Willig, 2009).

Critical race theorists exposed the routine and ordinary manner in which racism was enacted. They observed that liberal accounts were inadequate to understand its persistence and power (Delgado & Stefancic, 2007). CRT is made up of five major components or tenets, namely: (1) the belief that racism is seen as ordinary and not aberrational; (2) the idea of an interest convergence; (3) the belief that race is a social construction; (4) the idea of storytelling and counter-storytelling as ways of exposing and resisting racism; and (5) the notion that white people have actually been recipients of civil rights legislation (Delgado, 1990). The idea that racism is ordinary, is based on a belief by critical race theorists that racism has become the customary way of societal operation and as a result, it represents the common, everyday experience of the majority of black people in the US (Delgado, 2010). Since racism is regarded as an ordinary common practice, it becomes difficult to recognise and address in daily life. This means that formal rules that require equal treatment of black people and white people can only manage to redress the most overt forms of racism. However, they fail to address the day-to-day covert forms of racism in society (Delgado & Stefancic, 1997). Critical race theorists have critiqued liberalism for its positions pertaining to equal opportunity, colour-blindness, merit, and the role model argument when it comes to Affirmative Action in the US (Delgado & Stefancic, 1997). Since racism is normalised, CRT scholars believe that racism is not an accident or a matter of ignorance that will recede with education or better enforcement.

The second component of CRT is centred on Bell's (1980) theory of interest convergence which is based on the notion that common beliefs are created by the majority status quo. The white majority in the US support racial justice to the extent that it will benefit them based on a "convergence" between their interests and those of oppressed groups (Bell, 2018). An illustration of the interest convergence was explained in Bell's (1992) metaphoric example

called *The Space Traders* (cited in Bell, 2018). In this metaphoric example, he explains interest convergence through telling a story about aliens' visit to the US. In the story, the alien visitors want to trade all of the world's African Americans for enough gold to retire the national debt, a magical chemical that will cleanse America's polluted skies and waters, and a limitless source of safe energy to replace the US.'s decreasing resources. Following rigorous debates for two weeks, a ballot is passed and accepted which sends all of the African Americans in the US to the space traders or aliens. This parable demonstrated that the white people had power (being politicians, and US leaders) and that the white people had something to benefit by giving all African Americans to the aliens as they were able to receive the abovementioned resources the aliens had promised (Bell, 2018). Here justice is only supported when white people benefit from its implementation.

The third component of CRT is built on the idea that race is socially constructed where racialisation, race and races are seen as products of social thought and supporting practices. For this reason, race and racialisation are regarded as categories that society invents for particular purposes and are not related to biological or genetic reality (Delgado, 2010; Delgado & Stefancic, 2007). The purposes for which race is invented is oppression in order to benefit economically, politically, and socially from the labour and subjugation of black people. The creation of race is therefore a fiction in favour of whiteness.

The fourth component is the idea of storytelling and counter-storytelling. This is the belief that there is a need to develop "voice of colour" where black people name their own reality (Delgado, 2010). For Delgado and Stefancic (2007), the absence of storytelling and counter-storytelling has been recognised as one of the obstacles to racial reform as the majority mindset continues to prevail. Since white North Americans brought their beliefs, wisdom, and shared understandings to discussions of race, including legal ones in the US, it was important to counter these with the narratives with black people's articulation of their reality and experience. An example of how the concept of "storytelling" and "counter-storytelling" is illustrated in the differing beliefs of the schooling system in the US. The view that schools in the US are neutral spaces where black and white students are treated equally has been challenged by evaluating graduation rates of the two groups. Hackman and Rauscher (2004) illustrated that school curricula were structured around the mainstream white, middle class value system which resulted in communities of minority students being marginalised. They

argued that the curriculum was insensitive and inequitable, and this resulted in the widening of the racial achievement gap (Hackman & Rauscher, 2004).

The fifth component is centred around white privilege where it has been argued that white people have actually been recipients of civil rights legislation. One such example is seen in Delgado's (1990) assertion that the implementation of Affirmative Action in the US was implemented in a way that benefited white people. He contended that the implementation of Affirmative Action was not rooted in history, and it was not serving the intention it was purported to serve, which is to redress the historically unfair treatment of black people through slavery, denying them jobs and land ownership (Delgado, 1990). He argued that it was an approach to divert attention from the historically unfair treatment of black people by calling for a fresh start instead of acknowledging and addressing the uncomfortable actions of the past (Delgado, 1990). In this way, affirmative action might be seen as a form of repayment of historical debt which enables whiteness to claim equality and move on from an unfortunate past whose debt has been paid.

The role of the CRT is to advocate race-consciousness that will help challenge inequalities and hierarchies and achieve equality in the legal context, as well as society as a whole (Syed, 2007). In addition to this advocacy, critical race scholars have also criticised the manner in which race is constructed and represented. Scholars, such as Solórzano (1997) and Yosso (2001), have refuted the traditional claims that there is a level of objectivity with regards to race and gender in various institutions. Instead, they argued that these traditional claims disguise the self-interest, power, and privilege of dominant groups. In refuting these claims, CRT is seen as offering a liberating and transformative response to racial, gender and class oppression (Matsuda, 1991). The above examples have illustrated how CRT has been used from a legal perspective to examine the ways in which prevailing conceptions of race perpetuate relations of domination, oppression and injustice in the US. Next, I discuss CRT in relation to South Africa.

2.1.3 A Critical Race Theory perspective on blackness in South Africa

Within the contexts of colonialism and apartheid, inequality and a long history of institutionalised white supremacy and white privilege which continues in South Africa, it becomes important to have critical engagement with the ongoing salience of race. The significance of CRT is evident in South Africa as it assists us in understanding the socio-

political and human rights discourses and to expose and critique the racial ideologies embedded in them. With the legacy of racial segregation and institutionalised race-based discrimination that continues to persist in post-apartheid South Africa, it is surprising that CRT perspectives have not been used in much local research.

Conradie (2015) argued that the differences in people's behaviour in South Africa can still be attributed to race. They further proposed that studies on race relations in society should analyse whether various contexts would interrogate, change or reproduce existing inequalities and assumptions. Slater (2014) similarly asserted that broad socio-economic inequalities and stereotypical assumptions about race and gender have advocated subtle forms of hostility toward black people, especially black women, resulting in them experiencing the worst hardships. It is for this reason that Slater (2014) claims that black people in South Africa still encounter stereotypes in relation to their intellectual capability as well as ethical integrity. Modiri (2012) employed CRT as a theoretical perspective to examine the overt and covert role of race in legal and public discourses in the South African context. He contended that a post-apartheid CRT should explore the following three points; firstly, to critique law and legal institutions implicated in perpetuating racist ideology; secondly, to analyse the racialised patterns of wealth distribution, economic inequality and poverty; and thirdly, to engage with the dynamics of race, culture and identity in post-apartheid social and political life.

Motivated by the numerous media reports of racism in South African schools, Moorosi (2021) examined the role of school principalship standards in addressing race in educational leadership. She used theoretical perspectives from CRT that challenge notions of colour-blindness, meritocracy, and neutrality. She explored the manner in which race issues are addressed in the Policy for School Principalship Standard and the implications thereof for leadership preparation and practice (Moorosi, 2021). In her analysis, she found that there was no overt mention or treatment of race and ethnicity as social constructs in the principalship standards, and that diversity and culture were used more. For Moorosi (2021), this implied that there was more emphasis on difference rather than inequality (Moorosi, 2021). She further argued that the Policy for School Principalship Standard is colour-blind, it denies the existence of racism and does not acknowledge the power and influence of school principals in modelling the race dynamic in schools.

Modiri (2012) and Moorosi (2021) illustrate the importance of using CRT in the South African context from a legal and education system perspective respectively. It is important to apply this theory in organisational settings to understand race and racial dynamics, particularly in the context of the policy imperative for transformation. Syed (2007) noted the similarity between CRT and feminist theories in drawing attention to the areas where gender and race consciousness may result in more equitable legal structures. From the workplace perspective, it is paramount that gender segregation at work should also consider the impact of racial segregation. Conradie (2015) and Syed (2007) further contend that race should not be separated from gender in philosophical discussions of race as this would result in the erasure of the uniqueness of minority ethnic women and related intersectional realities. In this study, the learnings from scholars in the US and local researchers are relied on and applied in the field of organisational studies to which this research contributes.

2.2 Perspectives on the relationship between race, class, and gender

The current study which focuses on inequality, dominance, and oppression pays attention to the intersections of race, gender, and class. This is because black men and black women's political and economic statuses may result from their distinctive gendered experiences. The complex subordinate positions on dimensions of race, gender and class create the conditions of possibility for a 'different standpoint' for black women which is not white, not male, and not economically privileged (Collins, 2000). Applying an intersectional analysis in the current study potentially provides insights into how these dimensions of difference or simultaneous inequality producing processes work (Holvino, 2001; McCall, 2005). It also emphasises the uniqueness in black women's experiences and highlights their intersectional realities. These assertions highlight the importance of employing intersectionality to understand the unique experiences of the black women senior managers from a societal and organisational perspective.

2.2.1 Intersectionality

From an organisational perspective, Kimberle Crenshaw played a pivotal role in increasing the momentum of the CRT movement in understanding employment discrimination. She hosted a number of workshops where she explored intersectionality in relation to the black-white binary of race and essentialism to the exclusion of black women (Crenshaw, 1989). Her theory of intersectionality has provided the foundation for understanding discrimination at the intersections of identity categories, such as race and gender (Crenshaw, 1989).

Intersectionality arose as a result of African American scholars' critique of feminist articulations that are based on white women's politics in the US which view gender as a universal concept. They argue that the category of "woman" is not universal as gender is socially constructed and cannot be considered outside of race and class (Crenshaw, 1991). In this regard, women are always gendered and classed and do not exist outside of these categories. This intersectional position resulted in the need to theorise multiple forms of oppression that black women experience and particularly where inequalities of race, gender, and class inequalities are evident (Crenshaw, 1991). Even though black feminist women had long used the intersectional lens to think through their challenges in the US (Combahee River Collective, 1983), the concept of intersectionality was first formally coined by Crenshaw in 1989. She argued that people and collectives can be subject to various forms of discrimination that are often interconnected and interdependent (Crenshaw, 1989). The concept of intersectionality was conceived to address the disembodiment of black women from the legal fraternity (Crenshaw, 1989). She used this concept to demonstrate the failure of US legal frameworks to adequately address issues of inequality and discrimination toward black women in the workplace as a result of the intersection between race and gender (Crenshaw, 1989).

Intersectionality is defined as multiple interlocking identities that are distinct in terms of relative socio-cultural power and privilege that shape people's individual and collective identities and experiences (Shields, 2008). Other scholars, like Gopaldas and Fischer (2012), have described intersectionality as the idea that each and every person is positioned in society at the intersection of multiple social axes, such as race, class, sexuality and, of course, gender. Consequently, every person is subject to advantages and disadvantages particular to their intersectional position. Intersectionality is central to the study of inequality and power relations as it highlights the relationship between categories of social difference, such as race, gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality, and nationality (Rodriguez, Holvino, Fletcher & Nkomo, 2016). The theory draws our attention to systemic power complexities that result from social differences that interact across individual, institutional, cultural, and societal domains of influence (Collins, 2000; McCall, 2005).

Patricia Hill Collins was among the initial and foremost scholars to advance the study of intersectionality. In her work, she identified four themes that contribute as framing assumptions for intersectional literature and scholarship (Collins, 2015). These themes

provide a view on how intersectionality's initial holistic approach to social inequalities, power, and politics continues to shift as it becomes increasingly incorporated within academic norms. The first theme points to the way in which intersecting power relations of race, class, gender, and sexuality shape individual and group-based social locations (Collins, 2015). The second theme concerns how these distinctive social locations of individuals and groups within intersecting power relations have important epistemological implications (Collins, 2015). This suggests that all knowledge cannot be separated from the power relations in which it participates and is shaped by.

The third theme is concerned with how race, gender, class, and other systems of power are constituted and maintained through relational processes. This concept demonstrates the various ways in which social positions occupied by actors, systems, and political/economic structural arrangements acquire meaning and power in relationship to other social positions (Collins, 2015). The fourth theme is concerned with the nature of the connections among the knowledges and social structures of communities and the worldviews they promote (Collins, 2015). These four themes demonstrate the way in which intersectionality is able to account for *inter*–social locations, to challenge binary thinking and to shift the focus towards understanding the fluidity of interrelationships and co-production of various categories and systems of power (Collins, 2015). Significantly, Collins (2019) points to the mutually constitutive nature of these identities in ways that work against thinking of them as distinctive social hierarchies.

Studies on inequality in the workplace date back to the 1970s where issues of race and gender were understood using sociological theories of social difference (Zanoni, Janssens, Benschop & Nkomo, 2010). The 1990s saw a shift of focus from social identities towards structural dimensions of workplace inequalities in the individual, organisational, cultural and societal domains which was linked to the work of Joan Acker. In her research, Acker (1990) explored gender inequality in the workplace resulting in the birth of the "gendered organisation", a concept for which she has often been credited. She later explored other processes that produce intersecting dimensions of social differences, such as class, gender and race differentiations in organisations (Acker, 2006, 2012). Alongside other scholars, Acker's work on intersectionality has provided some insights on how different dimensions intersect to explain the systematic disparities that exist in the workplace. For her, it is important to read organisations through larger social categories of analysis and power.

Rodriguez et al. (2016) discussed two approaches to the study of intersectionality in the workplace. The first approach explores how intersectionality can help us understand the inequalities experienced by people and groups, given their social membership. For example, the manner in which women of a specific racialised group experience inequalities in the workplace. In the second approach, subjectivities are entrenched within systemic dynamics of power and intersectionality is explored to highlight these dynamics and enable them to be analysed. According to Rodriguez et al. (2016), most intersectional research focuses on the first approach. Some of the examples include Browne and Misra's (2003) exploration of intersectionality in labour market inequality; Munro's (2001) analysis of the intersectionality of class, gender and race in trade unions; and Adib and Guerrier's (2003) work on women's narratives of their engagement in hotel work.

The second approach takes a critical look at how power is exercised simultaneously in all domains of influence and how these systems of inequality are institutionalised. Studies that have explored this approach include Boogaard and Roggeband's (2010) exploration of intersectionality in the police force; Arifeen and Gatrell's (2013) research on the formation of the identities of British Pakistani women in managerial and professional positions; Tatli and Özbilgin's (2012) analysis of the intersectionality of inequality and privilege of students, employers and staff in the arts and culture sector. This approach offers an opportunity to engage in a critical exploration and a further study of intersectionality in the workplace. Two other frameworks have offered a further analysis of intersectionality. The first framework by Holvino (2010) argued that individual narratives, organisational practices and societal processes should be explored in an interconnected manner so as to disrupt dominant organisational discourses and challenge the power dynamics that sustain systems of inequality in organisations. The second framework was proposed by Tatli and Özbilgin (2012) who proposed a framework which integrates intersectionality and Bourdieu's theory of cultural, social and symbolic forms of capital to analyse structural and functional elements of organising. In their framework, they claim that Bourdieu's theory facilitates the contextualisation and use of the concepts of field and capitals.

Rodriguez et al. (2016) have suggested three different methods in which the application of intersectionality in organisational studies can be enriched and expanded. Firstly, they suggest that dominance and oppression be viewed as an interplay of advantages and disadvantages in intersectional analysis. In a similar vein, Nash (2003) suggested a framework that explored

the simultaneous forces of privilege and oppression, as well as dominance and subordination in the workplace. The second method considers the relationships between certain identities and subject positions and the organisational and societal systems, processes and practices that produce and reproduce workplace inequalities (Corlett & Mavin, 2014; Holvino, 2010; Nash, 2003).

Rodriguez et al. (2016) defined the third method as the attempt to build a more complex method of intersecting categories of difference that may be more reflective of dynamics in organisations. For example, focusing only on the intersection of race, gender and class may discount other categories, such as age, sexuality and religion, which may help us understand inequalities in the workplace. The intersections of gender, sexuality and occupation were explored by Simpson (2014) in her analyses of male cabin crew workers' constructions of their occupational identity. The study illustrated that men who work as cabin crew service workers experienced an identity challenge as a result of tensions created between the "feminine" nature of the service and care they offer and the dominant discourses of masculinity.

These arguments and many others have led authors, such as, Bose (2012), Choo (2012), and Collins (2015) to explore how intersectionality applies globally outside of the US (cited in Dhawan & Varela, 2016). Rodriguez et al. (2016) identified three positions that analysed the applicability of intersectionality globally. The first position is based on the argument that the conceptual frame of intersectionality has been used in contexts outside of the US to understand interlocking structures and systems of domination (Davis & Walker, 2010; Falcon & Nash, 2015). Davis and Walker (2010) argued that intersectionality is applicable in other countries outside of the US as it links race, class, culture, sexuality and ethnicity. The usefulness of intersectionality beyond the US has been questioned by many scholars. Rodriguez et al. (2016) argued that the theoretical origins of intersectionality were a result of the experiences of black women in the US and consequently difficult to apply elsewhere. There are researchers who have criticised the transferability of intersectionality to different geographical areas. For example, Dhawan and Varela (2016) criticised intersectionality for not being applicable and transferable to non-Eurocentric countries in relation to understanding inequality and injustice in black majority contexts.

In the second position, there is a debate on how intersectionality has travelled (Rodriguez et al., 2016). For example, Collins (2015) has emphasised the importance of being aware that the westernised conceptualisations of categories, such as gender, race and class have different meanings in other parts of the world outside of the US. It is therefore important that we appreciate that as much as intersectionality can travel, there are variations in the forms of these categories within and across different contexts. The third position we need to take into account is the question raised about the relevance of intersectionality in the neoliberal world where capital is a powerful determinant of how social life is structured. The main argument of this position is that categories, such as race, gender and class are not static and as a result, it questions whether intersectionality adequately captures the fluidity of identities (Rodriguez et al., 2016). These three positions challenge researchers to further explore and expand understandings of the relationship between intersectionality, dominance and power across space and time in a transnational world. The current study thus considers the application of intersectionality in this location informed by the foregoing cautions and debates.

There have been several studies conducted on senior managerial roles using intersectionality as the conceptual frame. For example, Atewologun and Sealy (2014) sought to understand multiple identity negotiation at the intersections of ethnicity, gender and senior management status. They used identity work as a theoretical basis to study intersectionality focusing on the experiences of senior black and Asian male and female employees in organisations in Britain. This work created the framework of "intersectionality identity" by combining the work on identity and intersectional theory. They introduced 'intersectional identity work' as an approach for examining people's experiences at the nexus of multiple identities. The work on intersectional identity can be used to understand the inequalities intertwined with intersecting social categories. Atewologun (2018) conceptualised inequalities in terms of privileges and disadvantages that are related to the main social categories in a particular context.

Dhawan and Varela (2016) acknowledged intersectionality for being a theoretically challenging methodology as it focuses on multiple intersections of race, class, sexuality and gender among other forms of differentiation. Crenshaw (1989, 1991) proposed that intersectionality, as a methodological tool, can examine various forms of inequality. For John (2015), the strength of intersectionality is that it enables a clear view of a problem that may possibly have multiple and overlapping discriminations. In this regard, it makes visible the forms of difference that may be ignored but which have important consequences in the lives

of many people. For instance, it allows feminists to not only engage with gender but to consider how race, class and sexual orientation might impact the gendered experience of some women.

This study focuses on the importance of exploring the interplay of subjectivities, micro-level encounters, structures, and institutional arrangements (Atewologun & Sealy, 2014; Holvino, 2010). Exploring the linkages between the subjective and structural shows the importance of understanding the ways in which race, gender and other categories of difference produce and reproduce particular identities that define how people come to see themselves and how others see them in the workplace (Holvino, 2010).

2.2.2 Intersectionality in the African context

Western feminism has been criticised for being irrelevant beyond the Global North as western feminists do not consider the socio-cultural inequalities of women (Jacobs, 2011). Western conceptualisations of feminism have been accused of not acknowledging the social, economic, and cultural disadvantages that women in non-western societies experience. For example, Oyewumi (2002) argues that studies on gender do not take African realities into consideration. She argued that research on gender has been largely based on European and American experiences and challenged scholars to question the social identity, interests, and concerns of the purveyors of such knowledge. It is evident that Euro-American women's experiences and the desire for social justice have provided the basis for the questions, concepts, theories, and concerns that have produced gender research. There are scholars who have critiqued gender as a universal concept and have shown the extent to which it is specific to Euro-American and white women's politics in the United States (Jacobs, 2011; Oyewumi, 2002).

African feminists outside of the United States have, therefore, focused on the necessity of paying attention to imperialism, colonisation, impoverishment, livelihoods, and other local and global forms of stratification. This informs the assertion that gender cannot be abstracted from the social context and other systems of social stratifications and hierarchies. They have argued that in the Euro-American context, gender is an essential organising principle of the family where gender distinctions are the primary source of hierarchy and oppression within the nuclear family (Oyewumi, 2002). This nuclear family is seen as specific to the Euro-American context and not necessarily universal and particularly foreign in the African

context, despite it being promoted through colonisation. For African feminists, race and class are not normally variables in the family.

It therefore makes sense that white feminism, which is trapped in the family, does not see race or class. Surdakasa's (1996) work which contrasted the characteristics of Africa-based family systems and European-based forms is especially helpful. She indicated that the nuclear family is built upon marriage, whereas, for example, in West Africa, family is built upon brothers' and sisters' blood relations. Within that context, couples continued to live with their extended families in the same household. In such a society, the core group of the compound was made up of blood relatives including brothers, sisters, their adult sons, and grandchildren. Spouses were considered outsiders and therefore not part of the family (Surdakasa, 1996). This is not unlike many contexts on the African continent where the nuclear family is the exception and not the norm. Furthermore, Surdakasa (1996) warned against interpreting African realities based on western claims of gender realities.

2.2.3 Intersectionality in the South African context

To understand the use of intersectionality in the South African context, Carrim and Nkomo (2016) explored the identity work of Indian women entering managerial positions in corporate post-apartheid South Africa. They utilised social identity theory and intersectionality to understand the importance of time and historical events, such as, apartheid, in shaping the identities of these women in the workplace. The study showed how interactions between processes of differentiation such as race, gender, culture; and systems of dominations, such as, colonialism, apartheid, and patriarchy, produce and reproduce subjectivities. Similarly, Canham and Maier (2018) applied this theory to consider the different positionings, gendered coalitions, and career outcomes for black and white women in South African banking. These studies illustrate the importance of the application of intersectionality in understanding the lived experience of marginalised groups. They also point to the ways that intersectionality can be used in practical ways for dealing with inequality in the workplace. Rodriguez et al. (2016) emphasised the value of intersectionality for disrupting discourses that exist in organisations which produce and reproduce inequalities in those workplaces.

In the South African context, feminism is not divorced from race and class. Jacobs (2011) noted that political victory for white women in the apartheid era was not a victory for all

women. This is because politically, black women protested and fought alongside their husbands, sons and brothers in the apartheid struggle. Writing during apartheid, Gaitskell et al. (1983) contended that black women were oppressed in three ways, as black people, as women, and as workers. The illustration of this triple oppression is observed in the prevalence of black women in domestic services roles. Gaitskell et al. (1983) argued that black women's domestication has always been central to the racial and gendered order of South Africa. The domestication of black women in the South African contexts challenges western feminists' assertion that the substance of class oppression is specific to gender (Gaitskell et al., 1983). South African socialists have argued that the dynamic relations between gender, race and class should be linked to avoid static analysis of variables or the temptation to collapse them into each other.

Collins (2000) urges scholars and researchers to shift the discourse away from additive analyses of oppression. These additive approaches are based on firstly, either/or, dichotomous thinking where people, things and ideas are conceptualised in terms of their opposites. The second basis of additive analyses is that these dichotomous differences must be ranked where the one side is labelled as dominant and the other as subordinate. For example, the first premise of dichotomous thinking would emphasise the differences between black and white; men and women. The second premise would highlight the dominance patterns which indicate that white people rule black people, men are superior to women, and that reason is preferable to emotion (Collins, 1995). This premise leads to the assumption that there are groups that have been oppressed more than others. For example, one might question whether a black woman is oppressed based on her status as a black person or due to her status as a woman.

Acker (2006) stated that the challenge with this notion is that a black woman in this instance is essentially asked to place herself in a box based in the status she occupies. She cautioned scholars that the focus on one category can potentially oversimplify and ignore the realities of the other categories of the person. Importantly, Collins (2019) insists that identity categories are not additive but co-constitutive. This is to say, they work together to create the subject. Intersectionality represents a complex and thorough approach to recognising the impact of an individual's unique social location in relation to others and the operation of power. Looking at the various contexts in the workplace where intersectionality has been employed, it seems to be an appropriate theory to help us understand the experiences of black senior managers

within the financial sector. It is important for the current research to understand and unpack intersectionality of the three categories by acknowledging the nuances that exist in the South African context.

2.2.4 Habitus, Capital, and Field

In exploring the life stories of black men and women from their childhood to their lives as senior managers in the financial services sector, Bourdieu's theory of habitus becomes central to make meaning of these stories. Habitus is an approach that allows the researcher to look beyond what is visible in empirical relations and to explore that which is invisible (Nord, 2005). In the current study, it assists in unpacking the manner in which power is culturally and symbolically created and is constantly reinforced through the interplay of agency and structure throughout the lives of the senior managers (Bourdieu, 2018). Many scholars have attempted to explain the concept of habitus based on Bourdieu's writings. For instance, in understanding the concept of habitus, Horvat, Weininger and Lareau (2003) noted the importance of Bourdieu's theoretical concepts, namely habitus, capital, field and practice. Bourdieu's concepts of capital and fields will also be explored as part of understanding these life stories.

Bourdieu defines habitus as socialised norms or tendencies that guide behaviour and thinking which influences the identity, actions, and choices of people (Bourdieu, 2018). Habitus is a set of learned preferences which an individual acquaints to the social world. It is a system of durable, transposable, cognitive 'schemata or structures of perception, conception and action' (Bourdieu, 2002, p. 27). Rooted in one's family upbringing through socialisation within the family, habitus is conditioned by one's position in the social structure. The individual's ways of thinking, acting, and feeling are internalised through a process of socialisation which becomes part of their beliefs, thoughts and actions. In addition, Bourdieu asserts that habitus is transferable. Individuals are able to adapt their beliefs and thoughts in accordance with a different structure in which they may exist or occupy.

Harker, Mahar, and Wilkes (1990) interpreted Bourdieu's definition as his process of describing and analysing the genesis of an individual which refers to the core make up of people. According to Swartz (1997), people's perceptions and actions are based on their unconscious internalisation of their objective chances that are common to members of a social class or status group, especially in one's early childhood. The individual's actions in

society are based on them responding to their own internalised interpretation of societal rules (Bourdieu, 1993). This habitus also serves to determine the course of acceptable action in a given field. People interpret the world and act on it, based on their preferences which are centred in the habitus (Swartz, 1997).

Habitus is primarily used to explain peoples' actions within a certain field where an interplay of struggles produces history (Chandler, 2013). A field is a social arena in which people express and reproduce their dispositions and where they can compete for the distribution of different kinds of capital (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). People often experience power differently, depending on which field they are occupying at a given moment. For example, as a learner at a school, the participants in the study would have experienced power differently as compared to now when they are senior managers in the workplace. Bourdieu combined habitus, capital, and field to come up with a formula he termed 'practice'.

An agent's habitus determines particular dispositions that propel the agent to behave in a particular manner which will be suitable for a specific field of struggle (Chandler, 2013). Habitus will therefore automatically adjust to different fields. Although it adjusts itself to new fields, habitus can be augmented through forms of capital and resources that are required for positions of power within a field and its overlapping fields. The capital can either be cultural, economic, and/or social. Bourdieu (1997) asserted that humans live in a number of fields composed of elements, including cultural, economic, social and symbolic capitals.

Bourdieu (1986) classified cultural capital into three forms: the embodied state, the objectified state and institutionalised state. The embodied state is characterised by continuous dispositions of the mind and body, including how the individual looks and behaves as well as the influence and power they carry (Bourdieu, 1979; Bourdieu, 2011). The process of embodiment requires that the individual invests through effort and time in attaining the embodied cultural capital. The objectified state consists of material objects and media such as writings, pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments which are transmissible. The institutionalised state is expressed in the form of educational qualifications, such as, certificates, diplomas, and examinations (Bourdieu 1986).

Derived from Marxism, economic capital refers to economic possessions that increase an individual's position in society. Social capital refers to current or potential resources which

the individual possesses as a result of belonging to a certain network or group which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively owned capital (Bourdieu, 2011). Agents have to acquire appropriate forms of capital in order to rise to positions of power. By integrating new forms of capital, habitus transforms and changes within the fields. Bourdieu asserted that agents act within relational networks of practice which operate through symbolic struggles that are a result of particular fields that separate agents by virtue of their acquired capital (Chandler, 2013).

According to Bourdieu (1997), the habitus of each agent is a result of their history and suggests that the agent is able to follow rules without referring to them. As a result, the agent will view the world and act in certain ways based on their past experience and their current position in the social field (Bourdieu, 1997). They will realise a need to develop a practical sense of orientation that guides them in their actions, and they will not see the need to examine this orientation as they see their choices as unquestionable (Collins, 2009). This means that the manner in which the agent behaves is dependent on their social past, their class habitus and the particular dispositions from each agent's history is based on their given social context. Their individuality is, therefore, a result of the dynamic social psychological processes rather that the generalised social setting. The structure of habitus is essentially a person's characteristics and is produced by the conditioning associated with a particular class that is constituted of systems of strong and similar characteristics (Bourdieu, 1990).

Consequently, the agent will tend to follow rules while, at the same time, retaining their agency, as a result, people internalise the rules of the game in a specific field of interaction through the habitus. Borrowing from the game of cricket, Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) used the notion of game to explain the functioning of habitus in the process of generating or limiting action. Game could therefore be understood as concerned with the parameters of possibility for particular actions. According to Bourdieu, the meaning and the positions of power from which we live our lives are created by the interaction of the individual habitus with the surrounding field. DiMaggio (1979) has described habitus as a theoretical basis that relates objective structure and individual activity. We may therefore characterise it as a psychosocial theory. The habitus is thus a process where social structures determine individual action and, in turn, the individual action will influence social structures resulting in a continuous dialectical reformulation. Not only does habitus function as a boundary mechanism which determines acceptable actions, but it also serves as a process where

possibilities for certain actions in the social world arise. According to DiMaggio (1979), habitus allows people to develop a sense of their place in the world and the availability of a variety of social worlds.

Habitus was described by Bourdieu (1988) as the product of conditioning which is associated with particular types of living conditions. Habitus is the process of creating structure in order to organise certain practices and the perception of these practices. According to Moingeon and Ramanantsoa (1997, pg. 388) "the habitus as a structured structure by experience operates like a generative grammar of behaviours." In this instance, agents or people tend to look at the world through the lens of their habitus. People possess properties such as their culture, relationships and their social status which are inflected through their habitus. Moingeon and Ramanantsoa (1997) further stated that habitus is the embodiment of social rules and relationships which creates practices, representations, and functions outside the person's awareness. This suggests that the body assumes postures and mannerisms to which it has become habituated over time.

According to Bourdieu (1990), habitus is constituted by characteristics, such as, the way a person behaves, acts and thinks. The way that they are habituated is attained unconsciously through socialisation in the family, school and other places of social influence. To this, we can add the workplace. Bourdieu distinguishes between two types of habitus, the habitus of class and the individual habitus. The habitus of class is the idea that a class of people has communal characteristics in their lifestyle and will therefore, have a shared orientation through their shared habitus. However, the habitus of class is not something that is individual; it is more of a collective reality (Bourdieu, 1990). It may, however, inform individual perspectives and behaviours. For example, over time, class habitus teach us those aspects of behaviour that enable us to conform without attracting negative attention from those that matter to us.

Armstrong (2005) explored the different ways in which women conceptualised their work as employees and as mothers. The findings in that study indicated that there was a similarity between what women from working class backgrounds expected and what was possible in terms of their class position and their embodiment of femininity. From a work perspective, these women experienced low status and low paid employment and from a family perspective, their early adulthood was characterised by getting married and having children

(Fallov & Armstrong, 2009). It is clear that from both work and home, these women's class and gendered dispositions were characterised by limited power and dependence. According to the theory of habitus, every person has their own habitus. Personal habitus is however inflected through class habitus. People will, therefore, have different characteristics due to coming from a different class habitus. The different characteristics will combine making an individual habitus and resulting in everyone being unique while simultaneously being made in the collective space arising from a shared context (Armstrong, 2005). This is significant as it allows us to think from the habitus of class and the individual. For example, a person can be young or old, a worker or manager, black or white. These can be simultaneously individually and collectively held attributes.

Habitus is when agents learn dispositions through bodily practice and social categories which allow them to act automatically, based on the needs of the situation. Bourdieu (1990) stated that habitus integrates with capital and fields to formulate what he called an "economy of practice". According to Chandler (2013), fields are constructed by relative struggles of power, or control over the relevant capital employed within the field, between agents. "Agents will as a result, employ strategies through which members of a group seek to distinguish themselves from the group immediately below and to identify themselves from the group immediately above" (Bourdieu, 1990, p.136). This illustrates that people with the same class disposition tend to characterise themselves based on their differences with people from a different class.

The concept of class is helpful for unpacking issues of inequality in the South African context, particularly in organisational studies. To support this assertion, Seekings and Nattrass (2008) argued that race should no longer be seen as the only cause of inequality in South Africa since in their view, class was a more accurate lens for reading disadvantage. They acknowledged that racial inequality still exists, however they suggest that there has been an increase in intra-racial inequality and social class has become the main axis of inequality (Seekings & Nattrass, 2008). With black people starting to own businesses and occupying senior positions which result in high income, it is evident that class will become important. However, in this research, even though it may be argued that black senior managers belong to the middle class in the present, from a habitus perspective, it is important to understand them in relation to the class location in their formative years. This aligns with Bourdieu's (1979) assertion that children learn the class-based cultural orientation of their

parents, and this shapes their class trajectory as children. Consequently, while black senior managers may have elements of a middle-class habitus, they might also be shaped by the class habitus within which they were raised in their families, schools, and communities.

Bourdieu (1988) described class as an analytical construct where the set of occupants of the same position in a space are affected by the orientation of their position. These constructed classes can be characterised as sets of agents occupying similar positions in social space, are subject to similar conditions of existence and conditioning factors (Bourdieu, 1988). As a result, people that come from a similar class are provided with similar dispositions which encourages them to develop similar practices and behave in a similar way. Their class status can either be inherently positioned, based on a certain class of material conditions of their innate experiences of the social world, or it can be relationally positioned, based on positions which may be above or below them (Bourdieu, 1988). Class status can also be relationally positioned, based on positions that are neutral, in the middle, or neither dominant nor dominated (Bourdieu, 1988). These constructed classes will connect agents that share similar conditions and are similar to one another to form a practical group which is likely to reinforce the agents' points of similarity.

For this reason, the current study explores the class positions of participants' parents in order to understand the habitus within which they were raised in their formative years. Although some of the participants grew up in families of a lower class than others, their current occupation status has moved them to the middle-class social position. Mattes (2015) listed two approaches to the middle class. The first one considers middle class as those people who either occupy the middle strata of the income distribution in a given country or a middle position between a lower class and an upper class. The second approach considers the middle class as a discrete category with unique occupations and skill. Mattes (2015) argues that membership in the middle class in a developing society like South Africa is not only about being part of the adult middle class, but rather growing up under conditions of relative security and affluence. It is therefore, of importance in the current study to understand the childhood class categorisation of the black managers. This understanding sees class as operating on a continuum and as fluid. It nuances Seekings and Nattrass's (2008) categorical characterisation of class.

The application of habitus as a theoretical framework is useful as it assists in understanding how class, race and gender influence the actions and attitudes of black men and black women senior managers in navigating through their careers in organisations. One of the strengths of habitus identified by Bourdieu (1988) is its ability to widen the research focus to illustrate the ways in which macro influences, such as culture and class, act on people. Bourdieu argues that although people create their social world, it is important to acknowledge that the structure in which people exist is predefined by broader historical, racial, gender and class relations (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

Bourdieu (1990) asserted that people shape their aspirations according to the chance of access to a particular good and 'motivations' and 'needs' through their habituated position in society. Characteristics of the person are mainly shaped by what they see as possibilities and impossibilities, opportunities and prohibitions inscribed in their social conditions. The theory would then suggest that black men and women would each have their individual characteristics that shape their experiences in their career mobility, and this would be determined by both positive or negative experiences they have in society and within organisations. At the same time, they would have similar experiences based on their racial habitus of being black. This also applies to gendered habitus. Based on this assertion, their feelings, behaviour, and actions in navigating through their careers will be determined by their habitus. The use of habitus in the current study provides an opportunity to explore the characteristics of black men and women who are in senior management positions and how their habituated identities can help us understand their career journeys and mobility. It explores how structural conditions interplay with race, gender and classed histories.

The core of the habitus framework is that each person's behaviour and thinking is obtained unconsciously through socialisation (Sayer, 2004). This is similar to Judith Butler's concept of performativity. These two theoretical frameworks are predetermined by society, context, and economy. Habitus can account for the dynamic nature of the different forms of discrimination that exist in social settings (Nord, 2005). According to McClelland (1990), habitus can be used to analyse the dominance of certain groups in society as well as the domination of subordinate groups. In the current study, it will assist in analysing the subordinate group's career mobility experiences. The subordinate group in the study is black men and black women who have been identified as the group that is under-represented at senior management levels, according to the CEE report for 2022-2023.

Bourdieu has been criticised for disregarding the decisions that people make and for emphasising collective contribution and historical determinism. Bourdieu (1990) claims that people make choices or decisions based on their specific social history and within a particular group habitus. He further argues that the way an individual acts or behaves is based entirely on their social past in relation to their social context. Lahire (2011) criticised Bourdieu for not considering the variety of dimensions of which an individual is made up, such as gender. Huppatz (2006) noted that even though the field plays an important part in Bourdieu's theory of class, he is silent on this when it comes to gender. He has therefore been accused by feminist writers of over-emphasising the strength of masculine domination as he failed to incorporate the concept of field into his analysis of gender and the inherent ambiguities in gender identity (Huppatz, 2006; Lovell, 2000; McNay, 2000).

To provide an account of gender identity formation, McNay (2000) and Lovell (2000) recommended that Bourdieu's habitus be referenced alongside Judith Butler's work on gender. They claim that Butler's interest in the instability of gender identity will enhance Bourdieu's approach. Similarities in both Bourdieu and Butler's approaches are seen in their attempt to provide a non-deterministic and temporal account of gender identity through the notion of repetition (Huppatz, 2006). For Butler, repetition indicates the inherent instability of gender relations and identities (McNay, 2000). In addition to the above recommendation, Lovell (2000) suggested that the combination of Bourdieu and Butler's approaches will assist researchers to look at how some class cultures enable the intersection of gender positionings. Although this study focused on Bourdieu's theoretical approach as the main approach, it engaged Butler's approach to provide a framework for exploring the black women managers' experiences. Importantly, here Butler augments Bourdieu. Consequently, Bourdieu's theorisations are relied on with only minor inflections based on Butler's conception of performative repetition.

2.3 Part Two: Literature Review

2.3.1 Black childhood and the South African schooling system

It is important to define the concept of childhood in the South African context as this provides perspective for the following sections. Straker (1989) defined childhood in South Africa as the period from birth to ten years old and defined youth as spanning between ten

and eighteen years old. The age ranges of the participants in this study suggest that all of them were born before the new democratic dispensation in South Africa. The older black senior managers were children in the 1970s and youth in the 1980s whereas those who were born in the late1970s and early 1980s were children before the democratic state and youth post 1994. The historical context of the black senior managers must be taken into consideration when exploring the life stories of their childhood and schooling years. Exploring the historical context of the country when they were children, as well as the schooling system, provides context on their experiences during their formative years. I thus explore the transition into a democratic state and how this influenced the political and social landscape of the country, including the education system.

The 1970s saw the emergence of children and young black people embarking on strike action in the pursuit for justice (Ngomane & Flanagan, 2003). A collective civic identity was emerging amongst black people which has been argued to have changed the political landscape of South Africa (Dubow, 2014). One of the significant events was the Soweto, June 16, student protest in 1976. A school child, Hector Peterson, was killed by the police in that protest and between that time and August of 1976, there were 500 more students who were killed by the police (Ngomane & Flanagan, 2003). The older black senior managers in this study were part of the youth who came of age in the historical moment of the 70s. They would have been party to political boycotts and stayaways that disrupted schooling for a significant part of their childhood. The 1980s were punctuated by states of emergency, political violence, and repression. This was the context in which most participants grew up. In addition, all the senior managers were either children or teenagers during the transition period to a democratic state.

Ngomane and Flanagan (2003) argued that the black youth of South Africa played a pivotal role in the transition to a democratic society. To illustrate the role of the youth in the transition to a democratic society, they interviewed a diverse group of black leaders to explore the pathways by which these individuals became leaders in communities, organisations, government as well as religious institutions (Ngomane & Flanagan, 2003). The findings indicated that they shared several elements regardless of whether they were from rural or urban areas. These black leaders were involved in student movement organisations that allowed for a collective political resistance. They attributed their political activism to the desire to redress the social injustices which gave them a sense of moral purpose (Ngomane &

Flanagan, 2003). The generation post the 1976 Soweto uprising were commonly known as the "Young Lions" because they were born during a period of heightened political consciousness (Ngomane & Flanagan, 2003). Inspired by their brothers and sisters from the uprisings, this generation established student movements in various South African organisations to create political awareness. This historical context illuminates how the political landscape and transition period impacted the childhood of the black senior managers. Not only did it influence their childhood from a family and societal context, but also had an impact on their educational experiences and outcomes.

Here, I explore the history of the South African education system to provide insights on the journey that the black senior managers undertook during their schooling years. Jansen (1990) described black educational history in South Africa until the apartheid years in terms of five major periods. He characterised the first period as traditional African education which was led by elders in communities where they transmitted cultural phenomena, history and life experiences orally. Traditional African education occurred where ethnic groups passed to the coming generation their traditions and histories by means of different forms of art such as poetry, songs and oral tales (Christie & Collins, 1992). The second period occurred upon the arrival of the first European settlers. This might be described as the introduction of an era of slave education which was characterised by providing black people with Christian religious instruction. The third period occurred in the early 1800s, where Christian missionaries began to introduce mission education where European values and histories were taught at school. The fourth period which followed in the 1920s, saw the introduction of the era of the Native education system where the state segregated the curricula across racial lines. With the introduction of apartheid, the new system of education became Bantu education which was based on policies with racist overtones. According to Jansen (1990), the fifth period occurred in the 1990s where there were significant changes applied to the education policies. He however, argued that these policies continued to have racist overtones. Having provided the broad historical arc, in what follows, a more detailed accounting is given.

The transformation of the economy from being agricultural to more industrialised influenced the shape of the curriculum of black education in South Africa. Following the entry of Dutch settlers, an evangelical curriculum was introduced. This resulted in the first black schools for enslaved people with a purpose to provide religious instruction to encourage docility and obedience. This education was consistent with the practices of Dutch settlers in their country

of origin (Jansen, 1990). With the British occupation of South Africa, the evangelical curriculum continued as an education system. The late 1700s saw a proposal by two Dutch clergymen to offer training in French, Italian and Latin that would allow candidates to qualify for admission in overseas universities. These ideas laid a foundation for an alternative approach to education in South Africa in that period. The British occupation initiated a shift towards a more academic curriculum, with the emphasis placed on evangelical, industrial, and academic training that produced a school leaving certificate for students (Burchell, 1976).

The academic curriculum introduced by the British continued through the 1800s until the occurrence of radical changes in the late 1800s and early 1900s where subjects introduced included drawing, woodwork, and needlework (Behr & Macmillan, 1971). The 1900s saw the emergence of the industrial development in South Africa where black people began to be employed as industrial workers. The appointment of George Grey as a governor of the Cape saw the introduction of the Industrial Training Curriculum which was aimed at providing black people with skills for manual labour (Behr & Macmillan, 1971). As the Industrial Training Curriculum was becoming the predominant system, Afrikaners began to fear that they would become subservient to the British settlers and that black people would start competing with them for jobs (Behr & Macmillan, 1971). This led to them wanting a more sophisticated educational system for white people in order to ensure their political and economic dominance over black people. This led the way for black people being given low status work compared to their white counterparts who occupied higher positions.

The call for a differentiated curriculum resulted from this need for superior status by Afrikaners. This was characterised by continued racist tendencies and exclusion for black people. In 1922, black and white people began to have separate curricula at the primary school level where black children were subjected to an inferior syllabus that was meant to ensure that they only had access to menial jobs (Dube, 1985). Black South African schools had two features in their education system, firstly; regional vernacular languages were made compulsory in all primary classes; and practical skills such as handwork, gardening, housecraft, and needlework were emphasised. At high school level, there was some level of uniformity in the curriculum, however non-academic training was encouraged in black high schools (Dube, 1985).

With the fall of apartheid, the system based on the division of education into nineteen departments was reorganised into one ministry. The Department of Education established nine provincial Departments of Education (Chisholm & Leyendecker, 2008). In addition, new education reforms began to be introduced, abolishing the policy of dividing education on the basis of race. Chisholm and Leyendecker (2008) describe the reform of the curriculum review as having taken place in three different stages. The first stage entailed the removal of racist language from the curriculum post-apartheid; the introduction of the Curriculum 2005 (C2005) was second stage, and the third stage was the review of the C2005 (Chisholm & Leyendecker, 2008). However, since the participants of this study had largely completed education at the time of this review, I do not provide a detailed outline of the changes. Interested readers are directed to Chisholm and Leyendecker (2008).

The reform in the education system in South Africa, post 1994, played a role in the type of education that some of the younger black senior managers in this study received. Democracy enabled an increase of the black middle class who were able to afford a better education for their children. In concert with the reformed policies, the result was that a significant number of black children obtaining access to former model C schools which were previously accessible only to white children. These were well resourced government schools. The increase in the number of black children attending these former model C schools resulted in the emergence of different class groupings amongst black people (Hunter, 2014). The children that attended these schools are seen as possessing a form of privilege over the black children who attended township or rural schools. Whereas it may be argued that education reform afforded black children, as a homogeneous group, access to a better education, it is apparent that there is class stratification among black people. Bourdieu argued that education is a powerful mask for privilege. This is because, it appears to reward merit and effort, however, a family's social class grants children with cultural capital in the form of habitus that enables or disables them in their navigation of educational institutions (Bourdieu, 1990; Erben et al., 1979).

Bourdieu (1990) contended that inequalities in education are a result of promoting a sense of entitlement to middle class children which advantages them over poorer students. Furthermore, he asserts that education produces privilege and unequal apportioning of symbolic capital. This might be understood as the prestige that reinforces social dominance over those with limited forms of capital within particular contexts. It also highlights the

difference between agents belonging to a lower social class as compared to those belonging to a higher social class. He claimed that those of a higher social class possess a social capital in the form of certain acts such as the bodily mannerism and the use of particular accents when communicating (Bourdieu, 2018). Hunter (2014) pointed out that education reproduces inequalities by creating lifelong networks such as "old boy" networks. These networks grant their members access to work and other social benefits. According to Bourdieu (1990), these networks benefit their members through the provision of social capital that grants access to valued resources.

Similar to basic education, higher education in South Africa has a history that evolves around racial and ethnic lines guided by colonial and apartheid state policies. It is for this reason that we ought to recognise that the history of white political, economic and cultural domination played an important role in the emergence, roles and cultures of current institutions (Badat, 1999). The history of higher education illustrates that the system was not homogenous. Universities reflect the history of unequal relations of power which resulted from the colonial and apartheid regime (Badat, 1999; Nkomo, 1990; Wolpe & Unterhalter, 1991). The first white higher education institution established in South Africa was the University of the Cape of Good Hope, which functioned as the administrative examining board for the colleges of the Cape. These colleges were preparatory schools for white people intending to go to Europe for university education. This led to the founding of the South African College (SACS) in 1829 which evolved into a fully recognised university in 1918, the University of Cape Town (Ajayi, 1996). Following their conflict with the English, the Afrikaner elites established their own university, Victoria College in 1865, which was renamed Stellenbosch University in 1918 (Ajayi, 1996).

The establishment of these universities led to the establishment of other universities whose purpose was to only serve the white ruling classes across the country. The white ruling governments denied Africans access to these institutions as they feared that higher education would result in them being anti-colonial and anti-racist (Ajayi, 1996). Almost a hundred years post the establishment of the first white university, the first black university, Fort Hare was established in 1918 (Reddy, 2004). When the Nationalist Party ascended to power in 1948, only 4.8 percent of all students enrolled at universities were black. Most of these were at Fort Hare (Badat, 1991). As an alternative to denying black people access to white universities, the apartheid state created universities for classified groups at that time based on

the different African tribes and homelands (Horrell, 1968). The University of Zululand was established for Zulu and Swazi speakers; the University of the North was created for Sotho, Tswana, Venda, Tsonga speakers and the Transvaal Ndebele. Xhosa speakers were directed to Fort Hare University and the newly established University of Transkei. They created the universities of the Western Cape and Durban-Westville for coloured people and people of Indian descent (Horrell, 1968). Separating the universities based on ethnicity was the realisation of the apartheid state's vision to divide the black majority into many minorities in order to weaken them politically (Reddy, 2004).

The racial differentiation of universities mirrored that of society where the minority classified as white people at the top and a large majority of black people categorised by state policy into Africans, Coloured and Indian "groups" at the bottom (Reddy, 2004). The Coloured and Indian groups were purposefully positioned to constitute "middle-man minorities" (Van den Berghe, 1987). The policies founded by the government applied racially discriminatory admission criteria to construct universities for white people, Africans (divided into separate language groups), Indians, and Coloureds (Van den Berghe, 1987). Albeit being separated based on ethnicity and language, the historically black universities had similar cultures which differentiated them from the historically white institutions. Although black people were permitted to study at black universities, the resources and curricula at these universities were geared towards producing skills to enable basic development and black "independence" for the Bantustans by producing teachers, nurses, social workers, and clerical skills. Black student organisations co-operated as a result of the students' experiences of struggle and conflict which developed a common collective identity (Reddy, 2004; Van den Berghe, 1987). In the same way, the white universities with shared history, culture, and political ideologies created common institutional identities among the English and Afrikaner language universities respectively. Badat (2002) attributes the perpetual racial and ethnically fragmented higher education sector to the legacy of apartheid state planning. When the country transitioned into a democratic state, the higher education "system" was comprised of twenty-one universities and fifteen Technikons which are now called Universities of Technologies (Badat, 2002)

Higher education institutions have been credited for having a positive impact on social transformation in South Africa, constituting and responding to the social conflict within their walls in a different way. The development of black universities resulted in an increase of the

number of black students between 1960 and 1976. By allowing more black students access to study, these institutions contributed towards social transformation of post-apartheid society. These institutions also contributed towards the collapse of apartheid in that they provided favourable conditions for black political consciousness that facilitated activities, such as student protests and activism (Reddy, 2004). Through studying courses in the humanities and education, students were able to critically engage their experiences of oppressive conditions on their campuses and black students became highly frustrated (Reddy, 2004). The increasing student frustration and alienation produced student organisations and campaigns for university reforms. The reforms led to unrest where black students protested to show resistance to the apartheid government's ideologies and policies (Badat, 2002).

Although there were other factors contributing to the abolishment of apartheid, this resistance from black students through protests played an important role in the disintegration of the legitimacy of the apartheid social formation. Reddy (2004) contends that black students' resistance, several strikes, boycotts, worker stayaways, and communities battling against the police created a social force that challenged apartheid rule in the 1980's. The emergence of the black elite during the apartheid era, has also been credited to these institutions allowing black people to further their studies. Since 1994, under the new democratic dispensation, South Africa has undergone significant changes in the state and civil society. A significant change following the collapse of apartheid is that formerly white universities are no longer just preserved for white students, resulting in the increase in the number of first-generation black students from poor, rural and urban working-class groups entering higher education institutions (Reddy, 2004).

The colonial and apartheid periods produced a large white middle class through their ability to access previously white higher education institutions allowing them to obtain better jobs than black people. Simultaneously, the black institutions also played a role in the emergence of the black middle class who, in the 1960s, played a fundamental role in establishing a resistance movement that intensified in the 1980s. With an increase in the black middle class, access to higher education is not only centred around race but class is becoming an additional important factor (Reddy, 2004). This rise of the black middle class which increased significantly in post-1994 period, has provided more opportunities for upward social mobility as a result of black graduates assuming jobs in the public and private sectors, as well as civil

society. Obtaining better jobs has allowed them access to former white neighbourhoods and their children are accessing historically white schools (Reddy, 2004).

Although there has been an increase in the number of black students entering higher education, the fields of study, degrees, pass rates, research outputs and funding are still associated with race and gender (Reddy, 2004). White students continue to have more opportunities that allow them greater access to higher education compared to black students. This is a product of the primary and high school education they have attained, and also the common reproductive function of the universities which was formed to serve the needs of specific racial-ethnic groups of the population resulting in the prevailing social relations under apartheid (Reddy, 2004).

Obtaining initial work experience post attending an institution of higher learning is a key objective of young graduates. According to McDermott, Mangan, and O'Connor (2006), organisations employ graduates as a pool of potential managers and to enhance succession possibilities. Considering that these graduates are perceived as having high potential with the ability to be fast tracked into more senior positions, some organisations recruit them into accelerated development programmes generally named graduate development programmes, graduate recruitment programmes or graduate accelerated programmes (Viney et al, 1997). The objective of these programmes assumes that the graduate will reach a senior management position faster than a graduate who is not on such a programme (Viney et al., 1997). McDermott et al. (2006) assert that these programmes raise an organisation's capital by enabling them to grow and continuously innovate. By and large, organisations categorise graduates as knowledge workers and differentiate them by employing them into formalised graduate development programmes. According to McDermott et al. (2001), organisations search for graduates who are ready for work, have the required skills, are able to communicate, and can easily integrate in a wider organisation. Equally, graduates search for organisations that will develop their competence, provide them with competitive rewards and position them for further career development.

Similar to most countries, graduate development programmes have gained momentum in South Africa with companies aiming to acquire the best talent from academic institutions and expose them to many facets of their business in order to fast track a graduate into a future management position. These programmes place the graduate within a programme for a period

of twelve or thirty-six months of intensive on-the-job training. With South Africa producing more black graduates every year as a result of the increase in the number of students entering higher education institutions, their unemployment rates appear to be declining, compared to previous years where more white graduates than black graduates were hired (Oluwajodu et al., 2015). The move towards equality has resulted in a directional change in employing white graduates to employing the previously disadvantaged people. Although there is a growth in the black graduate labour force, graduate unemployment in South Africa appears to be rising together with the overall unemployment rate (Oluwajodu et al., 2015).

In their research on the employment trends for South African graduates, Oluwajodu et al. (2015) identified some reasons to explain the increasing unemployment rate for graduates. One of their major findings was that the kind of institution that a graduate attends and the perception of employers about those institutions determined whether they would employ the graduates. Graduates from the so-called non-access universities are preferred to those from historically black institutions because of employers' perceptions about these universities and the fact that they do not engage with employers to understand the right skills needed to be successful. As a result, employers prefer to spend their resources on candidates from non-access universities. This is because the cost involved in recruiting is expensive and they prefer to invest these large costs in candidates perceived to have adequate skills (Oluwajodu et al., 2015).

In addition to the study others have suggested individual and behavioural factors associated with youth unemployment in South Africa (De Lannoy et al., 2018; Patel et al., 2020). De Lannoy et al. (2018) recognised the difficulty in young people finding employment due to a lack of work experience and marketable skills as compared to older and more experienced workers. Factors such as high costs of transport, limited access to the internet and ineffective labour market knowledge and information have also been attributed to high unemployment amongst the youth (Patel et al., 2020).

2.3.2 Historical Context of South African Organisations

Kunnie (2004) noted that labour practices in South Africa were underpinned by the colonial system well before apartheid was formalised and institutionalised. He argued that Africans were rigidly confined to subservient roles as labourers, and this was one reason why the colonial regimes from the 1800s refused to accord them the title and rights of "workers".

Furthermore, African women were essentially viewed as domestic labour, and white workers employed African women as domestic labourers (Kunnie, 2004). Black people worked in positions where they were subservient to their white counterparts who were in positions of supervision over black people. The separation between black and white people was also reinforced through deliberate geographical separation in both urban or rural settings and differentiated because of temporal or social circumstances (Kunnie, 2004). The places where Africans were located, as well as their social settings, ensured that they did not have access to resources which resulted in them being unskilled and subsequently, not getting employment in skilled jobs. Because the private and public sectors were owned and run by white men, they primarily pursued the interests of white men. This meant that white men were preferred as skilled workers while black people provided unskilled labour.

With the end of slavery in the 1830s, men of different race groups started working in the same kind of jobs, however with unequal rates of pay. Between the period of 1938 and 1956, Alexander and Simons (1959) reported the predominance of white people in skilled occupations. White people were reported to occupy 82.6% of skilled jobs, Africans 6.2%, Coloureds 5.5% and Asians 5.6% (Alexander & Simons, 1959). The gaps in labour legislation during the early 1940s, the growth of manufacturing and deskilling of jobs, the entry of white women and black men into employment, and the concomitant growth of radicalised industrial unions resulted in class militancy during the war years (O'Meara, 1978). In the post-war period, working class identification was de-legitimised due to various factors such as the class divisions between Afrikaner workers and the Afrikaner petit-bourgeoisie (O'Meara 1978).

Despite challenges from trade unions, South Africa experienced a rise of several racialised laws in the mid-1950s. In this period, following immediately from the election of the Nationalist Party in 1948 and its promise to protect the interests of Afrikaners, laws were implemented to promote job reservation and preferential treatment for white men (Alexander & Simons, 1959). Job reservation is described by Alexander and Simons (1959) as a system that promoted a workplace colour bar that was introduced by the Nationalist Party in 1956. Its consequences were that it gave white workers preference over selected occupations in industry, commerce and public services. These laws ensured that black South Africans were prevented from certain types of jobs (Von Holdt, 2003). One such law was the Mines and Works Act of 1911 which stipulated that skilled work in the mines were reserved for white

people only. Another law was the Native Building Workers' Act which was enacted in 1951 which stated that Africans were not allowed to perform skilled building work (Von Holdt, 2003).

According to Von Holdt (2003), South African white management in the 1970s and 1980s, controlled black workers through a specific form of racial despotism. White managers were given authority over black workers, and this was maintained through frequent dismissals, the threat of violence and fear, and arbitrary procedures against black people. The colonial authority and a generic manual labourer resulted in the devaluing of black workers who were expected to be subservient to their white superiors. The black workers laboured in environments where they had to follow instructions from their white managers. As black workers were entering more front-line jobs, racist and arbitrary managerial techniques were carried out to devalue these white-collar jobs (Von Holdt, 2003). Similar power dynamics were prevalent as the black workers in white collar jobs were expected to follow instructions and orders given by their white managers in superior positions.

In order to maintain racialised work hierarchies, differential schooling was provided to black and white learners and students (Wolpe & Unterhalter, 1991). This was based on Verwoerd's vision for apartheid where black people should receive just enough education to be what he described as "hewers of wood and bearers of water" (Perumal, 2009, p. 36). Thus, the exclusion of black people from skilled employment was due to the inferior education quality they received and job reservation for white people. Woolard (2002) attributed this to the immense investment in state education for white schoolchildren in the 1950s and 1960s which resulted in white workers securing the skills that enabled them to command high incomes in the 1970s and 1980s. These restrictive economic practices thus prevented most of the population from upward mobility within the labour market. This led to unequal income distribution which was reinforced by an unequal distribution of skills and training (Woolard, 2002). With the abolishment of apartheid and the establishment of a democratic dispensation, the new government implemented various redress processes, such as, affirmative action and later the implementation of employment equity.

Kenny (2004) described the workplace in South Africa as a critical place where social relations were contested. These contestations led to significant changes between the 1970s and late 1990s. She argued that workers' strategic choices changed, resulting in them being

altered political beings. Further to this, Kenny (2004) emphasised how the space of work impacts the way in which workers view their political future in post-apartheid South Africa. As a result, workers are likely to find themselves bound by sets of meanings about race, class, gender and age at work. Workplace experiences and relations are thus central to how people understand their place in the world and to how they imagine their possibilities. Workplace experiences are constitutive of identity generally.

2.3.3 South African organisations' journey towards equity

Towards the end of apartheid, North American multinational organisations doing business in South Africa, began to implement affirmative action programmes in the South African subsidiaries (Maphai, 1989; Ramphele, 1995). However, post 1994, backed by political will, more systematic efforts to diversify the workforce were implemented. To redress the inequalities created by the apartheid system, the South African government introduced the Employment Equity Act in 1998, which was amended in 2006. The main purpose of the Act is to promote employment equality given the structural and systemic nature of the labour market discrimination (Employment Equity Act 55, 1998). The Act provides a framework and guidelines for organisations on how to implement the transformation agenda as part of their internal labour practices. In addition, the Act aims to achieve employment equity by (a) promoting equal opportunity and fair treatment in employment through the elimination of unfair discrimination; and (b) implementing affirmative action to redress the disadvantages in employment experienced by designated groups (Africans, Coloureds, Indians, persons with disabilities and women), in order to ensure their equitable representation in all occupational categories and levels in the workplace (Employment Equity Act 55, 1998).

Employment equity has to be viewed in the context of the important supporting pillars to effect transformation. These include the National Development Plan 2030, Skills Development Act, Broad Based Black Empowerment Act (B-BBEE) of 2003, and the Government's Strategy to address Gender Based Violence. The EEA and B-BBEE Act are the two legislative frameworks that promote the redress of historic inequalities by creating inclusivity in employment as well as ownership in businesses (CEE, 2023). The B-BBEE Act uses a scorecard that aids to facilitate B-BBEE through five elements, namely, Ownership, Management Control, Skills Development, Enterprise and Supplier Development and Socio-economic Development. From a B-BBEE Act perspective, the EEA is operationalised through the Management and Control scorecard element which seeks to ensure that there is

an equitable representation of black people in all occupational levels of the organisation (CEE, 2023). To align to the EEA, the B-BBEE Act compels organisations to use the economically active population targets to set targets for all occupational levels in order to achieve equitable representation of the overall demographics for black people (CEE, 2023).

To ensure that organisations are complying with EE requirements, the South African government established the Commission on Employment Equity (CEE) which monitors the employment patterns, and the regulations and guidelines of the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 (EEA). Since 2000, the Commission has provided an annual report to the Minister of Labour in terms of Section 33 of the Act, indicating the progress in implementing employment equity. The annual report gives a statistical review of employment equity trends drawn from the employment equity reports submitted by designated employers to the CEE. Designated employers are organisations that employ 50 or more employees.

Although it is evident that the South African workforce is well equipped with legislation and statutory bodies to redress the past inequalities in our workplaces, organisations are finding it difficult to translate their aims and objectives into action (Booysen, 2007b). Nonetheless, the implementation of the EEA in the country has resulted in a change in the demographic makeup of organisations (Horwitz & Jain, 2011). While significant progress has been made in the junior and middle management levels, senior and top management structures are still the domain of white men. The Employment Equity Report of 2023 indicates that the Act does not seem to significantly increase the pace with which organisations promote black and women employees into senior management roles (CEE, 2023). From 2003 to 2023, the CEE report indicates that there has been only a 1% increase of the black population in top and senior management year-on-year which is considered be a very slow rate of transformation. This is tracked in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Employment Equity Statistics over a 20-year period

Occupational Sector	Period	African	Coloured	Indian	White	Male	Female
Top Management	2003	10%	3.5%	5%	81.5%	86.2%	13.8%
	2023	16.9%	6.1%	11.2%	62.9%	73.5%	26.5%
Senior Management	2003	10.8%	5.1%	6.3%	77.9%	78.5%	21.5%
	2023	26.4%	8.2%	12.3%	50.1%	62.8%	37.2%
Professionally Qualified, Specialists and Middle Management	2003	16.2%	8.2%	7%	68.5%	69%	31%
	2023	48.4%	9.9%	9.3%	30%	51.8%	48.2%
Skilled technical & academically qualified workers	2003	35.8%	14.1%	7%	43.1%	56.3%	43.7%
	2023	65.3%	11.6%	5.3%	16.2%	50.6%	49.4%

Commission of Employment Equity (2003, 2023)

International research by Khosrovani and Ward (2011); Saadin, Ramli, Johari and Harin (2015) in the US, and Fearfull and Kamenou (2010) in the UK and local research by Horwitz, Jain and Mbabane (2005), Selby and Sutherland (2006), Thomas (2002), show that while legislation is integral to addressing unfair workplace discrimination, it is not enough. This suggests a growing consensus that strategies and efforts to facilitate the inclusion of black senior managers are not achieving the desired results. The EE reports over the years have indicated that South African financial services' senior management positions are dominated by white males and black people and women struggle to advance to senior management positions. The status of black managerial participation in decision making positions in the private sector has been widely discussed in South Africa. The Minister of Labour indicated that although there has been progress made in the number of black people being hired in the private sector, they seem to be under-represented in top and senior managerial positions (Transformation Indaba, 2016). The CEE report for 2022-2023 illustrated that white people are over-represented as they occupy 62.9% of the positions at the top management level, which is almost seven times their Economically Active Population (EAP).

The statistical make-up of organisations, as reported above, indicates the slow pace with which black people and black women, in particular, reach senior positions. In some instances, it indicates that we are regressing in staffing practices that were meant to help us address the slow pace of change. This challenge has become an important concern for South African

organisations. With nearly three decades of democracy and affirmative action, the pace of change in senior ranks is of concern. Literature on transformation within organisations internationally, and in South Africa, tends to focus on identifying the barriers to career advancement of black people (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Bell & Nkomo, 1998; Seibert et al., 2001; Thomas, 2002; Saadin et al., 2015). There is, however, limited research on how these barriers can be overcome (Booysen, 2007b; Booysen & Nkomo, 2014). This provokes the question as to what extent the permeability of the organisational career boundaries enables careers of white men while constraining the careers of black people.

Black women share potential common interests with each of their group memberships; that is race with black men and gender with white women. Although white women and black men were also disadvantaged sub-groups, black women in South Africa were most adversely affected by apartheid having faced a 'triple oppression', being black, women, and often poor (Jaga et al., 2017). Jaga et al. (2017) contends that black women remain the most vulnerable group in the South African labour market as they are still in low skilled occupations compared to white women employed in skilled occupations. Employment equity statistics have continued to indicate that black women have trouble breaking into white male dominated professional workplaces because of South Africa's racial and patriarchal apartheid legacy as well as ongoing patriarchy (Jaga et al., 2017). It is therefore important to hold an intersectional lens when considering black women in this context.

2.3.4 Job mobility amongst black professionals

The increase in the number of black people attending higher institutions of learning and subsequently being employed in South African organisations has led to a high demand for Black African professionals, especially in senior management. Matuna (1996) addressed the narrative of job hopping amongst black professionals. He contended that there is a trend in South Africa's job market where skilled black recruits hop from one management post to another for money. Booysen (1999) on the other hand, attributed the introduction of the EEA to the heightened job hopping activity amongst black professionals. They argued that the employment equity requirements placed organisations under immense pressure to diversify their workforce causing them to intensify their head-hunting efforts and offering higher financial rewards to attract black talent (Matuna, 1996; Booysen, 1999). Nzukuma and Bussin (2011) supported this argument and attributed the equity legislation to have caused organisations to pursue EE requirements, resulting in the mobility of highly qualified black

talent. They also recognised how the limited number of qualified and experienced black professionals created perceptions concerning the mobility of top black talent (Nzukuma & Bussin, 2011). Many organisations are positioning themselves as being the employer of choice, and there is a distinct shift towards workplace equality.

Investigating the apparent causes of black professionals' mobility, Cruz (2006) found that sixty five percent of managers had moved between two jobs at least within a space of three years. Additionally, there was evidence to indicate racially skewed turnover with black people moving at a more frequent rate. The study found a number of apparent causes for the mobility amongst black professionals. The plausible causes included a culture clash, the need for belonging, the desire to feel valued and treated with respect and dignity and the desire to make a meaningful contribution (Cruz, 2006). In their study to test perceptions about the mobility of African black senior managers, Nzukuma and Bussin (2011) reviewed literature on the reasons why Black African senior managers leave organisations. Firstly, they conducted a literature review on international countries that have had similar transformation challenges as South Africa and secondly, they conducted an analysis of the demographic landscape of senior management in South African corporates. Lastly, they established a number of "push and pull factors", that resulted in Black African senior managers leaving their organisations (Nzukuma & Bussin, 2011). They cited hostility and racism in organisations as a real driver for mobility amongst black professionals (Myers, 2013; Nzukuma & Bussin, 2011; Rangaka, 2011). They concluded that the discourse about job hopping amongst black professionals was a generalisation. They found consistency in literature that suggested the hostile Eurocentric corporate cultures was the main driver for turnover behaviour amongst black professionals (Nzukuma & Bussin, 2011).

Due to the majority of South African organisations being built around Western cultural norms, black people have always been excluded in the majority of economic life. With the economy still being largely controlled by white males, South African organisations are centred around a Euro-centric culture that promotes individualism and competition, opposing an Afro-centric culture that advocates inclusiveness and solidarity (Nzukuma & Bussin, 2011). Following a number of scholars examining this phenomenon, the narrative of job hopping amongst black professionals grew in interest among scholars with one of the most notable studies conducted by Ndzwayiba et al. (2018). They examined this narrative within the context of the politics of unequal power relations, dominance and otherness. These

scholars found that the popular racialised job hopping phenomenon was an over-generalisation which lacks credible evidence. Their argument was that the previous studies did not take these aspects into consideration and failed to expose the intricate dynamics in studying black employees' turnover behaviour (Ndzwayiba et al., 2018). The job mobility amongst black people, particularly in senior positions, is examined in the narratives of participants in this study. Most of the research regarding black managers' excessive job mobility or 'job hopping' appears in popular literature sources, such as newspaper articles, and not in scientific and academic literature.

The narrative of the "job hopping black people" found in media and scholarly publications is generally critical towards black professionals as they were perceived to be disloyal, greedy, unreliable, and motivated by money (Ndzwayiba et al., 2018). Prominent and influential people have perpetuated this narrative. These include the former governor of the South African Reserve Bank, Tito Mboweni, who proclaimed that the competent black people he recruited left for other jobs once they received training (Oliphant & Sapa, 2006). He asserted that the unstable behaviour amongst black professionals disappointed him and as a result, he ceased to recruit black people (Oliphant & Sapa, 2006). He proclaimed his preference for Afrikaners as he perceived them to be more focused on their work. Such public utterances reproduced a negative narrative of job hopping, disloyal black people. Ndzwayiba et al. (2018) criticised Mboweni for having missed an opportunity to examine the real motives behind the mobility of black people, as he was the Minister of the Department of Labour when the employment equity policy was developed. He was accused of reinscribing the prevalent racist narrative which perceives Afrikaners as embodying the required competencies and credibility as compared to black people who are perceived as lacking such traits.

With the media coverage on job hopping amongst black professionals, several scholars began to show an interest in understanding this phenomenon. These scholars have sought to refute the claims by examining the drivers and causes for the reported mobility amongst black professionals. For instance, a Human Sciences Research Council report in 1999/2000, challenged the job hopping narrative (HSRC, 2003). The study found that 52.5 percent of graduates had changed jobs only once since graduation regardless of their field of study. The study also found higher retention behaviour amongst African graduates with 61 percent of these still in their first job since graduation compared to 38.1 and 35.8 percent amongst white

and Indian graduates, respectively (HSRC, 2003). In later studies, several scholars refuted the dominant job hopping narrative as they found that there was not enough empirical evidence that proved a higher turnover behaviour amongst black professionals compared to their white counterparts (Myers, 2013; Nzukuma & Bussin, 2011; Rangaka, 2011). Nzukuma and Bussin's (2011) study found that black senior managers have a propensity to change jobs more frequently than their white counterparts. In their study, black senior managers attributed this behaviour to a lack of trust they have towards organisations in relation to their career development.

Other scholars have challenged the dominant narrative by arguing that it over-simplifies a complex issue. In their study, Vallabh and Donald (2001) surveyed 30 black managers and 30 white managers to determine similarities and differences in potential drivers of quit intention and quit behaviour. There were no differences in the work values of these groups, however, job satisfaction was found to be higher amongst the white managers compared to the black managers. The lower job satisfaction amongst black managers was attributed to them feeling untrusted, unrecognised, and often assigned to positions that did not match with their qualifications and experience (Vallabh & Donald, 2001). Additionally, Mtungwa (2009) emphasised that black employees do not leave for money. Instead, they leave as a result of organisations not being accommodating to them. He proclaimed that corporate environments "are not black friendly" as they subject black employees to negative stereotypes that undermine their competence and credibility. In more recent times, researchers have started to pay attention to the voices of the black professionals in an attempt to understand the factors that influence their career journeys and if these reflect their lived career experiences (Stanley, 2009; Wyatt & Silvester, 2015).

2.4 Summary

The first part of the literature review commenced with an overview of race as the preceding focus of life story research within the South African context. This was followed by a review of relevant concepts and theories from various perspectives that guide this study. Race matters have been, and continue to be, a topical subject in South Africa from a political and social perspective and to explore the subject, CRT was employed in the current study. CRT has been instrumental in understanding and exploring race issues in literature, politics and societal matters and it has been credited for recognising the voices of marginalised people and challenging the status quo that has promoted inequality in society. The transition into a

democratic state mainly addressed race matters which resulted in noticeable changes in race relations but has now shifted the spotlight towards gender and class inequalities. For this reason, the intersection between race and gender was explored as it plays a critical role in the life stories of the black senior managers.

It is important to recognise the impact that the intersection has on their lived experiences from childhood to their current status. A review on intersectionality was presented from international and local perspectives. In addition to intersectionality, Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field and capital were also reviewed to explore race, gender, and class. These concepts have been explored in previous studies and have been found to be effective in understanding matters where there are power inequalities as a result of social stratification. I subsequently introduced performativity as a theoretical perspective to aid in exploring the experiences the participants had as senior managers in their respective institutions. Performativity allows for the exploration of identity performances that are acted by the senior managers based on what is required in the environments they occupy.

To place the theory in context and to apply it to life and material conditions, with the focus on the life stories of the black senior managers, part two of the literature review began with the historical context of the South African school system from basic education through to higher education. It is important to provide this context of the schooling system as this is part of the early stages of their life stories. When exploring this period of their schooling years, it is important to take into account the political and economic context of the schooling years as it impacted their journeys in their formative years. Education has been attributed to contributing towards career success, particularly when obtaining access to jobs. Literature reviewed and presented indicated a graduate development programme as playing an important role in providing access into organisations. I presented research on these programmes and illustrate how they are used to provide growth opportunities to graduates who have just completed their studies.

To trace the journey as a young profession to a senior manager, I introduced research on organisations, particularly in the South African context. I start by providing a historical overview of organisations to explore the way organisations are structured and how they have been designed for white people and exclude black people in professional and management roles. I presented and reviewed literature on the implementation of employment equity

legislation. I analyse Employment Equity reports by presenting data over a period of 20 years in order to analyse the pace in which changes have been achieved. This is followed by analysing the current data from the most recent report which provides more of a contextual view of the current status of transformation. The final section of this part focuses on black professionals' mobility between organisations and the "job hopping" phenomenon that has been noted and debated by various social commentators and researchers. In the following chapter, I present a detailed discussion of the methodology used for this study.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

This chapter is a presentation of the methodological considerations used in the current study. The chapter begins with the description of the narrative inquiry framework which gives the conceptual and methodological impetus of the research. This is followed by the description of the narrative inquiry framework in the study of life stories. Following the description of the framework in the context of this study, I describe the methodology and procedure followed in the study. I explicate the interview process of data collection undertaken, how I analysed the data and interpreted it for meaning. The chapter concludes with my reflections of the role I played as a researcher during the research process. This is done in relation to ethical implications and issues related to confidentiality and the safety of data storage.

3.1 Narrative Inquiry as a Framework for Interpretation

3.1.1 Narrative Inquiry

Narrative research is a form of inquiry where the researcher studies the lives of people through the stories they tell in the process of research. Narrative inquiry was defined by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) as a researcher's way of understanding participants' experiences over time, in a certain place and in social interaction with the environment. Clandinin and Rosiek (2006) extended this definition by describing narrative inquiry as a process of exploring how social, cultural, and institutional narratives create and shape people's experiences and how they, in turn, express and enact their experiences. Humans are storytelling beings who, individually and socially, lead storied lives. Thus, the study of narrative is the analysis of the ways humans experience the world. Connelly and Clandinin (2006, p. 375) contend that "story, in the current idiom, [is] a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. Narrative inquiry as the study of experience as story, then is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience." This is a productive way of thinking about narrative. It guided the approach that I took in relation to gathering stories and in the meaning making process of interpreting participants' stories.

According to Hogan and Nicholson (1988), the research relationship between the researcher and the participants becomes empowering and it develops over time. Hogan and Nicholson (1988) describe empowering relationships as those where the researcher and participants

develop feelings of connectedness. This feeling of connectedness develops in situations where both parties share the same purpose and intention and regard each other as equals (Hogan & Nicholson, 1988). When the process of narrative inquiry begins, it is imperative that all participants have a voice within the relationship. Without voice, there is no story or at the very least, the story that is given is that which the teller thinks the listener wants. This suggests that the two parties need to find a way of working within a relationship that requires what is termed 'connected knowing' in which the knower is personally attached to the known, which they call the "believing game" (Clandinin & Caine, 2008). The "believing game" is a way of knowing where the researcher immerses themselves in the participants' story as a way of coming to know their story.

In narrative inquiry, it is critical that the researcher listens first to the participant's story, and that it is the participant who first tells his or her story. This means that the participant is granted the time and space to tell their story so that it too gains the authority and validity as much as the research story would (Clandinin & Caine, 2008). The mutual construction of the research relationship is very important, and it is characterised by a relationship in which both participants and researchers feel cared for and have a voice with which to tell their stories. Narrative inquiry is therefore a process of collaboration which involves mutual storytelling and retelling stories as the research proceeds. It is vital that in the process of starting to live the shared story of narrative inquiry, the researcher should endeavour to construct a relationship in which both voices are heard (Clandinin & Caine, 2008).

3.1.2 Narrative inquiry: Life story narratives

Reay (2004) asserts that in order to understand the concept of habitus, it is important to explore individual histories. It is for this reason that I employed narrative inquiry as a method of analysing the stories told by the black senior managers. One of the central concepts of Bourdieu's theory of habitus is the complex interplay between past and present involving something linked to an individual's history (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Narrative inquiry provides insights on the individual's current circumstances there to be acted upon, but they are internalised to become a layer added to their earlier socialisations (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). The importance of studying life story and other biographical and narrative approaches has been highlighted in identity studies as providing insights into a person's total life (DiMaggio, 1979; Kohli, 1986; Thomas & Znaniecki, 1958). This study employed a narrative

inquiry approach to explore how habitus is created through people's early childhood experience through socialisation within the family. These narratives provided an understanding of participants' engagement with the outside world, particularly in the work context, while navigating their careers. In another study by Warhurst and Black (2017) used the life story approach to examine manager's engagement with wisdom as a resource for identity work.

Life stories are regarded as the starting point for life story research and are regarded as partial, selective commentary on the lived experience of the storyteller (Goodson, 2001). Goodson (2001) explained the rendering of lived experience in two stages in which the first stage is where the storyteller narrates their life story, and the second stage is where a life story is constructed through a range of interviews and documented data. Based on the manner in which the story is reconstructed, the storyteller will select the stories that present his or her life story as individual experiences embedded in a coherent, meaningful context, a biographical construct and not as series of isolated experiences. These stories will then be a part of the overall pattern of thematic and temporal relationships that make up the experience of the individual's lifetime. The storyteller will, as a result, choose what is biographically relevant and they will develop the thematic and temporal links between experiences in a subjective manner. The process of selection that the storyteller uses to present their life story is coherent and occurs in a structured meaningful way within the context of the interaction with the interviewer (Rosenthal, 1993).

The narrated life story evolves based on the thematic focus of the biographer representing a construct of biographical experiences (Rosenthal, 1993). Therefore, the story will evolve around a thematic topic that is decided upon by the interviewer and judged by the narrator based on their interest (Harrison, 2009). The creation of these topics by the interviewer provides the biographer with a framework that assists them in selecting stories they want included. The narrated life story develops around a specified thematic focus, which represents a general construct of biographical experience**s** derived from past interactional episodes and future expectations and is simultaneously a product of the biographer's present situation (Harrison, 2009). Based on this distinction, the analysis of narrated life stories emerges at the two levels, firstly through the analysis of the lived life, the experienced life story and the analysis of the narrated life story (Rosenthal, 2006). The former analysis entails the reconstruction of the biographical meaning of experiences at the time they happened and

further the reconstruction of the chronological sequence of experiences in which they occurred. The latter analysis entails the reconstruction of the present meanings of experiences and the reconstruction of the temporal order of the life story in the present time of narrating or writing (Rosenthal, 2006).

3.1.3 Organisational Storytelling

The qualitative methodology used in the study is in the form of stories that the participants told about their experiences in the process of making meaning of career mobility. Scholars and practitioners have debated the impact of telling stories in organisations. Those that find value in telling stories have shown that stories are useful for commencing organisational change and sharing knowledge, especially in situations where most other forms of communication fail. Examples of such situations are attempts to convey strategy, organisational culture or social practices (Brown, Denning, Groh & Prusak, 2004; Morgan & Dennehy, 1997). On the other hand, those that oppose storytelling in organisations claim that storytelling is merely a momentary management fad (Sinclair, 2005).

Swap, Leonard, Shields, and Abrams (2001, p. 107) define an organisational story as "a detailed narrative of past management actions, employee interactions, or other intra- or extra-organisational events". Storytelling is often described by researchers as a social and cultural phenomenon that people use to make sense of their life, the organisation they work in and the world they live in (Czarniawska, 1998). It allows members to express their organisational experiences. Storytelling confirms the shared experiences and meanings of organisational members and groups within the organisation. Storytelling, in the current research, thus allowed us to understand the career experiences of the black men and women in senior management roles in the organisations within which they have worked in the course of their careers. Moreover, the telling of earlier life experiences, such as, careers of parents, was enabled in this approach. This allowed for the integration of life and organisational histories. The continuities and discontinuities between early life and present future trajectories are therefore traced.

Frank (2000) asserted that 'story' and 'narrative' are analytically different. The difference relates to where the primary data ends and where the analysis of that data begins. He pointed out that people tell stories, but narratives come from the analysis of stories. Therefore, the researcher's role is to interpret the stories in order to analyse the underlying narrative that the

storytellers may not be able to reflexively account (Frank, 2000). In the current study, the senior managers shared their stories of navigating life and their careers. This illuminated the raced and gendered possibilities and limitations which impacted their career mobility within the post-apartheid period. Moreover, it shed light on the strategies that some have utilised to successfully navigate career trajectories within particular moments.

3.2 Methodology and Procedure

3.2.1 Qualitative Research Design

The current study explored life narratives, tracing career journeys of black men and black women senior managers through the use of a qualitative research design. Creswell (2013) defined qualitative methodology as a process of inquiry where a social or human problem is studied in order to obtain a better understanding of that problem. Qualitative methodology is about understanding the experiences of those who live them (Rudestam & Newton, 2014). The qualitative paradigm is rooted in the ontological approach of subjectivity. The subjective approach is based on an assumption that the social world external to individual cognition is made up of names, concepts and labels. These are used as subjective creations that serve as tools for describing, making sense of and negotiating the external world (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). In the context of the current study, the qualitative method allowed for an understanding of how senior managers make sense of their worlds and the world in which they exist by categorising aspects of their lived experiences (Creswell, 2013). For Creswell (2013), participants' 'lived experiences' are what assist and guide many of the different qualitative approaches to make sense of their research analysis.

Following Lee's (1992) phenomenologist view, the qualitative method enabled me to capture the participants' recollection of their life stories and allowed for the understanding of how they defined and constructed their world. In accordance with Alase (2017), I was able to apply my interpersonal and subjective skill to the research exploratory process by immersing myself in the events or activities of the study during the process of interviewing. I became an active participant in the study and as I was able to use the participants' responsiveness to obtain relevant information and ideas.

The research questions in qualitative research should capture the essence of what the study aims to uncover (Alase, 2017). Trede and Higgs (2009) observe that research questions

embed the values, world view and direction of an inquiry. They also are influential in determining what type of knowledge that is going to be generated. In support of this view, Creswell (2013) suggested that researchers, using the qualitative method, should have two central questions to their studies and a maximum of seven sub-questions. Asking central questions followed by the sub-questions will narrow the focus of the study while leaving the questioning open. In addition to posing the central and sub-central questions to participants, as a rule, it is important that qualitative researchers utilise the open-ended question formula.

Following Creswell's (2003) recommendation, the following research questions were asked in the interview:

1. What do life story narratives tell us about how black people navigate professional careers?
2. How do black men and black women in senior management positions make meaning of their family and community backgrounds to think about their careers?
3. What meanings do black senior managers assign to their experiences of moving between organisations over the course of their careers?
4. How do gender, race and class intersect to explain the experiences of black men and black women senior managers' career journeys?

3.2.2 Sampling Strategy

The participants of the current study were sampled from a population of black senior managers in various organisations within the financial services sector in South Africa. As stated previously, for the purpose of the current study, black people refer to Black African people as defined by the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998. In addition, they must have moved between at least two organisations within their careers so that they have a story to tell about moving between employers. A non-probability sampling methodology was used. In non-probability sampling, subjective judgements play a role in the selection of the sample. The researcher decides which units of the population will be included in the sample (Tansey, 2007). The main advantage of this methodology is that it allowed for greater control of the selection process. Although there was greater control over the selection process, the trade-off is that such sampling techniques limit the potential to generalise from the findings of the sample to the wider population.

There are various techniques for non-probability sampling, but for the purpose of this research, two were used. These are purposive sampling and snowball sampling. Purposive

sampling is a selection method where the purpose of the study and the researcher's knowledge of the population guide the process. If the study entails interviewing a pre-defined and visible set of actors, the researcher may be in a position to identify the particular participants of interest and sample those deemed most appropriate for the research needs (Creswell, 2013). For this study, I compiled a list of all the organisations in the financial industry (banks and insurance) and studied the organisations' structures in order to determine the positions classified as top and senior management. The participants were then recruited based on their occupation of those positions. The method of recruitment that I used includes my own personal and professional contacts and I also used a professional network named LinkedIn. Once I studied the organisational structures of the institutions, I searched for the candidates on LinkedIn and sent them messages. After they responded, they shared their personal contact details, such as, telephone numbers as well as email addresses, which I used as the main point of contact to schedule the interviews. I determined the race characteristics of participants based on their names and surnames. This is of course, an imprecise identification strategy as it might exclude people with surnames that might not be African.

In addition to the means described above, I relied on the participants to assist in identifying and referring me to other black senior managers in the financial sector. This methodology is known as snowballing. The snowball sampling method involved identifying an initial set of relevant participants, and then requesting that they suggest other potential participants who share similar characteristics or who have relevance in some way to the object of study (Lopez & Whitehead, 2013). This second set of participants was then interviewed, and also requested to supply names of other potential interview participants. The process continued until I reached saturation for the purposes of the study. Of the two techniques used, seventy percent of the participants were found through the use of LinkedIn and the rest through snowballing. All participants were either contacted telephonically or through email and this was followed by setting up meetings. I used the initial contact to explain what the purpose of the research was and what I expected of potential participants. I then asked them to give me consent to participate and for me to share the results of the study.

Although non-probability sampling has its advantages for this study, as there is greater control of the selection process, the trade-off is that such sampling techniques severely limit the potential to generalise from the findings of the sample to the wider population (Tansey, 2007). The aim of this study is however not to generalise but to potentially generate

theoretically transferable findings. This means that the central theoretical formulation of this study might be adapted to conduct research with other populations. These participants were black senior managers in the financial industry and excluded black senior managers who are working in other sectors. The sample was only constituted by black managers designated as senior managers in accordance with their roles within the organisations. From an Employment Equity perspective, these managers are classified in the senior and top management occupational levels.

3.2.3 Participants

The manner in which I described the sample in the table below and the rest of the study was to ensure that the participant's privacy was protected. I presented the biographical information anonymously by using pseudonyms including using codes to classify the organisations at which they worked. Table 2 below illustrates the biographical information of all the participants in terms of their gender, age category and their organisation at the time of the interview.

Table 2: Biographical information by gender, age and their organisation at the time of the interview.

Pseudonym	Gender	Age Category	Organisation
1. Buhle	Female	30 – 35	Insurance B
2. Lebo	Female	35 – 40	Bank Z
3. Lerato	Female	40 – 45	Bank V
4. Mbali	Female	40 – 45	Bank Y
5. Mpho	Female	45 – 50	Bank Y
6. Nonhlanhla	Female	55 – 60	Insurance A
7. Thando	Female	35- 40	Bank Y
8. Thuli	Female	50 – 55	Insurance B
9. Zama	Female	35 – 40	Bank Y
10. Zanele	Female	40 – 45	Bank Z
11. Kagiso	Male	45 – 50	Bank Y
12. Langa	Male	35 – 40	Insurance B
13. Mandla	Male	45 – 50	Bank X
14. Mosa	Male	35 – 40	Bank X
15. Nathi	Male	40 – 45	Bank Y
16. Shaka	Male	35 – 40	Bank Y
17. Sibusiso	Male	50 – 55	Bank Y
18. Sifiso	Male	50 – 55	Bank X
19. Sipho	Male	40 – 45	Bank Z
20. Tshiamo	Male	40 – 45	Bank Y

The preceding table indicates that 80% of the senior managers in the study are working in banks as compared to only 20% working in insurance institutions. In my analysis of the top structures in the various financial institutions, I found that the insurance institutions had less black representation in senior management positions when compared to the banks. Of the insurance organisations identified and contacted, only four participants expressed interest in the study. Forty-five percent of the participants were from Bank Y, made up of 50 percent men and 40 percent women. Based on my analysis of the senior management structures across different banks, it was expected that they would constitute a considerable number in the study. Bank Y appears to have more black people in senior management positions as compared to the other banks and financial services institutions in general. More black women coming from bank Y is reflective of their gender representation at these senior management levels.

Another reason for the higher number of participants from bank Y, can be attributed to the snowballing methodology where one of the participants sent an email to his colleagues in other business units and out of that process, there were two additional participants who agreed to be part of the study. In relation to age, 80% of the participants were between the ages of 35 and 50. This age group is likely to have benefitted from the implementation of employment equity initiatives focusing on ensuring that black people are represented in senior and top management positions in organisations.

3.2.4 Interviews

I collected data through the use of open-ended interviews by collecting spoken narratives of the participants. The use of open-ended questions was beneficial as it allowed for the exploration of the topic in depth and to understand processes (Züll, 2016). The use of open-ended questions provided me with an opportunity to discover the responses that participants gave spontaneously, and as a result, avoided the bias that may result from suggesting responses to participants (Züll, 2016). Participants were required to respond in their own words and to express verbally without being directed in a particular direction by predefined response categories (Züll, 2016). According to Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, and Ormston (2014), interviews seek to generate data that gives insight into participants' lives or views through verbal communication. This is important for this study as the focus was to understand the stories of black senior managers in navigating their careers.

Participants were given an option to be interviewed at a time and place of convenience to them. I scheduled interviews and provided the participants with an option of a location that was suitable for them. I started conducting interviews face-to-face in October 2019 and continued until March 2020 when the country implemented lockdown restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The initial plan was to conduct all interviews face-to-face. However, at the time of the implementation of the lockdown, I had only conducted eight interviews. The national state of disaster restricted physical meetings and as a result, I had to come up with an alternative plan to conduct interviews. I elected to use Zoom and Microsoft Teams virtual platforms to conduct the remaining interviews.

I found that it was easier to schedule interviews with participants online which meant that I managed to conduct the remaining interviews in a shorter space of time as compared to the face-to-face interviews. Although this methodology contributed positively in terms of access, it yielded some challenges as well. For example, it was difficult to build rapport with some of the participants as they took some time to relax during the interview as compared to when it was face-to-face. Switching our cameras on allowed me and the interviewees to observe each other's body language and reactions during the interview. The other challenge was the poor connectivity where the interview was paused so that the participant was able to reconnect. Although this did not happen often, there were two interviews that were impacted by poor internet connection.

All 20 interviews were recorded using my mobile phone and a tablet device as a backup. In addition, Zoom and Team interviews were recorded using the in-built recording options. I used in-depth interviews in the study to understand the participants' perspectives on their lives and experiences as expressed in their own words. These interviews provided me with the participants' narratives as well as their social worlds and they gave me insight into their experiences (Silverman, 2006). The interviews were between one to two hours in length.

To enable the narrative inquiry, the study focused on storytelling as a methodology to obtain data. As part of the storytelling, the participants were asked to share their life stories and career journeys. The stories were told as part of the interview process. The interviews were guided by how the participants told their stories. Stories of early life, including occupations of parents or caregivers, were obtained to explore the early habitus of participants. Following the narrative frame, the interviews were meant to elicit stories of participants' lives from

childhood to the present as well as explorations of aspirations for the future. In addition to stories about their career mobility, the research also focused on the participants' life stories holistically. This was to ensure that all aspects within their lives that could have influenced their career experiences were captured during the interviews. I had initially intended to conduct follow up interviews with five participants to explore their life stories in more depth, however, the interviews were so rich in terms of what the participants shared that I opted to just use the initial interviews.

3.2.5 Assessing the quality of the research

Deriving from concepts outlined by Guba and Licoln (1989), Anney (2014) recommended four criteria to assess the quality of qualitative research: namely, credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Macnee and McCabe (2008) defined credibility as the confidence that can be placed in the truth of the research findings. It validates if the research findings represent trustworthy information drawn from the participants' original data and is a correct interpretation of the participants' original views (Macnee & McCabe, 2008). To ensure credibility of this study, I used an open-ended interview technique which provided data from the participants. The second concept I used was transferability, which refers to the degree to which the findings can be transferred to other contexts with other respondents (Anney, 2014). The transferability technique I used is purposive sampling where I selected participants that worked occupied senior positions within the financial services sector.

Anney (2014) claimed that dependability is established by means of an audit trail of the data collected throughout the research process. In this study, I accounted for all the data collected by recording and saving all the interviews on secure digital platforms and I saved all the transcripts from the interview (Anney, 2014). The last approach I used in measuring the quality of this study is confirmability which is concerned with establishing the degree to which the results can be confirmed or supported by other researchers (Anney, 2014). The strategy that I used in this study is reflexivity. I kept a reflexive journal that included my experiences during the interview process and personal reflections in relation to the study. The following section details the reflections I have noted in the study.

3.3 Data Analysis

In the current study, narratives about the life and career history of the participants were explored. McAdams et al. (2001) contend that people construct and share their stories in order to give meaning to the transitions in their lives. Career advancement is a form of transition from one role to another. Based on the assertion by McAdams et al. (2001), narrative inquiry helped us understand the stories of how these black senior managers were able to advance to these positions. When we study the narrations of people who have experienced a life transition, we better understand the ways in which the meanings of transitions are constructed (McAdams et al., 2001).

Polkinghorne (1995) identified two types as narrative mode of narrative analysis based on Bruner's (1985) categorisations, namely paradigmatic and narrative. The paradigmatic mode of narrative analysis is where narrative findings are arranged around descriptions of themes, categories or concepts that are common across collected stories (Polkinghorne, 1995). This analysis requires that the researcher look for patterns, narrative threads, and themes within or across an individual's experience and in a social setting (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The narrative mode of narrative analysis, on the other hand, involves the gathering of events as its data and uses narrative analytic procedures to produce explanatory stories. From the two types of analyses described by Polkinghorne (1995), the current study adopted the paradigmatic mode of narrative analysis to analyse data from the interviews.

3.3.1 First level of analysis: Coding

In analysing the data, I used Riessman's approach of thematic narrative analysis to find common thematic elements across participants' reported stories in order to theorise across experiences (Riessman, 2003). The first level of analysis involved reading the interview transcripts several times and coding the data. The focus on the lived experiences of the participants centres the study in the realistic paradigm which is concerned with the understanding of individuals experiences, meanings and realities (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Given that the study was conducted within the essentialist/realistic approach, the coding was more theory driven. I manually identified codes based on the research questions posed in the study which were positioned to understand the life and career journeys of the participants (Braun & Clarke 2006).

I identified codes manually by highlighting potential patterns within the text and matching the data extracts across the transcripts to a relevant code. This was followed by copying the data extracts from the individual transcripts and collating each code on a separate document. I initially coded for a number of themes to ensure that I did not exclude important data. In accordance with Clandinin and Connelly (2000), I organised data into meaningful groups based on repeated patterns or themes across the data set.

3.3.2 Second level of analysis: Identification of themes

I then developed themes and sub-themes to identify the central narrative elements associated with each theme. I inspected the different stories to identify the common attributes that appeared across them and ordered them into a specific theme. The emerging themes were reviewed in terms of the manner in which the participants spoke to them as well as how these themes overlapped (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The themes were grouped according to their early lives as children, where they grew up, their schooling experiences and their experiences in the workplace. In testing the developing theories, I applied Ricoeur's (1981) hermeneutic arc method of interpretation by moving between the interview transcripts using a combination of top down and bottom-up interpretative process (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

I identified the relationships between the established themes and sought to show the linkages between these themes. This was followed by the sequencing of themes identified in the first level of analysis into the temporal stages of the life and career history of the participants. In accordance with Squire (2008), the narratives identified within the themes, were represented across a timeline. I organised data according to the following chronological timeframes: (1) Childhood and Schooling; (2) Job market entry and early career; (3) Movement between jobs; and (4) Being a senior manager. I focused on the small and big stories being told by the participants and selected the stories that were answering the research questions in the study. The life stories were then mapped, based on the temporal frame of childhood to the current career stage.

Following Squire (2008), the experience-centred narrative analysis was intended to focus on both sequence and themes and to illustrate how they work together. The life stories and career journeys were examined in accordance with how they were potentially influenced by the historical context. The focus on the historical context was important for illuminating both national and organisational narratives of change. I organised the data in this manner to show

the reader the participants' lives and career journeys alongside significant events of South Africa's political transition.

3.3.3 Third level of analysis: Refining the data

Once I identified the themes, I further refined them and analysed the data within them. This process resulted in the identification of sub-themes with the four broad chronological timeframes. The sub-themes were identified from the particular meaning they demonstrated within the data. I analysed each subtheme to identify the story that it told in relation to the broader theme and the research questions. In accordance with Braun and Clarke (2006), I went back to the collated data extracts for each theme and organised the sub-themes consistently and coherently with associated stories. Overall, then, this approach incorporated narrative analytical elements in the tradition of Squire and Riesman and thematic analysis.

3.4 Reflexivity

The importance of reflexivity as a strategy for generating knowledge in qualitative research has been noted by many authors (Ahmed et al., 2010; Koch & Harrington, 1998). Reflexivity is defined as a process of continuous internal dialogue where the researcher critically evaluates their position in the world and how it influences the research process and outcome (Bradbury-Jones, 2007; Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). It is a process of interaction within and between the researcher and participants; the data that informs decisions, actions, and interpretations through the stages of the research (Ahmed et al., 2010). Reflexivity takes on a post-modern stance that reality is constructed contemporaneously, and no account can be valued over the other (Woolgar, 1988). It aims at addressing the implications of the research and researched. Reflexivity assists in evaluating the self since it requires the researcher to look at themselves continuously. It is, therefore, an action of reflecting your thinking back to yourself. In a reflective study, meaning is obtained within socially orientated research scenarios in co-constituents. Reflexivity enables a holistic approach to research in that it acknowledges that the researcher and researched are of the same order.

According to Woolgar (1988), the researcher should take responsibility for their own positioning within the research and the impact it has on the people under study, the interview questions being asked, the data collected and how it gets interpreted. It is imperative that I recognise and acknowledge my positioning within this study. Firstly, the topic of

transformation has been an area of interest for me since I began my postgraduate studies. I focused on Affirmative Action in my Honours paper and then proceeded to research how black professionals perceived the cultures of organisations, specifically focusing on the banking industry. Secondly, having worked in a bank within the Human Resource Management space for several years, this sparked my interest again in the topic. In line with Woolgar's (1988) assertion, my interest in this field guided this study from the topic being selected, the interview questions being asked, as well as the interpretation of the data.

From the onset of the research process, I was aware of my personal experiences as a black woman working in the financial services sector and consequently conscious that this should not influence the way in which I conducted the research. Although the intention was to always be aware of the potential influence of my experience, my positionality played a role in initially selecting the topic and influenced the data collection and interpretation processes. The researcher's positioning includes their personal characteristics, such as gender, race, age, sexual orientation, class position, personal experiences, beliefs, preferences, and political affiliation, among other factors (Berger, 2015; Woolgar, 1988). It is important to acknowledge my position as a black woman working in the financial services industry. The experiences that were shared by the participants, particularly the women, were resonating with me at times, and I had to silence the voice and not respond in such a way that it prevented participants from owning their experiences.

Reading participants' experiences through my experience would have the risk of misinterpreting their lives and effectively unhearing their stories. During interviewing, it was important for me to be self-reflexive by being continuously aware of my own reactions, emotions, and thoughts towards the interviews (Berger, 2015). Being a black woman also affected the interview process positively in that the participants were more willing to participate in the study as they may have felt that I shared personal characteristics and similar positioning to theirs (De Tona, 2006). It also affected the nature of my relationship with participants as I was able to easily build rapport with them from the onset of the interviews (Berger, 2015). The benefit of being multilingual was that I was able to understand when some of the participants used vernacular languages to explain experiences on which they wanted to place an emphasis.

Kacen and Chaitin (2006) noted that reflexivity can influence how the researcher

interprets the responses of the participants. Being a black woman who works in the financial services, I recognised the similarity in the participants' experiences and mine in the context of the work environment. Although I was conscious of this, there is a possibility that these shared experiences may have influenced how I explored and interpreted the narratives (Josselson, 2004). There were certain instances where I interrogated the employment equity discourse in relation to myself and sought to understand and interpret the storied habitus to career mobility of black managers as a beneficiary of the employment equity practice. Recognising my personal story and how my voice is located within a certain class, race, cultural and ethnic community of these participants was an important process I had to undertake as part of the research process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008).

As researchers, we have been cautioned to acknowledge the importance of how we reflect on and interpret our data and that we are aware of our role in analysing data, the preconceived ideas we have as well as the assumptions we bring to our analysis (Devine & Heath, 1999). Qualitative researchers are also encouraged to reflect and record their interpretations and acknowledge that the validity of their interpretation depends on their ability to show how they were reached (Boulton & Hammersley, 1996; Mason, 1996). Reinharz (1992) claims that most qualitative researchers tend to simplify the voices of the participants as if they are separate from their voices as researchers. In reflexivity, it was important that I recognise my social location as well as the ways in which my emotional responses to the participants determined my interpretation of their experiences. In addition to being a black woman working in the financial services sector, my role at work involved managing employment equity processes within my organisation. This somewhat influenced how I interpreted data as there were aspects of my work that were used in the interpretation of the data. My supervisor was able to highlight those aspects and cautioned me to separate issues identified from work with what the participants shared (Shaw, 2010).

The role of reflexivity in qualitative research is to monitor the credibility of the research by accounting for the researchers' values, beliefs, knowledge, and bias (Berger, 2015). It keeps the research process ethical in that it addresses the possible negative effect of power in the researcher-researched relationships (Berger, 2015). It was important for me to take note of the importance of reflexivity at every stage of the research from the conceptual phase of the research. Reflexivity played an important role in the formulation of my research question, the

way I conducted the interviews, to the analysis of data and drawing conclusions (Bradbury-Jones, 2007).

3.5 Ethical Considerations

I obtained permission to conduct this research from the University of Witwatersrand Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), protocol number H19/06/35. In keeping with the University of Witwatersrand's ethical research practices, ethical research principles were adhered to throughout the research process. I am registered with the Health Professionals Council of South Africa as an industrial psychologist and also had to adhere to its ethical principles. It is important to note that the participants gave informed consent to participate in the study. Participants were invited to participate in the study by means of a participation information sheet which was sent through email. The information sheet fully informed the participants about the purpose of research as well as the manner in which the interview was going to be used. In addition, consent was discussed before interviews commenced. This was not a high-risk study and participants did not exhibit adverse emotional responses to interviews.

3.5.1 Informed Consent

I informed the participants that participation in this study was voluntary and that they would not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way for choosing to participate or not participate. I also informed them that they were allowed to withdraw from the study at any point in time if they wished to do so and they were also welcome not to respond to questions that they felt uncomfortable responding to during the interview. They were informed that there would be no penalties to withdrawing from the interview. No participant withdrew from the study and there was no indication of discomfort from participants. I issued consent forms to all participants and obtained physical copies of the signed forms for all interviews conducted face-to-face and electronically signed forms for all the interviews conducted virtually online. In addition to the forms, I verbally explained what participation entailed. The forms requested consent to be interviewed and to grant permission for me to record the interview. The consent form for recording stated that the research supervisor and I were the only people who would have access to the audio recordings. In addition, participants were informed that data from the audio recordings and the transcriptions would not be seen or heard by any person other than myself and my research supervisor. Consent to be interviewed and for the recording of the interviews was obtained from all participants in the study.

3.5.2 Anonymity and Confidentiality

I could not assure complete anonymity in this study as I approached the participants through LinkedIn as well as through recommendations by some of the participants. Conducting face-to-face interviews and virtual interviews with the cameras on also prevented anonymity as I got to know who the participants were. Although I could not guarantee anonymity, the data collected from interviews was reported in an anonymous manner so that individual participants are not identifiable to readers. I used pseudonyms to identify all the participants and institutions for which they work or have mentioned during the interview process. This means that their privacy was protected during the interview process and their information has also been protected after recording. Audio recordings and transcripts are stored safely in a password protected computer. Confidentiality was assured since the data were stored in a password protected computer and all primary data was stripped of identifying characteristics.

3.6 Summary

The methodology chapter sought to describe the methodological framework and procedures followed in conducting this study. The chapter started with an introduction to the narrative inquiry framework and the reasons it was used as a framework of analysis in this study. The next section described the importance of using narrative inquiry in exploring life stories. Since the study was situated in an organisational setting, I discussed the significance of organisational storytelling and provided examples of how it was effectively used in previous studies. This was followed by the description of the detailed methods and procedures employed in conducting the study. A qualitative research design was used in the study as it was most useful in understanding the life experiences of the participants. The purposive and snowballing sampling methods which were used to obtain participants was described and I provided participants' information, namely, biographical information and the organisations in which they were employed at the time of the interviews.

The use of interviews in the current research was then explained and I provided details on how I conducted face-to-face and virtual interviews as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Post the description of the interviews conducted, I described how I transcribed them, and the steps used in the analysis of using narrative analysis. This was followed by an account of my reflections on the study where I discuss my positioning as a researcher within the study and how it may have influenced the research process from topic selection, through data collection

and interpretation. I concluded the chapter by addressing the ethical considerations undertaken in the study. I outlined how I obtained the consent to conduct the interviews and my application of anonymity and confidentiality to ensure that the identity of the participants is protected. I also provide my ethical clearance number provided by the university.

Chapter Four: Findings and Discussion

Chapter Four presents the empirical data gathered from the interviews. The presentation of this chapter is sequentially aligned to the research questions. This chapter analyses the empirical data by engaging with the theoretical framework and the literature presented in chapter two of this thesis. This chapter addresses the following research questions which inform the study:

1. What do life story narratives tell us about how black people navigate professional careers?
2. How do black men and black women in senior management positions make meaning of their family and community backgrounds to think about their careers?
3. What meanings do black senior managers assign to their experiences of moving between organisations over the course of their careers?
4. How do gender, race and class intersect to explain the experiences of black men and black women senior managers' career journeys?

In line with the organising role of narrative, the findings are organised in a linear temporality of four major sections with various sub-themes focusing on life stages under the following main themes: childhood and schooling; job market entry and early career; movement between jobs; and being a senior manager. These are illustrated in figure 1 below.

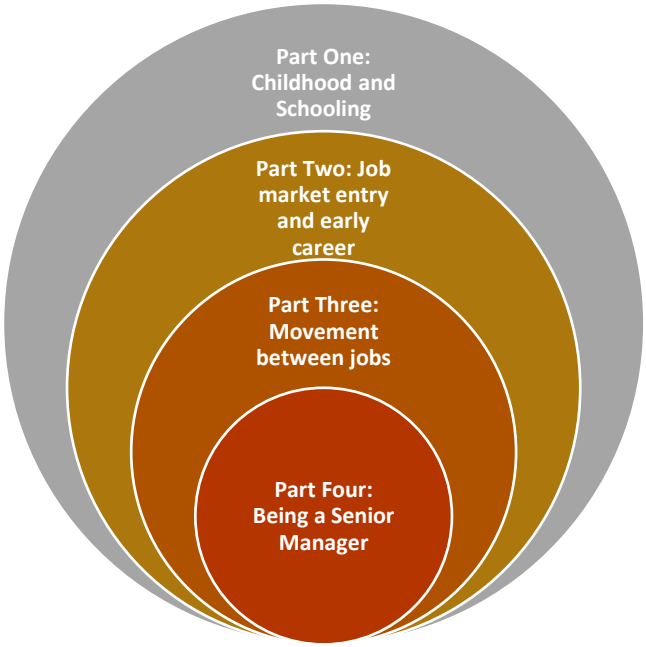

Figure 1: Linear temporality of the life story themes of the senior managers within the financial services sector

4.1 Part One: Childhood and Schooling

I begin this section by providing the family backgrounds of our participants. Although all participants identified themselves as black people, they grew up in different social contexts resulting in varying social class experiences. From the twenty participants interviewed, fifteen were raised in different townships in the provinces of Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape. Of the remaining five, three participants grew up in suburban areas in Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal, and two were raised in rural villages of Limpopo province. The family backgrounds of the participants suggest that most of them grew up in a family context of two parents with the exception of four participants who were raised by single parents or relatives, either from birth or as a result of their parents' divorce. The participant's parents had varying careers which ranged from blue collar workers, professional careers ranging from teaching, nursing to bankers. Others were unemployed. There were also participants whose parents were entrepreneurs. The age range of the participants was between 30 to 56 years of age with an average age of 45 years. This information provides context for unpacking their upbringing and childhood experiences within their family. The experiences of the participants are captured through the following subsections: parenting and identity; growing up in 1980s and 1990s South Africa; early school years; and higher education and career choice.

4.1.1 Parenting and Identity

This sub-section explores families of origin, social and historical factors in relation to participants' identity development through their life stories. The participants' upbringing and their parents' influence appear to have provided them with a sense of identity. This is observed in the lessons they received from their parents and the values they imparted to them in their childhood. The descriptions of their childhood experiences in the context of their family structures, suggest that the participants came from different types of families. Some of them came from nuclear families where they were raised by both parents, others were brought up by single parents, specifically single mothers and there were others that were brought up by relatives. Notwithstanding their family structure, the participants highlight the presence of relatives and communities in their childhood and how that experience had a positive impact in their childhood.

Following my questions to build rapport with the participants, I asked them to tell me about themselves and describe their family background from childhood. Buhle and Zama seemed to have a positive recollection of their childhood and families growing up and they were excited to share their childhood memories.

> I had a wonderful upbringing, two dedicated, very supportive parents. I'm the eldest of three, I have a younger sister and a younger brother, and I grew up in a strict household. But strict with love and attention. Also, I grew up in a small town which I think gave me quite a strong sense of community uhm where family was always you know, not more than 20-minute drive away. Ja, I consider myself as one of those fortunate people who had a really wonderful kind of upbringing (Buhle).

> So, my late father, he's deceased. [Pause], I come from quite a large family of all girls, so it was literally a family of women. Umm, KZN was lovely, I think I had a great childhood there, I had a good mix between you know, a kind of more urban and rural life. So, home was always in a rural setting and for me that is in the midlands in KZN. So, I think I had a very good balance between the two. My childhood was spent largely in Durban itself, that's where I grew up, and yah, I guess my exposure was both in the rural setting as well as urban (Zama).

The preceding stories by Buhle and Zama who come from nuclear families illustrate how their definition of family includes their extended families. In telling their stories, they describe their childhood experiences as being positive and indicate the value they obtained from having relatives and community members as part of their childhood. I read these positive accounts with the understanding that childhood reminiscence is generally coloured by nostalgia (Bradbury, 2012; Probyn, 1995). Kagiso told a story that depicted growing up in a difficult environment through a positive light.

> So, it was tough, but we didn't realise it was tough because the neighbourhood was like that. Everyone lived under the same poverty levels, the same struggles. Nobody had fancy takkies or whatever, we were all barefoot, life was good. The only pain was when it was raining, and I had to go to school with books in the plastic so that they don't get wet (Kagiso).

Kagiso's storytelling recalls going to school when it was raining. This was a significant experience in his life that he associates with pain. He was, however, laughing as he recounted this story, particularly when he recalled putting his books in a plastic bag. His narrative sought to illustrate that he built resilience from these formative childhood experiences. Mancini and Bonanno (2010) emphasised that people's immediate experience of adversity is

often marked by distress, however; in the longer term, their reactions show considerable variability. Kagiso juxtaposes the hardships with the gratification of the life he experienced which he refers to as a "good life". He further claims that growing up in conditions of hardship resulted in him building resilience that has benefitted his life. Consequently, he might be described as being able to improve on his psychosocial functioning from adverse or traumatic experiences (Mancini, 2019). Even though the conditions were unfavourable, Kagiso regards them as positive experiences as they were shared experiences with others. He highlights that he did not realise that the conditions he grew up in were "tough" as they were shared experiences of common difficulty.

The experience of living in different types of environments, such as rural contexts, townships and suburban areas can be understood through the lens of habitus. This can be observed in the similarities between Kagiso and Mosa's stories of growing up in a village. In the following narrative, Mosa appreciates that although the "village life" encompasses challenges, there are lessons that he learned from the environment.

> It gives you context of where, the life and the challenges we had to deal with you know, and for me it was just how I survived that, that was hard work, yah. I think I would call it humble beginnings; you know, village life teaches you a lot you know (Mosa).

Habitus' ability to theorise identity formation assists in understanding how growing up in different contexts or fields results in the participants' formation. For instance, the rural environment placed Kagiso and Mosa in situations that they regarded as "tough", and they attribute their resilient characters to this background. In support of this Swartz (1997) assert that habitus is part of the socialisation process where everything that people experience is understood and categorised in relation to past experiences. Childhood experiences are particularly important in developing a "matrix of perceptions" that inform how they come to view the world and react in different contexts.

In the preceding accounts, Kagiso and Mosa narrate that their neighbourhood was tough and that people who lived there were impoverished and struggled. In Mosa's recollection of his childhood, he attributes his current success to the difficult upbringing in his rural village. Mosa and Kagiso's narratives of their childhood highlights the value they place on their experience of growing up in rural areas. They recognise the positive contribution of the

hardships in their upbringing have had in their lives and acknowledge the lessons learned from their background.

Kagiso and Mosa's narratives are consistent with Bourdieu's cultural capital. They read their childhood context as bequeathing them with resilience. Kagiso acknowledges the shared collective identity of growing up in a rural area. He points out that it was not an individual experience. Rather, it was an experience that was common to everyone who lived in the neighbourhood. The environment is recognised to have provided cultural capital as they both acknowledge how the environment taught them life lessons of durability. Mosa describes this attribute as survival. The discourse of learning survival skills is not only observed in the participants who grew up in rural areas but also those who grew up in townships. Tshiamo captures the differences in the survival discourse as experienced in the townships.

> I think, the second one is, like I said, survivalism, the ability to fend for yourself, fight for yourself, you know, uhm the ability to just operate in a fast paced, unpredictable environment and stuff like that (Tshiamo).

Bourdieu's assertion that individual's behaviour is determined by where they come from, in terms of family background and societal context is evident in how there is a difference in how poverty was experienced based on the location (Bourdieu, 1990, 1997, 2018). For Mosa, survival in the rural environment was based on surviving poverty whereas for Tshiamo, enduring in the urban townships was linked to surviving the political instability and turmoil that was prevalent at that time. Most of the participants claim to have learned certain behaviours that they have used throughout their career journeys from their parents. This was true for the participants regardless of their background.

The type of family structure that the participants grew up in appeared to yield different experiences amongst them. In the following stories, Thando and Sibusiso who were both brought up by single mothers, describe how they had close relationships with their cousins and how that constituted a big family.

> My mother had a very large family, so we always lived with her sisters. So, my cousins were, you know, almost my second brothers and sisters because I was an only child. My dad and my mom never married, and he passed away in 1999 and we were never really that close and to his family. So, I've always had this big extended family construct in how I've grown up (Thando).

> I grew up in a single parent environment, where the mother was a nurse obviously not earning much. There was a lot of us, her kids, well she had five kids, but over and above that in a black childhood, you'll have other cousins. Maybe there were like eight people at any other time, that she was looking after, not our siblings, but people from the broader family who were less privileged. You know, she will be making sure they that they'd go to school (Sibusiso).

Sibusiso's account highlights that his mother looked after his cousins. This epitomises a common social philosophy of African culture called Ubuntu. Nussbaum (2003) defined Ubuntu as the capacity to express compassion, reciprocity, dignity, harmony, and humanity in the interests of building and maintaining community in African culture. Ubuntu is a form of cultural capital common amongst black South Africans, and it prevails in the family structures amongst the participants' accounts cited here. In recounting his history, Sibusiso suggests that this gave him a "sense of belonging bigger than just himself". As part of understanding his childhood and how it influenced him as a leader, I asked him how growing up in that environment influenced his career journey. He appeared to have a sense of pride when he responded to this question as he attributed his leadership style to his childhood and the community in which he grew up. He contends— "my leadership style is very inclusive; I think that's where my background is".

In the context of interview conversations about family structure, participants like Sibusiso and Mbali made it clear that their experiences of family went beyond the nuclear structure. Multiple people were invested in their well-being. These included neighbours, grandmothers, aunts and broader members of the community that formed a protective shelter around young children. In Sibusiso's words, "sense of community" made sure that "things were okay". Unlike Shaka, Buhle and Langa that were protected by the affordances of middle-class choices, community and "strictness" was the cultural capital that working class black youth such as Lerato, Mbali and Sibusiso relied upon.

Consistent with the development of habitus, participants attributed the attainment of their personal characteristics to what they learned from their childhood experiences from their families, schools and communities.

> And then but I guess my career, and that's what I've come to realise now, it's made a lot more by not so much what I've studied, not so much the technical skills I have, but it's made a lot by my character, my perspectives, my approach to things, my leadership style and so forth and so forth. All of

> which I can trace back to my upbringing. Like I was saying, the small lessons and just self-awareness, self-understanding, who you are in the midst of the buzz, the craze and the rough, you know (Tshiamo).

In the act of storytelling, Tshiamo comes to learn something about himself. He notes, "I've come to realise now". The phrase "now" could signal the vantage points of both the moment of telling his story to me and his current life stage as an adult and senior manager. Here, the hindsight allowed by narrative enables him to take stock of his life. This echoes McAdams et al.'s (2001) theorisation that narrative teaches us about ourselves. Tshiamo comes to realise that while he values the technical expertise accumulated through study and experience, his character is more important to him. He makes a direct attribution to lessons from childhood for his character. This draws attention to the value of understanding people's lives in their entirety when considering them in the present. Furthermore, Tshiamo expands temporal frames between present and past and points to the porosity of boundaries between the workplace and the broader social context. Similarly, in the following excerpt, Mandla attributes his ability to build relationships to what his mother had taught him as a child.

> I think the ability to build relationships has always been about what are the core things that even I had to attribute it, it is what I learned from my own mother. She, for about 30 years of her life, a ne a rekisa magwinya, she sold fat cakes, but she's never ever stood at a corner. She's never ever, ever, ever woken up at four to go stand at a street corner and sold. She always sold her stuff through connections, through uhm you'd have people picking up parcels at five in the morning kogae (at home) you know, buckets of these things and come back in the evenings with the cash (Mandla).

Mandla's narration of the lessons from his mother depicts the success that his mother achieved through building relationships when she was running her small business from her home. Both Tshiamo and Mandla associate the characteristics of "success" with lessons learned from their parents. The narrative depicted here, suggests that there are certain characteristics that need to be cultivated in childhood in order to obtain success later in life. For the two participants, the habitus in the context of the conditioning they received as children has influenced their behaviour and actions as adults and subsequently as workers within their respective organisations. Consistent with the preceding narratives, Mosa claims to have "picked up" his father's leadership characteristics.

> So, you observe and then, you know, I think you pick up, even in the family, my father was the youngest, but he took charge. He took charge of his brothers; he took charge of family matters (Mosa).

Mosa's description of his dad being the youngest as a leader in his family resonates with him as he became a leader at what he perceives as a young age. I observed this when I asked him to describe his career journey and he specifically referred to becoming a member of the executive committee at 25 years of age making him the youngest member of his team at that time.

The emerging theme of environmental training was not only observed in the context of the immediate family. Participants like Kagiso remarked on it beyond his family context, particularly the rural environment he grew up in, which he suggests taught him about being a successful leader in the corporate context. With hindsight, he expressed appreciation for how the difficult environment indirectly taught him survival traits.

> The environment taught you a couple of things or a couple of critical values, principles of life. To survive you need to be in collaboration, it's the jungle, you can't make it alone, you need to be in a group (Kagiso).

The above stories on the influence of environmental teachings in childhood and family background has been observed as important to subsequent possibilities and constraints to life outcomes (Tomanović, 2004). For instance, Tomanović (2004) asserted that family habitus has a strong influence on the allocation, distribution, and use of family resources and thereby, structures the everyday life of children. The particular experiences and incidents narrated by Mandla, Kagiso and Mosa indicate how the habituation contributed towards their career journeys as they learned values, such as hard work and leadership from them.

Tomanović (2004) observed that habitus may also result in constraints and that not all environmental training can be understood as preparing participants for the corporate world. For example, Zama's account suggests that she experienced her environmental teachings as reinforcing behaviours which were contrary to what is required or valued in the corporate context. In the following story, consistent with cultural habitus, she describes how she was taught to respect her elders as a child as they were authoritative figures.

> I come from a background where we don't engage with each other in that way. It's a little bit more old school. You know in my time growing up, respect and diplomacy of elders and people in positions of authority, it's just the way we were brought up you know (Zama).

In narrating her career journey, she attributed the journey to having a sponsor who "saw something" in her. She explained "something" as an openness "to challenging people in senior positions". I recalled that she grew up in a conservative family where elders where to be respected which led me to asking her: "Where do you think you learned that?" Zama's response was that she learned it in her professional context. She proceeded to highlight that she did not learn this trait from her childhood. She appeared to perceive some of her childhood habituation as limiting to her career success. In the following story, she explains how the cultural habitus of respect, which was valorised in her upbringing, taught her to respect hierarchy to her detriment.

> You know, in my time growing up, respect and diplomacy for elders and people that were in positions of authority was important. It's just the way we were brought up, you know. I think as a result you almost take that into your first work experience, and I very quickly found that just didn't work for me in the working environment. Quiet diplomacy and all of those good things are great, but sometimes you're going to need to push real hard to get, to get heard, to make your point known (Zama).

Zama observes that although she learned lessons of "respect and diplomacy" in her childhood, she became aware that this was not suitable for the world of work. She consequently made a decision early in her career to adjust her approach towards attributes that align to valued cultural capital. In this instance, she was able to adjust her habitus to a new field through her legal training and the experiences she obtained in her professional life. Her decisions were based on an awareness that the habitus she had developed from her community of origin was not suited to her career and she decided to adjust it to what was required in the new field of her work environment.

> There's only one protocol and that protocol is who is the elder and that is the protocol you observe. I guess that comes handy as well one day to say, 'okay cool, who are the senior leaders here, let's observe the protocol'. But then it's good and bad because the bad side is that when you get here, you tend to respect your superiors a little bit too much (Kagiso).

In the preceding statement, Kagiso reinforces Zama's discourse of "respect" for elders as he explains that he was taught to "observe protocol" as a child. He further notes that this has translated to how he relates to older colleagues in the work context. In his account, he acknowledges that the discourse of diplomacy and respect for elders that is common in African cultures tends to work against most black professionals as they do not speak up against older colleagues in an attempt to "observe protocol". Since competitiveness is valued

in corporate contexts, respect and diplomacy might be read as working against rewarded practices such as the exhibition of cut-throat temperaments.

In turning to narrative hindsight, the participants speak as though they suddenly realised that their habituation towards authority was not useful for the workplace. However, McAdams et al. (2001) suggests that coming to consciousness is rarely marked by sudden awareness but is a gradual process that we make meaning of through telling stories to ourselves and others. It would therefore not be entirely surprising if Zama and Kagiso came to give form to their awareness of the habituated mismatch between their familial culture and organisational culture through the process of narrativising their lives to me.

The stories told by the participants on their particular experiences as children illustrate how dispositions learned as children tend to be re-enacted in their adulthood and appear to have contributed towards their success (Bourdieu, 1997). Some childhood habituation remains useful throughout one's life while other forms are not useful across all fields. For example, in a context where respect is not a valued corporate attribute, those habituated towards respecting hierarchies may have to adapt their habituation towards more valued attributes. On the other hand, Calvinistic attributes, such as, hard work and honesty, appear to be easily transferable to the capitalist workplace.

Kagiso and Zama learned the attribute of "respecting the elders" as children which they continued to practice as adults, including in the workplace (Reay, 2004). Bourdieu (1979) termed this process an 'imperceptible apprenticeship' that takes place primarily in family settings and in the education system through processes of social and cultural reproduction. Although they value "respecting the elders" through their lived experiences from childhood, they have adapted it to their careers in a flexible manner (Reay, 2004). While Kagiso is likely to "observe protocol", he appreciates that there are situations where he is required to assert himself towards elders and "take them on and act more directive".

In addition, some participants' narrative accounts attribute their upbringing to shaping their identities in various ways. In the following excerpt, Mosa attributes his success to the humility he learned in his childhood.

> I value my upbringing in a sense that it defines who I am, you know. My humility, my appreciation, although I've, you know, you could describe it in your research to say I've succeeded. I think or I have made it in life, I think I'm always connected to my upbringing and my roots (Mosa).

Dumais (2006) illuminates Mosa's account by asserting that habitus is unconsciously developed from a young age through family practices. These practices are generated and organised by a collection of strong, similar characteristics. For instance, a family might valorise competitive behaviours and children may internalise competitive habits. Mosa connects his success— "I've succeeded" and "I made it in life" to the strong characteristics he obtained from his childhood, particularly from his father. In telling the story he attributes his current successes to his "upbringing" and "roots".

When asked about some of the characteristics he associated with his career success, Mandla initially appeared unsure but with some thinking and storying his life, he attributed his ability to build relationships to his mother.

> I think the ability to build relationships has always been about what are the core things that ever if I had to attribute it to anything, I would attribute it to what I learned from my own mother (Mandla).

It is apparent from the preceding excerpt that building relationships resonates with Mandla as he repeats a story that he recollected from his childhood about his mother's business. In his response to my question about his career success, he tells a story of a particular incident about his mother's ability to sell "magwinya" from her house instead of a street corner due to relationships she built in the community. For parents who may not have had the financial means to provide "a good environment", discipline and "strictness" served to secure the safety and educational success of their children. The level of structure and discipline was also attributed to shaping the identity and personas of some participants. This is highlighted by Tshiamo and Lerato's narratives.

> So, we had a little bit of a structure in that both my parents were together and, so there was a bit of a unit and a family structure; and we had a very strict mother. In a way it was almost a conflict of some sort because on one hand, you are excited about the buzz and you know and the streets, but on the other, you have these rules and expectations that you have to conform to and not and absolutely not by choice (Tshiamo).

> I think a lot of things helped me you know; I grew up in a very strict home (Lerato).

Lerato reads her "very strict home" as having helped her become who she is. In the preceding excerpt, Tshiamo positions having both parents and a strict mother as one of the reasons for his success. This form of strict parenting (now read as support) was not just observed amongst participants that grew up with both parents. Those who were raised by single parents or relatives acknowledged how they also received support from their families as well as their communities. They observe that this helped them to succeed at school and subsequently achieve their career goals.

> I always tell people I was fortunate that I had a lot of mothers, you know, it wasn't just my grandmother. It was my aunts that came through to check on us and we got a lot of support from our extended family (Mbali).
>
> You see the communities at the time, there was a sense of community as well. So, when my mother was working, we had a neighbour who was looking after the kids to make sure things are okay (Sibusiso).

The discursive work of discipline often meant close supervision to keep children in school and to limit opportunities for them to fall pregnant. The latter would threaten their chances of success. In black communities, education was a proxy for success and a "ticket out" of poverty. This is evidenced in the following excerpt by Sifiso and Shaka. Sifiso recalls how his parents placed importance on obtaining an education and how it results in getting out of poverty.

> My father was for the most part a labourer in a big paper manufacturing plant and my mother was a teacher throughout her life, so we didn't have much, so from very humble beginnings we always knew that the only ticket out of this kind of situation is education. That's what our parents instilled throughout our early childhood. As we grew up, that was the consistent thread of how our parents raised us that education first, everything else later. So, that was the consistent guidance for me throughout my early childhood throughout my adulthood, right into my work life (Sifiso).

In Shaka's case, he describes his parents' philosophy about education as a means to obtaining freedom.

> My parents' philosophy was, education will set you free, education will set up opportunities and will give you a foundation irrespective of what you want to do. As a young star, ugh these are just words, uhm and which uh I think we just enjoyed life and the parents provided us with a good environment to have a healthy upbringing (Shaka).

In the context of the current study, democratisation was a significant life altering event that opened opportunities that had been impossible for earlier generations such as the participants' parents. As 'transitional' youth who went to school in the transition to democracy, their life stories provide a window into the possibilities enabled by this period. This means that the habituated values of hard work learned from parents found fertile ground in the social context of democratisation. This is an important qualifier that tempers the possibilities of values, such as hard work. Hard work always needs an enabling context. The notion that education will "set you free" and "it's the only ticket way out" for Shaka and Sifiso, illustrates how people aspire to possibilities that they think are feasible and seem within reach based on their past experience through their unconscious socialisation (Bourdieu, 2018). They were both socialised through their parents that education provides a form of social capital by providing a better environment.

The current study found that the socialisation and habituation of black participants influenced and shaped their career aspirations and definitions of success. For most of the participants, the discourse of hard work emerged in relation to the class habitus of their parents and caregivers. The participants' narratives demonstrate how some habituated attributes remain consistent and valuable across social class. Childhood habituation has shaped their behaviour in adulthood professional settings for participants who grew up in different environments. These attributes learned as children have been habituated through the family influence and have been realised in adulthood and remained useful in their careers (Bourdieu, 1990). Overall, the early family habitus appears to have had an influence on the work dispositions and career journeys of the participants. This is seen in how they recall their childhood experiences and lessons they learned from their parents. In addition, their circumstances, although not always favourable; seem to have had a positive influence in the choices they made to pursue an education and subsequent careers. This aligns with the findings of several studies on family habitus. For example, studies by Bourdieu (1990) and Morrow (1999) concluded that family habitus is grounded in different kinds of capital; economic, cultural, social while some commentators include emotional capital. Furthermore, it generates and activates different kinds of capital through the processes of allocation, distribution and use of family resources. In the context of the participants' learned behaviour in their childhood, the parents appear to have provided cultural capital which manifests in how they behave in society, specifically in the workplace.

4.1.2 Growing up in the 1980s and schooling

The previous subsection provided the family backgrounds of the participants and explored their family contexts and the environmental conditions in which they grew up. Following the portrayal of the family background and its habituation, this sub-section unpacks the socio-political context of participants' childhoods. I explore the political context of South Africa in the period in which they grew up as this period had a significant impact in this particular stage of their life stories. The 1980s and early 1990s saw a rise in political unrest against the apartheid state (Seidman, 2001). Protest activity and state repression were pronounced in townships across the country. This period coincided with the formative schooling years of most participants. Most narratives reflected on this period. With most of the black participants growing up in townships, the historical context of the townships of their youth was a useful narrative meaning making process. The black participants traced the formative ideas about their careers to their youth.

The narratives provide us with an understanding of participants' schooling years and how this period influenced their decision making when it came to choosing their preferred careers. The section starts with the participants' experiences in their primary and high school years and is followed by their experiences in higher education settings. Their stories suggest that the participants' experiences of early schooling varied as a result of the variations across their family backgrounds and the geographical areas in which they were raised. The diversity in experiences illustrates how the type of schooling provided social capital, particularly for those that attended former model C—historically white - schools. Following their school years, I share the narratives of the participants' experiences in higher education organisations. In exploring these experiences, they share how they entered these organisations, how they selected areas of study and how these guided their career choices.

All of the black participants in the study were born during the apartheid period albeit to different extents depending on their age at the end of apartheid. The youngest participant was nine years old and the oldest was 30 at the end of apartheid. The average age of participants in 1994 was sixteen years. Many were raised in environments that were systematically deprived and they recall living in conditions of impoverishment. Their narratives suggest that the environment in which they grew up was the main motivation for them to work hard at school in order to obtain the education required to get a professional job and access to a

‘better life’. Some of them believed that their parents’ careers helped to determine their own career choices and paths.

Those with parents with little to no education were motivated to choose careers that would result in better livelihoods than those of their parents. This subset of participants had experienced the disadvantage of parents not being able to adequately provide for them and their families. For the participants who were brought up by parents who had been in employment, it was apparent that they wanted to emulate the work ethic of their parents. For those with educated parents, enabled by post-apartheid opportunities, they were motivated to attain better career opportunities than what their parents had been able to achieve in an environment constrained by apartheid’s racialised and gendered restrictions.

> You either are going towards something or you are going away from something. In my case, I guess it was going away from something. So, all I knew is that I don’t want to struggle, all I knew was that I wanted to have a car and a decent house and a decent life (Kagiso).
>
> I started realising that, at the back of my mind, I think I know that I needed to get out of that space (Thuli).
>
> My father was, for the most part, a labourer. So, from very humble beginnings. We always knew that the only ticket out of this kind of situation is education (Sifiso).

From the preceding accounts by Kagiso, Thuli and Sifiso, it is apparent that they were motivated to “move away” from their parents’ circumstances of struggle. Kagiso was motivated by a materially “decent life”, Thuli wanted to “get out of that space” and Sifiso knew that he did not want to become a labourer like his father was. For him, education was the “ticket out”. As people from a lineage of “achievers”, when read in relation to Kagiso, Thuli and Sifiso, Shaka and Zanele strike a dissonant chord as they continue to build on legacies that were already in place.

> But I think already that gives you an idea of the background of achievers. They bought into education and hard-working parents, where I come from. My parents’ philosophy was education will set your free. Education will set up opportunities and will give you a foundation irrespective of what you want to do (Shaka).
>
> Like I think between them, my mom has like 8, 9 degrees, a couple of Masters’, PhDs; like, we love studying. My dad, funny enough was actually one of the first few blacks to actually get an MBA at Wits in 1980 (Zanele).

The accounts by Zanele, Shaka, Thuli, Sifiso and Kagiso suggest that obtaining an education played an important role in their families. They believe that as black people, the only "ticket" out of poverty towards material success is through an education. Some participants appeared to be driven by the need to escape from their childhood situations. This cohort figured education as their only way out of their impoverished environments. In addition, some participants see their environments as having motivated them to work hard. From the following accounts, the discourse of needing to "go away" from poverty compelled Mandla to "hustle" and "push" his dreams in order to escape his impoverished upbringing. Mosa's appreciation of his "humble beginnings" is evident. He observes that his environment taught him a lot and contributed towards him eventually escaping.

> You realise you need to hustle; you need to push your own dreams and I think that's what motivated me to try and change my life (Mandla).

> The life and challenges we had to deal with you know and for me it was just how I survived that, that was hard work. I think I would call it humble beginnings you know; village life teaches you a lot, you know (Mosa).

With the support and hard work encouraged by the parents and caregivers, as well as the schooling opportunities that opened in the transition to democracy, the participants were able to obtain their high school education and they all aspired to further their studies at a tertiary level. The parents' social class status does not seem to have a negative impact towards the senior's managers career choices and journeys. Those from impoverished backgrounds seemed to have obtained motivation from their social settings to seek better opportunities. Some were motivated by the need to escape their context, while others were inspired by the need for a better life than their parents had had. Regardless of the context, the motivation to work hard was generally influenced by parents. In addition, parents who came from a lower status social class seemed to have encouraged the participants to seek better opportunities. However, continuing excessive poverty among black people suggests that the ability of these particular participants to "escape" poverty might not be a general experience. Rather than explaining causality, the aim of this study is to offer plausible accounts from the narrative self-authorisation of participants.

From the following stories, it is apparent that participants growing up in the 1980's and 1990's townships had differing experiences from those who grew up in the rural

environments. The following stories by Thuli, Lerato, Sibusiso and Nathi provide an account of life within the townships during their childhoods.

> So, I attended school in Soweto, and my first year of school was in 1976. So, I started school right at the point of the riots. And my whole academic year or years, they're full of err, you know, like, the riots and the crime and all of that. And so, I did my schooling there and I participated in I think it was, and I always say to people, it was somewhat my way escaping what was happening, I guess, around me (Thuli).

> And then the riots started. So, my grade 10 year, was actually, I think we had half a year schooling. It was right at the peak of a you know those, that KZN killings prior to 94, it was 1993. It was just like right in the middle you know, the police coming to our school, it was just five minutes to the homelands collapsing. We were affected as well, our president was about to fall, the ANC, Mandela had been released and people were fighting. CODESA was going on. We literally had no school that year. I think if I can count, probably even less than five months, maybe five months of schooling. So, we had to, a lot of kids failed, a lot of kids dropped out and so you had study on your own (Lerato).

Thuli and Lerato recall the riots in their townships as significant childhood experiences that adversely impacted schooling for a generation of young people. They recall that their schooling was disrupted by the riots. This corresponds with educationists such as Christie and Collins (1992) who observed that the 1970s and 1980s were a period of crisis for education. However, the transition period of the early 1990s was particularly disruptive in places like KwaZulu Natal where Lerato attended school. She narrates that the school year was shortened and that this resulted in many children failing in that period. The political situation of disruption impacted schooling directly for some participants. For Thuli, the beginning of her schooling coincided with the height of student resistance in 1976. Her schooling was therefore marked by the dysfunction that was endemic to the period. When her schooling was disrupted, she had to find ways to adjust to the political context which had a direct impact to her.

Thuli and Lerato's stories show how growing up during in a time of political unrest in South Africa had an impact on black children's experience of schooling. Here, schooling is understood as a foundation for the participants' subsequent careers. The tensions of the democratic transition impacted black children's schooling and ultimately, their pursuit of careers and jobs (Christie & McKinney, 2017; Engelbrecht, 2006; Rakometsi, 2008). This period saw white children being comfortable in organisations of privilege, whilst schools for

black children were subjected to a mediocre education system as a result of the political context (Rakometsi, 2008). The provision of second-rate education to black children was seen as a political weapon that led to running battles with authorities. The black schooling system was used to fight political battles on a broader socio-economic front that had nothing to do with education in some instances (Engelbrecht, 2006; Rakometsi, 2008).

The mediocre education that existed in township schools led a number of black parents to move their children to suburban schools, commonly known as former model C schools. Nathi shares particular incidents around the political unrests that saw led him to move from township schools to a former model C school.

> So, I guess it was actually quite interesting growing up in an environment where there were riots. Obviously in the township where I grew up, I grew up in a place called Ntuzuma which is close to KwaMashu. Yah, I mean, the whole thing about Mandela being released from jail and the changes from township schools to move to you know, like better schools in the suburbs, you know and so the journey continued yah (Nathi).

Nathi's recognition of the significance of these events highlights how this period coincided with the beginning of black children started to obtain access to former model C schools which were previously only accessible to white learners. The migration to suburban schools was in part a consequence of the schooling disruptions that gripped township schools (Christie & McKinney, 2017). This phenomenon is explained by Sibusiso when he recalls an incident of "political violence leading to 1994" when he moved from a township school.

> Obviously, there was challenges around the quality at the time. Township schooling at that time with the political violence and leading up to 1994. Things were quite hectic growing up in that environment. So, my mother took a position that just maybe to access better quality education we will go to a neighbouring Indian school (Sibusiso).

The years leading up to the formal demise of apartheid witnessed a loosening of segregated schooling. To secure his education, Sibusiso's mother took the decision to enrol him in a neighbouring historically Indian school. With black children being allowed entry into former-model C and Indian schools, the democratic transition in the country opened new opportunities for schooling and work for black people. Thuli's life story of being raised in the epicentre of protest contrasts sharply to that of the participants who either moved to or started

school in historically advantaged suburban schools. This suggests huge variation in the backgrounds of black people which are generally treated as homogenous. In the following accounts by Buhle and Shaka, it is apparent that their schooling in historically white schools was materially different to experiences of those who attended township schools.

> I just think, I think the one thing that kind of stands out when I think of my schooling was how I just got exposure to a lot of different things like I was so busy, I had a busy schedule, it's debating, it's hockey, it's swimming, all sorts of things (Buhle).

> I loved that school; it was a great foundation not from an academic perspective. I think at that age, but I think there is a science that proves that, the importance of manners, respect, chivalry in order for one to use such skills for the rest of their lives (Shaka).

Sifiso's narrative of his move from a dysfunctional township school to a former model C school illuminates the identity shifts and costs that such transitions occasioned. For instance, he was given an English name which he has kept throughout his life.

> So, grade one in my school had certainly at least fifty children, one facing one direction, one group facing one direction, all in the same room. So, my two elder sisters and I were then given an opportunity to go to a different school which at that time you would have been classified as a private school. But we knew no English, we could speak no English. So both or at least I had to repeat standard one even though I had done grade three already in the other school. But because I knew no English in the other school, they made me repeat that grade so I can learn English (Sifiso).

He then recalls the day he was given the English name that he still uses in his professional context.

> I remember this very vividly in the interview process. We were in the interview and the 'mistress' or the 'mevrou' at that school asked; "what is his name"? They said, Sifiso and she asked, "what is his real name?" My parents did not know, and they chased them out and said, "think about it and join the queue again". Which is where the name Peter came from (Sifiso).

Sifiso's narration of the incident when his name was changed was a significant experience he had as a child and he narrated the incident word-for-word as a conversation between his parents and the school teacher. His parents made a decision to change his name in order for him to be accepted at the school. For him, the name change was not a voluntary process to adapt to the new school environment, but he was converted to adapt to the former model C

school environment. We might say that the new field required different rules of engagement and a new habitus.

Similar to Sifiso, Buhle's transition from a township school to a former model C school was signified by her experience of confusion as she, like Sifiso, was unable to speak English. However, her name was not changed, and the adaptation required from her was to learn how to speak English. The difference in this experience may be read in relation to the historical context of the education system. For instance, Sifiso attended these schools prior to the new democratic dispensation whereas Buhle went to these schools in the new democracy, in a period where African names were embraced. In the following excerpt, Buhle places importance on adjusting "quite quickly" into the new setting. This was important in order to fit into the new cultural context with a different class habitus.

> Ja, so I spent about two years from the age of about five to seven in a township school. So, that would be the latter parts of the 80s or the early 90s and then uhm, you know just before democracy around 91 or something. I went to kind of suburban schools, and it was all very confusing. I couldn't speak English, never spent time with white kids and all of that, but anyway, kids adjust quite quickly uhm. I adjusted quite quickly and then went into high school, also in Pietermaritzburg (Buhle).

Buhle felt that she needed to "adjust quite quick" in order to integrate into the white culture that operated in the former model C school environment. This assimilationist culture made Buhle feel inadequate when compared to her fellow white learners. She shares how she could not speak English and had also "never spent time with white kids". As a result, she was required to adjust to their normative standards in order to be part of the new environment.

The adjustment that black children were expected to make in order to adapt to the cultures of predominantly white spaces seems to be a common practice that is narrated by those who had to move from township to former model C schools (Christie & McKinney, 2017). In the beginning of the interviews when I asked Sifiso and Buhle about their parents' occupations, they indicated that their parents did not have professional work but rather engaged in blue collar and small informal business respectively. Coming from working class environments, they had to learn English for the first time and for Sifiso, he was compelled to adopt an English name. Schools and workplaces with a middle-class habitus are generally more difficult spaces for people with working class cultural capital that is not valued in middle

class spaces. The extent to which they are able to habituate to the new environment is likely to influence how they navigate the spaces and context. The stories by participants from working class families appear to be contradictory to Bourdieu's (1993) claim that working class parents were likely to have lowered aspirations for their children. What is observed in this study, is that the initial setbacks of this cohort of working-class children were mediated by parents who, although they did not have the educational background and requisite social capital, nevertheless valued education and encouraged them to succeed in their studies.

Some of the participants recognised that their relatively privileged backgrounds provided them the edge through access to better education. Having gained its independence in 1980 and made huge investments in education, Zimbabwe was reputed to provide excellent education (Chisholm & Leyendecker, 2008). For black parents of means like Langa's, sending children to Zimbabwe was an investment in their children as it suggested a way out of the Bantu education system. Langa and Shaka's parents appear to have practiced a level of agency in the educational choices of their children. Their choices suggest the possibilities available to people of a middle-class background. Shaka remarks on this euphemistically as "a good environment". The discourse of a good environment stands in for a middle-class environment.

> As a youngster, I think we enjoyed life, and the parents provided a good environment for us to have a healthy upbringing (Shaka).
>
> I was privileged to have very good education across, and my parents felt that the Zimbabwean system at that time was the best possible education for me, maybe for good reason. Yeah, it was a very different environment there, things were more relaxed, people trusted each other, it was mixed races, it was friendly. Although there was mixed races, there wasn't the hostility that you would see between white and black here (Langa).

The material and experiential disparities between participants is a significant factor that emerges here. Participants attended school at a turbulent historical period marked by constraints and possibilities. Their stories provide insight into township schooling, homeland schooling, suburban schooling in historically white or Indian schools, private schooling and rural schools. The inequalities in the education of the participants resulted in the middle-class children being advantaged. This produced an unequal apportioning of symbolic capital which may be understood as the prestige that gives value to those who attended former model C schools (Bourdieu, 1990). It is against this background that career narratives of participants

are considered in this study. Different dosages of valued habitus enable varying levels of access and success in these contexts. We see this in the narrative discourses represented, for instance, by Shaka who had a more privileged upbringing and Thuli, on the other hand, who lived through the height of the Soweto uprisings and had disrupted schooling.

Even though habitus is a product of early childhood experience, particularly their socialisation in their families, people's habitus will continuously develop alternative pathways through encounters with the outside world. According to Reay (2004), habitus can be replicated by exposure to conditions which reproduce dispositions or transform them through processes to raise or lower individual's aspirations. Some of the participants sought better educational opportunities by escaping their social context. This may explain why some of the participants aspire to have experiences that are associated with a higher social class such as moving to more affluent environments. This was also seen in a study by Schneider and Lang (2014) on the social mobility of Turkish-German (Turkish second generation) professionals. They found that the individuals appeared as 'imprisoned' in the prescriptions of a given habitus, so that 'escaping' from it and adopting a new habitus may be understood as a deep and permanent transformation.

4.1.3 Higher Education and Career Choices

In this sub-section, we explore participants' accounts of their entry into institutions of higher education, including how they obtained the funds required to support their studies. Following on the class habitus from childhood experiences, the tertiary education of participants from working-class contexts was funded by family and various bursary schemes. Those who came from a working-class context with no funds to pay for post-school education were funded through bursary programmes from various organisations and some from the government student loan programme. The funding opportunities provided access to most impoverished black students and allowed them an opportunity to further their studies. In line with providing access to students who needed funding, the government implemented the Tertiary Education Fund of South Africa (TEFSA) which was later replaced by National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) in 1999. The financial aid scheme provides access to funding to impoverished students, based on an assessment of their household income status. With the income differentials in the country mostly based on race, it is no surprise that most black students would benefit from the programme. In addition to the scheme, many organisations

provide funding opportunities to students based on academic performance as well as financial need. The funding sources however remain inadequate and do not reach all deserving students.

Sibusiso and Nonhlanhla shared their experiences of how receiving funding in the form of bursaries to further their studies in their respective universities provided them with opportunities to study further. Without the support, Sibusiso explains that he "would not have been able to afford the fees" as he observes this experience as a "game changer" for his family.

> I got a bursary to study Accounting at the University of Natal. So that was obviously, the background that I was coming from. I would not have been able to afford the fees so that was the key game changer for us as a family (Sibusiso).
>
> In Bank Y, I was in the accelerated development programme throughout my career, even my studies with them were paid by Bank Y. I've never paid for any of my studies by the way. My employer has always paid for my studies because I'm part of a programme (Nonhlanhla).

Increased access to post school education in the early 1990s was enabled by the desegregation of historically white universities and the availability of more funding support for tertiary education (Chisholm & Leyendecker, 2008). Reading the context in which Nonhlanhla and Sibusiso accessed further study through a critical race lens enables us to surface the broad socio-economic inequalities that resulted from the apartheid era and continued post 1994. In this context, most black families were still excluded from accessing life altering opportunities such as furthering their education (Chetty, Pather, & Condy, 2015). The bursary programmes and other funding opportunities that Sibusiso and Nonhlanhla accessed can be regarded as a form of capital that resulted in the participants entering a new field, the formal employment sector, in which their parents had been unable to participate.

Notwithstanding the importance of the bursary programmes enabling black students to access higher education, some participants' areas of study were directed by what funding opportunities they received. This obliged them to study towards specific qualifications based on the bursary requirements rather than the pursuit of areas of personal interest. Mandla and Thando tell stories of how they had to forego their bursaries as a result of changing their areas of study. They both made a decision to study what they were interested in. However,

due to lack of funding and affordability, they abandoned their studies. Mandla, however, subsequently decided to study in another field for which he received funding to return to university. From the following accounts by Mandla, Thando, Sifiso and Lebo, we observe that funding opportunities compelled some black students to pursue specific degrees which were not necessarily aligned to their individual interests and aspirations. However, these forced choices enabled them to enter new spaces which eventually provided access to corporate employment opportunities.

> I got a bursary to go do medicine. I was just not a blood person, so I just couldn't stand the sight of blood. So, I decided to go do electrical engineering. I did one year of electrical engineering, my grades were great, I loved it but at the end of my first year, my parents were struggling to finance my education. So, I started asking around looking for bursaries and stuff, so I got a job with Bank Z. While I was with them, I also got a bursary to go back and study Accounting (Mandla).

> And then after high school, I got a bursary at a consulting firm. I went to UCT, I studied a Bachelor of Business Sciences in Economics and Finance, no, actually it was for Accounting, a CA stream. Half-way through I realised that Accounting as a field is not something that interests me much, so I changed my stream. Half-way through that I then lost my Ernst and Young relationship (Thando).

> It wasn't really my decision, I applied for academic scholarships and that's what guided my journey overseas. I went to where the academic scholarship was, and it was in the US (Sifiso).

> So, I think at the time when I was going, I was either going to do Chartered Accountant. I think at the time Actuarial sciences was coming up, but we didn't know much about it, we knew it was there. So, I think I had a choice between these two but obviously my bursary was more towards the CA, because I started having a scholarship with them since I was in high school (Lebo).

The above accounts of experiences by Mandla, Thando, Sifiso and Lebo were not common to all the participants. Shaka and Buhle who grew up in middle class families where the parents were educated and employed, pursued areas of study that were of interest to them. Not only did they choose their own areas of study, but they were also guided by their educated parents in making career decisions. They give an account on how they were able to select their areas of study as well as how they were guided. These instances illustrate the cultural capital possessed by middle class families.

> It resulted in me going to study at Tshwane University of Technology, an IT degree. My old man said, ‘you must add business to it’, which I did, and it

> opened up a new can of worms or passion because now IT was the passion that drove me through. But now, there was a passion for business coming about and understanding how business worked (Shaka).
>
> I guess and yah from grade 11 just having very serious conversations about what I'm going to study, where I'm going to study. I think by March, March grade 11, I was applying to universities (Buhle).

Both preceding accounts illustrate how cultural capital is replicated. Their middle-class parents were able to guide them because they too had experience of accessing higher education. Buhle and Shaka's accounts, as well as the earlier experiences shared by Mandla and Sifiso, challenge the homogeneous discourses of black experience. Having attended former model C schools, Buhle and Shaka possessed forms of social and symbolic capitals over the black children who attended township or rural schools. The social capital is seen in the form of the social networks and access to extramural activities that were non-existent in rural and township schools. From a symbolic capital perspective, Buhle and Shaka attended schools that had good reputations for providing a good education. Bourdieu (1990) describes this as serving as a powerful mask for privilege. Their social class provided them with cultural capital in a habitus that enabled them in their navigation of educational organisations (Erben et al., 1979).

Middle class participants had a social capital that provided them with the ability to select careers of their choice. Buhle and Shaka were able to pursue careers of interest as their parents funded their studies whereas Mandla and Sifiso were directed based on the bursaries they obtained. Class habitus amongst the participants at university resulted in a divergence in their experiences. It is important to consider this divergence in experiences in their career journeys when looking at how the participants entered into the corporate context and how this impacted their experiences during their schooling years. The stories told by Mandla and Thando highlight career crossroads in their university years that determined the direction in which they took the careers.

The following accounts depict how Lerato and Zanele navigated decision making about what to study at university. Unlike Mandla and Thando who had to completely abandon their studies due to lack of financial support, Lerato and Zanele decided to go to different organisations and select areas of study in which they were interested.

> So, when I finished matric, I registered for a BSc Computer Science at Rhodes University. I left, went to Rhodes and I had just registered for something I did not like, I did not know, and things went horribly wrong. So, there was that one year that I spent in Rhodes, then I went back home after a year and I completed my BCom degree at the University of North West, also in Mafikeng (Lerato).
>
> I actually did a BCom Accounting, cause I actually wanted to go the Accounting route because I was actually very good in Accounting in high school. That was my thing until I was in it and I actually realised I get bored quite quickly. It really, my personality, and that was really not going to work. Then after doing accounting, I went to the university of Pretoria, then I did Investment Managements. So, at that point in time, I decided I wanted to be a chartered financial analyst go the CFA route (Zanele).

Lerato was only able to pursue her degree in her area of interest due to the funding received from the government. Unlike most bursaries which prescribe the areas of study for students, the NSFAS programme by the government provides funding to students across disciplines. The funding is divided into a loan that the students have to repay at the end of their studies and the other portion is converted into a bursary (NSFAS, 2022). Zanele, on the other hand, was able to change universities and switch her areas of study with the continued financial support of her parents. Lerato and Zanele were able to change their areas of study based on two different forms of capital, namely, the student loan (debt) and parents' finances. The class habitus sees Lerato having to start her first job experience with financial debt whereas Zanele entered her first job debt free. Although both had the capital that allowed them to make the switch, the forms of capital were different based on the social classes to which they respectively belonged.

The participants leveraged diverse sources to secure funds for their studies. A small minority of participants paid for their own education with the support of middle-class families. The majority were working class and this cohort leveraged loans, bursaries and government support to pay for their education. The black participants from families whose parents were middle class were able to afford to pay for their schooling. Working class families were unable to do the same. The discourse of hard work which they had adopted from their parents was carried through at this stage of their lives. Through opportunities that opened as a result of the transition to democracy and hard work, participants were able to qualify for bursaries from various organisations which enabled them to study further. Ultimately, all participants were able to get an education.

Bursaries and other forms of student funding enabled black people, who mostly come from working class backgrounds, to study further beyond high school. From Bourdieu's perspective, this form of funding is an organisational cultural capital that allowed black people entry into a field that was previously inaccessible to them. Scholars such as Reddy (2004) have credited higher education for having a positive impact on social transformation in South Africa. This is in relation to a history of mass exclusion of black people from higher education in the apartheid period (Leibowitz & Bozalek, 2014). The impact of the redress policies post 1994 resulted the increased participation amongst black people and women. To support this assertion, Leibowitz and Bozalek (2014) showed that there was an increase in black students at public universities from 55 percent in 1994 to 80 percent in 2010. The increase has been attributed to the opening of previously segregated universities, massification, an increase in universities and a widening of funding mechanisms for black students. The participants of this study were part of the beneficiaries of this change in policy and the funding from the government NSFAS scheme.

The increase of the black middle class in the post-1994 period has provided more opportunities for upward social mobility as a result of black graduates from universities assuming jobs in the public and private sectors and civil society. Obtaining professional and managerial jobs has allowed them access to economic capital. Well-paying high status jobs and living in historically inaccessible middle-class communities endowed them with symbolic capital. The participants who went to township and rural schools acquired economic capital that afforded them the ability to take their children to former whites only schools, thereby providing them with social capital. The participants' narratives of this period in their lives indicates the influence that parenting had in how they developed values, such as respect and hard work, which they continue to display in their adulthood. The environment in which they grew up did not have a differential impact in the values, regardless of their social class. This suggests that values of hard work and respect are not necessarily classed or geographically different. The historical context of South Africa's political landscape significantly affected childhood and schooling experience. This is particularly evident among the participants who grew up in townships. Their experiences appear to differ from those who either grew up in suburban or rural areas. Though there were shared experiences of struggle amongst the black participants, the struggle manifested in different forms. The struggle in the rural environments was signified by high levels of poverty and limited access to certain facilities. On the other hand, the struggle for participants from townships was marked by the

political turmoil. The experiences of participants, such as Shaka and Langa, who grew up suburban areas were marked by transitions into the previously inaccessible spaces.

The Critical Race Theory attributes of storytelling and counter-storytelling can be understood as enabling participants to counter the discourse that black people's experiences are homogeneous. These childhood narratives provide a lens through which the voices of the participants are considered from different backgrounds and social contexts. The other notable CRT tenet from the narratives is the historical construction of the South African schooling system. The distinction between rural, township and former model C schooling shows how the social order segregated the schools along racial and class lines. The intersectional lens between race and class becomes apparent as the cultural, social and symbolic capital are surfaced by the participants. This intersection results in the emergence of the black middle class amongst black people where the relative homogeneity that largely existed pre-democracy slowly diminishes as the experiences start to differ more starkly according to class.

4.2 Part Two: Job Market Entry and Early Career

From the narratives of the participants' childhood and schooling experiences, we saw how the habituation of early childhood experiences played an important role in the development of their identity. The environment, as well as the political context, played a significant role in this stage of their life stories. Participants' entry into school and further studies occurred within a period of political transition which enabled access to spaces previously forbidden to black people. Following a linear temporality, the next stage of the life story that we address is the participants' entry into the world of work and their early experiences within this phase. We explore the narrative that traces the move from higher education to the world of professional employment. We start by exploring their experience of their first job. We then look at their experiences of mentorship and sponsorship which were identified as having played a significant role in their career trajectories.

In addition to the mentorship and sponsorship they obtained, the participants attributed their career trajectory to their hard work. In narrating the discourse of hard work, they highlight organisational colour blindness that nevertheless utilises meritocracy based on race. The experience of black people, in fields that were previously inaccessible to them, appears to be a shared experience regardless of the organisations at which they have worked. Their shared identity as black people is evident in their narratives. This is particularly evident in the stories of how they obtained the different forms of capital at the early career stage of their lives. At this stage, there is a more apparent emergence of intersections of race and gender. Here, the women articulate a simultaneously raced and gendered experience of organisational life. The intersection of being black and being a woman is illustrated in the various stories told by the women participants.

4.2.1 Getting the first job

All the participants in this study completed an undergraduate tertiary qualification with some participants advancing their studies to postgraduate level. In this sub-section, we look at their entry into the world of work. It is apparent from most of their narrative accounts that their first jobs were in the form of programmes such as graduate development programmes and internships. These were designed by organisations to offer opportunities for employment to students who had completed their studies and did not have formal prior work experience. The participants entered into these graduate programmes through various means.

Mbali recounts that she obtained a bursary from a company with the condition that she had to work for them for a certain period post her qualification.

> After completing the BCom degree I had to come to Johannesburg and work for Company A to serve for the period for which they had granted me a bursary, I ended up being there for four or five years (Mbali).

She was able to complete her studies as a result of a bursary that she received which allowed her entry into the organisation. She believes she had "to serve" which suggests that she did not work for the company by choice, but rather as an obligation she was meant to fulfil. Coming from an impoverished background, Mbali explains that she depended on the bursary she obtained to complete her qualification. As a result, she regards working in that company as serving.

While Mbali appeared to have automatic entry into the workplace, most participants applied to graduate programmes that were offered by various organisations. The participants recognise efforts made by many organisations to make information on the programmes accessible to them and other students while they were still in their respective higher education institutions. They emphasised that they were aware of employment opportunities through graduate programmes when organisations came to their universities, advertised the programmes and conducted recruitment campaigns at their campuses.

Lerato recalls her experience of being "identified" by Bank Y following her completion of her degree. Thando also recalls that she was also recruited by Bank Y, and she highlights that it was the "start of her career".

> From UCT, I was identified by Bank Y when they came to recruit. So, I went to work for Bank Y as a graduate and in that year, I completed an honours part-time (Lerato).

> I got into the Bank Y investment banking graduate programme, a year into that so that was great, that was really the start of my career through that (Thando).

Kagiso who also started his career as a graduate in Bank Y, refers to the programme as the "best thing that has ever happened" to him. He narrates the valuable lessons that he acquired

through the programme and recalls how he became “assertive” and was able to build his “own brand”.

> Then I went and did exactly those crazy things, and then on my fourth year I started applying around and somehow, I was lucky and got accepted on the Bank Y graduate programme. I must say the graduate programme was the best thing that ever happened to me because they exposed us to so many basics you know. How to become assertive, how to build your own brand how to behave as if you were Kagiso (Pty), (Kagiso).

Lerato, Thando and Kagiso attribute the beginning of their careers to Bank Y’s graduate programme which they were able to access through the career fairs that the Bank hosted at their respective universities. As indicated in table 2, the majority of the participants in the study came from Bank Y which seems to have a significant representation of black people in their senior echelons. The participants who were on the graduate programme at Bank Y told stories of how the bank purposefully recruited black students with the intention to grow and accelerate them into senior positions. They continue to attribute their career progression and success to this particular programme. These participants attribute participation in the programme as the beginning of their careers.

Kagiso illustrates how the programme was structured to provide a habitus that was expected in this corporate field. Here, Bourdieu’s field is used to provide an arena for the graduates to reproduce dispositions required by Bank Y. From his narrative, it appears that the main purpose of the programme was to ensure that as new entrants to the workplace, they would be able to adapt their habitus to incorporate ways of being that were required in the workplace. This was essentially a new field for them. As graduates, they acquired an embodied cultural capital in the form of skills acquired and organisational cultural capital in the form of a set of relationships and power obtained. The programme ensured that there were sufficient resources and support for participants to integrate into the workplace. For example, Kagiso explains that they were trained on “how to behave,” including how to “become assertive”. This indicates the performative nature of what is regarded as permissible behaviours in the corporate context. The programme appears to have exposed them to performances that are required to adapt to the particular field. Based on these accounts, it appears that Bank Y’s programme was to ensure that the participants conformed to what was deemed to be desired behaviours at the bank. This reinforces long established norms and behaviours which bolster the status quo.

Outside of Bank Y's graduate programme to recruit and develop black people, there were other companies that sought to do the same. Some of the participants believed that the focus on recruiting and training young black graduates was a result of the pressure that government was placing on organisations to meet their employment equity targets. Sipho recalls how he gained entry into an internship programme that was deliberately set out to develop black economists. The emphasis on future "black economists" being recruited illustrates the efforts most organisations put into ensuring that they meet their employment equity targets.

> So, I went to UCT for my undergrad and then I went and did postgrad at the University of KZN. I studied up to a Masters level but had sub-majors in politics and philosophy and then I was fortunate to get into an internship programme that was trying to develop black economists (Sipho).

According to Langa, in addition to recruiting black graduates, his organisation was "deliberate towards developing black talent". He further suggests that this is a reason the Exco team in his organisation is "one of the most transformed Exco".

> So, in speaking for Insurance B they were very deliberate towards developing talent, particularly black talent. So, if you're going to come and make it as a leader in that kind of environment, there has to be some kind of training and development that has to happen. So, here black talent is being sent to top universities in the world you find. I'm going to speak tongue and cheek for my employer but I think it's one of the most transformed Excos (Langa).

Langa and Sipho's stories on organisations focus on recruiting and developing "black talent" illustrate the importance of employment equity as a form of capital for both organisations and black graduates who seem to have benefitted from it. The CEE (2023) recognised the employment equity legislative framework as responsible for promoting the redress of historic inequalities by creating inclusivity in employment as well as ownership in businesses (CEE, 2023). As a result, in the context of the participants, employment equity can be seen as a form of social capital that enabled them to enter into fields that were previously inaccessible to them, and which gave them access to economic capital in the form of high paying jobs. In the South African context where organisations are under pressure to meet their employment equity targets, such programmes appear to have provided social and symbolic capital to these organisations. The social capital, referring to the benefits acquired based on one's social relationships and interactions, is observed in organisations receiving credentials through their B-BBEE status which allows them to conduct business with other organisations.

Symbolic capital, referring to the resources that provide recognition in various settings, is attained through the public recognition which signifies the organisation's commitment and support to the transformation agenda of the country. Organisations' ability to reach the employment equity target also results in them obtaining B-BBEE points that provides them an advantage when doing business, resulting in economic capital for them. From the financial organisations' perspective, the graduate development programme from Bank Y which most of the black senior managers claim to have been part of, seems to have played a significant role in developing black graduates. This is realised firstly, with managers that went on to leave this bank and progressed in other financial organisations; secondly, when compared to its peers, Bank Y has a significant number of black people in senior positions.

When I asked if employment equity contributed to his career progression, Langa appeared to reject that belief for himself. Although he previously emphasised that his organisation developed "black talent" resulting in a transformed Exco, he seemed to reject the importance thereof when it comes to his own career. He seemingly contradicts himself in the following narrative as he states that he has "very strong views against employment equity". This is contrary to what he previously stated in relation to supporting the development of black people.

> I have very strong views against employment equity, especially in the manner that it is perceived and implemented in some places. Has it? Maybe, but I don't know, but I prefer to earn my stripes than for people to kind of make a pity hire to say, 'just because of the balance, let's get a black face in the building' (Langa).

Langa refers to black people as "black talent". His use of "black talent" to describe black people in these spaces challenges the discourse of "black faces" as window dressing. His challenge frames black people as possessing required aptitude and skill. He associates the discourse of "black face in the building" with incompetence as it is seen as a "pity hire" which is different to a person being seen as "talent". However, in his criticism of employment equity, Langa does not consider the likelihood that he was appointed as a consequence of this programme. In addition, he appears unable to reconcile corrective and enabling measures with skill and talent—one might both benefit from employment equity and be competent. His "strong views" against the policy suggest that he might have internalised white suspicion of black people in the corporate space. Critical race theory alerts us to the timing and context of discourses of meritocracy. These appear to emerge in the context of implementation of

employment equity in organisations and as a push against enabling access. Meritocracy is consequently assigned to whiteness and incompetence and window dressing to blackness.

Merit comes to stand in for doing things as they have always been done. Canham (2014) contends that in defining meritocracy, the perpetual focus on black incompetence tends to elide attention from white incompetence. This results in an association of whiteness and perpetual competence. In this rendering, some black people begin to resent the very mechanisms which are meant to facilitate black advancement in a recalcitrant environment. Consequently, black people like Langa do not want to be regarded as employment equity beneficiaries as this would suggest that they attained their positions as a result of their race and not on merit.

Programmes such as graduate development, internships and other development programmes appear to have not only provided access into the workplace for the participants, but they also contributed toward habituating them into valued organisational attributes. From the participants' narrative accounts, these programmes are perceived to be implemented by organisations in order to develop black people into senior roles. The programmes can consequently be considered to be part of employment equity initiatives that are implemented by organisations to achieve social justice and legislated employment equity targets which result in transformation in accordance with the demographics of the country.

4.2.2 Mentorship and sponsorship as anchors of career progression

Following their entrance into organisational contexts, the participants highlighted the value of having a mentor and a sponsor at the onset of their career journeys. They attribute their successful integration into the corporate environment to mentorship. In addition to the value of mentorship at the beginning of their careers, participants acknowledge that mentors play a pivotal role in providing the guidance required throughout one's career. Sponsorship, on the other hand, was seen as playing an integral part in their recognition and exposure to opportunities for growth and development which resulted in their successful career progression. A mentor's role is defined as someone who encourages the individual and a sponsor as someone with influence who can advocate for the career advancement of protégés by introducing them to others in positions of influence and recommending them for positions or promotions (Hilsabeck, 2018). A sponsor is usually someone who also is in a position of influence with access to others of the same status (Hilsabeck, 2018). Sponsors differ from

mentors in that the sponsor's role is not only to provide guidance but to offer direct access to career opportunities.

Thando and Sibusiso look back at how mentors assisted them when they started their careers at the banks where they worked as graduates. They were both part of the graduate programme at Bank Y where they were allocated mentors as part of the programme.

> So, I spent a lot of time trying to figure out where would I be suitable and more importantly, I was very fortunate to have a mentor. So, part of the grad programme, we were all allocated mentors, and I made a conscious decision to ensure that my mentor-mentee relationship is quite meaningful for them as well as for me (Thando).
>
> The bank does make training available, not just to black people but to white people as well. But it does help you as you journey through the organisation. But for me, the biggest thing is providing mentorship for people coming from minority backgrounds (Sibusiso).

Thando recalls that having a mentor assisted her in determining "where she would be suitable". She further explicates that her relationship with her mentor was "quite meaningful" for both her and her mentor. This illustrates the symmetrical nature of a mentorship relationship since it purportedly benefits the mentor as well (Hewlett, 2013). Sibusiso acknowledges that his organisation provides mentorship "not to just black people but to white people as well". In addition, he appreciates the importance of mentorship for people coming from "minority backgrounds".

Even though mentorship appeared to have played an important role at the beginning of some of the participants' careers, they claim that mentors played a less significant role as they progressed in their careers. Mosa and Zama share the different roles that mentors and sponsors performed in their career journeys.

> Oh, I did the programme. I clearly valued mentors, sponsors, namely because one of the things, for me, for any person to succeed, and this is what I try do on my own, is you need a sponsor you need somebody who's going to look out for you, and somebody who's going to take a bet on you (Mosa).
>
> So, there are a couple of things that contribute to one's progression which are a combination of your own contribution, effort and seeking out those opportunities. But I also feel that there's a fundamental role that can be played by sponsors. Now that is important, I have always had that in all my roles (Zama).

Mosa acknowledges the value that mentors and sponsors played in his career journey, however; he attributes his career success to having a sponsor who was "looking out" for him and "taking a bet" on him. Mosa's experience concurs with Hewlett's (2013) finding that sponsorship has a measurable impact on career progression and people with sponsors have a higher probability of attaining more senior positions. Mosa's experience of the mentorship and sponsorship relationship confirms Hilsabeck (2018) findings which illustrated the fundamental function of sponsors in advancing protégé's careers and recognising the limited influence that mentors have in this respect. Sharing a similar experience in her career, Zama narrates how she has always had a sponsor in her career and appreciates the "fundamental role" that sponsors play. She attributes her progression to a combination of her personal efforts and having sponsors.

From the stories shared by Sibusiso, Zama and Mosa on the benefits of having mentors and sponsors, it is apparent that these provided social capital to the participants in the beginning of their career journeys. The social network that the participants obtained through the mentors and sponsors provided them with resources and valuable lessons that were required. This was particularly salient at the beginning of their careers. One of the values of having a sponsor as narrated by Mosa is when a sponsor is somebody who "looks out for you". Here he recognises a sponsor as someone who offers protection. This suggests that sponsors are likely people who possess some form of power within organisations (Hilsabeck, 2018). The power they possess may take the form of organisational cultural capital by virtue of the authority they hold. In addition, they attain social capital through connections they may have within organisational fields. From Mosa's account, it is apparent that those associated with powerful sponsors are able to access the required social and cultural capital required to succeed in the financial services field.

Having a mentor and sponsor provided the participants with the resources that assisted them in managing their careers. In addition, they seem to also have learned valuable characteristics from their sponsors. Zama's statement illustrates the performances that were learned from sponsors. She recalls how she was able to learn how to "advance" her argument in court and she attributes that to her sponsor.

> So, when you advance your argument in court, you know that's your opportunity to build your case. So, quite possibly that's something that

> attributed to it, probably harnessed even more with this particular sponsor that I had (Zama).

Although having a mentor and sponsor is seen as contributing towards providing support and access to opportunities, Zama emphasises the importance of working hard. Mbali supports this in the following excerpt where she states that although she works hard and does her job "very well", she has benefitted immensely from having a sponsor and that the sponsor was responsible for "opening doors" for her. The discourse of doors being opened highlights how the particular fields in the financial services sector are controlled and owned by particular individuals. The opportunities and entry into doors are not accessible to everyone. Only certain gatekeepers' control who gets access and who does not.

> I deliver, I'm not ashamed of that. I work hard, I do my job very well and I have tangible results that people can see. And I also have mentors in the organisation. I have a sponsor, an incredible sponsor since 2014 that has walked, is actually walking the journey with me and he also actually, he knows what I'm capable of. He helps me, opening doors within the organisation. If there's opportunities, he will make me aware that this is available, if you are interested you want to talk to this person (Mbali).

The discourse on the importance of mentors and sponsors is elaborated on by Shaka in the following statement. He recognises the importance of working hard, but also appreciates the role that employment equity played as well as his background. A combination of his cultural and class habitus from his family background, the social capital provided by having mentors and sponsors, provided him with the opportunity to be in a field that was previously not occupied by black people.

> In the long term, it has resulted in me being one of the first individuals looking after such a portfolio. And it came from putting in those hard hours, it came from transformation, it came from a successful record, it came from a solid background. Great sponsors and I would even put mentors, slash mentors. I have intentionally looked for mentors because the notion that I am not the first to walk the path helps me say 'let me talk to those who have done it before' (Shaka).

Participants suggest that the sponsors are mostly white people. Shaka's account of being "one of the first individuals" in such spaces as a result of having support from mentors and sponsors suggests that white people are responsible for providing access to these spaces as they are the current occupants and gate keepers of the field. The participants believe that

having a white sponsor contributed towards their career success as it opened doors for them. For instance, Zama recalls having a “white male Afrikaans” sponsor early in her career.

Given the role that sponsors are expected to play in relation to providing access to opportunities, it is no surprise that the predominant demographic make-up in the early stages of the career journey was white people and particularly, white men. In financial services organisations, senior positions were mostly and are still occupied by white men. The following observation by Mosa suggests that as a black person “you need a senior white person” to sponsor you. His use of the words “take a bet” demonstrates his belief that the white sponsor takes a risk by supporting a black person and providing them with opportunities. Mpho also uses these words to describe the role played by her sponsors who were “mostly white males” in providing her with access to career opportunities.

> You need, and for any black, especially as the organisation is transforming, you need a white you know, a senior white person to take a bet on you. And the inverse, I guess, will start to happen now as more and more organisations start having senior black leaders. Those same leaders need to take a bet on someone (Mosa).
>
> So, the organisations that I have worked for, I've had good leaders that really saw my potential and also were willing to bet and sponsor me in developing myself. They were more than mentors and funny enough it was mostly white Afrikaner males who saw the potential in me. I guess, you know, it is, it's been willing to go an extra mile but also open up yourself and be vulnerable because we don't know it all, right. But also, when you are open to learning from others, I think that just gives you the edge (Mpho).
>
> I guess when it’s all said and done, when you reflect and look back, you have to appreciate the good things that came out of what you got. And along the way there are a number of people I would say, took a gamble on me and some of them who were very supportive towards my growth and development (Nathi).

In the last excerpt, Nathi illustrates narrative hindsight in action when he observes the power of looking back in order to gain a new perspective (Freeman, 2009). In this regard, since Nathi’s career has turned out well, he recasts his story through the lens of appreciation and potentially airbrushes the challenges and negative experiences. This is captured in Kvernbekk’s (2013) assertion that narrative hindsight creates coherence after the fact of what might have been a complicated set of experiences.

In the above narratives, Mosa, Mpho and Nathi suggest that the provision of opportunities to black people is seen as a "gamble" and a risk in corporate South Africa. Nyati (2019) addresses the concept of leaders taking bets on people. He describes the importance of leaders intentionally sponsoring younger employees with potential and providing opportunities for them to grow in their careers so they themselves become leaders in time. Although Nyati (2019) highlights the positive contribution of taking a "bet" on black professionals, the assumption that offering an opportunity to a black person is equivalent to taking a bet may be seen as a form of unconscious organisational racism where there is a potential failure that could occur if the bet is lost. This discourse potentially results in the fear of employing black people in senior positions thus continuing to ensure the exclusion of black people in these fields.

The influence of having a white mentor or sponsor seems to be a common discourse among participants. Thando, Thuli and Zama share their narratives of having a white mentor or sponsor as part of their career journeys as follows.

> I had started having another mentor I actually don't remember, I'm actually not even sure how the relationship started at a different BU (business unit). Also, female white executive, actually surprisingly, who had been in the bank I think 17 years at the time. She also went through the graduate programme and there was something about our energy that we gelled (Thando).
>
> A lot, a lot I think I had a lot of people who believed in me and in my capabilities. The very interesting thing about that is that you've heard me say I've worked in white spaces; these have been white people yah, these have been white people who believed in me (Thuli).
>
> It almost happened naturally, so it's not like I approached and asked for it. It was somebody who led our business at the time and I, you know. Partly, I think when I joined that business, it was to actually help the business craft the strategy. The sponsor was white male Afrikaans. I've been led by Black African male, white English females, white Afrikaans females and personally I rate working with white Afrikaner men because I just know, where I stand and value that (Zama).

Based on their experiences, Mosa, Thando, Thuli and Zama have come to believe that the best way to obtain social capital and career success is for black employees to have affiliations with white senior managers. Sponsorship from white seniors is regarded as providing social capital. The latter provide the resources to the field they have historically occupied. Applying CRT, the participants' reading of power and structural distribution of valued habitus is

revealing. Critical race theorists, such as Delgado and Stefancic (2017), believe interactions between people and within organisations are situated in power relationships rooted in white supremacy. This belief assumes racism as normal and embedded in societal structures even amongst black people. The participants do not necessarily believe that white mentors and sponsors are better than black ones. They are, however, able to read the power embedded in the corporate networks and recognise that the association with powerful white figures benefits them. Puwar's (2004) reminder is, however, useful when she asserts that white people, particularly males, are often the invisible prototype of those who are seen as rightfully belonging in spaces of power and authority (Puwar, 2004). If whiteness is normalised as powerful, we might become blind to and trivialise black people's power.

Mosa, Thando, Thuli and Zama's experiences of having white mentors has been supported in mentorship literature. For instance, Petersen, Saporta and Seidel (2000) suggested that cross-race mentorship as one of the ways to accelerate career advancement goals for African Americans. They attributed this suggestion to white mentors having access to key networks that can accelerate African Americans' career advancement and achievement of other career goals (Petersen et al., 2006). The authors suggest that white mentors have access to networks and resources that other mentors do not. Consequently, having a white male mentor is likely to contribute towards the increase in their mentees' salary relative to other mentors (Randel, Galvin, Gibson & Batts, 2021). Read in relation to this scholarship, the participants storytelling is instructive and goes to the heart of organisational gate keeping. However, the underside of this reading is the danger of naturalising social capital through mentorship and sponsorship as always necessarily white. The belief that only white people can be good mentors and sponsors inadvertently denies black people's ability to successfully fulfil these roles. From a CRT perspective, an interest convergence occurs in this instance as black people benefitting from white people being their mentors perpetuates the white supremacist belief of being better than their black counterparts (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

Zama's story epitomises this hierarchical valuing of a specific group of career sponsors. She observes that "Afrikaner men" are better leaders than Black African men and white women senior managers. While this is based in her experience, Zama's story perpetuates unconscious organisational racism. It feeds into the stereotypical assumption that black people and women lack important attributes in leadership capability. Her stance is likely to be a product of the cultural habitus she has adopted from white mentors and sponsors. Zama's narrative is an

example of an interest convergence in the relationship between the white sponsors and black employees. In this instance, the interests of white leaders are advanced in that they are seen to have valued attributes in the form of knowledge and skills that they are benevolently passing on to the black people who appear to be in need of them. Relying on Bell (1980), we posit that the white sponsors and mentors' interests converge with those of young black professionals' need for mentorship and sponsorship.

Zama illustrates how discourses of merit continue to operate in South African organisations for both black and white people. From the preceding excerpts, it appears that the discourse of valuing white mentors and sponsors is more apparent among the women participants. The historical context of the relationship between black women and white men was characterised by the former's role in service to the latter, both on the slave plantation and in the sphere of domestic work (Crankshaw, 2002). I suggest that this might be a latent bias that appears to exist amongst some black women. Although the discourse of merit is highlighted in this, the belief that powerful white men possess what is required to become successful is to be expected as they continue to occupy the positions of power. From the above, we can appreciate the need for the black women to align with and learn from white men as they possess symbolic capital through their status. However, this might also gesture to the possibility that the cultural habitus of black women as subservient to white men in these organisations. The data suggest that some black women continue to value white men more than black men or even other black women. Since the black women perceive black men as occupying a shared low status social class and racialised group, the women may see them as not possessing the necessary social capital that will help them to progress in their careers.

Although the value of formal sponsors and mentors has been viewed as contributing towards the career growth of the participants, some senior managers attributed their career growth to leaders who were not formally appointed as mentors, sponsors or managers. These were people in leadership roles who played an important role and ensured that they were given opportunities for career growth.

> When I then moved, I spoke to a number of leaders in the organisation, and I was given an opportunity to join one of the business teams at the time that was driving the transformation process in Personal and Business Banking (Mbali).

> I had a boss of mine called DI, who was just devoted to seeing me do well, and that's just been a blessing throughout my career. Just to have these amazing bosses who are committed to seeing good outcomes for me (Buhle).
>
> I've had instances where I felt supported by other leaders like [name] who is the CEO. In fact, I think what was really great with him was that, and for me that's really his legacy, is that he did try and tackle this issue of transformation head on in the firm and I think he understood that it was bigger than numbers and stuff. I think he took an active role and conscious decision to try and empower young black people in the firm (Tshiamo).

The preceding accounts by Mbali, Buhle and Tshiamo suggest an appreciation of having leaders in their organisations that played active roles in supporting their career journeys. For instance, Buhle and Tshiamo told stories about the black senior managers they used to work for who were invested in ensuring that young black people in their respective organisations were supported and given opportunities. Unlike other participants with formal mentors and sponsors, they observe that their leaders were accessible to everyone and provided this support to others as well. The apparent difference is that with black leaders, support was accessible whereas with white mentors and sponsors, accessibility and attention were limited to certain individuals with "potential" as Thuli pointed out. In the early stages of their careers, the number of black leaders within the financial services was noticeably lower than what it is now. The black leaders at that time had limited social capital. However, they were still able to provide access to black junior professionals. Tshiamo points out how his CEO at that time played an active role to "empower young black people in the firm".

The discourse of guidance in the form of support from seniors in positions of power in financial organisations is apparent in the early career narratives of the participants. Support came in the form of formal mentors and sponsors, and in some instances, direct managers and leaders in organisations. These individuals provided the social capital and resources that was required by the participants to firstly, adjust to these spaces and, secondly, for opportunities to advance to more senior positions. Athey, Avery and Zemsky (2000) found that the ability of entry-level employees is increased by mentoring. All participants appear to have had mentorship early on in their careers. Most were formalised through programmes in the organisations; however, some were more informal where they found a mentor for themselves. Participants share consensus on the value of support from leaders in positions of power. Sponsors provide the capital required to help black professionals adjust to the corporate field.

Beyond formal mentorship programmes and having a sponsor, the participants noted several development programmes offered by these organisations as aiding in accelerating their career progression. In the following excerpt, Mosa narrates how he was offered an opportunity to complete an international leadership development programme that allowed for a "fast tracking promotion". He illustrates how participating in the programme allowed him to learn certain behaviours that he believes are required in senior roles such as "how to read power plays". These skills and behaviours provided him with the embodied cultural capital that he uses in his current leadership roles. Embodied cultural capital refers to desirable traits, skills, and knowledge attained through one's socialisation (Bourdieu, 2011). In the following narrative, he recalls how his Spanish professor emphasised characteristics needed in senior positions and how this has assisted him to thrive in his senior position.

> I believe firmly in fast tracking promotion but, I think there's a balance. I think in most cases when we do fast track promotions, we focus on the job technical requirements and supporting the individual on the job technically. We would send you on you know, all the leadership courses and all those things, but ultimately at senior levels, it's an even balance between technicalities and politics and that is the thing that most people struggle, with, to say; 'how do you read the power plays? I had these three years, four years ago I had the opportunity to do a course at INSEAD. We had a Spanish professor who came and said, 'if you ever going to make it in corporate, you need to understand power' (Mosa).

> So, I was doing my MBA (Masters in Business Administration) at the time when I joined the bank. The bank continued to fund my MBA. So, when I concluded my MBA, then I started having conversations around you know, I need to go into a more business focused role (Sibusiso)

Like Mosa, Sibusiso acknowledges how the bank he was working at helped him change his career trajectory by paying for his MBA which allowed him to obtain the necessary skills required in a business role. The bank used its economic capital by funding Mosa's studies which then ensured that he obtained organisational cultural capital in the form of an MBA degree. The funding that allowed him to obtain an MBA, endowed him with symbolic capital which enabled him to obtain a role more aligned to his aspirations. Development appeared to be an important attribute for accelerating career progression. It motivated some participants to remain with their current organisations and can therefore be read as supporting retention. Nathi credits his retention to the development programmes that supported his career. It is here that he "spent the longest time".

> I would say that probably the companies where I have spent the longest time, it is the companies where they've always been invested in my development. So yeah, I think it's been quite a journey also mutually beneficial to most of the companies that I've worked in (Nathi).

Acquiring and deploying of the embodied cultural capital in the form of skills obtained in the graduate programmes, has resulted in the participants possessing the embodied dispositions required within the organisational fields (Bourdieu, 2011; Tomlinson, 2017. Development through initiatives such as mentorship, sponsorship and development programmes provided cultural, symbolic and social capital to the participants as graduates which contributed to their career advancement. The ability for graduates to demonstrate interpersonal and behavioural expectations of the organisational field is important for their career development (Tomlinson, 2017). Through these initiatives, the participants acquired the necessary skills required to progress to the next career stages. From the stories shared, it is evident that the participants credit these initiatives and senior sponsorship for their career growth which illustrates the importance of these processes, as highlighted in literature.

4.2.3 Hard work as promoting career growth

While mentorship and sponsorship played a role in the early stages of the participants' careers, they strongly believed that hard work contributed immensely towards their career trajectories. It is for this reason that this sub-section explores the discourse of "hard work" and its contribution towards the participants' career mobility in becoming senior managers within the financial services sector. This research reads "hard work" as a discursive strategy used to position oneself as deserving of their success and advancement. Hard work distinguishes those who claim it from those who benefit from employment equity and are discursively positioned as lazy and incompetent. Hard work is a religious ethic based on the view that those who work hard will be rewarded. Not only did participants perceive hard work as playing an important role to facilitate entry into the workplace, but it was attributed for their advancement to senior roles.

In their recollection of their career mobility, Kagiso and Mpho believe that they were able to obtain senior positions through their hard work. Kagiso equates hard work with the hours that he had to work. He observes that he "put in the hours" and that this contributed to his "progress". The discourse of hard work and putting in hours illustrates the performativity

expected in organisations so that success or what Kagiso refers to as "progress" can be achieved. Hard work is signalled by hours of work. To be perceived as worthy of progress, there seems to be an expectation of performances that are associated with working hard.

> I was appointed as a head of that business. My boss at that stage said to me, 'in fact, your direct reports said we must appoint you because they believe you have the interest of the business and you have really worked hard to understand the business and to support them' (Mpho).
>
> The other thing that helped me is hours, I've put in the hours. When people are sleeping and dreaming, I'm working because it's when you deliver exceptionally. Then you can progress right? (Kagiso)

In his question, "then you progress right?", Kagiso co-opts me into the discourse of the rewards of hard work. I, of course, accept the relationship between hard work and career progression, but I signal the discursive work of emphasising hard work in conversations about the progression of black people. I regard this as a discourse meant to counter racist stereotypes that black people get opportunities without the requisite hard work. This may be read as a form of counter storytelling in the tradition of CRT (Bell, 1980). In this regard, Solórzano and Yosso (2002) contend that counter storytelling provides an alternative to deficit storytelling about black employees. However, while this counter-story pushes back at deficit conceptions of black managers, it does not unravel the underlying racist assumptions about black managers' work ethic. Instead, black managers perform the valued attribute of hard work. In addition, hard work is conceived of an individual attribute. Structural racism is not challenged by individual performances of hard work. Seen this way, hard work might be both a counter story and a performance of respectability politics. Lee and Hicken (2016) remind us that engaging in respectability politics and associated behaviours is likely to have adverse implications from both mental and physical wellbeing.

Mbali similarly associates "excellence" with hard work. These are performances that lead to career progression and that she describes as "push hard" and "never take no". The constructs she uses in this instance are usually associated with aggressive masculinities and the social rewards of masculinity.

> My work always speaks for me, you know. I'm one person who believes in excellence. I work very hard, I work hard, I push hard, and I never take no, you know. I always believe anything is possible, anything can be done and whether it means it becomes successful from the onset or I fail it's okay, it's better than not doing anything (Mbali).

To be “successful” then is to perform masculinity. Since senior roles and positions of power are dominated by men in the financial sector, to advance, women are required to perform in ways that endorse masculinity. A study by Knights and Tullberg (2012) noted that performative elements produced and sustained masculinity amongst British male financial operator. These operators were found to share similar performances that constituted masculine identities which conformed to heterosexual norms of displaying authoritative expertise (Knights & Tullberg, 2012).

Mandla and Buhle support the discourse of hard work in the following excerpts by labelling it a “work ethic”. Buhle narrates that she was offered an opportunity by her former manager due to her “strong work ethic”.

> The experience that I acquire, the work and the work ethic and the quality of work that I produce, I am proud of myself for those (Mandla).
>
> But anyway, a year later I was at [name of organisation] and so we've come full circle, the three of us. What's phenomenal for me is just like how when you act correctly, when you have a strong work ethic, when you’re good person and all of that, people remember all of that (Buhle).

With hard work seen as an important personal contributor to career progression, some participants suggested that this performance was expected more for black people than their white counterparts. Mosa, Mandla and Sifiso contend that the hard work that was expected of them was not the same as that expected from white people at the same levels as them. Moreover, they observe that they had to work harder to get the levels of recognition received by their white counterparts.

> As a black individual there is no lie about it, you work ten times harder than your equivalent white individual. There’s always, there’s a doubt on your ability and capability to do anything (Mosa).
>
> I always say to my kids that ‘you go to school with Bernard who is from a family of the Van Rooyen’s, but when you walk into a workplace, you have to deliver three times what he has to deliver for the same credibility’ (Mandla).
>
> You almost felt like you had to prove yourself. You felt that in that context, you would do double the amount of work just to get to the level of people around the table. Then you discover that, actually, you are streets ahead of them, but the reality is the context of the racial dynamics (Sifiso).

Mosa, Mandla and Sifiso ascribed the following numbers, “ten times”, “three times” and “double”, to describe the amount of work expected from black people as compared to their white counterparts. To gain symbolic capital in the form of being seen as competent in fields that previously excluded black people, they believe that they have to exert themselves beyond what is required for their white counterparts. This expectation suggests that there may be unconscious racism that continues to exist in these organisations. The perceived expectation for black people to work harder than their white counterparts is experienced as a form of pressure that participants lean into and do not resist. CRT recognises this expectation for white people not to work as hard as black people as a systemic advantage offered to white people in organisations. Bohonos (2019) suggests that this experience is likely to be recognised by black people whilst unconscious to their white counterparts. The unconscious bias has been attributed to colour-blindness which considers racism as neutral and denies racism (Bohonos, 2019).

Although Zanele believes that hard work is important for career progression, she sees it as a counter contention to the discourse of merit where black people are perceived to have obtained their positions based on their race instead of merit. She emphasises that she does not want to be seen as a “black face” that was hired because she was black. For her, working hard and going the “extra mile” is a way to show that she is capable of doing the work. This might be understood as an example of a reaction formation defence mechanism where people act to unconsciously replace unwanted impulses like incompetent affirmative action appointee with their opposite—hard working merit appointment. Zanele’s reaction formation is similar to the preceding statements by Mosa and Mandla.

> So, the first thing is, you know when people literally undermine you because they actually don’t think you know the work. It's like they only hired you because literally you are the black face on the transformation journey. Like literally cause like long ago it was literally a tick box. They just had to hire somebody who is black whether competent or not. It's like literally having to come into the room and have to go the extra mile to actually prove that you are actually competent (Zanele).

Hard work was not only regarded as important for success and as a way to prove yourself as a black person, but it was also regarded as a form of job security for black people. Continuing his narrative, Sifiso contends that he felt that there were “banana skins” where one would slip and fall in the boardroom. This metaphoric description conveys the discomfort of being black

within corporate spaces and how his every move was watched in anticipation that he would fail. In addition, Sifiso's use of "black child" to describe adults in the boardroom points to his perception of the infantilisation of black people in corporate contexts.

> The scrutiny upon you, the banana skin is always one step away, whereas you felt for others there were no banana skins. But for you, as a black child going through some of these boardrooms, you always felt like the banana skin, your next step is your last step and you're out (Sifiso).

This discourse was reinforced by Langa who highlighted that the expectation was not the same for white men as he perceived them as having it a "tad easier" than black people.

> But I must say in comparison perhaps to the other white males, they probably have it a tad easier than us blacks. But you have to kind of work hard to get the same recognition (Langa).

Sifiso and Langa's experiences and perceptions point to unconscious racism within these organisations. CRT suggests that the manner in which meritocracy is measured for black people, as compared to their white peers, is perceived as an act of subtle racism. The adverse consequences of using meritocracy in the workplace on employees' careers has been studied by organisational scholars over the years (Castilla, 2008; Rissing & Castilla, 2014). Consistent with Sifiso and Langa's experiences of meritocracy, Castilla (2008) showed how a large US based organisation rewarded the performance of white men far more than women and minorities in the same job and work unit.

To cope with the organisational racism practiced in these organisations, Sibusiso states that as a black person "you need a thick skin". Sibusiso places the onus on black people to be resilient and appears resigned to the likelihood that the spaces will remain unchanged.

> It was difficult, obviously you needed to have thick skin because there's a lot of doubt regardless of whether you were competing with similar experience and background. There's always; there'll be that ... 'okay, what is Refiloe going to contribute?' (Sibusiso).

In Sibusiso's assessment, black people are expected to adjust their habitus to the corporate field. In this instance, the field is seen as unchangeable which means that those who are coming from the "outside" will need to adjust to it.

In conclusion, this sub-section has outlined the following: Upon entering the workplace, participants integrated into their various organisations through mentorship programmes. Participants narrated how mentors helped them navigate their careers early on and the value of having sponsors to provide them with opportunities for career progression. Hard work, particularly for black people, was seen to play an important role in career advancement as it allowed participants to be noticed and offered opportunities for progression. The previous section however suggested that hard work was simultaneously a real expectation, a counter-story to black deficit tropes and a reaction formation used to defend against employment equity tropes of laziness and incompetence.

4.3 Part Three: Movement Between Jobs

In the previous section, the participants shared their stories about their entrance into the workplace. They illustrated how development initiatives provided by their employers assisted them to progress to the next levels in their careers. This section explores the participants' movement between jobs and between organisations throughout their careers within the financial services sector. The tenure for job hopping has been defined in traditional models as changing jobs within a period of three years of starting a job (Cruz, 2006). The average job tenure of South African employees was almost three years and 11 months in 2014 and it moved to two years and 10 months in 2022 (Statistics South Africa, 2022). The job hopping narrative has created stereotypical attitudes against black professionals who have been constructed as more prone to the practice of job hopping relative to their white counterparts. Table 3 shows that the participants in this study have stayed in their current organisation for an average of five years.

To illustrate how the participants moved between jobs as senior managers, table 3 lists the last three organisations' participants each worked in the last 10 years.

Table 3: Participants' movement between organisations

Name	Number of Working Years	Organisation 1	Organisation 2	Organisation 3	Current Organisation	Number of Years in Current Organisation
Buhle	14 Years	Asset Management A	Asset Management B	Bank V	Insurance B	1 Year
Kagiso	16 Years	Bank X	Bank V	Bank X	Bank Y	5 Years
Langa	15 Years	Global Markets Company	Insurance B	Insurance B	Insurance B	9 Years
Lebo	18 Years	Audit Firm A	Bank Z	Bank Z	Bank Z	13 Years
Lerato	19 Years	Bank Y	Bank Y	Bank Y	Bank V	2 years
Mandla	21 Years	Bank X	Bank U	Bank V	Bank X	1 year
Mbali	22 Years	State Owned Company	IT Company A	Bank V	Bank Y	9 Years
Mosa	17 Years	Audit Firm B	-Bank X	Bank X	Bank X	11 Years
Mpho	27 Years	Bank Y	Bank X	Bank V	Bank Y	2 Years
Nathi	19 Years	Bank X	Insurance S	Bank X	Bank Y	2 Years
Nonhlanhla	33 Years	Insurance A	Insurance C	Insurance B	Insurance A	8 Years
Shaka	18 Years	Bank V	Bank U	International Bank A	Bank Y	3 Years
Sibusiso	19 Years	Audit Firm A	Bank Z	Bank V	Bank Y	9 Years
Sifiso	25 Years	IT Company BA	IT Company BA	Bank Y	Bank X	9 Years
Sipho	16 Years	Consulting Firm B	Consulting Firm B	Bank Y	Bank Z	13 Years
Thando	14 Years	Fund Management A	Bank Y	Bank Y	Bank Y	11 Years
Thuli	28 Years	Bank Z	Bank X	Bank V	Insurance B	7 Years
Tshiamo	20 Years	Car Manufacturing	Consulting Firm A	Audit Firm C	Bank Y	6 Years
Zama	21 Years	Law Firm A	Asset Management C	Insurance B	Bank Y	1 Year
Zanele	14 Years	Consulting Firm C	Consulting Firm C	Bank V	Bank Z	1 year

Table 3 indicates that the average number of working years that the senior managers have is 20 years. On average, most participants have worked for different organisations over the course

of their career. The mean average number of years that participants have spent at their current organisation is seven years. This duration ranges from one year to 13 years.

Career mobility amongst black professionals has been a point of contention amongst scholars, however, there is insufficient evidence on what constitutes job hopping (Cruz, 2006; Mtungwa, 2009; Nzukuma & Bussin, 2011). The findings in this study exploring the average job tenure of participants, disproves the narrative that black people in the financial services sector move frequently between organisations. These findings support Ndzwayiba et al.'s (2018) argument that the job hopping narrative towards black professionals was false. They contend that this discourse served to maintain the context of politics of unequal power relations, dominance and otherness that exist in organisations, and which results in purported hyper mobility. Although they rejected the existing negative discourse about job hopping amongst black professionals, the participants shared stories that expose the intricate dynamics triggering black employees' movement between organisations.

Consistent with scholarship the stories attribute hostile Eurocentric corporate cultures as the main driver for turnover behaviour amongst black professionals (Cruz, 2006; Mtungwa, 2009; Nzukuma & Bussin, 2011; Thomas, 2002). Participants point to the role of exclusionary practices with an emphasis on the values of Eurocentric culture being unaccommodating towards black professionals. Previous studies such as Mtungwa (2009), Nzukuma and Bussin (2011), and Rangaka (2011) contended that black employees do not leave organisations in pursuit of more money, but rather because of existing racist cultures of South African organisations. A decade post these studies, the current study highlights the way unaccommodating cultures and negative stereotypes continue to undermine black people's competence and credibility. Not only did the participants attribute their movement to the negative experiences within these organisations; however, they equally acknowledged the increased access to social networks as a form of social capital which afforded them opportunities for career advancement.

4.3.1 Unaccommodating Eurocentric cultures

Based on our colonial and apartheid history, South African organisations have arguably been designed based on Eurocentric ideologies and principles which have guided how the cultures are constructed (Kerr-Phillips & Thomas, 2009). Canham and Maier (2020) have illustrated the deeply entrenched and naturalised nature of racialised segregation in South African

banks. This culture was identified by some of the senior managers as one of the main reasons they have moved between organisations. The cultures of some of the organisations have been described as unfavourable and exclusionary of those that do not share a cultural habitus and middle-class background, leading the senior managers to leave. In the excerpt below, Shaka recalls how he felt "alienated" and excluded as a black person working at his previous organisation. He further states that he found his values were "challenged". Although he is from a middle-class family and attended former model C schools, Shaka continued to experience organisational racism. His class habitus did not appear to give him the appropriate form of capital he required to adapt white spaces. Shaka shares his alienating experience of the culture and his attempts to cope.

> So, I'll use words to describe; you'll be alienated, you'll be alienated. You'll question what you know, you'll be excluded from events specifically social. So, things that come to mind, as I remember decisions made on a Monday over a braai that happened on Saturday. But, wow, I wasn't at the braai. 'How did you guys make that decision? Oh, okay.' Cause there was a comradeship that one wasn't part of. Uhm, and you question yourself and say hey man how did I miss this one? So, you worked a lot harder, you read a lot more, you made sure you would refer to things so that you could speak confidently, and it was hard, but I think you were conscious to say, let me use the process, which will be the work (Shaka).

Shaka observed that he was not willing to settle and adapt into this culture "no matter what the amount" was. This assertion illustrates his resistance to adjusting to the new field even though it has afforded him economic capital in the form of the money he is earning. Shaka's resistance to the workplace field that emulates his former school field is somewhat of a surprise as the embodied cultural capital of these fields are similar. It would have been expected that unlike the participants who did not go to middle class schools, Shaka would have better adapted in these environments as they emulate the types of schools he attended. One would expect him to be able to adapt more easily than someone who went to working class black schools and had not previously been exposed to white spaces. Conversely, as someone who already possessed the valued cultural capital, this may enable him to rebel against alienating organisational cultures (Bourdieu, 1990; Erben et al., 1979). His own and his family's financial position may very well protect him from risk which could possibly enable him to take risks that others cannot easily take. This might, in fact, be a middle-class protection rather than a rejection of class.

Some participants appeared to be rejecting adaptation to the dominant culture as it is seen as inauthentic and alienating. They believe that it is important to remain true to oneself and not change to fit in to progress in one's career. Some believe that it is important not to change who you are as a black person and not to conform to the Eurocentric cultural expectations. In ways that resonate with Shaka's observations, Tshiamo's account of his experience of the "Eurocentric" culture highlights how the dominant "value system" in corporate South Africa is still Eurocentric and how it is not "enabling for an African child". He suggests that subtle forms of racism remain dominant in financial organisations.

> I guess secondly and most importantly, because we often neglect the issue of culture, because most people stop at the numbers as far as transformation is concerned. We forget about, let me call it, the value system which is dominant in the corporate world, which is obviously a liberal European, or Eurocentric system, for obvious reasons and we've for the longest time. We've actually become the majority even in the system, even though that's only more at the bottom. And for me, this is one of the most neglected issues around. How do we transform the system in a way that is African in outlook and enabling for an African child (Tshiamo).

Tshiamo laments the neglect of culture in discourses and interventions about change. He points to the paradox of a black majority country and black majority organisations embracing Eurocentric culture. Lowe (2013) describes a Eurocentric organisational culture as one where the organisation's leaders see the organisation from a white, often middle-class perspective. The organisation does not believe itself to be racist and will marginalise people who challenge this way of thinking by regarding them as negative or unhelpful. The culture in Eurocentric organisations is characterised by attitudes, beliefs, behaviour, and values which are predominantly white as opposed to inclusive, and the senior leadership is white or largely white (Lowe, 2013). Nzukuma and Bussin (2011) purported that Eurocentric culture promotes individualism, competition, and opposes an Afrocentric culture that advocates inclusiveness and solidarity. With the differences in the value systems between the two cultures, it is evident that participants, such as Tshiamo, found it difficult to adapt to this culture.

Based on the preceding excerpts, it appears that even though Shaka and Tshiamo come from different social classes, they share a common experience of working in spaces that practice a Eurocentric culture. The storytelling by the two participants illustrates the racialisation and alienating cultures of financial services organisations. Tshiamo's experiences point to the

routine and ordinary nature of racism. Essed (1991) termed this everyday racism. Tshiamo avers that the Eurocentric culture makes it difficult to recognise and consequently address the insidious nature of racialisation. As fields, these organisations reproduce European dispositions which are characterised by whiteness and masculinity. Here, the distribution of power mostly rests with white men who possess embodied and organisational cultural capital which bolsters and reproduces their authoritative positions and influence within the financial services field.

Tshiamo's preceding proposition suggests that instead of black people assimilating to Eurocentric culture, organisations based in South Africa should rather adopt Afrocentric culture. He narrates that the numerical makeup of these organisations is changing to reflect the predominance of African people. Several studies are in support of Tshiamo's proposition and have challenged organisations operating in the African context to adopt a more Afrocentric leadership style (Poovan, Du Toit & Engelbrecht, 2006; Thomas & Schonken, 1998). Mangaliso (2001) maintained that as more Africans are empowered to progress to leadership positions and manage South African organisations, this value system must be taken into consideration for effectively managing diverse teams.

With Shaka growing up in a middle-class suburban area and attending former model C schools and Tshiamo attending township schools, the former had exposure to white spaces and the latter did not. There is however a convergence in their feelings of not belonging in organisational spaces. The similarity in the black men's experiences is framed by the collective reality of a system described by Tshiamo as alienating and Eurocentric.
In the following excerpt, Langa builds on Tshiamo's sentiments. He asserts that the system has not transformed. In order to survive and for a "black kid to make it in that kind of environment," there is a need to be "outstanding". This is similar to what the participants highlighted in terms of the expectation of black employees to work harder than others.

> We were still in the minority. You have to continuously and work harder to have your voice heard than the next person, the next white person and the dynamics around the ratio and the professional imbalances were there, they were present, and they were present in very obvious way, sometimes in very subtle and sort of hidden ways (Sifiso).

Sifiso highlights how black professionals were expected to work harder than their white counterparts to receive recognition. What has been identified as a form of discrimination in

terms of the expectation for black people to work harder than their white counterparts can also be seen as a form of racial bias experienced by black people in the workplace in line with some researchers' assertions. For example, Motsei (2015) stated that racism and racial bias are still deeply ingrained in the South African workplace and the assumption that white people are superior to black people continues to exist, both from white people and some black people. Turner (2016) defined racism as a belief that race is the primary determinant of human traits and ability, and that racial differences relate to the intrinsic superiority of a particular race. Bergh and Hoobler (2018) described racial bias as an unconscious, automatically activated belief in the inferiority of, or negative attitude or stereotype toward a race group or groups. According to Gumede (2018), in South Africa, persistent white superiority assumes that black people are less competent than white people, which results in black people having to prove and demonstrate their competence at work.

The other cultural phenomenon that is evident amongst these organisations which led black attrition by some of the participants who left their roles for other organisations is the use of the Afrikaans language in the workplace. This use of the Afrikaans language, particularly in work meetings, was identified as one of the reasons for the unhappiness experienced by some participants. They observed that Afrikaans was particularly entrenched in Bank V. Sibusiso and Shaka who left Bank V narrate their experiences of how Afrikaans was used at this bank.

> And went on to Bank V, culturally, I got a shock, didn't fit, it was a very much Afrikaans, a strong culture. So, I just struggled to fit in. So, the meetings were conducted in Afrikaans. Sometimes I couldn't follow, so it really was difficult, you know coming in as a minority group. And at that point I got an opportunity with Bank Y which was a very dynamic, err you know, a cosmopolitan, multi-cultural (Sibusiso).

> In this case, Bank V was an Afrikaans environment. I got left out of meetings; meetings were done in Afrikaans. I mean it was real and you just say 'guys'. And I, those were my hurdles. They're small hurdles versus what we know our forefathers went through. But they were hurdles nonetheless and understanding that there was a bigger picture made the hurdles palatable (Shaka).

In their narration of their experiences at this bank, Shaka and Sibusiso recall being left out of meetings as they were conducted in Afrikaans. While the intention might not have been to exclude non-Afrikaans speakers, the effect was that black people who do not speak the language felt excluded. The exclusion is emphasised by Mpho who narrates a story of her colleague who communicated to clients in Afrikaans even though the primary business

language at the bank was English. Participants experienced the Afrikaans culture to be exclusionary in meetings and important discussions. Mpho and Lerato narrate their accounts of the use of Afrikaans in various client engagements.

> Then I started looking at this and analysing and I saw what the other guys are doing, with their Edcon, with their Steinhoff, their Ackermans, Shoprite CEOs and CFOs. They are bringing people who they can identify with, who can 'praat Afrikaans' if there's a need, who can go to a braai on a Saturday and watch rugby together and 'praat Afrikaans'. And it's seamless and they feel like they connect to their banker (Lerato)

> I mean this guy used to even speak Afrikaans so, if we had to go to meet a customer, the business language is English, but he would speak Afrikaans even though the customer speaks English you know, that type of nuance (Mpho).

In the preceding excerpts, Lerato narrates how the use of Afrikaans was used in engagements with clients and companies that she sees as representing the Afrikaans culture. She observes that the use of the language made these clients "connect to their banker" and this made it much easier to conduct business. Beyond the influence on the actual work as well as engagement with clients, the following excerpts by Sibusiso emphasise how assimilating to the Afrikaans culture can result in career progression.

> I was very specific to say there was a very Afrikaans dominant culture at the time, so obviously there was this perception that there's a strong clique. If you want to move, to progress, career progression in the group, you obviously had to be tied to the dominant culture (Sibusiso).

Sibusiso describes the culture of this bank as "very Afrikaans dominant" and he points out that in order to achieve career progression, black people were required to be "tied to the dominant culture" by adapting their habitus to the culture. Afrikaans at this bank is a resource that allowed people to be included and to be part of what he calls a clique. From a client engagement perspective, the use of the language provides the social capital that is required in order to deliver to clients. It also provides the social capital that can cultivate important clients. The participants' stories illustrate that black people who are able to adapt into this culture will have a cultural capital that will ensure that they obtain the required social capital to succeed.

The preceding stories illustrate that Afrikaans retains cultural capital in most financial services organisations. This imbues Afrikaans language speakers with cultural capital and power. In some of these organisations, Afrikaans is a form of cultural capital since those who speak it are afforded social capital in the form of valuable client networks and important information in the meetings that are held. The participants' stories illustrate how not being able to participate in these meetings negatively influenced their contributions in meetings. Sibusiso tells of a story of how he could not follow the meetings and Shaka recounts he got left out of meetings. The meetings referred to by Shaka and Sibusiso can be regarded as Bourdieu's "fields" where there is a competition for the distribution of various forms of capital. In this context, Afrikaans is a disposition reproduced by white people and it is used to ensure that the social capital is mostly distributed among themselves or a small number of black people able to understand and speak the language. Consequently, the Afrikaans culture that pervades these meetings results in the distribution of power that is favourable towards white people.

The historical role played by Afrikaans culture and language in building Afrikaner nationalism and identity suggests that it is more than a communication tool (Verwey & Quayle, 2012). The language has been recognised as central to racist, supremacist Afrikaner nationalism that produced and sustained apartheid (Verwey & Quayle, 2012). CRT points to the difficulty of recognising racism in everyday life as it manifests itself in the routine and common behaviours. Therefore, the use of Afrikaans in the business context to the exclusion the black participants in organisations like Bank V, is likely to be considered a form of indirect racism. This is because the use of Afrikaans is symbolically associated with South Africa's apartheid past which was centred in racial divisions and exclusion of those who were not Afrikaans speaking (Verwey & Quayle, 2012). Consistent with the CRT principle that "racism is difficult to recognise", the use of Afrikaans in ways that exclude others may be difficult to recognise as a form of racism due to its recognition as one of the official languages in South Africa.

Although similar to the black men, the black women's experience of the "Eurocentric" system was different in important ways. Their experience of the cultures in these organisations was that although it generally excluded black people, it favoured black men over them due to the masculine nature thereof. In the stories below, Lerato and Mbali share

their experience of how they have experienced the culture of these organisations as black women compared to their male counterparts.

> So, it becomes hard as a black female when you are you know, a minority in those environments. And it becomes lonely at times because, you know, sometimes you're in meetings and you raise certain points, and you feel like you're not heard. You know, you'd say something and a male counterpart sitting next to you will raise the same point and the other people would be like 'oh, yes', you know, they would be agreeing with something that you've said, you know (Mbali).

> An African woman versus men, white men, it was a gentleman's club and for the very first time in my life, I found myself having to break walls and barriers that I had never had to do before and for the very first time I was working with unfamiliar people (Lerato).

Mbali describes black women as minority, both as black person and as a woman in the spaces occupied by peers at her rank. She particularly recalls how she would raise a point in a meeting and not be heard. However, when a male counterpart raises the same point, then it is considered. This story illustrates how she is invisible and faces discrimination in the form of sexism and racism. Lerato's recollection of breaking "walls and barriers" illustrates how she experienced double discrimination as a woman and as a black person. She describes her challenges as an "African woman versus men". She then specifies the intersection with race by referring to "white men". In her story, she classifies all men in one group which she calls a "gentlemen's club" which suggests that she considers black men as being the beneficiaries of this club. Here, Lerato points to the operation of patriarchy in ways that exclude women.

Like Lerato's self-identification, Zama draws attention towards the discourse of diversity, and highlights that her background is different from black men as she is "a woman and African".

> I don't think the penny has dropped about the value of diversity right. And this is diversity of thoughts and opinions, all those things. Not necessarily that I'm a woman but I'm African, my background is different (Zama).

The emphasis on "I'm a woman, I'm African" by Zama in the preceding excerpt, emphasises the intersecting identities of black women in financial services organisations. The intersectionality of being black and woman emerges in her narrative. She recognises that although as a black woman she shares race affinity with black men, as a woman, she experiences the world differently to black men. The gender identity for black men appears to

provide them with a form of social capital—the patriarchal dividend, that black women do not possess. In addition, she emphasises the value of diversity of views and thinking as an important attribute that extend beyond identity categories.

Mbali, Lerato and Zama's stories illustrate the embodied cultural capital that black men attain from the patriarchal dividend. The shared masculine identity with the dominant group provides black men with more opportunities. Being men provides them with access to white male environments. Consequently, although the black men described the "Eurocentric" culture as exclusionary on a basis of their race, the black women consider them to benefit from patriarchy shared with white men. Therefore, even though black men experience alienation on the basis of race, their gender identity is a protective and facilitative factor. On the other hand, women participants point to their exclusion on the basis of both race and gender. It is within this context that their poor representation at senior management ranks, relative to black men, should be understood. These differential experiences reflect what Raymond and Canham (2022) characterised as black men's ability to thrive in the shadows while black women face the sharp edge of combined race and gender penalty.

Most of the male participants did not recognise the social capital that they share with white men. However, in the following excerpt, Tshiamo's account supports the assertions made by the women participants. He identifies the "macho nature of corporate success" which he describes as favouring men over women. He describes valued attributes as engaging in battles, being a "fighter" and being able to "play the system". He associates these characteristics with men rather than women. Tshiamo believes that the macho discourse, which he describes in detail, is the determinant of whether or not someone becomes successful in the corporate context.

> It's a whole lot of factors. One of them is the macho nature of corporate success, so to speak, right. Which is for example, it gets very political often times, so you have to be able to play politics. You have to engage in battles, sustain them, and typically those are political battles and so forth. So, it lends itself naturally to, I think, the traits of men in general, because anyways, it's a male dominated thing. So, the rules are crafted by men, whereas, and I'm not seeking to say women cannot fight, cannot engage in politics, and I'm not seeking to say their traits can be limited to only nourishing, and you know, the likes. But the corporate world looks more for fighter, political ally, somebody who can play the system than somebody who can nourish, you know (Tshiamo).

Tshiamo attempts to defend his viewpoint that are not just limited to “nourishing”. He continues to suggest that for women to become successful, they have to re-enact performances that are associated with masculinity—a male habitus. The way organisations have been organised and controlled, has been of great interest to researchers (Booysen, 2007a; Booysen & Nkomo, 2014; Ramodibe, 2008). Organisational culture has been identified as one of the barriers preventing black people from career progression (Booysen & Nkomo, 2014; Wilson, 2000). Local researchers have affirmed these findings in the South African context as researchers have found that the organisational cultures in financial organisations do not accommodate black people (Booysen, 2007b; Ramodibe, 2008). The participants in this study seem to affirm this discourse as they claim that organisational culture is likely to be the reason for the slow pace of transformation.

4.3.2 Bias in the financial services industry

The stories recounting experiences of alienation highlighted perceptions of organisational racism and patriarchal practices in financial services organisations that embrace Eurocentric values. Critical race theory emphasises the importance of enabling black people to voice their stories of everyday life (Bell, 1995). In the stories about their careers, discourses of organisational racism draw attention to inequalities and stereotypical assumptions experienced by black men and black women. The participants describe the discrimination directed towards them as unconscious. This implies that the aggressors and the organisational cultures have internalised discriminatory practices as normative behaviours. In line with CRT, the practices occurring as normative behaviours make it difficult to recognise them as racist. The normative practices are experienced as discriminatory, not only in relation to race, but gender, class and geographical location. In the next section, we analyse unconscious bias which is recognised and identified through the practices and cultural habitus of the organisations where participants work. The participants maintain that the biases they have recognised as black people, and as black women, have played a role in their career journeys and have influenced their decisions to move between different organisations. Some have felt compelled to leave the organisations they worked for when they found the experiences to be unbearable.

A discriminatory practice identified by the participants is the assumption that white people have more experience than their black counterparts. This often results in white people being considered for better career opportunities. The stories narrated by Mosa and Lerato suggest

that the biases that exist are “subtle” and “inherent” and therefore that the aggressors may not be aware of their behaviour.

> You put two people, I tell you in any corporate, the white person will always be looked at as more experienced and I don't know why. What drives that? There is just that, it's an inherent bias because, how can we have done so much, how did he even get up to this level, you know? What has he done wrong? And you find where you’ve touched, you've delivered results, but you are in this constant battle to prove relevance (Mosa).
>
> One of the things that happens and it's subtle, I don't know what the appropriate word is to use you know, way of making sure that things are retained for a certain group of people is by allocating you ‘dog’ clients. The real clients that are profitable, that are going to bring you the real deals, and the real numbers are kept for certain people, that is common. Where people exclude and make you feel unwanted (Lerato).

In the preceding narrative, Mosa makes a comparison between a black person and a white person. He contends that the latter will be perceived as having more experience than the former. He emphasises that black people are expected to “prove relevance”. Echoing CRT’s claim that organisational racism is routine and ordinary, Mosa asserts that “the white person will always be looked at”. He recognises this discrimination as normative. By not recognising it as racist, it masks the white person as naturally always having superior experience. Lerato’s story corroborates the subtlety of racism. Because of the subtility and subterranean nature of exclusion, she struggles to find the words to describe her experience. However, her account of her concrete experience enables us to identify the basis of her exclusion. She contends that black people are allocated “dog clients” that are unprofitable. In a capitalist sector, profitability is the hallmark of success. She describes her experience when she worked in Bank Y, an investment bank. Here she was allocated clients who were not as “profitable”. She further describes feeling “excluded” and unwanted as a result of not being able to participate in “real deals”.

Mosa and Lerato’s stories illustrate a form of colour blindness which CRT describes as a denial of black people from receiving recognition when they are deserving. Both their stories show these organisations’ perception that black people are not suitable to take on certain roles as they may not have the experience required. They both suggest that the same expectation may not apply to their white counterparts. They consequently understand this as racially discriminatory as a form of unconscious bias. The ordinary and routine character of racism, race is a form of cultural capital which provides social capital to white people. This

affords them better career opportunities which in turn, provides economic capital dividends in the form of higher salaries. Their experience of discriminatory organisational processes and procedures, such as discriminatory cultures and behaviours, has made these participants not feeling valued and respected (Booysen, 2007a; Cruz, 2006). Scholars have often associated the existence of discriminatory cultures with the movement of black professionals between organisations (Ndzwayiba et al., 2018; Stanley, 2009; Wyatt & Silvester, 2015).

White people share a habitus since their collective reality is based on shared social rules and relationships they have created. The collective habitus formation amongst white people is produced through their shared histories, group socialisation and lived realities (Reay, 2004). Understanding the collective habitus, according to Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992), allows us to trace how social structures influence racialised encounters and their impact. Over time, the practices have been repeated and become mundane. They are thus outside of their awareness and have become institutionalised. The practices have been habituated over time, based on the colour bar of petty apartheid that had kept workplaces segregated and reserved most skilled work for white people (Canham & Maier, 2020). However, the introduction of black people in these social fields has not led to the requisite adjustment toward inclusive normative cultures.

In explaining why, they left their previous employers, Mosa and Lerato narrate that they were in a “constant battle” and feeling “unwanted”. Mosa considers the ability to “battle” as necessary cultural capital required to “prove relevance” as a black person. The word “battle” is associated with outcomes of winning or losing. Mosa and Lerato’s use of these words illustrates the hostility they have experienced. Similar to Mosa and Lerato, Zanele shares her experience of the disrespect experienced by black executives. She, however, adds that in her experience, people of Indian descent are also complicit in racial discrimination. She narrates a lack of respect for black people and the disregard for their opinions in the business context.

> I don't want to play the race card, but it is always your fairer counterparts and even the Indian counterparts always disrespecting the black execs, whether you are male or female. Where their opinion trumps yours or they have something more valid to say or where they feel they have a right to actually comment on your business unit (Zanele).

In addition to her reported experience, if we return to the earlier discussion on respect in African culture, in addition to legitimate disrespect for black executives, it is possible that

Zanele's observations are informed by her respect for authority. The ease with which white and Indian colleagues challenge black executives may therefore also be informed by her expectations for reverence of hierarchy. She describes how white people and Indian people tend to have opinions that trump black people's contributions, and she sees this as disrespectful. The experiences shared in the preceding stories illustrate the apparent and routine nature of racism. Their feelings of differential treatment have shaped their experiences within the organisational context. Therefore, they attributed their definition of unconscious bias to their experiences and shared identity. The use of language to exclude black people was previously highlighted in the context of the use of the Afrikaans language. Not only is language used to exclude black people, but it is utilised to make black people feel incompetent and inadequately qualified. Language is not benign, and it bolsters white cultural capital.

The stories shared by Mpho, Lerato and Nonhlanhla in the following excerpts illustrate their experience of being "paraphrased" when speaking in meetings. Mpho attributes paraphrasing to being perceived as not speaking proper English and as an insinuation that "white people think they can speak better English". Lerato asserts that not being "allowed to lead" and "be the voice" for her own ideas due to being paraphrased has resulted in other people receiving recognition for her work. Nonhlanhla recalls her experience of receiving negative responses for sharing an idea and how the same idea was recognised when paraphrased by a white male.

> People feeling like they must re-explain what you've just said because I think, I don't know if many black people experience that. But white people think they can speak better English and it's about better English (Mpho).
>
> You are in a meeting or in a committee and you are being paraphrased. It happens a lot where you are not being allowed to lead this thing and be the voice and be the face for it (Lerato).
>
> Are the ideas I'm coming with so stupid? Why am I getting such negative responses every time? Every time I try and come up with an idea which I think is a brilliant idea. But then sometimes in the very same meeting, the white male, will say exactly the same thing in different words, and they'd say 'Oh, yes, yes, that can actually work' (Nonhlanhla).

Mpho, Lerato and Nonhlanhla illustrate how the ability to speak "better English" provides cultural capital to white people as they are considered to have a better command of the language as compared to black people. Lerato and Nonhlanhla's narratives suggest that the cultural capital that is obtained from speaking "better English" provides their white

colleagues with a social capital in the form of recognition. In this conception, the command of the English language and accent stand in for the quality of ideas. This is, of course, a false inflation of accent, command of language and ideas (Botsis, 2017). CRT recognises that this association of "better English" with whiteness is a form of colour blindness that denies the ideas of black people who do not have the same command of the language. Paraphrasing as a form of discrimination is difficult to recognise as racist since it is presented as assisting black people with expressing themselves "better" or assisting in explaining on their behalf. Participants however find it patronising and experience its psychological and material effects. Moreover, since it is only black women participants who complained of paraphrasing, it might be seen as a form of 'mansplaining'. Bridges (2017) describes mansplaining as a concept generally used by women to characterise men's behaviour of patronisingly speaking to women. This concept allows us to see the dual operation of race and gender in the phenomenon of paraphrasing.

In the excerpt below, Mosa highlights how black people from former model C schools who speak with a "twang type" accent are treated differently from those who are not able to speak in that way. Often those from working class black schools speak with a "black" accent. Here, the twang might be conceived of as a white accent that is imbued with cultural capital. Black people who speak with a "twang" are considered to speak "better English". This gives them valued social capital that is rewarded in financial services organisations. Mosa reflects on how those who do not speak with a "twang" are compelled to adopt the white accent by the corporate culture that sees merit and competence as whiteness. He recollects being asked "why are you not like this guy"? Mosa claims to refuse to conform to this performance of whiteness and competence. He emphasises that, for him, the manner in which he speaks does not determine his intelligence and he believes that it will not determine his career as he will rely on his "brain".

> I think the interesting interactions were where you were interacting with white counterparts and a black counterpart who has come through a different path, so let's call it a model C path. I find that there is, you know, you kind of get forced into, which refused truly to say; 'why are you not like that guy you know'. I'm not the, 'call it a twang type' of person, I am as rural as they come. My brain is what takes me where I need to go, not my education not the fact that I went to St Johns and what not (Mosa).

The preceding stories suggest that the English language and its associations with whiteness is a form of everyday racism. It is seen as an ordinary act rather than a racist practice. Hill (2009) claims that racism is produced and reproduced through language and culture and as a result, it is important to acknowledge the interplay between the linguistic practice when seeking to understand racism (Hill, 2009). In addition, Tan and Rubdy (2008) problematised the relationship between language policies, global economic influences, and social cultural identity. They assert that as a commodity, language provides value to learners and speakers resulting in their economic and social advancement.

The participants' narratives support this assertion as they illustrate how the use of English in their workplaces is a commodity that bestows particular people with symbolic capital. Here, those perceived as having a good command of the language are seen as competent. Holmes (2000) and Macksler (2001) labelled this practice as a different form of racism which they labelled as symbolic racism as it appears to be more pervasive and not displayed in traditional forms (cited in Wodak, 2008). Wodak (2008) described this as "new" racism that differs from the older kinds in that it is not expressed overtly but manifests itself in ordinary, subtle ways that are routinised. In the stories the subtle ways are observed through practices, such as paraphrasing what the participants say in meetings, as well as, perceiving what Mosa calls a "twang" accent as an indicator of competence. These subtle acts which are not always obviously associated with racism, are used every day and rendered ordinary in these workplaces. Wodak (2008) theorises this as the existence of racism without observable "races" as it is bound in language in subtle ways. Tollefson and Tsiu (2004) noted that public perceptions of the value of English in the 21st Century economy have resulted in attitudes being shaped towards favouring English over other languages globally. The English language is consequently positioned as a dominant language, resulting in power being placed in the language and those who use it (Tan & Rubdy, 2008).

Discriminatory practices that characterise the corporate culture of financial services organisations were identified and described in the participants' stories above. These are considered to be the triggers that have resulted in some of the participants' movement between organisations. The discriminatory practices highlight organisational bias which the participants describe as "unconscious" and manifesting in subtle ways. The experiences shared were regarded as unbearable and motivating some participants to move to what they perceived as more accommodating to black people. They provide insights into the possible reasons that participants made decisions to move between organisations.

Some of the cultural discourses identified in the stories are associated with the use of language as serving as different forms of capital to white people and black people who have a perceived good command of the English and Afrikaans languages. The Afrikaans language is perceived by the participants as being used to exclude them from important conversations. It is regarded as providing social capital where those who speak it are part of the 'in-group' that possess the required power to succeed. The English language, on the other hand, is perceived as a symbolic capital where those who are regarded as having a good command of the language are recognised as being associated to whiteness and competence.

4.3.3 Pursuing opportunities for growth

The Eurocentric value system permeates the design, function, as well as the unconscious bias and discriminatory practices of financial services organisations. While the accounts by participants do not suggest that this cohort of black managers moved between jobs any more than the average manager in this sector, their narrative accounts suggest that the Eurocentric culture and racialised and gendered biases might repel black managers from workplaces and push them to find environments that are more accommodating. The other discourse that was apparent amongst the participants was that they were continuously approached by other financial organisations to join them with possibilities for career growth. Since financial skills are highly transferable within the sector, this appears to be a common practice in the financial services sector where organisations approach people with the view to recruiting them. Importantly, many of the people who are approached are not overtly looking for employment or considering leaving their current employer.

Nathi shares his story of how he was approached by Bank X to join from an insurance organisation at which he used to work. He notes that he received a call from an employment agency to join the bank where he was offered a more senior position.

> Literally two months into my studies, I then get a call from an employment agency. Like, I didn't put my CV anywhere, they said; 'hey look there's a role available at Bank X and I think you're perfectly suitable for that role'. And then I was offered by an insurance company to actually become their deputy General Manager and then I went to join the Insurance House. Bank X was not too happy with me when I joined the Insurance House, so I think eight months or six months after that they gave me a call and said, 'no you left prematurely, we want you back and the role is now available' (Nathi).

The process of being head hunted is a form of social capital that allows black people to have access to senior roles in other organisations. While white people are also head hunted, the practice is particularly important for advancing the career trajectories of black people who might otherwise not get opportunities for seniority with current employers. For instance, Langa and Nonhlanhla observe that they moved to their current employers as a result of being headhunted.

> So, I don't know if that's what we call head hunting or just networking. So, usually it's a good guy who would say, 'look there's an opportunity here that I think you'd be interested in...' So, when I was bored again, another opportunity came up at Insurance B. Someone put in a good word for me. I went for a coffee chat with the recruiting line manager, and that was it. It worked out within Insurance B, it's been the same thing as well (Langa).

> So, I got bored because I was in year three of doing the same thing and then a Medical Aid Scheme started headhunting me. It sounded like a good opportunity to be the operations executive for a Medical Aid Scheme. So, I moved over to the insurance company, it was a very nice, challenging job. For the first time at the time, it was the second government organisation that I knew to be efficient after Organisation G. Organisation G was very efficient at the time, they had just made that turn and they were very efficient, and the Medical Aid Scheme managed in a similar manner (Nonhlanhla).

Although Langa and Nonhlanhla were keen to take on the new opportunities due to being "bored" with their roles, they did not actively seek out alternative opportunities but were rather approached to join other organisations. Organisations use this process as a form of social capital by providing opportunities to black professionals and achieving their EE targets. Achieving these targets results in positive recognition. Being qualified and experienced in spaces where there are few black senior managers, provides a form of embodied cultural capital that places them in an advantageous position of access to many opportunities.

The headhunting is not only conducted at an organisational level but also at an individual level where a former manager would approach an individual. For instance, Mbali retells her story of her former manager approaching her to move from Bank V to Bank Y. She was able to access a new opportunity based on the social capital she had accrued from a relationship that existed between herself and her manager.

> Bank V, I was there for two years and my, the CIO that I supported of Bank V moved to Bank Y. Sometime after he had moved, he approached myself

> and one of my colleagues that were top performers in the area, and we came for interviews at Bank Y. We were actually poached from the other side to here (Mbali).

In the above excerpt, Mbali attributes the recognition as a "top performer" as the reason for her manager approaching her to join her in his new organisation. In this context, hard work provided symbolic capital where they received recognition and respect as they were viewed as top performers. Their symbolic capital resulted in them obtaining social capital through the relationship they had with their manager. They were able to obtain their new jobs through the connection and network they had built in their previous organisation. The discourse about growth opportunities as a motivation to move to another organisation emerged in most of the stories narrated by the black senior managers. Kagiso was very clear that he will leave his current organisation if he is not offered an opportunity for growth and that he cannot "do this job for five years". His level of confidence suggests that he believes he has the appropriate capital and resources to advance to the next level of seniority in the corporate structure.

> So, if I don't continue to grow and growth for me where I am is to take on other portfolios. If I cannot take on other portfolios, I will leave because I cannot do this job for five years, I'm very selfish about that part (Kagiso).

> Part of the reasons why I leave organisations it that there is no growth for me. I left there because if I had not left, I would still be in the same role (Mandla).

In the preceding excerpt, Mandla indicates that he managed to obtain a senior role in the current organisation he is working at as a result of having left before and then returning. Growth opportunities are realised through moving between organisations and there is a belief that staying in one organisation may not always result in receiving those opportunities. Moving is therefore, a strategic decision that can compel one's former employer to recognise their skill and readiness for promotion. Like Kagiso and Mandla, Sibusiso is specific as to what would make him leave his current organisation. He sees himself advancing to the Group Executive level and believes that he has the required capital to obtain that position. Although the three senior managers currently occupy senior positions in their organisations, they aspire to even greater seniority.

> You know at this stage, if the right opportunity comes, that's going to allow me to contribute at the next level. So, I would probably only leave if I was going to get a C-suite position driving the company strategy right at the top. So, this bank is massive, you know. I'm in senior role now, but I still have multiple layers so I would almost see myself, envision myself almost sitting

> right at the top of that table with Group CEO, basically making the decisions that impact the organisation across the board (Sibusiso).

Participants like Sibusiso clearly identified opportunities for growth as a motivation to move between organisations. These opportunities were obtained through being headhunted or by actively looking for positions which offered opportunities for career growth. In addition, the implementation of employment equity practices has resulted in black professionals accessing opportunities that were previously unattainable to them. Booysen (1999) argued that the EE requirements placed organisations under immense pressure to diversify their workforce, causing them to intensify their head-hunting efforts and offering higher financial rewards to attract talented black employees. Van As (2001) similarly contends that the high mobility of talented employees in South Africa is caused by factors like the emigration of skilled workers and employment equity legislation that have led many organisations to place an emphasis on meeting targets, resulting in the mobility of highly qualified black employees. Consequently, the introduction of the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 (EEA) is one of the reasons that has heightened job mobility amongst black professionals. Employment equity therefore provides black professionals with an embodied cultural capital as a product of their race and gender. Consequently, the cultural capital they possess through their race and gender, as well as the organisational cultural capital like qualifications and experience, provide social capital that makes them regarded as top talent that is in demand.

Informal networks appeared to play an important role in the headhunting process. The managers observed that their networks were instrumental in enabling them to be headhunted. Molefi (2017) explained the value of informal networks in advancing the access that black people have to important organisational resources. She defines these informal networks as personal connections and relationships that exist between people where business interactions and transactions occur. These informal networks were previously only accessible to white people since they had powerful sponsors. Participants in the current study suggest that black people have now developed a strong network base which enables leverage and opportunities for mobility and advancement.

4.4 Part Four: Being a Senior Manager

The previous section highlighted the ways in which a number of discourses informed the participants' movement between jobs and between different organisations. The implementation of the Employment Equity Act has resulted in a change in representation where the number of black people is increasing in financial organisations. The increase of black representation in senior management positions has resulted in a notable shift in the demographic make-up in senior positions where there appears to be a significant number of black professionals occupying these positions. With the increasing number of black people in senior managers positions in what has been described as hostile environments by the participants, understanding the experiences and emerging discourses through the stories of the black senior managers provides insights into how their career journeys have been shaped. This section examines the participants' transition from professional roles into senior management roles and how they have occupied spaces which were previously reserved for and occupied by white people. Since the thesis unfolds in a temporal chronology, from early family life, school and higher education, job entry and advancement, it concludes in the present with participants occupying senior management roles.

The organisational culture in financial services organisations was noted to be a significant determinant of the participants' movement between organisations. It is for this reason that this section explores aspects of these cultures in terms of how they are experienced by the participants. As a group of pioneers, we first look at the role the participants occupied as the first black person or the only black person to sit in the boardrooms where decisions are made. Since the senior levels of the financial services industry are male dominated, we analyse the experiences of black women in these spaces. In addition, the discourse pertaining to the boys' club within these organisations is explored. This is done in relation to the observation that some white men have personal associations outside the workplace which have a direct influence in determining the manner in which the spaces are controlled.

4.4.1 The first and the only black in the room

The discourse about being the first and only black person in senior positions is a result of the slow pace of transformation that has been under scrutiny since the inception of the employment equity legislation. Based on the average age of the participants (45 years) and the employment equity representation of black people at senior levels, it can be expected that

most of them were the first black people to occupy the senior positions within their respective organisations. Some participants characterised themselves as the "only black person" in boardrooms where decisions are made, twenty years after the implementation of the employment equity legislation. This illustrates the slow pace of transformation in these financial organisations. Consequently, the senior managers in this study shared their experiences of being the only black executive in their respective divisions.

Some participants described the experience of being a minority as lonely. Reporting on their research in the United States, Isaac and See (2018) observed that African American executives in the corporate environment described being alone as painful. There have not been many studies in the South African context to study the complexities of being the only black executive in the boardroom. The current study suggests that the participants seem to be either the first generation or second generation of black executives in the country. In exploring the participants' experiences in financial services' boardrooms, stories about being the first black person in a senior role emerges, particularly amongst the participants older than 50 years of age, are prominent. However, the discourse of being the only black person in the boardroom appeared to be common across the different age groups.

Thuli and Mpho who are in their 50s narrate the circumstances around their appointment into senior management positions at the financial organisations they worked for. At the time, Thuli's organisation was driving the transformation agenda to achieve their employment equity targets. In her story, Mpho recalls how the organisation she worked for was "under pressure" to appoint a black person in senior management positions.

> I was fortunate at that time. I was just at the point where Affirmative Action was big on the agenda and to a large extent, I also brought my A-game. It was not easy because nine out of ten times, I would have been the first one in that position or the first one in the space and the first one in this but also there was that understanding that I needed to make it work (Thuli).
>
> So, I took on the job. I think they were also under pressure to really appoint a black person in that environment (Mpho).

The achievement of employment equity targets provides financial services organisations with symbolic capital as they will be recognised as complying and meeting the aims of BBBEE legislation. In the South African context, meeting employment equity targets results in meeting BBBEE targets which provides companies with access to certain business

opportunities. As stated before, the employment equity legislation also provided the participants with embodied cultural capital through their race and gender classification. This in turn, ensured that they were able to qualify for these positions through their skills but also through their demographic classification. Both the organisations and the participants appear to have mutually benefitted from this legislation. Following CRT, the benefit from BBBEE for these organisations and participants can be regarded as having an interest convergence (Bell, 1980) as the former advance their interests to obtain access to certain business opportunities while the latter get access to career progression.

While the implementation of employment equity provides black professionals access to senior positions in these organisations, Thuli narrates "making it work" which suggests that black people who were among the first to occupy these positions experienced some form of pressure. Sifiso, who is also in his 50s, recalls how being the minority in these positions was accompanied by the stereotype of being labelled as "just a BEE". He observes that the label resulted in one not being considered as competent and the "odds were stacked against you". Derogatory labels directed towards qualifying black professionals appointed to senior positions minimises their achievements. The expectation for black professionals to work harder to obtain these positions as compared to their white counterparts is a form of discrimination where they are continually seen in these organisations as less qualified. These negative discourses suggest that black people will never be ready for senior management roles.

In addition to the discriminatory stereotypes of being employment equity beneficiaries, some of the participants felt like they were outsiders in these organisations. Canham (2014) has termed this phenomenon, outsiders within. This feeling is observed in Sifiso's story below. Although the intention for employment equity was to provide access to positions that were previously not accessible to them, the perception and narrative that they were only able to obtain those position due to their race had negative consequences for them as they felt that their competence to do the work was overlooked.

> The racial bias was always against black people. There were very few of us and we were always in the minority and I'm speaking particularly with an emphasis on Black Africans ... we were always in the minority, which meant that the dynamics were tough. The odds were almost stacked against you. Not only from the fact that people did not consider you, and sometimes they'd say it to you, 'you're just a BEE' or 'you are just a transformation candidate

> that's the reason you are around here'. Until they hear and see what you do (Sifiso).

Being perceived as token appointments created a challenging environment for the participants as they felt that they were considered to have been appointed only as a result of being black. For example, in the excerpt above Sifiso's observes that "the dynamics were tough". In addition, Lebo narrates her experience below by asserting that white and Indian people competitors who do not obtain the senior position make it very difficult for black people who do. Sharing a similar experience, Thuli recalls how she was perceived as a token appointment. This resulted in her silencing. These biases prevailed from early career stages and persisted throughout the journey even at a senior management level.

> I think the most difficult thing, if I had to classify, is that it's always been opportunities or spaces where we don't find black people in that position. Being in that position, when you get there, you are expected to work even harder. I think really, whether be it, white people or Indians who didn't get that position, they would make it very difficult for you. I also think it's been the racial barriers that people have experienced, you know, the emotional fighting that people have, the unspoken battles (Lebo).

> I think there was a thing, as soon as you came in, there was a thing that said you're a token and because you don't necessarily have a voice or your voice does not count and therefore for your point to be put across or your point to be considered, somebody must take it and repackage so that it can be heard (Thuli).

The tokenism discourse described here is a form of racism and sexism where black women are not considered deserving of these positions. Instead, they are typecast as beneficiaries of the employment equity. In this case, tokenism might be considered a creation of white people who have racialised competence and associate it with whiteness. In this conception, they are naturally competent while black people are perceived as tokens of employment equity.

The concern for being a token appointment that some of the participants shared is similar to findings made in previous studies. A study by Atkinson, Coffey and Delamont (2003) observed that some employment equity beneficiaries claimed that they were victimised, marginalised and labelled as token appointments by white colleagues for being appointed through the implementation of employment equity legislative mechanisms. The experiences and perceptions of some participants corroborate what Ivona and Lance (2014) characterised

as self-enhancement that self-interest accounts of beneficiaries of employment equity reacting negatively to employment policies. They found that black employees rejected being labelled as token beneficiaries and contended that their careers advanced as a result of their individual merit.

This is articulated by some of the participants who juxtaposed the importance of employment equity in providing black people with opportunities but at the same time rejecting its association with tokenism. The contention of being perceived as a token appointment is that it ignores their attained education, hard work, and experience. Langa suggests there are "enough capable black people", and that employment equity is not needed. He rejects employment equity because he perceives it as casting doubt on the capability that black people must obtain and occupy senior positions. To him, employment equity perpetuates the racial stereotypes that black people are not able to be in such positions as they do not possess the required capacity.

> That's not right. I think we have a great opportunity and a great country to take responsibility for as young black people. In fact, screw the EE thing, we have enough capable black people. We are not hired for pity but hired because we are capable. The more we develop those and there's an attitude, the more we say we want to earn our spot as opposed to I want to use the law to get there, the better for all of us (Langa).

Similarly, Lebo acknowledged that she is a beneficiary of employment equity. However, she simultaneously postulated that she wants to "advance" in her career based on her skills and experience.

> I am acknowledging that if there wasn't any employment equity, probably I don't know if I was going to get the role because I mean, you know there's lots of biases the people go with. So, let me just say that I think it played a role, but I cannot tell you to which extent. But employment equity, is not a tool that I would use myself to advance me to get a job. I wouldn't say hire me because I am black, and you need me. I would say hire me because I have done this, I have the experience and I work hard, I have delivered this and this (Lebo).

Zama emphasises that her success has not been a result of what she refers to as "window dressing".

> I don't believe that any point in my career this has been window dressing. I think I've earned the positions I've been in, but employment equity has played a role nonetheless (Zama).

The discourse of "window dressing" is associated with the process of placing black people in positions of power without the requisite authority to make decisions. Although affording black people with opportunities to access senior positions is seen as a form of capital that has opened opportunities, when it is done to "window dress", it becomes a form of discrimination as they are made to believe they are in positions of power whereas in reality, they are not. In this conception, some white people are unable to imagine competent black leaders. For example, Gaertner and Davidio (1986) found that white people who regarded themselves as liberal were more likely to help a black person on a task if that person was a subordinate than if they were their superior. Joseph (2015) asserted that minority groups tend to navigate hostile socio-economic environments in the process of actualising their career goals. The hostility includes experiences of racial insults in the workplace which may cause victims to experience feelings of isolation, exclusion, and rejection (Joseph, 2015).

Consistent with the research from Europe, South African scholarship has shown how race continues to be a salient feature of workplace mistreatment and a complex phenomenon in organisations (Motsei, 2015). In the local context, racism is pervasive and extends beyond the workplace (Khoury, 2018). In the current study, participants told stories of bias against black people and how they manifest in the workplace. Although the experience of being the only black person in the room was seen as a challenging experience, Thando contended that that this can serve as an opportunity for black people to learn about others from different backgrounds. In her view, this experience might be a way in which black people can also adapt their habitus and learn aspects that may be beneficial to them from people from different racial groups.

> Certainly, in the earlier days it is alienating. Even before I was an executive, my boss, the CE, it was just me and him that would be in the room with our whole STRATCO team of about fifteen people and we were the only black people in the room. And I think equally that allowed me to learn a few things about really to having to force social connections with people with very different backgrounds and different views (Thando).

While being the first or only black person in senior positions in financial services organisations emerged for both men and women participants, there were additional pressures

associated with being a woman in a male dominated industry. This is captured in the intersectional nuances of women's experiences. Nonhlanhla's emphasis in the excerpt below, on being a black female, draws attention toward the complex challenges that black women face as they experience double discrimination as racialised and gendered beings (Collins, 2019).

> But it starts with being a black female, but it's up to you then how you change that perception to say 'I am not just a black female, I am made of the qualities that deserve this role irrespective of how I look, what my skin and gender is. I have all the qualities that are required and just turn things around'. Unfortunately for black women, we do face the struggle for the rest of our lives in turning the perception around, that I got it because I deserve it and not because I am black, and I am female. Because that is always the perception that 'Oh yah, she got it because she's black and she got it because she is female.' 'No, I got it because I deserve it' (Nonhlanhla).

In the next subsection, we consider intersectionality with the aim of understanding the experiences that the women participants have, especially when considering the historical disadvantages faced by black women.

4.4.2 The Lone Black Girl

Although the participants shared experiences of being discriminated against as black professionals in these organisations, the women participants' highlight the double discrimination they faced as not only being black but a woman. Some of the black women describe their journeys as being as lonely because they tend to be the only black women in senior positions within their organisations. This is noted in the stories that Mbali and Zanele narrate about their experiences of being the only black women in senior positions. They recount their experiences of being in rooms that were previously accessible to white people and black men only. It is here where decisions impacting the business are made. They are known to be important spaces that are exclusive and only accessed by people in positions of power and influence.

> So, it is a journey, but given where I am now, there aren't a lot of black females at the tables where I sit. We still see a lot of, there's a lot of black males. We're seeing a lot of black males taking up senior positions and also majority white males as well. So, it becomes hard as a black female when you are a minority in those environments. And it becomes lonely at times because you know. Sometimes you're in meetings and you raise certain points, and you feel like you're not heard (Mbali).

Mbali's account acknowledges the progress that has been made in relation to inclusivity. However, she asserts that black male representation has increased while that of black women has been at a significantly slower pace. Through this assertion, she points to the minoritisation of black women despite their numerical majority status in the country. Zanele's context is similar in that she is the only black woman at her level of seniority. She sees herself as an outsider in her current organisation as she was from another bank. She highlights the intersectionality of being black and a woman. Mbali and Zanele's stories are consistent with the statistics on the employment equity demographic representation in senior positions which indicate that there has been an increase of black men occupying senior management positions while black women's participation lags significantly behind. Their narratives provide texture and embodiment to the statistics.

> I'm the only black female. There's three black males, the rest are either white male or Indian. So, for me it was tough in the sense that, first there's a lot of people, when I got here, people didn't like the fact that I came from outside the bank cause the bank likes taking and grooming internally into their positions. And then secondly, I was black and female when normally it's white males that get that position (Zanele).

The stories of black women senior managers, such as Zanele, highlight how their experiences are different from those of black men. As a consequence of black men's gender proximity with white men, they potentially form allies with white men who are the majority in senior ranks. This works against black women's solidarity with black men. Their shared experience with black men diminishes as the black men share a gendered habitus with white men. Black women are excluded on the basis of their gender. Their gender identity poses an additional challenge for black women as they have to adapt to a male dominated and masculine habitus. To adapt to these contexts, the women narrate how they are expected to perform gender specific acts that are socially associated with men in some instances and women in others. In relation to performances associated with masculinity, Zama narrates the manner in which men engage with each other such as "speaking over each other" and describes this behaviour as a lack of "diplomacy".

> Men engage different way, they speak over each other to make their points, so that sort of rhetoric continues, right. So, I don't know, I think men enjoy the jostling of speaking over each other; kind of chipping in, you know there's almost no diplomacy. I haven't necessarily only adapted or felt that I needed to adapt to the male way of engaging. I am a woman; I generally speak at this tone and level voice. I don't raise my voice. I try to articulate so I, this is who I am (Zama).

Zama's description of the gendered performative constructs presumes men's behaviour as hostile and assertive. On the other hand, she presumes that women are gentle and soft-spoken. She appears to be perpetuating the social stereotypes of proper masculinity and femininity. However, her critique points to the ways in which spaces of seniority are gendered and how these potentially work against more feminine expressions of gender. In her statement "this is who I am", Zama appears to be rejecting the behaviours and cultural norms of organisations that promote masculine behaviours. This aligns with Nkomo and Kriek's (2011) revelation that black women in South African workplaces saw themselves as outsiders as they struggled to espouse the organisational cultures of their places of employment. Similarly, Canham (2014) found that some black women managers in the banking sector refused to adapt to the organisational norms of the organisations.

The discourses of gender identity in the workplace have been noted by many organisational researchers (Oakley, 2000; Tannen, 1994; Tyler & Cohen, 2010). The tone and pitch of voice that women use is seen as a way in which to stereotype women. This often serves as a barrier to advancement because they do not fit the male stereotype of leadership (Tyler & Cohen, 2010). Tannen (1994) asserted that women are less likely than men to engage in behaviours that are self-promoting to how they were socialised in childhood. According to Oakley (2000), this disadvantages women who work in hierarchical systems where negotiating authority is something that needs to be done quite often. Because they generally speak from a disempowered position, some women tend to change their linguistic style to a more command-oriented form in order to be perceived as strong, decisive and in control. Although they feel disadvantaged by not adopting the tone that men use in the boardroom, in their accounts of themselves, most of the women senior managers in this study appeared to be comfortable with how they communicate and suggest that they do not want to adopt the tone used by the men.

Recalling her own assertiveness, Thuli remarked that this was an "anomaly as a black female". Thuli's account supports the discourse that black women are not assertive. Thuli recognises the importance of performances associated with whiteness and masculinity as she claims that black people are generally not assertive and often lack the confidence necessary to assert one's view. Echoing Thuli, Mpho further challenges black women to find their voice.

> I think it was a culture shock in many instances. And the other thing is that at the time, I think even us as black people, we were not very assertive, to the extent that we were not, confident to push our view. To push our agendas and be assertive enough to then stand our ground. As a result, when one comes across as then standing and being assertive you know, so you became an anomaly especially as a black female (Thuli).
>
> Initially very intimidating, but also my natural being, I'm not a loud person. You walk in the boardroom you say the same thing, but no one hears you. So, and I think female leaders, that is one thing we need to work harder on, is finding our voice in the boardroom, number one (Mpho).

Thuli and Mpho highlight that the performances associated with white people and men are socially valued and provide embodied cultural capital. These behaviours are assumed to be associated with success in these organisations. Thuli and Mpho emphasise the importance of these performances. This challenges Zama's desire to maintain her "womanhood" in her style of engagement. Although Mpho appreciates the importance of adapting to performances associated with masculinity, she maintains the need for owning her womanhood through how she dresses as described in the following excerpt.

> But also showing up as females, you must never, so I was very clear in the beginning; I do not want to show up as my male counterparts. So, every time I had a board meeting, I would either wear a pink dress or a red dress just to affirm my femininity. But also, what I've learned about being the only female in the boardroom, in the meeting, do not offer to make tea or coffee for any of your colleagues (Mpho).

From her narrative, Mpho appears to encounter a paradox in wanting to maintain some performances associated with being a woman while rejecting others. She first assumes her preference to "wear a pink dress or a red dress" which "affirms her femininity", while simultaneously refusing to assume the role of making tea or coffee for her colleagues. While perpetuating the stereotypes associated with women such as wearing "pink" and "making tea", she practices her agency by choosing the performances she will enact and those she will reject. Larwood (1991) indicated that dress was another way masculine stereotypes can work against women in leadership positions. If women dress in ways that accentuate their femininity, Larwood (1991) suggests that it can undermine their credibility as managers. However, since Larwood wrote more than three decades ago, Mpho's account may suggest that expressions of femininity in senior management may be more acceptable than before.

Mpho simultaneously rejects service to men, such as making tea, as this is a practice traditionally associated with being a woman. The stereotype around gender roles has been noted as contributing towards women being subject to certain negative behaviours in the workplace. In an article entitled *Tea girl and garden boy bankers*, Canham (2019) illustrated that racialised and gendered stereotypes continue to be a reality for bankers in South Africa. Consequently, even those who have defied racialised and gendered restrictions are told that they should return to the domestic sphere in the service of whiteness and patriarchy. Moalusi and Jones (2019), as well as Sayce and Acker (2012), recognise that women's roles have traditionally been associated with and confined to the domestic arena. For example, one of the senior women in this study described how she was told not to attend an event at night as she needed to go home to her partner. Latchanah and Singh (2016) recognised family responsibilities as one of the stereotypes used to exclude women from networks which may benefit their career journeys. The prevailing stereotypes which are likely to result in toxic beliefs about gender difference may influence the messages and information that women are exposed to in organisations. This may lead to them experiencing the phenomenon of the 'glass ceiling' where seniority evades them beyond a certain point (Sayce & Acker, 2012).

Making tea in the South African context illustrates the intersectionality of being a black woman in a country where many black women are domestic workers, a role of domestic service. As illustrated by Mpho, black women's refusal to make tea is to counteract the racist and sexist stereotypes that associate the practice with black women. Her rejection of the stereotypical role associated with black women challenges the apartheid system which established a race and gender hierarchy embedded in unequal power relations in the workplace. The system afforded white men the best and highest paid jobs, while black men were employed in unskilled jobs. White women were employed in typically feminised jobs, such as secretaries, and black women were confined to domestic work (Booysen, 2007b; Kenny, 2004). From this perspective, domestic work is considered to be at the lowest level in the hierarchy where the incumbents do not possess necessary power. The assumption of the serving role to "make tea" for colleagues can be seen as confining one's role to limited decision making power in the workplace.

In addition to the expectation of performances that associate success with masculinity, women participants also recounted stories of being undermined more than their black men

counterparts. Nonhlanhla describes her experience as being “rough” and “in your face” as the only woman and black person.

> Here, it was like rough, rough, in your face. In the boardroom, being the only female and the only black, it’s daunting. Having to raise, you come up with what you think is a brilliant idea and are told ‘agh no, we’ve tried that 15 years ago, it didn’t work’. And you, like, start questioning yourself, ‘Can I, am I, can’t, I think? (Nonhlanhla).

She conveys a story of how she would come up with what she considered exceptional ideas only to be rebuffed as recycling dated solutions. This results in second guessing and questioning one’s skills and abilities. Lebo similarly recalls her experience of being in an executive management meeting where she found that she needed to prove herself as she was being perceived as an incompetent leader.

> I guess people were fighting me. At some point I was sitting at Exco and the words that were said were like 'maybe, it is not the business, it's the leadership that's incompetent you know’. So, things were being said by Indian people, especially. I found my battles more against Indians than whites actually. You find yourself in situations where you have to prove yourself (Lebo).

Lebo’s emphasis on the need to prove herself to Indian and white people can be juxtaposed to Thando’s assertion in the following excerpt. Here she challenges the preceding narratives by rejecting the discourse of the “lone black girl”.

> So, in any of the interactions, I find that I have more of those conscious moments where I have to read the situation and say ‘actually it's okay, I can actually take a backseat here. I don't always have to be the lone black girl, and that's actually okay, and in fact I don't want to carry that mantle. I don't want to carry that title’ (Thando).

Thando argues that she prefers to “take a backseat” and does not always want to prove her presence and worth as a black woman in spaces where she is the minority. This argument resonates with Mpho’s account in which she challenges women not to “show up as if we know everything”.

> So, how do we show up as if we know everything? And if you don't know, you don't say you don't know. You must think of an answer that says, ‘I have a little bit of knowledge of this, however; I can go and find out’. It doesn't mean that I don't know, and we must stop being hard on ourselves and wanting to know everything. No one knows everything (Mpho).

Thando and Mpho recognise the pressure that black women in senior positions place on themselves to appear to know and to prove themselves. Their narratives challenge black women senior managers to be honest and comfortable without succumbing to the pressure to appear as if they know everything. The desire to prove oneself appears to be as a strategy that is used by the participants to cope with the discrimination they faced. This is in line with Bell and Nkomo (2001), who found that black women use strategies drawn from their cultural heritage of strong black women to create positive self-valuations. Their research on the effects of race and gender on the careers and life journeys of black and white women managers found significant differences in their organisational experiences and perceptions of the barriers to their advancement. They observed that black women's organisational experiences were negatively affected by racism and sexism whereas white women reported sexism as the main barrier to success (Bell & Nkomo, 2001).

In coping with being the only black woman in exclusionary spaces, the discourse of "sisterhood" emerged in the stories shared by the participants. Zanele recalls a story of how she and the only other black woman in her leadership committee "gravitated to each other" as they were the only two that shared a raced and gendered identity.

> I think we kind of gravitated to each other cause, clearly, we were the only two. What I appreciated; she's literally always had my back. We had our last Exco last week where there was another incident of disrespect cause I was actually presenting and while literally I'm standing up, I'm presenting, I'm looking at my monitor and I heard her and our CRO who is also black male actually interjecting. Like she is saying 'you guys are rude, Zanele is actually presenting and half of you are on your phones and your laptops. But if anytime you have something to blame, you blame data. Like, you're always blaming her for things going wrong, actually that is very disrespectful' (Zanele).

> One thing that some of my colleagues and I who are feeling the same frustration, you know when we are in meetings, we always say we need to support one another because we can see our counterparts. It's like a caucus before some of these meetings and they agree on some of the outcomes. So, when we are in sessions and if you see that, you know, your sister is being undermined or is not being heard, we need to make sure that comes to an end or people are made aware that is not right (Mbali).

In her story, Zanele shares how her black woman colleague supported her when the male colleagues were not paying attention during her presentation in a meeting. Mbali also recalls how she and her colleagues who were experiencing common challenges as black women

made a decision to support one another when they perceive that the other is being "undermined or unheard". She observes that as a black woman she sees other black women as her sisters. "Sisterhood" is a form of social capital developed by black women senior managers to support each other in the spaces where they are a minority.

The sisterhood described by Mbali and Zanele appears to be a form of social capital created to adapt to consecrated exclusionary spaces and this has formed a collective identity which they associate with as black women in these spaces. As a discourse, sisterhood is associated with the concept of family where the women now see each other as not only colleagues but family. McDonald (2006) outlines a historical review of the concept of "sisterhood" and attributes its emergence to the collective struggle and resilience of black women in North America. She claimed that sisterhood was produced through women's acts of resistance in slave times, community work in the club movement in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and contemporary black feminism and womanism.

Sisterhood has historically assumed that black women's gender-ethnic identity and consciousness was homogeneous. However, McDonald (2006) revealed that there were aspects and experiences that differed amongst black women of different socio-economic status. Despite class differences, however, congruent with the main principle of sisterhood, she found black women across all social classes identified with struggle. These women's identification with struggle was based on their collective attempts to overcome racism and sexism. This is because class does not necessarily insulate black women from racism and sexism. Mbali and Zanele's experiences of sisterhood in the boardrooms indicates the deliberate attempt by black women in senior positions to confront the racism and sexism that persists in these environments. The collective identity that is shared amongst black women provides social capital in the form of support for one another. By speaking up in support of Zanele, her colleague displays the solidarity of sisterhood. This solidarity counteracts the sexism that continues to persist in male dominated spaces.

From the findings of this section, we observe the intersecting power of race, class and gender in shaping the experiences of the black women participants. While class is a muted identity, the women bear both their current middle-class positions and their working-class habitus of their families of origin. The narratives shared by the women participants point to the uniqueness in the experiences of black women within financial service organisations. With

the employment equity representation showing an increase in black men in senior positions in the financial services sector, the number of black women that progress to these positions is still very low. Black women consequently remain the minority in senior management roles in this sector. Unlike black men, their intersecting identities and experiences are characterised by double discrimination as black and as woman. The black women's narratives illustrate how they adopted various coping strategies to manage the struggle of being the only woman in male dominated spaces. They highlight how they made a conscious decision to remain authentic and not adopt the behaviours that are mostly displayed by men. However, since there is no one way to be women, some adopt elements of masculine norms to strategically overcome the barriers that they confront. The women also indicated that they create solidarities of sisterhood with other black women where they are able to support one another. These strategies have played an important role in their success in the male dominated sector in which they work.

4.4.3 The Boys' Club

The experience of being excluded from decision making is an additional discourse that is explored here. This is done in relation to the preceding observation that decision making sometimes occurs outside of the formal work environment. The social events identified by the participants are perceived as spaces where important work related discussions take place and where critical business decisions are made. Since black people are often excluded from these social activities, informal gatherings are seen as negatively impacting participants' potential career progression and success. The participants provide different labels for these social events with boys' club being the most common label assigned. The social events, such as braais while watching rugby games, are described as activities around which white men socialise during weekends. They invite each other over to watch these games at their homes. These are typically racially homogeneous groups from which women are usually excluded and they are considered to be exclusive where invitations are limited to only a few people. Participants in this study believe that important business decisions are made at these social events. These decisions are brought back to the workspace after being concluded at these informal segregated spaces.

In the following excerpt, Zanele describes the boys club as being made up of white men. She narrates how and where the decisions are made. She contends that the sites include golf courses and bars. She describes how career decisions that determine who obtain senior

positions are made in these spaces by claiming that executives in the financial services sector are not selected based on merit but on networks. The discourse of occupying senior positions based on merit emerged in part three of the findings. There, participants indicated that they were considered to be token appointments. The same discourse appears to also exist towards white senior managers since some of the participants believe that they were not hired based on merit but rather on their boys' club networks.

> I think because being historically a boys' club, if you actually check the majority of the CEOs in the financial industries have always been white males. The one thing I have learnt is the position of a CEO is normally not determined by the work that you actually put in. It's actually determined in other boardrooms, on the golf course, in the bars. But people decide your fate based on, yes, your reputation, your networking, and hopefully a bit of performance. But I think history has proven there have been people based in CEO positions and you like question how did that person even make it there (Zanele).

> So, if you are coming from outside in (another organisation) and you're not part of the rugby culture, as an example, you are not part of the weekend braai events that will happen, then obviously you are kind of not part of that dominant culture. It will obviously mean that you get left out of some of the conversations about key projects you are involved in (Sibusiso).

The preceding excerpt by Zanele perceives the boys club as a white man habitus that enables this group to progress into senior positions in their careers. Her assertion that the appointment of white men into CEO positions in financial services organisations is decided at networking events has been supported by previous organisational studies. For instance, Burt, Kilduff and Tasselli (2013) and Conway (2001) illustrated that informal social networks offered more value than formal networks in the accomplishment of both organisational and individual objectives and goals, such as career advancement. Reinforcing these findings, Sibusiso accounts for how he saw himself as an outsider and not as part of the rugby culture which he perceives as a dominant culture in these organisations. Corroborating Zanele's assertion about what happens in these social activities, Sibusiso recognises how he is left out of "some of the conversations about key projects" from which he needs information to execute his job. His exclusion from these conversations is a form of disempowerment as he may not be able to function optimally in his role as a result of not having full context to take informed decisions.

From the stories narrated above it appears that the tokenism discourse is widely spoken about, and it purportedly influences and shapes some of the discrimination towards black professionals in these organisations. Conversely, although there is a perception about the benefits of being part of a boys' club, this discourse seems to be more subtle. The possible reasons for the difference in how these two discourses are demonstrated is the unequal power relations that exist, based on who holds senior positions. These spaces are still predominantly white and male and as the current holders of the power, they have the ability to determine the culture, as well as acceptable behaviours. Excluding participants in the form of these social activities is a form of organisational racism that persists in some financial services organisations. While it was described as subtle in the earlier sections, some participants describe these social activities as conducted deliberately albeit disguised as a social activity that is not work related.

The exclusion of participants from boys' clubs' results in participants experiencing rejection even as they currently occupy senior positions. Shaka expresses how he was excluded from a braai where a decision was made and subsequently brought into a boardroom. The white men at the meeting referenced the decision been made at that braai. He describes being alienated as a result of not being part of these social activities. Not only are these exclusions seen as alienating, but Sibusiso also perceives them as spaces that afford mentorship for white men which increases their career advancement opportunities.

> You'll be alienated. You'll question what you know. You will be excluded from events, specifically social. So, things that come to mind as I remember decisions made on Monday over a braai that happened on Saturday. But wow, I wasn't at the braai, 'how did you guys make that decision, oh okay' (Shaka).

> It is not always easy to impose yourself to on a majority culture cause other people meet on weekends, they have braais, they have career conversations and then naturally mentorship happens there (Sibusiso).

In addition to gender, as one of the factors that are associated with social networks in South Africa, race appears to play a role in how the old boys club is constructed. A boys club symbolises shared discourses and practices amongst men which institutionalises men's dominance over women (Gregory, 2009). The nature and operation of these boys' clubs and their contribution has maintained the dominance of men in different settings (Gregory, 2009). Knights and Tullberg (2012) illustrated how the nature and operation of boys' clubs have maintained the dominance of men in different settings. Even though boys' clubs have been

understood in the context of gender by international studies, in the South African context, race has been associated with old boys' clubs as white men have historically been in positions of power in society and organisations (Verwey and Quayle, 2012). The activities associated with white men in the South African context, such attending braais, watching rugby and playing golf are described as exclusionary. This is because the activities take place outside of the work context and particularly on weekends.

In their study about Afrikaner identity post-apartheid, Verwey and Quayle (2012) described a braai as a distinctive social arena associated with alcohol, rugby, hunting, meat, and hypermasculinity. They further assert that the social context of a private braai attended exclusively by white Afrikaners at a friend's house is likely to produce a racially and culturally homogeneous private space that elicits the type of in-group talk that is rarely spoken in public or mixed settings. The culturally homogeneous social events are a common feature of white South African culture and the attitudes recorded are likely to be generalisable to events of this type (Verwey & Quayle, 2012). This assertion supports the claims of black senior managers about the events that take place outside of work where important discussions and decisions are made. This social relations in the work context can be linked to the construct of organisational social capital. Leana and Van Buren (1999) defined organisational social capital as a resource reflecting the character of social relations within the organisation. Organisation social capital can be achieved when members share a collective goal and trust which in turn, results in successful collective action. However, when others are excluded, not all members of the organisation benefit from organisational social capital. Therefore, in the context of the current study, the narratives of black women and black men suggest that they are mostly excluded from the benefits of organisational social capital.

In addition to excluding black men, the boys club in the financial services industry was experienced by some of the women participants as gendered and as exclusionary to women. In the following excerpt, Lerato draws attention to her experience of exclusion as a black woman from the boys' clubs. She regards the space and practices as "a gentlemen's club" that collectively benefits men, including black men. Here, she identifies herself as a woman first. She refers to "men and white men" as "unfamiliar people" signifying her dissociation and lack of common interest with black men in this context. Zama and Buhle similarly describe how the boys' clubs are primarily gendered, thus implying that black men also

benefit from these networks. Continuing from her earlier assertion that men engage differently from women, Zama describes the boys' clubs as forums that allow for masculine forms of engagement. Buhle narrates a story of being told to go home "to her boyfriend" after a sports match she had attended with her male colleagues. When her manager told her to "go home" this was a perpetuation of the stereotype that she is not supposed to go for drinks after this event as it is a masculine activity associated with men. Her dismissal suggests that drinks are another domain of exclusion for black woman. For her male colleagues, Buhle must disengage her work persona and assume a role of a homemaker and go home to her boyfriend.

> An African woman versus men, white men. It was a gentlemen's club and for the very first time in my life, I found myself having to break walls and barriers that I had never had to before. For the very first time, I was working with unfamiliar people (Lerato).
>
> The other thing in my experiences has been that, you know, I think because traditionally these forums have been largely boys' clubs, they engage in a different way (Zama).
>
> We once booked clients to a sports match, and it was mainly like males because the whole industry is just males. I helped with the logistics and all of that and they were all staying at this one hotel; but now being men, they still wanted to go out in the evening. We got back, I think around seven or that and they still wanted to go out, fine no issues. But when we get there, when the bus drops us off, they say; the guy who was my manager says to me; 'Buhle, you can go home, I'm sure your boyfriend whatever, you know' (Buhle).

The preceding stories by Zama and Buhle illustrate the masculine nature of financial services organisations. Since masculinity is valued, it places men in more advantageous positions. Being a man provides embodied cultural capital. It provides them with the social capital that allows them to be part of the boys' club. Although black men are excluded as a result of their race, their gender nevertheless provides them with opportunities to adapt into these cultures. In addition, it provides the networking opportunities that are required in order to succeed in these organisations. The intersecting position of race and gender in this instance results in black women experiencing double discrimination, firstly, for being black, and secondly, for being women. Creating boys' clubs' networks ensures that the power distribution remains in favour of men. This consequently maintains the male domination of the financial services industry. The gender stereotypes reflected here and earlier are societal stereotypes of what roles women should occupy in comparison to those that men are expected to assume.

Although the exclusion is experienced by black people in general, black women appeared to experience more forms of exclusion than black men in these organisations. This suggests the importance of ensuring that gender is directly addressed alongside race in discourses and interventions of social change and transformation.

4.4.4 Black senior manager's contribution to transformation

In narrating their career stories, participants highlighted the role that black senior managers play towards the successful implementation of employment equity in the financial services industry. Most of the participants noted that financial organisations that successfully implement employment equity had senior management at the highest level who supported and drove its implementation. Conversely, the participants believed that in organisations that were unsuccessful in implementing the legislation, transformation was not supported by senior managers. In the following excerpts, Sifiso and Mosa claim that for these latter organisations to transform, senior managers who make hiring decisions should be deliberate in their approach to ensure that they advance black professionals into senior positions.

> It all comes down to leadership, leadership from the board, leadership from the Chief Executive and then leadership from the structures that the Chief Executive wins. So, if the commitment, and I say this with due respect and humility, the commitment is not there at the top, there's no incentive, then you will not see that incentivisation of people happen unless leadership is fully committed and explicitly so (Sifiso).

Sifiso points out how the lack of commitment from the top leadership from the board and CEO will result in the managers below this level not seeing the importance of transformation through the implementation of employment equity. Mosa's contention supports Sifiso's point, and he further argues that driving transformation should not be optional, but it should be enforced. The preceding stories highlight the organisational cultural capital that senior managers at the highest level in the organisation have. Through this capital they are able to make decisions that will either support or impede the implementation of employment equity. Since white men largely occupy these positions, this implies that they are the ones who possess this capital. This allows them to make decisions as to who is provided with the opportunity to advance to senior positions.

> I think it's starts at, if the leadership or the drive for transformation doesn't happen by free will. You have to drive it and enforce the change. You force the people and say you're going to employ a black person at that level, you are going to employ an Indian, a Coloured, whatever (Mosa).

With black professionals starting to occupy these positions, some participants believe that they have cultural capital which they could use towards advancing inclusion. Sibusiso emphasises how "leadership change happens at the top first" in terms of transformation within organisations.

> So, in organisations, you find leadership change happens at the top first. I think it's a function of leverage to then drive change faster cause the people obviously, they are not threatened by the change themselves they believe change is the right thing, it's easier for them to buy into change. So, if you're got a very transformed organisation at the top from the board chairperson, obviously from the board itself to the people who are running one of the biggest areas within the organisation, you will find change will follow naturally (Sibusiso).

Extending on the assertion by Sibusiso, Thando and Tshiamo share their experience of working in organisations where they had black senior managers who were instrumental in driving the transformation agenda. Having black senior executives is seen as the opportunity to provide the social capital required to advance into more senior positions.

> In an organisation that has black leaders, there are more black leaders at the lower levels that then also get promoted into the organisation because the presence of a black leader gives the confidence to the rest of the business units. Because the notion that there aren't actually any black leaders is mostly false (Thando).

> I have had other instances where I felt supported by other leaders like the current CEO in fact. I think what was really great with him. For me that's really his legacy is that he did try and tackle this issue of transformation head on in the firm. And I think he understood that it was bigger than numbers and stuff. I think he took an active role and conscious decision to try and empower young black people in the firm (Tshiamo).

The preceding stories by Tshiamo and Thando suggest that the successful implementation of employment equity is more easily realised in organisations that have black senior executives. This is because they have acquired capital to provide advancement and career opportunities for black professionals. Having ethnically similar individuals in powerful positions is regarded as providing an advantage to black professionals in their efforts to achieve senior management positions (Ibarra & Deshpande, 2007). In alignment with the research by Ibarra and Deshpande (2007), Tshiamo and Thando observe how this social capital provided them

with more access to career related assistance or guidance from the senior managers in their organisations.

The participants' narratives of their experiences in their senior positions appear to mirror their early childhood and adulthood experiences. Their narratives illustrate that although they have attained the required capital in the form of education, skills, and experience, they do not possess the form of capital that would counteract the racism and sexism that appears pervasive in some of the financial services organisations. The racism and sexism that they experience is described as subtle, common, and routine. This makes it difficult to recognise and address. One site of these practices is the boys club that participants described as an important place of decision making and as contributing to career advancement. This social activity is understood to be a common activity amongst white men and black men in certain instances. As those who engage in such activities meet in their personal time and social spaces in order to watch a game of rugby or have a braai, it is difficult to monitor and call out the practice as racist and sexist. Consistent with the participants' experiences of the old boys' club, Johnson and Mathur-Helm (2011) found that the persisting male dominance in South African banks boardrooms resulted in social interchanges conducted in activities associated with masculinity, such as playing golf and watching sport. These social interchanges continue to promote the old boys club culture which results in men appointing other men in senior positions.

Although the participants shared similar experiences about race, the intersectionality of race and gender was observed in the narratives of some of the black women. They narrated experiences of double discrimination that they faced as a result of being black and being a woman. These narratives point out their unique experiences especially in the South African context where black women are generally at the lowest social class in comparison to other groups. Although gendered narratives were not as prevalent as the accounts of racial discrimination, some women participants were vocal about their experiences which they linked to their specific intersectional identities. This suggests that the voices of black women should be taken into account in these organisations. This would help to address the challenges they face in obtaining seniority and counteract their low representation at senior positions within the financial services sector. The unique experience of black women participants in this study, as compared to their black men counterparts, is congruent with the previous study by Jaga et al. (2018) which found that black women professionals are still confronted by

deeply embedded gender and race prejudices in post-apartheid South Africa. The intersectionality of race, gender and class faced by black women in corporate South Africa highlights the importance of recognising structural and psychological barriers, and personal, cultural, racial and class barriers that prevent black women's career advancement (Johnson and Mathur-Helm, 2011).

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter began with an exploration of participants' narratives of their childhood experiences. It then focused on their schooling which was followed by their career journeys as they navigate their careers in the financial services sector. Read through the lens of Bourdieu's theory of habitus, the findings of this study indicate that the participants' childhood experiences should be understood in relation to the social class of their parents. In addition to the parents' background, the socio-political context of a changing country was a significant influence that contributed to schooling and subsequent career decisions that they made. Bourdieu (1990) argued that social class differences emerge very early on in life and are generated by the transmission of cultural capital and habitus from parents to children. Children that come from higher status background are likely to obtain a general cultural knowledge from their parents and this gives them an advantage in the school setting (Bourdieu, 1990). The families from different social class positions transmit different types and quantities of cultural capital and habitus to their children (Bourdieu, 1979; Schneider & Lang, 2014).

For most participants, attending school during the South African political transition influenced their schooling possibilities and choices. For older participants, experiences of schooling disruption due to political violence played a seminal role in their lives. For others, the political violence negatively impacted their schooling experience. These political events appear to have played a significant role in the life experiences of the participants. Some experiences, such as being allowed access to former model C schools were positive since previous generations had been denied these opportunities. Moving from the university years into the world of work, the study found that organisational relationships in the form of mentorship and sponsorship in the early careers of the participants were valuable for how they navigated the early phase of their careers. From the participants' stories, it appears that the pressure to transform from exclusionary apartheid workplaces to diverse and inclusive

organisations in a democracy opened networks to black professionals. This helped to ensure that participants got access to opportunities that would assist in career progression.

As professionals within the financial services, participants highlighted that the way organisations have been organised and controlled made it challenging to navigate through their various organisations. For instance, participants narrated stories about pervasive Eurocentric cultures in the financial services sector. They observed that these cultures were unaccommodating of black people and created barriers to transformation. The results are congruent with other studies in South Africa which identified organisational culture as one of the barriers that have prevented black people from progressing in their careers (Booysen & Nkomo, 2014; Wilson, 2000).

Against the backdrop of pervasive and intractable racialisation and patriarchy, the participants' narratives suggest that the financial services industry is marred by racism and sexism. The discourse of bias is quite dominant across all the themes that have been identified in this research. The bias identified was experienced in two forms, firstly, explicitly in terms of excluding black people from certain social networks and social events and subtly, where there were racial undertones that were received from white counterparts and black women also experiencing sexism. Molefi (2017) observes the importance of understanding what she describes as unconscious biases in the workplace and challenges managers or leaders to assess themselves in terms of how they treat employees, based on race, gender, and class. However, notwithstanding the pervasive tone of complaint, the participants are those who have "made it" into roles that are difficult to reach. They suggest that characteristics, such as resilience learned from early adversity, the value of seminal lessons of hard work inculcated by working class parents and communities, opportunities opened by democratisation and equity legislation, and mentorship and sponsorship are pivotal to understanding their career advancement. Methodologically, the narrative frame enabled a wider temporal plane that reads careers as part of a continuum from early life that attaches to intergenerational and socio-political relations. This reading enabled new insights into a relatively well studied area of research.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

Perhaps, the most novel aspect of this research was to locate black senior managers within a longer temporal frame that considers them in relation to their families, communities, socio-political and economic histories. This location shed new light since it illuminated their lives and careers in novel ways that are grounded in history and context. It enabled an understanding of black senior managers as bearing histories that they bring along with them into the workplace. Accessing these histories through the genre of narrative assisted in showcasing what is enabled by storying one's life therefore creating circuits of meaning making that connect seeming disparate sites of the personal, historical and the workplace. At its core then, this project was about storying the early lives of black senior managers by locating them as mostly working class, caught up in the struggles against apartheid for democratisation, as benefiting from the opportunities enabled by the transition to democracy, and as entering and navigating the white and masculine corporate workplace of the financial services sector. In other words, what happens when those who bear black histories enter the exclusionary workplace? How do black people navigate these spaces to eventually reach levels of seniority that evade many other black people? This is the story of this thesis.

Theoretically, the class theory of habitus was incredibly generative for its illumination of the different fields of operation that people navigate historically and in everyday life. In this regard, the thesis was able to track the different kinds of capital that people bear in relation to the forms of capital that are valued in the different fields of operation. Here, we found that some forms of capital better prepare people for navigating the financial services sector and that other forms can be leveraged to withstand exclusion and resurgently recast spaces in productive ways that open exclusionary spaces. Consequently, even though habitus is largely enduring, the research showed the generative shifts that can occur over time. This suggests that black senior managers are not just passive participants in a closed system but that they agentically insert and assert themselves into organisational spaces. Since feminist scholars insist on the value of working with gender as an experience and as category of analysis, habitus was productively read in relation to the intersectional lens that asserts a women's standpoint of the world and the corporate arena. This perspective was crucial for surfacing black women's agency, challenges, and fortitude in surviving and navigating sexist and racist cultures that appear pervasive in the financial services sector.

Having outlined the core stakes and the lenses used, it is important to restate the research questions that drove this project and simultaneously set its parameters. What do life story narratives tell us about how black people navigate professional careers? How do black men and black women in senior management positions make meaning of their family and community backgrounds to think about their careers? What meanings do black senior managers assign to their experiences of moving between organisations over the course of their careers? How do gender, race and class intersect to explain the experiences of black men and black women senior managers' career journeys? It is apparent that these questions are constructed to incrementally think with the present as the vantage point through a history of working life and the pre-life of managers as young people. With this moving temporal scale in mind, the history illuminates the present from the vantage point of the current. This is to say that participants told their histories in 2020. These histories are consequently coloured by all they have come to know and experience rather than being stencils of a transparent past or "true" account. Fortunately, since this study locates itself within the interpretivist paradigm of which narrative is a part, it was invested in self-reflexive truth claims rather than verifiable truth. The research was conducted with the belief that we can learn something of these participants' lives which might in turn, illuminate pathways for understanding the transformation journey on which corporate organisations have embarked. In addition, since these participants have walked the arduous journey to seniority, they might "teach" those of us committed to creating inclusive spaces to do our work more thoughtfully.

5.1 Summary of the findings

With the findings discussed in the previous chapter, the aim of this final chapter is to provide a high level overview of the findings and the contributions of the study as they relate to the central aims of the study: 1) Exploring the life and career mobility narratives of black men and black women senior managers, and 2) Understanding how their career movements and trajectories shed light on the implementation of employment equity in the financial services sector. The method of enquiry used to address the aforementioned aims was a qualitative research design which sought to explore the senior managers' lived experiences. Qualitative inquiry was the research approach used for its focus on the real-life experiences of the participants and how they make sense of these (Creswell, 2013). The narratives were collected through the use of interviews. I conducted 20 semi-structured, in-depth interviews of senior managers who were working in various organisations within the financial services sector. All the participants consented to the recorded interviews which were subsequently

transcribed. The transcribed interviews were coded, and I used a narrative analysis to make meaning of the findings presented below.

5.1.1 Childhood and Schooling

The influence on childhood and family background is seen to play an important role in the careers of the black senior managers. Black people in South Africa tend to be viewed in a homogeneous way, however, this research suggests classed, gendered, and class heterogeneity amongst black people. With the rise of the middle class, the younger black senior managers suggest that being raised in a middle-class family has a largely positive influence in career decision making and career trajectory. This foregrounds the intersection of race and class through the lived childhood experiences of the black senior managers. For instance, it appears that parents influenced the manner in which personal identity was developed. This process seems to have nurtured values that guide participants in their work environments. The influence of family context seems to have played an important early role in how they made their career choices and also later in how they navigated their workplaces.

An examination of the period that most participants attended school during a period of marked political transition suggests that many of them navigated a complicated terrain of schooling disruption and flux. This experience may be understood as having a marked impact on their development. Some of this was both negative and positive. For example, interruptions to schooling in townships often instigated parents to remove their children from poorly resourced schools and take them to schools which were previously just for white children since this period coincided with school desegregation. In addition, the experience of the political transition politically conscientized participants in relation to class, race, and gender struggles. These complexities were illuminated by the use of Bourdieu's theory of habitus which showed how participants' childhood and the context in which they were raised played a role in shaping who they became as adults. This is seen in the manner in which the black senior managers were able to navigate their careers. Although organisations do not have an influence on people's childhoods, we observe how participants use some of the lessons learned in childhood in the workplace. It is important to recognise those as having a positive impact on black people.

The black senior managers highlighted the issue of values in terms of determining how they behave and carry themselves in the workplace. They attributed most of the characteristics

they value as important to how they were raised. Values were seen as one of the main reasons for moving between organisations. In this instance, black senior managers claimed that they left their previous organisations due to a values misalignment. Williams (1990) defined cultural values as shared ideas about what a society collectively views as good, right and desirable. The question is whether the expectation of the values alignment with that they describe as personal is reasonable for the organisations in which they work. To counter this argument, several organisational culture researchers have argued that being nested within societies, organisations ought to be influenced by the context in which they exist (Hofstede & Peterson, 2000; Sagiv & Schwartz, 2007).

5.1.2 Job Market Entry and Early Career

The value of education was highlighted as significant by the black senior managers. All of them have obtained a bachelor's degree and post-graduate qualification. They attribute the education they received to have given them access to career opportunities, especially early on in their careers. Hard work was also a prevalent theme that ran across many of the participants' narratives. All of them characterised themselves as hard workers and they attribute this to how they were raised. Regardless of whether parents had professional careers, were unemployed or in service jobs such as domestic work, they shared the common characteristic of hard work.

The participants who grew up in impoverished backgrounds cited bursaries as providing them with an opportunity to further their studies post high school. It is apparent from the research that providing access for funding to previously disadvantaged groups will continue to play an important role in achieving transformation goals and redressing inequality. The issue of funding for tertiary students remains a huge challenge in South Africa. The rise of student movements demanding the government fund further education is indicative of the crises. The challenge should be equally directed to organisations who continue to claim that there is a black talent gap. It is important to note that there is a link between the paucity of black talent and access to education (Rakometsi, 2008). If organisations are intentional about the implementation of employment equity, there needs to be a focus on contributing towards education and one such way is through increasing funding opportunities for black people who qualify to further their education but are unable to afford fees.

The outcome of this research highlights the value of mentorship and sponsorship as an important contribution to the careers of the black senior managers. The role of a mentor was seen as important in providing leadership guidance as well as support throughout one's career. Sponsorship on the other hand is as seen as having provided them access to opportunities. Most of the senior managers observed that sponsors opened doors for them to be noticed as top talent by decision makers and facilitated access to career opportunities. This suggests that it is important that organisations invest in the mentorship programmes. Participants highlighted the value of networking and positioning oneself to be noticed by those who hold positions of power in organisations. In the South African context, sponsorship has been seen to be only accessible to white people as they are able to network outside of the office. However, the senior managers suggest that they are challenging the status quo by taking up opportunities for mentorship by powerful people. Opportunities of development offered to the senior managers early on in their careers has contributed towards career success. Their stories suggest that most of the managers' career trajectories seemed to take place faster than they had initially anticipated. They became managers early on in their careers and, they attribute this to the development opportunities they received.

5.1.3 Movement between jobs

Black professionals have often been seen as job hoppers, accused of moving from one organisation to the next motivated by financial gains. However, participants countered this discourse by attributing their movement to misalignment in values and industry practices of headhunting. Most of them describe having been headhunted throughout their career journeys rather that actively looking for other roles. This coheres with Nzukuma and Bussin's (2011) observation that competition for talent between organisations is one of the contributing factors towards black people moving between organisations. However, beyond the self-accounts of black managers, numerical tracking data suggests that black managers do not move any more than their white counterparts in a sector where skills are highly transferable. In this regard, Statistics South Africa (2022) suggests that the average tenure in a job is two years and ten months. In this study, participants typically spent an average of five years in a role.

The discourse that black professionals move between organisations too quickly did not resonate with stories of the black senior managers in the study. Movement within an organisation between divisions or departments appeared more prevalent than

interorganisational mobility. However, participants did highlight the importance of moving around, whether within or between organisations to one's career journey. They indicated that this movement provides an opportunity for growth from a technical point of view as well as an opportunity for career advancement. This suggests that black professionals aspiring to occupy senior positions should not view the movement between organisations as necessarily negative, but rather as a way of obtaining experience that will ultimately assist in advancing their careers in ways that circumvent some of the discriminatory practices that create ceilings for black advancement.

Values are one of the factors that determine or drive the culture of an organisation. One of the findings suggests that despite the journey of transformation and change in the demographic make-up of organisations, the culture of financial services organisations remains Eurocentric. Cultures continue to reflect the norms and practices that were made for white males. There is still an expectation that in order to succeed, black people should adopt white men's ways of being and masculine practices. However, participants often strategically resisted the imposition of Eurocentric expectations of inhabiting the workplace. Intersectional analysis revealed that black men benefited from the gender dividend of proximity to white men while black women were generally on the back foot since they have to navigate two or three layers of outsideness.

5.1.4 Being a Senior Manager

Participants generally felt immense pressure to prove themselves as worthy of their roles as senior managers. They saw this as a hurdle placed in the way of career growth and access to seniority. They view this as unfair as merit is not defined the same way for white people. Through the application of CRT that illuminates the ways in which people 'talk back' and counter discourse, the research surfaced how participants use the discourse of hard work to resist claims of window dressing. Based on the weight and power of meritocratic discourses whenever black people show up, the study recommends organisations should challenge the conception of meritocracy as whiteness across practices within organisations. These include the practices of hiring of black professionals, developing them and also how to manage their performance. This is not to imply that different principles are applied for black professionals but rather to apply fair, and similar principles of determining what constitutes merit, regardless of race and gender.

Since black senior managers are a minority at this level, it is to be expected that they would generally find themselves as the only, or one of a few, black people. This creates feelings of alienation. In particular, black women described feeling a great deal of loneliness. In this context, there is significant pressure to conform and to fit in. However, a number of participants were quite adamant that they would remain themselves despite the loneliness. Many understood that showing up as a black person and being able to speak up and being authentic is something they pride themselves in. Participants saw their minority status as the lone black in the room as organisational failure to implement employment equity.

An important recuring theme in the organisational narratives told by participants relates to exclusive informal networks beyond the workplace. In this spaces, white men who wield power make work related decisions that have a bearing on strategic matters and impact career progression. Since black people and black women in particular are often not part of these informal networks, they are effectively excluded from these power circuits and the benefits that accrue from these. Consequently, despite their seniority, most participants found that they were still operating at various levels of exclusion. Participants highlighted unconscious bias as a driver of discriminatory practices that are directed to them by white people in the organisations. These practices were experienced as derogatory and included being spoken for, 'mansplained', and being paraphrased. These patronising practices often lead to others being credited for participants' ideas. Studies on unconscious bias have started gaining momentum in South Africa as a result of organisations becoming more diverse; it is therefore important that organisations address issues pertaining to it when implementing diversity and inclusion programmes (Molefi, 2017; Ramphele, 2008).

Although the participants indicated challenges, such as experiencing unconscious bias at senior manager levels, they indicated the positive influence that black senior managers have in driving the transformation agenda in financial services sector. There is a general perception that organisations that have black people in the senior echelons are more successful in implementing employment equity and driving the transformation agenda as compared to those that do not have black people in the same positions. Some prominent black executives have been credited in changing the culture of these organisations to be more accommodating to black people.

5.2 Contributions of the study

With South Africa approaching thirty years of democracy, it is important for us to reflect on progress that has been made across the spectrum of life. Notwithstanding the institutionalisation of the democratic state, South Africa is one of the most unequal societies in the world (Francis & Webster, 2019). The realisation of a democratic state promised to redress inequalities that existed in society as a result of the apartheid regime and the preceding era of colonialism. One of the important ways of redressing these inequalities was the introduction of the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998. The main purpose of the Act was to redress inequalities in workplaces by widening the access and inclusion of black people (Africans, Coloureds and Indians) and women employees. It is important to recognise the progress that has been made by organisations with regard to its implementation since its inception. However, the CEE report shows that although progress has been made, it is still at a slow pace as these groups remain highly under-represented, particularly at senior and top management levels (CEE, 2023).

With the plethora of research on employment equity, there has been a limited focus on exploring the narratives of Black African people who have successfully occupied senior management positions. Previous studies exploring the experiences of black people in South African organisations included coloured and people of Indian descent when exploring experiences of black people within South African organisations (Booysen, 2007a; Booysen & Nkomo, 2010; Horwitz et al., 2005; Jain et al., 2003). By focusing only on Black African people (referred to as black people in the study), the current study sought to explore the unique experiences of this group as the majority population from a race in South Africa. My interest in exploring the life stories, including career journeys of black senior managers, emanated from my personal experience of being a black woman working in the financial services sector and the shared stories amongst other Black African women I have engaged with on this topic throughout my career.

Focusing only on the life stories of black African people added to the existing body of knowledge in transformation and organisational studies. In contrast to most studies that provide a snapshot of the experiences of black professionals and managers, this study provided a longitudinal view of their life histories and connected these to their current workplace subjectivities and experiences. The outcomes of the study have policy implications

at the national and organisational levels, as they have shed light into recognising the factors that drive individuals to be ready for managerial positions as organisations open up opportunities for development and growth. In particular, the need for steady parental support, schooling, mentorship and peer support are crucial and have both policy and human resource implications.

From a theoretical perspective, the study aimed to contribute towards existing theory by integrating Bourdieu's sociological concepts of habitus, capital, and field in an organisational setting. Bourdieu's concepts have previously been applied mostly in educational settings and there has been limited application of the concepts within organisational settings. Intersectionality has gained popularity in organisational studies. Locally, scholars such as Carrim and Nkomo (2016) applied the concept in a study about Indian women's experience in managerial roles. This study further extends and confirms the value of intersectionality by highlighting the uniqueness of black women's life and career journeys in comparison to black men's life and career stories. The exploration of the life narratives confirmed assumptions from critical race theory, by showing how the cultures of financial services institutions are designed to exclude black people, as a result, making it difficult for them to succeed in their roles. The theoretical innovation is the integration of sociological theory with gender theory, critical race studies, psychology, narrative theory, and organisational studies.

Focusing only on black people illustrates how race is not the only aspect that impacts on experiences of black people. In particular, gender and class play a role in questions of equality, diversity and inclusion. The implication of this finding is to caution researchers from treating black people as a homogeneous group which assumes similar experiences. The present study showed that although black senior managers shared racial identification, their life stories were shaped by their childhood experiences, including their parents and where they grew up, class backgrounds and geographical variation. These formative experiences and backgrounds appear to also have influenced their career journeys and how they currently behave and navigate the workplace as senior managers. The above illustrates the importance of exploring heterogeneity in organisational studies.

A further implication draws our attention to how black senior managers tell their own stories. They suggest that characteristics such as resilience learned from early adversity, the value of seminal lessons of hard work inculcated by working class parents and communities,

opportunities opened by democratisation and equity legislation, and mentorship and sponsorship are pivotal to understanding their career advancement. The integration of Bourdieu's concepts in an organisational study has illustrated the importance of individual's personal and social contexts towards the construction of organisational identities. Methodologically, the narrative frame enabled a wider temporal plane that reads careers as part of a continuum from early life that attaches to inter-generational, class, and socio-political relations. This reading enabled new insights into a relatively well studied area of research. Further studies would do well to continue this tradition of reading organisations in relation to their social and political locations.

5.3 Limitations of the Research

The paucity of black senior managers made it difficult for me to find participants for the interviews. This resulted in 45 percent of the participants coming from the same bank. The main reason for this is that the bank has seen a significant representation of black people in senior positions. Although the participants came from the same bank, they had experienced working in other financial services organisations which mitigated the risk of having stories told, based on as single environment. Most financial services organisations have their head offices based in Johannesburg, with a few insurance houses' head offices based in Cape Town. This resulted in the majority of participants being based in organisations that are in Johannesburg. Although this may be seen as a limitation to the study as there were not a comparable number of participants from Cape Town, reports indicate that Cape Town organisations are still mainly occupied by white people, specifically white males. As a result, it was difficult to recruit black senior managers as participants from the region. Ultimately then, this study is set in Johannesburg. It is however likely that the findings are transferable to other locations in the country.

The COVID 19 pandemic resulted in a lockdown in South Africa from March 27, 2020, and coincided with the process of data collection. At the time of the lockdown, twelve interviews had already been conducted in person. The timing of the lockdown required a transition to virtual interviews where a web-based videoconferencing platform was used for the remaining interviews. The in-person interviews were much more difficult to arrange because of scheduling challenges and the requirement to drive to the offices of the participants. However, the advantage of conducting in-person interviews was that I found the interviews to be more authentic as it was easier to build rapport with the participants. They became much

more comfortable early on during the interview and provided much more in-depth narratives without much intervention from me as the researcher. Participants were a little reluctant to share information in the beginning of the virtual interviews. However, as the interview went on, they became much more comfortable with sharing more freely. As a black woman who works in the financial services sector and in the human resources field, my identity and experience may have had an influence on how the participants responded to the interview questions. It also may have influenced how they responded to me as a person who has worked in a similar work context to them. I was quite conscious about ensuring that my story did not prevent the emergence of participants' stories.

5.4 Future Directions

With the increase in the representation of black senior managers in the financial services sector, inclusion in relation to race and gender may become less important. There is likely to be an emergence of certain in-group dynamics amongst black people, such as in-group competition, class differentiation and other diversity related issues. Although it is important to continue focusing on race and gender studies, organisations will be compelled to engage more deeply with diversity and inclusion beyond race and gender. These may include class, language, ethnicity and sexual orientation. This research began by centring class. However, since participants were all middle class by virtue of their seniority, class became less salient except to illuminate their early lives and their precarity since many first generation middle class people confront the spectre of financial challenges in times of economic difficulty. In addition, since many participants' family members and communities of origin are working class, this class position is not entirely absent in their lives (Canham & Williams, 2017).

To study the impact of class on the career journeys of black professionals, future research may need to look at young professionals who have just completed their studies and started working. At this point in their careers, the influence of their family environment remains important, and it may be more valuable to understand the operation of class in this context. The black community is diverse and aspects such as geographical context, regional specificities, language and cultural background, may need to be studied in organisational theory. It is important to acknowledge that these may have an influence in the stories of black professionals and may have an impact in how they navigate their careers. Post this PhD research, there are certain stories that need to be revisited in future work. This includes

themes that did not find space in this thesis, such as black-on-black violence can be further explored.

5.5 Concluding Remarks

The employment of more black people in professional positions within South African organisations has resulted in organisational studies researchers exploring their experiences of working within these organisations. Earlier studies mainly focused on understanding the barriers towards the implementation of employment equity with the aim to provide recommendations to address these (Booysen, 2007a; Booysen & Nkomo, 2010). As the number of black people increased in these organisations and started to occupy more senior roles, organisational researchers shifted the focus towards understanding the experiences within these environments (Canham, 2014, 2019; Carrim & Nkomo, 2016; Ramodibe, 2008). In more recent times, prominent black people in senior echelons have shared their stories to illustrate the importance of storytelling in the pursuit of understanding the complexities of transformation within South African organisations. In sharing his career and personal life stories, Nyati (2019) emphasised the importance of having black people in senior positions to aid the successful implementation of transformation initiatives within South African corporate.

To expand to this body of knowledge, this study sought not only to explore the narratives of black people within the workplace, but to also understand their life stories in their entirety. Central to the study is Bourdieu's concept of habitus which provided an awareness of the role that an individual's social world plays in determining their dispositions and behaviours. Drawing on Bourdieu's other concepts of capital and field illustrated the temporality of the stories from their childhood into their current status as senior managers. Bourdieu's concept of capital demonstrated the manner in which the participants obtained power resources through access to education and later on, to careers in organisations. Financial services, as a field, allowed us to discover the manner in which they are designed and how they are experienced by participants as they navigate their careers.

Since race continues to be central to conversations on transformation, it was important that the study employed CRT to explore the life and career stories of the participants as black people. CRT aided in exposing the ideological and political nature of the Eurocentric cultures within financial services. It showed how racism is normalised and entrenched through certain

practices associated within these cultures to protect and maintain existing power relations. Owing to its anti-essentialist position, CRT recognises that people are defined by more than their race, but by their class and gender as well (Creswell, 2013). Intersectionality illuminated this appreciation as it necessitated the need to focus on the multiple identities, particularly class and gender, in this study. It thus acknowledges how the intersection of race, gender and class can induce multiple forms of discrimination. It is for this reason that when studying black people, we do not assume homogeneity in their experience, but to acknowledge the multiple identities they possess.

The stories told in this study highlighted the influence of the senior managers' habitus in shaping their identities. Childhood experiences and parental influences were found to have shaped their later behaviours in their career journeys. Having access to mentors and sponsors early on in their careers, was found to have provided the senior managers with capital that allowed them to progress to more senior roles. Refuting the existing narrative that black people move between organisations excessively, senior managers' tenure illustrated that they stayed in their organisations for longer periods than what has been reported. Although the senior managers stayed for long periods, their stories point out the unaccommodating cultures and unconscious bias that remain prevalent in the financial services sector. Organisations that had black people in senior echelons were found to drive the transformation agenda more intentionally. The black senior managers saw the importance of their role in influencing the cultures of these organisations and also paying it forward by driving the transformation agenda.

Narrative inquiry amplified the stories of participants by allowing them to tell stories about their lives and careers through their own perspectives. In accordance with Kourti (2016), understanding personal narratives through storytelling allowed for the exploration of the multiple identities highlighted in the current study. Not only did they share their stories, but they also told counter-stories to challenge certain narratives that have been told about black people, such as the "job hopping" narrative. Consistent with Bold's (2012) and Wells's (2011) findings, this study found personal narratives to be a useful methodological tool as it was able to capture the dynamic aspects of participants' multiple identities and organisational members' identities. As they shared their life and career stories, they presented their experiences and understanding of themselves, others and the world. Therefore, not only did the personal narratives enlighten us on the participants' personal and working lives, but they

expounded how the identities as black senior managers working within the financial services sector were shaped over time.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Participant Information Sheet

SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
PSYCHOLOGY

Greetings,

My name is Refiloe Ramodibe, and I am currently pursuing my Doctoral degree in Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand. To complete my degree, I am required to conduct research and to write a research thesis that accounts for 100% of my mark. The aim of the research is to explore the stories of black men and black women in relation to their life stories and career mobility. I would like to invite you to participate in this study. Completion of the letter of consent will be considered as consent to participate.

I have obtained permission from the HR Executive to come in and conduct this research, however it is to be done on a completely voluntary basis and it is important to note that no person will be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way for choosing to participate or not participate in the study. Participants can withdraw from the study at any given time. If you choose to participate in the study, please contact me at the email address below.

Participation in this research will entail being interviewed by myself, at a time and place that is convenient for you. The interview will last for approximately for one hour although it may be longer. You may refuse to answer any questions you would prefer not to, and you may choose to withdraw from the study at any point. With your permission, this interview will be recorded in order to ensure accuracy. All of your responses will be kept confidential, and no information that could identify you will be included in the research report. The interview material (audio recordings and transcripts) will not be seen or heard by anyone either than myself, and my research supervisor.

Your participation in this study would be greatly appreciated. This research will contribute to the pool of knowledge in the area of Employment Equity and Transformation, especially in the South African context. The outcomes of this study could aid in understanding how the process of meaningful transformation could be improved in South African organisations.

Kind Regards

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Appendix 2: Consent Form (Interview)

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG
SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
PSYCHOLOGY

I, _____, consent to being interviewed by Ms. Refiloe Ramodibe, for her study on Employment Equity (life and career mobility narratives of black men and women through their habitus).
Please tick relevant boxes.
I understand that:

- Participation in this study is voluntary. ☐
- I may refrain from answering any questions. ☐
- I may withdraw my participation and/or my responses from the study at any time before the research report is examined. ☐
- There are no risks or benefits associated with participation in this study. ☐
- All information provided will remain confidential, although I may be quoted in the research report. ☐
- If I am quoted, a pseudonym (Participant A, Respondent B, etc.) will be used. ☐
- None of my identifiable information will be included in the research report. ☐
- I am aware that the results of the study will be communicated in the form of a research report or journal articles. ☐
- The research may also be presented at a local/international conference and published in a journal and/or book chapter. ☐

Signed:_____

Date:_____

Appendix 3: Consent Form (Recording)

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG
SCHOOL OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
PSYCHOLOGY

I, _____ give my consent for my interview with Ms. Refiloe Ramodibe, to be audio recorded for her study.

Please tick the relevant boxes.
I understand that:

- The audio-recordings and transcripts will not be seen or heard by anyone other than the researcher and her supervisor. ☐

- The audio-recordings and transcripts will be kept in a password protected computer. ☐

- No identifying information will be used in the transcripts or the research report. ☐

- Although direct quotes from my interview may be used in the research report, I will be referred to by a pseudonym. ☐

Signed:_____

Date:_____

Appendix 4: Ethics Clearance Certificate

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

Research Office

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)
R14/49 Ramodibe

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	**PROTOCOL NUMBER: H19/06/35**
PROJECT TITLE	An exploration of life and career narratives of Black Senior Managers: The storied habitus of the navigation of careers
INVESTIGATOR(S)	Miss R Ramodibe
SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT	Human and Community Development/
DATE CONSIDERED	21 June 2019
DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE	Approved
EXPIRY DATE	06 August 2022

DATE 07 August 2019 **CHAIRPERSON** J. Knight (Professor J Knight)

cc: Supervisor : Professor H Canham

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR(S)

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Secretary at Room 10004, 10th Floor, Senate House, University. Unreported changes to the application may invalidate the clearance given by the HREC (Non-Medical)

I/We fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I/we guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee. **I agree to completion of a yearly progress report.**

Signature

31 / 08 / 2019
Date

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES