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# The affective black experience: struggles with conformity for young black professionals in corporate South Africa

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# The Affective Black Experience:

## Struggles with Conformity for Young Black Professionals in Corporate South Africa

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**Abstract**

South Africa's democratic transition was cultured by, amongst others, the mythical ideology of Rainbowism. Rooted in happiness and the promises thereof, the renowned national metaphor was utilised by the state to radically shift the country's narrative around nationhood towards a shared understanding of identity, belonging, citizenship, and diversity. Today, the influence of Rainbowism within state-led efforts towards social change has slowly deemed under much public scrutiny. Persistent poverty, inequality and violence have fostered the emergence of, what many are calling, an "End of the Rainbow" discourse. As integral and lurid entities within post-apartheid nation-building, black youth and institutionalised spaces have affected and been affected by the shortcomings of Rainbowism. Their shared history and intersecting significance in fuelling collective action amongst South Africans have been well depicted in recent times where youth-led movements have highlighted the inequality and unhappiness that exists in institutions spaces like the university. However, little mention has been made about how black youth are making sense of institutional life within spaces like the workplace, against the backdrop of promised happiness. Through the conversations had with eight young black professionals, this research report centres Rainbowism as a project of happiness that governs institutional life for black youth in South Africa. Happiness is revealed as a dominant discourse operating along axes of power that shape 'happy' employees based on various forms of corporeal differentiation.

**Declaration**

I hereby declare that this dissertation is my own original work and has not been submitted before to any institution for assessment purposes. Further, I have acknowledged all sources used and have cited these in the reference section.



September 2017

Kutlwano Bokala Date

## Dedication

To all the killjoys and affect aliens striving for their happiness!

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

South Africa's transition from a segregated nation-state to a democratic republic was fuelled by, amongst others, the belief of a rainbow nation. Rooted in the promise of happiness, this ideological metaphor was used to radically shift the country's narrative around nationhood towards a shared identity, belonging, and citizenship (Evans, 2010; Myambo, 2010). The hearts, minds and lives of its citizens were to change for the better as Tutu, Mandela and other political influencers at the time, spread the good gospel of collective peace and happiness within a diverse society (Cronin, 2017; Evans, 2010; Myambo, 2010; Satgar, 2008). *Rainbowism* was to fulfil the long-awaited promise of a better life for those disenfranchised and oppressed by centuries of apartheid rule. However, much to the dismay of its citizens, South Africa has made little progress towards bringing about happier collectives within the last two decades of democracy.

The failings of post-apartheid nation-building have fostered the insurgence of an *End of Rainbow* discourse signifying the bubbling unhappiness amongst its citizens. The fading of national optimism and its related unhappiness can be attributed to Rainbowism's inheritance from pre-1994 national projects of belonging. In the past, citizens negotiated their happiness under an agenda of belonging founded on an ideology of racial classification, segregation and exclusion based on the shared bloodline, deep cultural histories, ethnicity and language of its people (Burns, Jobson, & Zuma, 2015; Evans, 2010). This oppressive ideology was known as *Apartheid nationalism*. It played a prominent role in carving the racial boundaries of control derived by the notion of a 'separate but equal' society (Bird & Garda, n.d.; Brown, 2001; Evans, 2010). It was believed that the spatial and material segregation of the races was a harmonious way of managing the heterogeneity of communities. However, as we have come to realise, this belief was a mechanism created to maintain white supremacy; politically, economically and socially. The segregation and subjugation of citizens were legitimised by

hegemonic structures like the Media and the Church. Both platforms did more to conceal systems of oppression than to challenge the workings, policies and activities of the apartheid system (Bird & Garda, n.d.). Their responsibility and power to inform and persuade the public was evident in the distorted narratives and myths that often went unopposed.

As the nation's agenda shifted towards equality, *Rainbow nationalism* continued this practice of legitimising a belief system through the use of the media and religiosity as pivotal tools of influence and persuasion in their agenda (Evans, 2010). Concerted efforts towards the promotion of a new imagined community were evident in the televised events that ranged from the release and inauguration of President Nelson Mandela to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Evans, 2010). The publicised undertaking of racial injustice was meant to galvanise the public towards a true rainbow society. Rainbow nationalism as a national identity was further propelled by the religious notion of a unique people chosen by God (Evans, 2010; Matteo, 2016). Like Afrikaner nationalism, Rainbowism operated as a civil religion that relied on the mythical story of a chosen people with a shared history of turmoil and a collective hope for a better future. It intended to elevate the image of a chosen people, in turn, cement collective national identity. However, unlike its predecessor, Rainbow nationalism refuted the belief of a 'separate but equal' society by embracing the liberal ideals of reconciliation and unity.

In an effort to completely debunk and distinguish itself from Afrikaner nationalism, Rainbowism operated as an incarnation of non-racial and multiculturalist ideals. Exertions to render race as immaterial under law and citizenship (MacDonald, 2013), as well as revalue disrespected identities through moral and political claims of representation (Song, 2017), were the principles that informed the promise of happiness for its citizens. However, present-day struggles for equality have proven that the familial resemblances between Afrikaner and Rainbow nationalism have hindered the fulfilment of happy promises. The cries of injustice

heard from young intelligentsia regarding the decolonisation of education (Msimang, 2016); the gender-based violence against heterosexual and homosexual women (Nicolson, 2017); the racially-motivated attacks and murders against blue-collar workers (Chabalala, 2017); and the thoughtless comments made by political leadership about the beneficial nature of colonialism (News24 Correspondent, 2017), are few of the many instances showcasing how the oppressive frameworks and practices of the past that have gone unchallenged and in many ways perpetuated. South Africans continue to live in a reality where the past is contentious and an uncertain future is characterised by persistent inequality, injustice and violence (Burns, Jobson, & Zuma, 2015). The cascading influence of imperialism, colonialism and apartheid within the South African imaginary reemphasises the jagged hollowness that exists among unhappy citizens who find it difficult to reconcile their lived experience to what was promised (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2012).

Institutional life provides further evidence of the toxic complexities of rainbowism that characterise the everyday encounters between citizens. Current sites of engagement, like the workplace and the school, have been publicly criticised for their lack of transformation and representation of people from historically-disadvantaged groups. For instance, the present-day workplace, where historically disadvantaged employees continue to grapple with the lack of decision making power when occupying leadership positions (Ndinda & Okeke-Uzodike, 2012); the exclusionary nature of a dominant organisational culture (Booysen, 2007; Canham, 2014); the internalised negative stereotypes perpetuated within the workplace (Soeker et al., 2015); the lack of urgency and commitment from those responsible for driving transformation (Steyn, 2010), as well as the publicised brutality and poverty surrounding the labour protests by blue collar workers gives glaring evidence of the unhappiness that exists within institutional spaces. In recent times, young intelligentsia have antagonised the deeply entrenched apartheid systems still in operation, by calling for the eradication of the unspoken

norms and patterns of discrimination that govern the social order in institutional life. Galvanised mainly by the black majority within these institutions, the fallist movement has brought to light issues relating to the number of black academic faculty members, the Eurocentrism of the curriculum, sexism, rape culture and the overt as well as implicit racism in dormitories and various departments (Msimang, 2016).

Such expressions of injustice have blemished the so-called happy existence that citizens in a post-apartheid society should be living in. A black light is shone on the systems of power and oppression that continue to hide behind liberal notions of freedom such as non-racialism and multiculturalism. Social myths of equal opportunity, meritocracy, collective amnesia and race as non-existent are discredited by the everyday experiences of South African citizens (Evans, 2010). This not only brings into question Rainbowism as a successful nation-building project, it calls for a worthy inquiry into the present-day material issues relating to rainbowism as a political project of happiness and the operations of happiness within spaces characterized by inequality.

In this case, happiness becomes more than simply an intrinsic emotion (Thien, 2005). It establishes itself as a social order defining and enforcing the rules of engagement for all citizens. For instance, cries of injustice that are labelled as troublesome, violent or destructive towards building national unity are a stark indication of the power the notion of happiness has in determining what is valued and devalued, what is good and what is bad. Affect scholars like Sara Ahmed have written pointedly on the significance of emotions like happiness and its relational, social, philosophical, and political dimensions (Ahmed, 2007b, 2010a, 2010b). In her book, *The Promise of Happiness,* Ahmed describes the perpetual state of wishing or desiring for something. Reiterating its political dimension, she asserts happiness is "*a politics that demands others live according to a wish*". It is this wishful living that perpetuates happiness as a suppressive ideology that sets the limitations of how people should ideally

behave or practice happiness. It further labels counter-narratives of the ‘wish’ as unhappiness. For subjects of unhappiness; the activist; the “Othered”; the affect alien; the killjoy; this social order leaves one feeling at odds with the world or that the world is at odds with them. More importantly, this social phenomenon becomes another reproductive site for oppressive social beliefs/practices to be normalised and true liberation to be stifled.

The socio-political significance of happiness also identifies subjects of happiness as embodied sites of affect and power relations worthy of further investigation within institutional life. As a burgeoning field, affect theory in organisational studies has the potential to offer new insights into organised spaces, theoretically, methodologically, and politically. It explores the varying perspectives within affect theory that describe affect as a biological manifestation of emotion externally and as a visceral force that is automatic and reflexive. Due to its focus on culture, history, and politics as it pertains to the bodily experience, the critical potentialities for affect to transform the world we live in can provide insights into the political and ethical nature of organisations.

This research report intends to form part of this exciting new landscape by exploring the role Rainbowism has played in how eight young black professionals are making sense of their national identity and belonging in corporate South Africa today. As a national project of happiness, this report explores the affective significance of Rainbowism that exists in the struggle to solidify a sense of identity and belonging within a disillusioned reality characterised by structural unemployment, interpersonal violence, mass poverty, and fractured family structures. This report makes use of critical diversity literacy as a tool for analysing the everyday experiences of these young black professionals as organisational subjects and their various forms of corporeal differentiation in the workplace, revealing how power operates on and through bodies to reinforce a dominant social ordering.

My focus is primarily on racial embodiment, particularly the black body, and how it engages with the white body/whiteness. The reason for this approach is that the black population has made up the majority of the populace involved in recent social resistance and protest action against societal inequality, causing one to assume that the black majority continue to bear the brunt of the nation's unfilled promises of happiness. It can be argued that a single case analysis of race is essentialising and may not address the full scope of the black experience. However, I argue that this project takes on an anti-essentialist approach by acknowledging the intersections of age and class among the black professionals involved in this research project, and how these intersections play a critical role in deepening the experiences of discrimination for black employees within in the workplace. Furthermore, this research report makes an effort to strategically represent the black experience, not as identical for all, but to illuminate the issues for a marginalised group by presenting their concerns in a coherent manner.

This research report is structured as follows; chapter two reviews the literature of the relevant scholarship on young people, racial embodiment, belonging and affect; chapter three describes the critical diversity methodology used to analyse and interpret the research data; chapter four discusses the research results and findings from the conversations had; chapter five reflects on the process of the research project the researcher's perspective; lastly, chapter six summarises the implications of the research results on the trajectory of critical affect within organisational studies.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

The embodied experience of young black professionals in organisational spaces governed by a broader political project of happiness is the central focus of my research project. By referring to their sense of belonging and need to conform, I aim to showcase how they affect and are affected by systems of power that determine their identity and happiness within the everyday institutionalised spaces they engage in.

Much of the literature that foregrounds my research project draws from critical theorists within the social sciences that expound on this experience. Drawing from their works, I am to contribute towards thinking more critically about affect within organisational scholarship. Although critical management literature has addressed significant matters of diversity and discrimination based on differences, such literature ignores corporeal differentiation and relegates the employee as a disembodied subject. There is a general neglect, within critical management literature, of how affect is mobilised in bodily encounters and in group situations.

Recognising this dearth, critical theorists state the case for a new way of looking at the material world, as it is lived and experienced. More specifically, new affective connections experienced in institutionalized spaces like the organisation. With this in mind, I'm encouraged to engage with theoretical perspectives and critiques of young people, racial embodiment, belonging and affect that will bring about exciting new avenues for organisational studies.

I have summarised my theoretical scope of review into the following research themes:

- Affect as social
- Politics of belonging
- Institutional life in South Africa

- Embodiment as critical

## 2.1 Affect as social

The evolution of affect from an individual romanticism towards intersubjective relations has garnered ever-growing interest among social theorists from various disciplines (Thien, 2005). Sprouting from Tomkin's *Affect theory* in the 1960s, the understanding of affect has evolved from a physiological response to a stimulus, to a philosophical concept that describes the embodied experience. Emotions like fear, hate, joy, and happiness are being articulated in more politically-relevant ways and less about an individual's personal feelings. Dubbed the affective turn by Patricia Clough and Jean Halley in their book *The Affective Turn: Theorising the Social*, the authors define the mid-1990s as the time where scholars turned their attention toward the ways that ongoing political, economic, and cultural transformations were changing the realm of the social (Clough & Halley, 2007). They theorised the impact of 'the social' related to the pre-individual forces, linked to unconscious responses, which augment or diminish a body's capacity to act or engage with others (Clough & Halley, 2007).

Many social theorists who have contributed to the affective turn find their pedagogical roots in the earliest and most influential philosopher of affect, Baruch Spinoza. In his most popular work, *Ethics,* Spinoza describes the human existence in the material world as an experience of cause and effect (Spinoza & Hampshire 2005). He uses the distinction between affection and affect to explain that our emotional life is determined by internal and external causes. Spinoza defines affection as the state of a body being affected by another body(matter). Affection is in fact emotion; the result of the body being put into motion when affected by another body (Spinoza & Hampshire, 2005). When affections have an impact on your ability to exist or your '*potentia'*, it is known as affect. Depending on the affect, it can lower or increase one's power to act. Deleuze & Guattari (2013) reaffirmed the distinction between

affect as the embodied power to act and affection as the idea involving the nature of the external body in their writing, A *thousand plateaus: capitalism and schizophrenia*.

Following the works of Spinoza, affective theorists like Henri Bergson, Brian Massumi, and Deleuze and Guattari broadened the scope of academic writing on the bodily experience of emotion. Bergson (1911) reiterated that human activity, including cognition, produces and is produced by affect. He explains that affect is the part inside our bodies which mixes with the image we have of external bodies. This image is produced by our perception of what affects us. Bergson makes the connection between cognition and affect by defining the brain as the 'zone of indetermination', the place where a multitude of responses to the world or stimulus are possible. The relationship between the body and world is such that the scope of one's perception of the world is a direct function of the possible actions of the body in the world (Bergson, 1911). Perception and action are really two sides of the same coin. The greater our embodied capacities, the greater the swarm of possible responses to stimuli. This swarm of material possibility is, for Bergson, the realm of the 'virtual', where the past and future brush shoulders with no mediating present. Similarly, Massumi (1995) mentions the virtual as the human perception of external stimuli, describing it as a two-way exchange where affect is the simultaneous participation of the virtual in the actual and the actual in the virtual.

Massumi's philosophical take on affect and his contributions towards the Anglophone scholarship from his translation of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's works has, undisputedly, influenced 21$^{st}$-century conceptualisation of the affect within social science and its political consequences. Social, cultural, feminist geographers (Thrift, 2004) and theorists (Ahmed, 2004; Sedgwick & Frank, 2003) have gleaned significantly from Massumi's philosophy in order to explore affect more critically. For Thrift (2004), affect is essentially already being utilized as a strategic political tool; that once consciously defined, is able to be engineered in the contemporary city and its socio-behavioural patterns. For Ahmed (2014),

affect operates in the political realm, arguing that emotions are not simply "within" or "without" but that they play a role in the "surfacing" of individual and collective bodies through the way in which emotions circulate between bodies and signs.

Adherents of affect theory, like Sedgwick, Massumi, Connolly and Thrift continue to grow across numerous disciplines. However, this popular scholarship is not without its critiques. In recent times, authors Ruth Leys has shared that claims made affect scholars are indeed eligible for rational, measured assessment and debate (Leys, 2011). The critic highlights the controversy, contradictions and disagreements that exist within twentieth-century efforts towards understanding affect and the notion of intentionality. She delves into the debate on the ways in which we think about how we feel. She asserts that there exists a conflict between camps that support an anti-intentionalist paradigm yet struggle when the question turns to meaning and those that embrace intentionality or the meaning of emotions yet have trouble explaining their presence in non-human animals. She further questions the leaning appeal from affect theorists from all disciplines to glean from the, overly simplistic, *basic emotion paradigm* of the neurosciences, whether appropriately or wholly (Cromby & Willis, 2016). Leys has arguably provided the most useful and thorough critique of the affective turn to date.

For the purposes of this research report, I find the works of Ahmed most useful in illustrating the socio-political dimensions and implications of happiness. She exposes the power relations that exist in so-called ‘happy’ environments and explains the world’s apparent complexity when it comes to differences.

### 2.1.1 Happiness

Although the focus on happiness, dating back 2 500 years in places like China, India and Greece, was defined as the highest human calling, the works of Sarah Ahmed as it pertains to happiness in socio-political life have proven to be useful in expounding positive affect as more than a far-reaching ideal of nirvana. She seems to challenge the notion of a perfect state of being adopted by past and present thinkers from the East to the West who shared the idea that happiness was and is the pursuit of ultimate perfection. Ahmed questions what this perfection is? what are its determinants? what are its expectations? who is unheard or excluded in this pursuit? and whose voices are heard and validated? In her writings*; Multiculturalism and The Promise of Happiness*, *Happy objects,* and *The Cultural Politics of Emotion,* she explains how happiness is used to establish a dominant social order where one is in constant pursuit of certain achievements known as happy objects. She states that those who are unable or lack the desire to pursue these happy objects work against the status quo of social happiness and are marginalised as agents of unhappiness known as 'affect aliens' or 'killjoys' (Ahmed, 2007b, 2010a).

She further explains how happiness is used to draw social collectivities and subjectivities. These collectivities are formed from the social and cultural practices of the relationality found between the contact surfaces of objects and the boundaries that are formed between the 'I', the 'Other', the 'We' and the 'Others'(Ahmed, 2014). A common practice deployed within the efforts of nation building, Ahmed highlights that positive affect or emotions, augmented by global ideas like multiculturalism or nationalism, is mobilised in groups, communities, cities, countries and continents (Ahmed, 2007b).

This claim is particularly important for 20$^{th}$-century political projects like Rainbowism that have played off of the emotionality of a democratic liberation and ultimately creating an ideal that defines the happy/liberated citizen within a happy/liberated state.

## 2.2 Politics of Belonging

Throughout her work on happiness, Ahmed makes reference to various political national projects, across the globe, used to usher in democracy, and build a national identity. Happiness as Ahmed describes has proven to be a powerful variable for state-led efforts towards national belonging. In building nationalised collectivities and subjectivities, the politicised articulation of belonging has brought about the conception of what Yuval-Davis calls the "*dirty work of boundary maintenance*". It emphasises the "us" vs "them" paradigm through cultural imaginations of the ingroup and outgroup. Consequently, the social, political, and territorial demarcation of collectives are created and sustained through essentialist constructions (Youkhana, 2015). Yuval-Davis asserts that it is important to make the distinction between belonging and the politics of belonging to understand how one feeds into the next and to further comprehend the intricacies of political discourse on contested matters like nationalism, racism, xenophobia, sexism and so forth.

### 2.2.1 National belonging

The universal notion that the survival and prosperity of a nation depend on its establishment of an independent state with a pronounced identity has been a belief at the core of state-led initiatives worldwide. This belief has encouraged nationalist views of social cohesion and belonging as a method to combatting the perceived hostile international environment (Matteo, 2016). Many theorists have identified and documented the various manifestations of this nationalist belief in understanding and illuminating the mechanisms of post-conflict reconstruction of social ties, formal political arrangements and institutional reforms (Yuval-Davis, 2006). During these movements, nations have recognised *national identity* as an integral part of reformation.

According to Emerson (1960) and Benedict Anderson (1991), national identity can be understood as a "*body of people who feel that they are a nation"* or an *"imagined political community*". This viewpoint informed social psychologists Henri Tajfel and John Turner theory on social identity. The authors claim that a person's concept of self stems from the groups they belong to (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Moreover, the authors suggest that the conceptualisation of national identity includes both self-categorisation and affect. Yuval-Davis (2006) shares a similar classification of the concept when explaining how belonging is influenced by where one is socially located or categorised in society and one's emotional attachment towards a group. Feelings of being 'at home' or feeling safe often lead one to act on behalf of such a group, even when other group members are unknown (Youkhana, 2015; Yuval-Davis, 2006). One can begin to see how the significance of affect re-enters the socio-political discourse through the illumination of how social locations, constructions of the self and emotional attachments are valued and judged in society (Yuval-Davis, 2006).

### 2.2.2 Multiculturalism

The belief of an external threat that exists within the promotion of a national identity based on shared characteristics like culture, language, race, religion, political goals or a belief in a common ancestry, has fuelled the innumerable arrangements of nationalism dating as far back as the 18$^{th}$ century (Anderson, 1991). It further entangled negative associations with regards to difference. Those that fell out of the bounds of the collective identity were seen as a threat to be feared (Schenwar, 2015). Nations, beginning in Europe, perpetuated this belief as a result of ethnic/national revolutions during and post-imperial colonialism (Kohn, 1945). To combat this disparaging trend, the post-colonial era has characterised nation-building as a multiculturalist crusade with that promotes globalisation and the diversity agenda.

Often used in western nation-states, the term multiculturalism has been promoted within many national projects of belonging across the globe, as a method of dealing with diversity in

society. Although the origins of multiculturalism remain vague, countries like the United States and the United Kingdom have brought the term into prominence through the well-known “melting pot” metaphor; an ideology which has since been criticised for its submersion of minority cultures within dominant culture (Song, 2017). Leading theorist on multiculturalism Will Kymlicka have called for “group-differentiated rights”, whereby true equality is achieved when minority group practices are recognised and positively accommodated (Kymlicka, 2007; Song, 2017). The multiculturalism movement has further been legitimised through official policy-making in the 1970’s (Kymlicka, 2007). African countries, in particular, have relied on multiculturalist nation-building to redefine populace territories that were carved out by colonial powers or empires without regard for their cultural, ethnic, religious traditions and beliefs. Recently, the essentialist and naturalised viewpoint that informs the struggles and political projects of nations like South Africa today, have caused robust political debate on matters of nationalism, xenophobia, tribalism, and descent-based belonging.

### 2.3 Institutional life in South Africa

In her book about racism and diversity in institutional life, Ahmed (2012) questions the dominant use of multiculturalist diversity by institutions like universities and organisations. She queries whether the institutional appeal for diversity has encouraged an agenda, less critical of matters relating to social justice, equal opportunities and equality. Her call for a greater inquiry into the mechanisms of diversity is indicative of the possible shortcomings of the diversity agenda adopted by national, institutional and global projects.

Given the current social climate, it can be argued that the Rainbowism has been a project legitimised by symbolic commitments to diversity, where it does not bring about what it names. Rainbow diversity within institutions has done passive work to change the lives of those who embody diversity.

### 2.3.1 Employment conditions within the workplace

The workplace in post-apartheid has done little to shift its historical patterns. Under Afrikaner nationalism, the spatial and material arrangement of South African society was built on the foundation of racial discrimination and segregation (intelliconn, 2012). The workplace was one of the few modes of this arrangement where this racist order was institutionalised. Known as the apartheid workplace regime, it was characterised by five features that aimed to solicit cheap labour from the vast majority of the population (intelliconn, 2012). These characteristics included the racial division of labour, the racial segregation of facilities, the racial structure of power in the workplace, the system of migrant labour and the spatial location of work (intelliconn, 2012; Nicolas Pons-Vignon & Ward Anseeuw, 2009). Less skilled labour-intensive jobs were reserved for blacks, hygiene facilities e.g. toilets, tea rooms were divided by race, whites occupied senior positions where they managed with an autocratic fist, migrant workers were ruled under the threat of contract termination, and places of work were strategically located outside the boundaries of protective legislation (Anand, Kothari, & Kumar, 2016; intelliconn, 2012; Nicolas Pons-Vignon & Ward Anseeuw, 2009; Niehaus, 2002).

Although the labour dynamics of the past are less stark and advancements have been made, the South African workplace was and continues to be a complex reflection of the social, political and economic landscape of the country. The workplace provides a glimpse of the reluctance to implement employment equity strategies (Black Management Forum, 2015; Booysen, 2007); the lack of decision-making power of non-white management (Ndinda & Okeke-Uzodike, 2012; Nicolas Pons-Vignon & Ward Anseeuw, 2009); the lack of diversity literate organisations (Steyn, 2010); and inadequate career progression present in corporate South Africa. Whilst the controversial President Jacob Zuma and his constituents utter phrases for "*radical economic transformation*" courtesy of the state of the nation address in

2017 (Zuma, 2017), the reality for the overwhelming majority of citizens is that there is nothing radical about what is experienced as snail-paced socio-economic progress or change.

The insurgence of a "happily ever after" democracy governing many corporations in the country made for a passive revolution that had no interest in advancing the historically oppressed (Satgar, 2008). As intelliconn (2012) states, "we are witnessing a post-colonial regime that has reconfigured and reproduced the colonial system in novel ways, causing a less stark contrast between the workplace regime of the past and the democratic workplace of the today". The lack of capacity to implement democratic legislation, the tendency to remain in the informal realms of formal organisations, the arbitrary nature with which decision makers remain colonial, the use of the fixed-term contract system and the demarcation of work facilities based on rank and seniority are some of the many trends that reproduce colonial ideals (intelliconn, 2012). These labour trends against the myriad of promised liberties has fostered the complexities of power and racial dynamics that govern the South African work context today. What was once an aspirational and hopeful transition filled with possibilities has now evolved, less radically (Satgar, 2008). Likewise, hope has since become a woefully incomplete strategy for black millennials (Haanyama, 2011).

### 2.3.2 Youth participation in institutional change

The youth of today are particularly aware of the historical patterns that remain within institutional spaces. Expressing their descending hopefulness with the current state-run agenda through political action. Faced with a disillusioning reality characterised by structural unemployment, interpersonal violence, mass poverty, and fractured family structures, historically disadvantaged youth in particular have found it difficult to establish a sense of identity formation or sense of belonging in institutional life as well as the broader Southern African context (Burns et al., 2015; Haanyama, 2011). However, wide criticism of recent fallist movements has relegated young people's subjectivities to images of ungrateful

delinquents that may threaten violence at any given time (Duncan, 2016; Reporter, 2015; TMG Entertainment, 2016) or dynamic millennials filled with hope and high expectations for change (Deloitte, 2017). This polarisation has limited young people's inclusion in nation building initiatives today (Burns et al., 2015). Although South African history has shown that youth participation has always been at the precipice of radical and sustainable change, efforts of equitable inclusion remain superficial. As Haanyama asserts, young people have often been included as an afterthought, as a means of equitable representation. Further limiting, prohibiting and constraining the multiplicity of their subjectivities and articulation of their lives.

This present mode of engagement holds traditional, historical and political significance of how society collectively understands the social positioning of youth. Most notable are the efforts of popular discourse to draw from black youth's participation in the liberation struggle to build the current construction of South African youth. Characterised as brave and fearless strategists, post-1994 discourse attributes the dismantling of the colonial regime partly to the actions of youth politics. The stories and experiences of young people at that time are often told in relation to their political agenda to organise and resist centuries-old oppression with unbridled determination without hesitation or instruction from political and community seniors. Their combative and intersecting relationship with institutions is explained with the same political associations. Often referring to the activities of the 1970's when Afrikaans was introduced as a medium of instruction and weakened headship of liberation movements through the exile, targeted killings and incarceration of political leaders further fuelled the events of June 16 (Duma, 2014; 'Unpacking Youth Issues', 2016).

Under an anti-apartheid agenda, this rhetoric has proven to be beneficial for the 'struggle generation' now, who were young then, in chastising and silencing the voices of young people today. Furthermore, it justifies the positioning of the struggle generation as the

authority or the dominant voice when discussions on social change and the future of South Africa are had. Young people continue to be spectators and recipients of their own reality when told about what it means to be young in South Africa. They are unable to the set the agenda for their own issues, negotiating their identity and sense of belonging within an environment that stifles their expression.

The mounting frustration with the lack of inclusion and discrimination within institutional spaces of learning and working, and the outcry for decolonised institutional frameworks have all fostered a repetition of history where the black majority galvanised for radical social change. Friedman contextualises the fallacy of integrated academic institutions, reconciled political/social relations, equal economic opportunity and diversified workplaces as a prejudicial equation yielding a breeding ground for anger and violence to fester. Friedman (n.d.) highlights the significance of affect in the present-day liberation struggle through his proclamation of South Africa's real ticking time bomb being the black middle class. Often referred to as the bougie blacks, the black middle class with access to privileged places of learning and employment are the ones organising against the neglectful operations of the state. The throwing of faeces, the looting of stores, and the burning of buses hint towards an ideology that perpetuates past activisms.

The state did not plan for this form of embellishment from the privileged black majority. As supposed inheritors of Rainbowism, black students and their allies were meant to perform the duties of happy citizens, which included gratitude in the form unquestioned compliance with the status quo.

## 2.4 Embodiment as Critical

Come the turn of democracy, what it meant to be an embodiment of blackness, an embodiment of diversity and an embodiment of change within historically white spaces, that were built to keep black people out, was not critically addressed. This realisation has fostered much of the scholarship on a racial embodiment and critical phenomenology. In order to understand the current turn towards the critical within the discipline of phenomenology, a look into the history of this philosophical movement is necessary.

### 2.4.1 Phenomenology

As a disciplinary field in philosophy, phenomenology often refers to the study of the way in which we experience things or the meaning things have in our experience (Creswell, 2013; Merleau-Ponty & Landes, 2012). It studies the experience subjectively, from the first-person perspective of the person experiencing the phenomena. This form of study is different from other main fields of philosophy like ontology (the study of being or what is) or epistemology (the study of knowledge), and at some stage was referred to as the proper foundation of all philosophy (Smith, 2016). Early phenomenologists like Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Jean-Paul Sartre became prominent in the 20$^{th}$ century for their studies on the structure of various types of experiences ranging from perception, thought, memory, imagination, emotion, desire, to bodily awareness, embodied action, and social activity. Husserl believed that these forms of experience typically involved intentionality. According to Husserlian phenomenology, our experience is directed towards things, only through particular thoughts, images and ideas. Intentionality is what brings meaning to a given experience and is distinguished from the actual meaning of these things. The methods and characterization of the discipline have been widely debated among Husserl and his successors, as well as Heidegger and his followers, who spoke about hermeneutics, the art of interpretation in social and linguistic context (Smith, 2016).

Although there exists great debate within the discipline of phenomenology, a critical turn has also emerged through the interaction of disciplines, more specifically, philosophy and the social sciences. The relationship between the two fields has been an important intersection for literature on critical embodiment. Melançon (2014) affirms this, sharing how this joining has allowed for other methodologies that address the same problem of what it is to think about society and how we live in it. Hence, the political and the critical turn within various disciplines share remarkable similarities. Some of the ground-breaking effort as it relates to embodiment has been well-documented by theorists Merleau-Ponty and Bourdieu and their contributions towards phenomenology. For both theorists, thinking is a socio-political activity that must be understood as embodied, as taking place in a social context, and as having political effects (Melançon, 2014). They both refuse ontological difference between being (the existence of all that exists) and beings (all that exists) that characterised the work of their predecessors; Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger. By doing so, they provide an understanding of thinking and practice as that which exists from the lives of those who live together and affect one another (Melançon, 2014). Hence, there is no difference between the two.

### 2.4.2 Racial embodiment

Many critical race, feminist and queer thinkers have incorporated a critical phenomenology perspective of everyday embodiment in their research. They believe that phenomenology is not a mere descriptive practice, but an enactment of critique, that is, an ongoing process of revealing and interrogating the concrete conditions, institutions, and assumptions that structure our lived experience, phenomenological inquiry, and thinking. In particular, the lived experience of discrimination within the conditional, and institutional space has grown in prominence with authors writing on issues of  race (Ahmed, 2007a;

Alcoff, 1999; Fanon, 2008), gender (Bartky, 1990; Butler, 1988), and sexual difference (Heinämaa, 1999) that plague our everyday bodily encounters.

As the diversity agenda for multiculturalism and globalisation surges onward, and phenomenologists turn towards bodies, social structures and the state, the racialized experience has gained significant attention. Frantz Fanon was one of the first to delve into the obscure matter of addressing what is often felt in spaces by black bodies, yet remains hard to explain. In his early works, inspired Merleau-Ponty's outlook, Fanon offered an alternative to his predecessor's notion of corporeal schema proposing his own *schéma historico-racial* and *schéma épidermique racial* (Fanon, 2008). Fanon critiques Merleau-Ponty's perspective on the body's agency to manifest the historical world, that engenders a corporealized conception of freedom, stating that for the black body capacity, expression and the ability to alter its own history and given context, is often denied, it is not free (Zolatova, 2009). Although Fanon agrees that with Merleau-Ponty's claim that both the self and the world are constructed through the corporeal schema, the weight of the "white gaze" and white imagination limits the freedoms of corporeal schema. Fanon describes this disorientation in his book *Black Skin, White Masks*;

> *In the white world, the man of color encounters difficulties in elaborating his body schema. The image of one's body is solely negating. It's an image in the third person. All around the body reigns an atmosphere of certain uncertainty. […] A slow construction of myself as a body in a spatial and temporal world-such seems to be the schema. It is not imposed on me; it is rather a definitive structuring of myself and the world-definitive because it creates a genuine dialectic between my body and the world… Beneath the body schema I had created a historical-racial schema. The data I used were provided not by 'remnants of feelings and notions of the tactile, vestibular, kinesthetic, or visual*

> *nature' [Jean Lhermitte, L'image de notre corps, Éditions de la Nouvelle Revue Critique, p. 17] but by the Other, the white man, who had woven me out of a thousand details, anecdotes, and stories. (Fanon, 91)*

Fanon's phenomenology of blackness made a significant impact on recent critical thinkers like Ahmed. In her article *Phenomenology of whiteness,* Ahmed describes how whiteness orientates bodies into specific ways of 'being' and 'doing' in space, similar reference to Fanon's phenomenology of blackness which argued that the experience of skin difference and of being the black other could only be understood in the encounter with whiteness or more precisely, the white imagination (Ahmed, 2007a; Zolatova, 2009). Both the phenomenological study of whiteness and blackness prove to be vital sites of interrogation in understanding racial embodiment.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

In thinking critically about affect in organisational studies, new ways of thinking and applying methodologies should be considered. As a useful research paradigm field within the social sciences, critical social theory has produced methodologies that have begun to consider the innovative ways organisational life can be studied to solicit the qualitative richness of the embodied life as it is lived (Carr, 2013). Such innovation has been utilised across disciplines, outside of organisational studies, with several scholars suggesting that affect can be discerned from patterns of the embodied experience e.g. mattering maps, bloom-space (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010). However, these methods have been found to be too vague and abstract for the empirical research required by critical organisational studies. A great deal of experimenting and creativity with methods is still needed. In order to seek enriching information about the affective experiences of young black professionals (individuals/groups) and the politics of belonging (the social problem) in corporate South Africa, I have chosen a qualitative research design. This research design focuses on the interpretive nature of inquiry and the political, social and cultural context of researchers, participants and the readers of the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2013). In the absence of a critical phenomenological approach to inquiry, my research project acknowledges that the in-depth lived experience should be recognised as phenomenological and that observation is fallible, erroneous and revisable.

Although there is no single research methodology that flows from this pluralist inquiry, it relies heavily on critical diversity theory. An approach that draws from Frankfurt's critical theory it involves close attention to the power and patterns of dominance (Carr, 2013). Critical diversity theory holds an understanding of diversity that aligns with the theoretical orientation of critical management/organisational studies (Steyn, 2010). From this form of inquiry, a conceptual tool known as critical diversity literacy (CDL) is used to analyse the intercorporeal interactions of bodies in space and the operations of power which implicate

social beings to create systems privilege, advantage, disadvantage and oppression (Steyn, 2014). Furthermore, it is used to determine the disposition towards diversity, and the extent of achieved transformation within organisations (Steyn, 2010).

My research project is qualitative in nature and follows a non-positivistic approach concerned foremost with the issues of social justice. It follows a qualitative process to the collection of data in a natural setting and the data analysis will be inductive, establishing patterns and themes (Creswell & Creswell, 2013) using the CDL framework.

### 3.1 Sampling

Qualitative researchers like myself rely strongly on non-probability samples due to the emergent nature of a research project and the size of the sample required. In non-probability sampling, the participants are selected based on certain attributes; this makes it suitable for greater in-depth analysis (Welman, Mitchell, & Kruger, 2005). For the purposes of my research, purposive sampling and snowballing were used as my primary and secondary sampling strategies respectively, in the selecting participants based on the following pre-determined selection criteria:

- Working in the private sector;
- Currently employed in any of the traditional professions e.g. doctor, lawyer, accountant, engineer etc;
- Between the ages of 18 -35 years old;
- Identifies as black, racially, politically and/or ethnically.

In total, I managed to fall within the recommended 5 to 25 individuals by interviewing eight young black professionals that fulfilled the selection criteria of my research (Creswell & Creswell, 2013).

Below is a summary of the demographics of the eight professionals who participated in the research according to the criteria mentioned above;

| | Age | Race | Gender (M/F) | Employment status | Work experience | Profession | Industry | Sector |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1** | 26 - 30 | Black | F | Employed | 3 - 5 years | Audit Learning & Development Manager | Finance | Private |
| **2** | 20 - 25 | Coloured | F | Employed | 3 - 5 years | Junior Consultant | Finance | Private |
| **3** | 26 - 30 | Black | M | Employed | 1 – 2 years | Financial Accountant | Finance | Private |
| **4** | 20 -25 | Black | M | Employed | < 1 year | Mechanical Engineer | Engineering | Private |
| **5** | 26 - 30 | Black | F | Employed | 3 - 5 years | Marketing Specialist | Finance | Private |
| **6** | 26 - 30 | Black | F | Employed | 3 - 5 years | Lawyer | Law | Private |
| **7** | 26 - 30 | Black | F | Employed | 3 - 5 years | Research Consultant | Higher Education | Semi-private |
| **8** | 26 - 30 | Black | M | Employed | 6+ years | Team Leader | Management Consulting | Private |

*Table 1 Participant Demographics*

### 3.1.1 Age

The term young professionals used in this research report refers to millennial workers. Meaning individuals who entered the labour market and/or engaged within various institutional spaces during the millennium. These individuals must be regarded as youth in terms of the National Youth Policy at the time of the interview.

All my participants complied with this criteria. Ages ranging between 20 and 30, majority of whom fell within the late 20s category.

### 3.1.2 Race

For the purpose and nature of this research the term **black** is defined according to the black consciousness definition of blacks which Biko (2004) states that blacks are individuals who have been by law or tradition politically, economically and socially discriminated against as a group in the South African society and identify themselves as a unit in the struggle towards the realisation of their aspirations. Therefore being black is not a matter of pigmentation, but a reflection of one's mental attitude towards the emancipation from subservience (Biko, 2004).

All my participants with the exception of one was a black professional.

### 3.1.3 Private Sector

I chose to select participants who worked within the private sector because of its reputation to window-dress, employment equity malpractice and slow-paced transformation (Department of Labour, 2016). Its jurisdiction away from the stringent statutory requirements of equality and good governance has allowed many organisational demographics to reflect white employees predominantly in the top to middle-level occupations, and black South Africans in the minority, occupying lower level positions (Department of Labour, 2016; Statistics South Africa, 2016). By contrast, organisations within the public sector, where strict adherence to

labour legislation regarding BBBEE is mandatory, the demographic composition usually is reflective of South African society. Therefore, the private sector provided an ideal setting for researching the concealed social injustices that black employees in South Africa may experience on an everyday basis.

Fortunately, I was effective in interviewing individuals from the private sector with the exception of one professional who worked at one of the prominent universities in Gauteng.

### 3.1.4 Profession

Operated by individuals or companies, the private sector is an economy where one may find numerous professionals from all walks of life making a living from their expertise or specific talents. Traditionally, the term professional refers to a person who specialised in an established profession. Unlike the blue-collar, grey-collar or pink-collar worker, professionals work within a specific and established expertise under some sort of moral or ethical foundation. They may, often times, be found in an office or established organisation in a position with some seniority and little expectation for manual labour e.g. doctors, dentists, lawyers. However, they are not solely white collar workers. The dynamism of the term professional allows them to, at times, work in labour intensive positions similar to blue collar workers or, work part-time or beyond retirement like grey collar workers. Although this term has carried through to various fields more loosely, the South African labour market still values the traditional understanding of professionals from the medical, legal, financial and engineering sectors

All research participants were employed as positions which required a standard of ethics in practice. Majority working in the financial industry as either junior level auditors or certified chartered accountants. Others occupied more traditional positions in law and engineering

whereas others worked in more unconventional professions ranging from research and business development.

### 3.2 Data Collection

Since qualitative research seeks depth rather than breadth, I chose to conduct individual face-to-face interviews. Remaining cognizant of the social justice perspective employed within my research, I engaged with an awareness of the historical, political, and contextual instead of avoiding it. As the researcher, I acknowledged the relevance of my embodiment within the interview process and that of the interview as collaborators in creating a story, narrative. As an intercorporeal catalyst of change, I gleaned from the writings on empathic interviewing an approach that emphasises the active nature of the interview process, debunking the notion of neutrality and objectivity that is promoted within positivistic research (Frey & Fontana, 2005). This approach to in-depth interviewing allows the interview to become an instrument for social change (Frey & Fontana, 2005).

Social reform is promoted within the interaction and relations between interviewer and interview, as well as those that inform our subjectivities. Not to be confused with the positional power of the researcher within the process, the engagement shapes the way knowledge is generated (Frey & Fontana, 2005). The balance is in allowing the interviewee to learn and encounter revelations of the world around and them whilst allowing space for assumptions and prejudices to be unearthed. It is with that ethos that I intentionally created a space for comfortable dialogue. Often, I would engage in my own process of trust where I perform the following tasks (in no particular order):

- Talk through the participation information sheet;
- Explain the inspiration and motivations of my research topic;
- Acknowledge my own subjectivity with the research topic;

- Refer to the interview as a conversation;
- Relay that there was no expectation from my end.

Implementing this process of trust building was important for me in creating an environment conducive to feelings being shared; where I shared some of my own experiences whilst simultaneously empathising and centring the experiences of the interviewee.

When I considered the practicality in executing my research, I offered to have each participant interviewed at a location convenient to them and at a time that fell within my research schedule. These interviews took 2 – 3 hours to complete. The financial implications of this arrangement, such as petrol or refreshments, was funded by my NRF scholarship monies. During the interview, I asked questions open-ended questions[1] required by SARChl relating to the phenomena in question.

### 3.3 Data Storage

Each interview was recorded through the use of a password-secured cellular device with a voice recording function. The voice recordings were converted to mp-3 format and were transcribed for the purposes of this research. Keeping logistic factors like equipment failure and environmental conditions in mind, I made sure that my cell phone was fully charged, devoid of any malfunctions, and had enough memory available before each interview. All interviews were conducted indoors. When I met with interviewees in a public space, I ensured that the space was the quietest place as possible. After each audio-recorded interview, each interview was assigned a code. After each interview, I made notes of the interview.

[1] Please see addendum for Interview Schedule

### 3.4 Data Analysis

Critical Diversity Literacy relies on an analytical framework to identify and address the social climate and its pervasive inequalities (Steyn, 2014). It encompasses broadly-framed criteria which can incorporate other forms of analysis like critical discourse analysis or critical phenomenology. Critical phenomenology addresses the intersubjectivity, intercorporeity and history of our social situation towards others. As Melançon (2014) explains:

> *Beyond questioning prejudices and presuppositions, critical phenomenology is a reflection of one's own situation and those of the people who surround us by the constant confrontation of what unites and separates us, from our body to our most abstract thoughts.*

For the purpose of this research project, I used the CDL criteria to establish the absence or presence of CDL. By doing so, I was able to determine the disposition towards diversity, the extent of achieved transformation in organisations and ultimately the politics of belonging that may exist for young black professionals.

The critical diversity analysis entails implementing a two-pronged process of analysis and interpretation: 1. thematic analysis and 2. critical diversity analysis. This analytical process relies on the critical diversity literacy framework defined by Steyn to unlock the relations of power at work in a given social phenomena. I used this framework both to guide my analysis of the embodied experiences of the young black professionals I interviewed and to assess whether critical diversity literacy was present in their work experiences.

### 3.4.1 Phase One: Thematic Analysis.

The thematic analysis is an important phase of a critical diversity research project. It identifies and analyses the patterns in qualitative data by implementing the following steps (‘Critical Diversity Literacy and Thematic Analysis’, n.d.):

- Familiarisation with data: This step requires one to read through the transcripts and begin to contextualise the feedback.
- Coding: This involves a second reading of the text, identifying issues, topics, stories that seem relevant to answering the research question.
- Searching for themes: This step involves the listing of codes, and the building of a code map to start identifying themes.
- Reviewing themes: This step involves checking that themes ‘work’ in relation to both the coded extracts and the full data-set.
- Defining and naming themes: Conducting and writing up analysis of each theme. What story does the theme tell?
- Writing up: Weaving together analytic narrative and data extracts to put forth a compelling argument about what the data says.

### 3.4.2 Phase Two: Critical Diversity Analysis

While thematic analysis is a helpful step in analysing the data, my analysis does not conclude when themes are identified. Once themes are identified, they are interrogated from a critical diversity literacy perspective; a viewpoint that Steyn describes as a reading practice – a way of perceiving and responding to the social climate and prevalent structures of oppression (Steyn, 2014). This suggests that the analytical framework defined by Steyn is used to unpack the data. The criteria for the critical diversity literacy (CDL) framework includes the following (Steyn, 2014):

- Understanding of the role of power in constructing differences that make a difference
- Recognising the unequal symbolic and material value of different social locations. This includes acknowledging hegemonic positionalities and concomitant identities, such as whiteness, heterosexuality, masculinity, cisgender, able-bodiedness, middleclassness etc, and how these dominant orders position those in non-hegemonic spaces
- Analytically unpacking how these systems of oppression intersect, interlock, co-construct and constitute each other, and how they are reproduced, resisted and reframed
- Defining oppressive systems such as racism as current social problems rather than a historical legacy
- Understanding that social identities are learned and an outcome of social practices
- Possessing a diversity grammar and a vocabulary that facilitates a discussion of race, racism, and anti-racism, and the parallel concepts employed in the analysis of other forms of oppression
- The ability to translate (see through) and interpret coded hegemonic practices
- Analysing the ways that diversity hierarchies and institutionalised oppressions are inflected in specific social contexts and material arrangements
- Understanding of the role of emotions and emotional investments
- Engaging with issues of transformation of these oppressive systems towards deepening social justice in all levels of social organisation

From the CDL criteria, the following exercises were distilled as the analytical questions that were asked of the data:

- Locating power by considering the ways in which it is at work within the theme;
- Use the CDL criteria to determine how each criterion works with each theme, which criteria speaks most to the phenomena being research and how these themes may open up viewpoints that have not been considered;
- Establish whose interests are at stake and what possibilities are being opened up or closed down.

The above-mentioned exercises were performed with the intention of being a useful method of judging the experiences of the young black professionals as it relates to their organisation's disposition towards diversity and the extent to which transformation has been achieved. The following section expounds on this aim by unpacking critical diversity literacy in the everyday lived experiences of the eight young black professionals.

# Chapter 4: Results

If one was to ask the millennial worker how their day was, their job would be one of the inferred mundanities of their everyday life. This notion, often coupled with a "sigh" or a "yawn", insinuates an unimportance of the daily toil for many hard-working professionals. However, through my conversations with young black professionals working in corporate South Africa today, I have learnt that the grey expression at the end of a long day carries greater meaning than its meek manifestation alludes. The ambivalent negotiation with belonging in their organisations was evident in the discussions I had with the eight young black professionals. From their engagements with clients, managers, colleagues to their predictions of social change within the organisational space, the young black professionals provided greater insight into how they are negotiating their existence within the current social politics of belonging and imagining alternative ways of happiness and positivity for the future.

Guided by the critical diversity literacy framework, the following section gives an understanding of the current power relations and various nuances embedded in the everyday lives of young black professionals.

## 4.1 The role of power in constructing difference

The role of power in constructing differences within the organisational space stems from the social and cultural influence of historical processes and practices (Puwar, 2004; Steyn, 2014). These ritualistic mechanisms have not only influenced and shaped our ideas about people, reality and truth but have determined the polarisation of human variation into binary opposites (Steyn, 2014), the belief of innate/immutable characteristics of those binaries and the systems of privilege and oppression (Johnson, 2005). As a reproductive site of social inequality where one binary is valued over another, the organisation or workplace acts as an oppressive system whereby rewards such as inclusion, belonging, and acceptance

are discussed or withheld and punishments such as exclusion and criticism are administered to individuals belonging to one or another binary (Boler & Zembylas, 2003). Unfortunately, the power dynamics within the organisational space works to inform our understanding and direct our behaviour in such a way that norms and expectations are internalised and made into a self-fulling "common sense" (Steyn, 2014).

This dilemma was expressed as six out of the seven young black professionals shared that they unequivocally felt that they did not have a sense of belonging or fitted into their organisation. In orientating themselves in this way, experiences of exclusion, rejection and severe criticism were forthcoming and prevalent in their narratives. The professionals shared situations and moments whereby colleagues or their superiors would exclude them professionally or socially either through language by speaking Afrikaans in their presence or through actions like not greeting or recognising them in the office. One professional in particular shared her experience of being addressed as a visitor in her office corridors by a colleague she engaged with on a daily basis:

> *It was such a silly incident but it actually proved that there are still racial tensions. Me and one colleague were walking in the morning inside the office, and we've been there for over 2 years by then, and this man who works there turns around and he says to us, "Oh, all visitors must report to reception."*

Although the incident seemed small on the surface and she dismissed it as trivial, the words of colleague held great significance to her experiences as a black woman at work. It is as if she had a moment of realisation within her and about her. The significance of her being in that place at that particular time affirmed the materiality and spatiality of her existence. Through the body and language, she was implicated in the histories of what it means to be a black female body in historically-segregated institutional spaces. His words held enough

power to define her as a ‘visitor’, an invader, as not belonging in that space. His positioning in histories of whiteness afforded him the power to establish a difference and make it stick.

This embodied experience of racism implicating bodies in organisational spaces extend further in another young professional’s experience with a group of colleagues where he felt excluded:

> *So, this other lady 2/3 years older than me. So, she was leaving and it was a very hostile thing and the technical directors were not really happy about her leaving. There was beef it wasn't on good terms. When I first got there when someone left there, we would throw them a party but when she wanted to go there was none of that. I thought eh man let's have a party for her. She could bring her cupcakes, I called the people that she speaks to and we arranged a thing. She didn't wanna go but then eventually she agreed to go. It was cool for the first 5 minutes and then everyone was just speaking Afrikaans while I'm there. So, when you speak about what the culture is in the office, I don't know what the culture is in the office all I know is that it's not me… I literally had one cupcake. And I paid for that and those cupcakes cost a lot. I had one, I went to my desk did my work. I don't wanna be involved in that and then they had the nerve to ask why did you leave? Like come on man, why did I leave?!*

In response to this incident, I asked whether his colleagues knew that he didn’t speak Afrikaans, he responded with the following;

> *They do! then I must keep my cool in be like “Nah I have a lot of work to do”. Dude…dude…dude. I'm not gonna blame them, I'm not gonna blame them, like do you.*

Interestingly, experiences of rejection and exclusion were characterised by language and the use of words. Those belonging to dominant positionalities like whiteness were able to use their unearned superiority to exclude both professionals.

### 4.2 Unequal value of social locations

In understanding the social world that organisations are governed by, it is important to recognise that the various axes of difference use power to establish hegemonic positionalities (Steyn, 2014). These positionalities are often concealed, or made invisible by the consensual social practices of people belonging to both hegemonic and non-hegemonic spaces (Steyn, 2010). The aim of the CDL framework is to reveal hegemony and its implications for individuals belonging to non-hegemonic spaces. From the research, it seems that the young black professionals are far more aware of the existence of hegemonic spaces than their white counterparts. One young black professionals described how this disillusionment is what hindered a fruitful discussion about diversity and a potentially close friendship with a white colleague:

> *There was someone like that and we would have lunch together. She left the company but like even her, she was very *hand gesture*… So, during discussions with her during our smoke breaks, she says her parents had to work hard to put her through school and she was blaming the English. The Afrikaans people. So even with her, I had to avoid this topic because even when she was not recognising her white privilege and she believes that she is more African than a Zimbabwean in this country. So yeah and she's like "we're also a part of this country. We can't really go anywhere as Afrikaans people… But that doesn't make you in any way shape or form like a black person in this country. She complains a lot about BEE… So, there was a lot of*

> *disillusionment. So, that was my person. Outside of that, we had similar interests. So, we could hang out a lot during lunch.*

Although she was the only 'conscious' colleague in his organisation who he thought he could discuss "radical" politics with, it was clear that she interpreted black incursion into organisations as a form of victimization and unfair "reverse" discrimination (Steyn, 2010). She was oblivious to the fact the power of whiteness is still being reproduced in organisations in the form of seniority levels and normative organisational culture.

One black female professional made reference to the institutionalized oppression of whiteness and middle-classness present in the South African organisations today:

> *It's not built, this is a very good question, I think you're right it's not built with the black person in mind it's a very white structure to accommodate white people to assess white people. It's a great assessment ground and accommodation ground for white people, but as a black person who didn't grow up with it, you must understand that working is not like in a private school we are all the same. you can assume that we all in the private school are parents are doing pretty well. They're not really poor yes there are those who are extremely rich but the fact that you're here means that you are alright in life or you can't be that bad.*

She furthers this notion when discussing the implications of being in such a space:

> *The workplace is not designed for black people. You are designed to fail in that environment. You are designed to not get a promotion and be fired, to stay in one place, it's not for black people. Then it doesn't matter if your educational levels…Doesn't matter even if you're private school educated. It's*

> *not designed for you, at the end of the day you're black which means you are at the bottom of the food chain.*

Even in culture-building exercises like team building or company parties, there was an ease with which these hegemonies continued to dictate the terms of engagement and dominate the organisational cultures. For instance: westernised party themes were seen as a universal norm of celebration:

> *It's not my idea of fun. Can you imagine a more disadvantaged black person's background? How they feel what is that they have to go Google that shit. Start from scratch what is that? what is Pirates of the Caribbean, why must I dressed up and to them just understanding what why must I do this why can't we just have a party have some food and go home. And very designed for white… And it's not going to be Mahotella Queens, the theme. Do you know what I mean?*

The complexities of being a so-called "privileged" black, allowed access to spaces based on class and educational background where they are expected to perform, yet addressing the limited conditions of possibility because of her race, challenges the notion of acceptance and unity. In her description, she illustrates how the salience of middle-classness fluctuates depending on the context. The nature of the relational network of power is not static. Middle-classness and privilege further complicate the experiences of the black body. One professional warns of the blinding nature of privilege, particularly for her black counterparts:

> *And it's important to recognise it because then then if you don't recognise your privilege then it's easy to think that that's the norm and I know we always talking about white privilege and whatever kind of privilege it is if you start to think that if you have it that most people have it too then you miss the issues,*

> *then when you don't know what the hell Fees Must Fall is about or what the hell is going on in this country? that people are complaining about.*

Her words expound the viewpoint that the "objective" and internalised structures which we work in provide the illusion of advancement and equality. The complexities of being a so-called "privileged" black, allowed access to spaces based on class and educational background where they are expected to perform, yet addressing the limited conditions of possibility because of her race, challenges the notion of unity and acceptance.

Unfortunately, those that are socialised into spaces of disadvantage experience feelings of shame or humiliation, threats to physical/mental health and face the perils of non-conformity if they challenge the social expectations set for them (Steyn, 2014). Such was the case with a young female professional who sought to disengage with colleagues and directors in order to self-preserve. She explains:

> *I think so, I think because they didn't get to experience me a lot in the workspace. I eventually minimised the work that I did for *Company name omitted*, most of my work was for my director…They knew that about me but I think they…because of my lack of sucking up and for them that probably said something about my capabilities because the way they registered things in the head or mind. I definitely think so. They don't know what I'm capable of, they don't know me at my full capacity. We didn't get there. There was just so much drama in between that didn't get to a part where we were working, just working. There was always one or two dramas about this or that.*

Her experiences as a black female refusing to engage in what she experienced as the degrading practices of daily corporate life limited her promotion opportunities and career advancement within the firm. Engagement with colleagues and directors as well made her a

participant in the conflicts that arose. She realised this when another black female in the firm excelled within that space by playing into the norms and values of the firm. She reconciled that, unlike her counterpart, she did not have the level of ambition to win the way others did. She claims:

> *I think when you refuse to do whatever it takes to win people think that you're not ambitious. Which is what I mean about *Colleague's name omitted*, she would do anything to win and people will probably think that she's a very ambitious person. I will not jeopardize my integrity, I will still win at the end of the day don't get me wrong. I will win but I will do it without jeopardising my integrity.*

By adhering to the norms, no matter how degrading, you are not only the happy employee deserving of promotion and opportunities but you are the likeable employee.

### 4.3 Intersection and reproduction of systems of oppression

One of the fault lines of social formations has been the creation of the binary framework and the understanding of its operations as singular. This is because not all people are identically placed in relation to the power structures that hold their positionalities in place (Steyn, 2014; Yuval-Davis, 2006). Each individual occupies varying positions of power and privilege as well as positions of disadvantage and oppression simultaneously. This complicates the binary framework on any one axis of difference that socialises and essentialises individuals and groups. However, those that are socialised into spaces of disadvantage often recognise this complexity and understand the systemic odds that are stacked against them (Steyn, 2014). This is why black feminist scholarship has been at the forefront of exploring and identifying how axes of difference intersect and how systems of oppression and domination do not act exclusively (Ndinda & Okeke-Uzodike, 2012; Steyn, 2014). In fact, these intersecting axes are constructed through and mutually sustain one another in the process of Othering (Steyn,

2014). Therefore, race cannot be seen outside of axes like gender, sexuality, nation or religion.

In the case of my research project, the race issue cannot be analysed without considering dimensions like gender, age, sexuality, religion, and class. The intersectional relations of these dimensions work to cultivate an environment whereby certain dominances are established and specific oppressions are privileged over others. For instance, the historical emasculation of the black male is prioritised over the sexist subordination of the black woman or the transphobic relegation of a black trans person because of patriarchal, and cisgender order. Those black bodies that are oppressed differently are expected to show racial solidarity in the face of whiteness and repress the hardships experienced within patriarchal communities (Steyn, 2014).

The prevalence of young black females in my research project encouraged me to be cognizant of possible gendered inequalities and injustices in their struggle for equality. However, there was no significant feedback provided in this regard. However, a young black female professional mentioned her hyper-marginalised experience of being a minority culture within the dominant African culture:

> *Because they learn everyone's language. Literally, I'm yet to meet and I say this because my mom is Tsonga. My mom will speak people's languages without an accent. Effortlessly and most Tsonga friends that I've made in varsity or wherever know other people's languages. That's how flexible they are as a people and our society they are shunned down.*

She went on to further elaborate on how others occupying dominant positionalities in that particular space don't see the need to adapt or meet her halfway;

> *But others won't do that for you. So, there's a lot of things that happen. There's race, there's class, there's ethnicity, there's education, there's gender and you have to negotiate, you have to reconcile all these identities in certain spaces.*

There's an expectation that those belonging to non-dominant groups must assimilate to a dominant culture, without an expectation for the other side to do the same. At times, there is an expectation that you refrain from becoming like those in the dominant group but understand your position warrants you unable to be like them. This predicament was illustrated in the experience shared by a young black male professional within an engineering firm. In it, he admitted that his environment was sexist and that opportunities for women were few and far between. Although this made him quite uncomfortable and empathetic to the plight of his female counterparts as an excluded minority. He rationalised that their exclusion from work opportunities and progression was based on the possible dangers associated with working late and a labour intensive job.

> *It's like, I don't know, I think it's easier for a guy to ask another a guy. Can you stay the night over and work harder than it is to ask a lady? Sorry, I think it's just easier.*

Although these were not women of colour, the sexist order present in the Engineering sector is a perfect illustration of how masculinity is made comfortable by constructed female fragility. It also highlighted how in this case black masculinity in the presence of white femininity privileges the black male professional over his white female colleague. However, this predicament may not be true in every context.

### 4.4 Oppressive systems as a current social problem

As an offspring of neo-liberal positivity, Rainbowism was meant to assure peace and unity in a post-Apartheid South Africa. Insinuating an end to the Apartheid 'rain', the rainbow symbolised that the past was now behind us. This has brought about a post-racial discourse that encourages colour-blindness and non-racialism as a requirement for good relations:

> *So, me and him work very well together. Like he's a genuine, don't see colour, really really nice white guy.*

Citizens are encouraged to focus on the prospects of the future and forget about the injustices of the past. In fact, to dwell on the past is to impede the nation's progress. The attempt to construct epistemologies of amnesia and ignorance have angered one black professional:

> *this just shows you that these people don't give a s***. The fact that Apartheid didn't move them, what they heard about what happened to black people, they still don't care. They are still walking around doing what they do and not caring. It shows that these people don't give a f***. You are on your own.*

This avoidance of the past has sugar-coated our differences in culture, language, and socioeconomic background in public spaces and perpetuated the myth of sameness, merit, and ignored the fight against racism and discrimination it was created for (Cronin, 2017). This trend has allowed for the comfortable parts of multiculturalism to soothe the white minority; it simultaneously rejects any attempt to deal with structural and systemic inequalities and invalidates peoples lived experiences of oppression (Hall, 2016). One professional shared how an incident of racism was dealt with accordingly yet racist practices prevailed because of others reluctance to get involved:

> *The business itself? The whites would get the most opportunities. They white people got the easiest entries. The white people got the better chances. It was insane… It was very blatant. Its blatant to an extent that after I left, the district manager where I worked was fired for racism… It was hidden but I knew. The detail came out; it's just that when I was there you see that the black people there are going nowhere. They here.*

For people who preferred to address the issues and not evade them, employment rewards would be denied or manipulated:

> *The minute you're opinionated and you have beef you're fucked. You're fucked in that guy's depot. When bonuses came out you were fucked.*

Cementing the notion that the dream of a rainbow nation was not promised for all, poet Jeremy Cronin (2017) cautioned:

> *Identity formation as well as the myth of the "rainbow nation" and its performative intention have served to discursively create a national identity that has been top-down in its constitution and implementation. Thus, true reconciliation has been foregone in place of a simplified and somewhat candy-coated myth of peace that has served to reconcile those on the inside whilst pitting them against those on the outside. Allowing ourselves to sink into a smug Rainbowism will prove to be a terrible betrayal of the possibilities for real transformation, real reconciliation, and real national unity that are still at play in our contemporary South African reality.*

### 4.5 Understanding social identities as a learned outcome of social practices

There is a tendency to essentialise people that belong to both dominant and non-dominant groups. Oftentimes, those affiliated with dominant positionalities are ascribed positive characteristics that reinforce their superiority in relation to others. In South Africa, race has had a history of being essentialised to reinforce the domination of the white minority:

> *But that's because they've been taught that white is right. That is what apartheid did, but they thought that anything white was going to work and was right. So, if the white people say it, it must be true and that's most Blacks. Even blacks our age but especially blacks older than us they still suffer from that. My grandmother suffers from there. My grandmother has this thing out black people's things never work they don't all organised a disgusting deeply rooted. she is this thing where white people's things always work They Know Better they better organised. My grandmother thinks that white people live godly.*

The internalised beliefs of the social order continue to be a toxic practice that refuses to diminish in the face of progressive race relations. Battling stereotypes was a prevalent occurrence for young black professionals and the allocation of clients. Often, professionals would be allocated black clients simply because they were black:

> *And the other thing is this condescending thing that black is universal. Just because we're black doesn't mean we're going to have common ground.*

Another professional had to combat negative stereotypes with narratives of discrimination and oppression:

> *Most of his senior staff is white which baffled me because it's his company it's two black guys but the Senior stuff is all white. so, that makes me think you don't trust the black people or that white people have brainwashed you about black people. Like black people are lazy. This is the discussion I had it work; black people are not lazy. They are not given the same opportunities as white people and also rather than sit here and fight with you all day I'm not going to bag for work. I'd rather go home and sleep.*

Young professionals also had to deal with the expectations of employers to serve as agents of control for the black majority. This archaic employment practice is steeped in colonial values whereby blacks within the marginalised community would be privileged and given all kinds of gifts, benefits and resources in order to do their job (intelliconn, 2012). The hired token is not meant to have decision-making power or have final say over the coloniser. This was evident one professional's situation where she is continuously confronted with resistance when she provides advice into how clients should be served beyond the bottom line:

> *So were discussing the entertainment and I clearly know that the MC is not going to speak to that audience. She likes this MC personal. She likes his jokes. And I said ok whatever. And I suggested someone. So, I just let things unfold for themselves. I'll say it once and I'm dismissed, ok cool. And when the function does happen and your clients are not laughing like you are because they don't find the jokes funny then it's you… and the other thing is the portfolio I'm managing are black people and now you want to tell me how black people work.*

### 4.6 Possession of diversity grammar

The use of appropriate language to discuss issues around race and racism manifested in different ways for the young black professionals. One professional shared the positive discussions that were cultivated as a result of the transformation policies of her company.

> *We had budget for it and the point of it was just to get, recognising our history and the importance of transformation, discussing what are the issues that the black people are having and what was nice is when you realise that the issue that you were having was not unique to being black because that's great that's where you wanna get to. I'm complaining about something that my white colleague that my Indian colleague are all experiencing versus it's just you and just building a network of talking to each other and helping each other out and that your similar people with similar issues and sometimes with issues that are not the same as other people. If you have to work late and the issue is you came by taxi and you can't work late it's an issue that not everybody can relate to and it important to kind of tackle those issues separately. So, we had that which I think was quite important.*

These types of forums are few and far between yet provide a great space for discussion and mentorship for young professionals. With the support and leadership of management, such dialogue can be useful to understanding experiences of racism, sexism and the like. However, not all interventions solicit such fruitful dialogue:

> *No, because all the transformation workshops we've had have been a waste of time. We attended one last year… They got some right. But here's the problem. We wanna talk about black issues and you hire an old white lady whose Afrikaans. Of course, she's gonna ask questions that are gonna make*

> *you feel better about yourself. She's not gonna ask the hard-core questions. She's not gonna bring topics that are hard-core to the table. So, her activities were: What are your school memories? Where are they from? Draw something? When you angry how do you react score yourself? Then this white lady stands up and then she says… Have you ever watched someone cry and not feel a thing? She was crying and she says that she feels like a foreigner in her own country. She's scared that her kids won't get any jobs. In her day, when they were going to school police had to check for bombs because comrades were crazy. Number 1, at least you got to go to school. Our grandparents didn't get a chance to go to school because there were no schools or the schools that were there, the system was Bantu education. And you crying and you've got land. Half of our people don't even have land. So, it was patronising.*

Over the years, diversity awareness workshops have garnered a negative reputation characterised by the crying white woman and the downward spiral dialogue. When there is limited to no support from business leaders in providing interventions, employees often rely on informal conversations with colleagues. However, the lack of self-awareness and the lack of recognition of how limiting assumptions about the Other permeate the workplace, closes down the possibilities for genuine dialogue (Steyn, 2010). Some of the black professionals shared how interactions with their white colleagues have been fraught with ignorance about the victimisation and discrimination of those from powerless groups.

## 4.7 Interpreting coded hegemony

Hegemony is a form of power that works to conceal itself (Boler & Zembylas, 2003). It remains invisible through common sense and "taken-for-grantedness". Socially constructed values are normalised and naturalised through a dominant ideology of difference. This has fostered warped forms of freedom and equality. Hegemonic language has been used to conceal the social control exerted to afford benefits to privileged groups and limit the opportunities for those belonging to powerless groups (Steyn, 2014). Those who are oppressed by hegemony seem to be able to recognize and name these practices most skillfully. This was a common practice for professionals when they were delegated certain clients to manage. Under the umbrella of "consultant-to-client fit", black professionals found themselves managing only black clients. This organisational practice ended up limiting their ability to function and grow within the organisation. Furthermore, it reinforced the notion of tokenism and being the *baas-boy*, whereby members of minority groups only being hired to keep the appearance of racial equality and regulate black workers in the "thickets of their language and social networks" (intelliconn, 2012). The reality of this, lead to uncomfortable moments for a professional, who had to negotiate race relations between their white superior and black customer:

> *The one time they wanted me to speak to this guy. They wanted him to sign off on this design. So, they asked me to speak to him and because he was black and I was black, and like they told me to my face…I must go speak to him tomorrow…So, I'm the one who is like, you know…Like it happens. The exact thing happened. They didn't know what they were doing, they didn't know that really offensive and dickish. At the end of the day, this guy knows, they gotta send this black guy because he knows what's happening… Like, we all know. So you know how awkward the conversation has to be now. You know what I*

> *mean… They said that this guy is kinda racist. You know, maybe you could speak to him… I must call him again Monday and speak to him. You know what I mean. So, if I had a client and he was white and he was racist. If I would go to my boss and say this guy doesn't like me because I'm black, he would say tough luck. You think they would side with me? They wouldn't side with me. They not.*

For this professional, racial discrimination is concealed through the need to ensure effective communication and positive client engagement. Interestingly, another professional shared how she was limited in her growth and development within her organisation because of the racist beliefs of some clients:

> *We had some clients who were hectically racist. Where even if you were a specialist in terms of some kind of field e.g. inventory or you're like us who were juniors. We need to go on a lot of clients so that we can learn. You're not allowed to go and your partner will tell you "no this person is very racist, we can't let you go on the audit, sorry."*

On the surface, it may seem like her manager or supervisor was in some way protecting her from the ugliness of racism. However, the implications of not being put out in the field to gain experience, for many professionals, can stunt their career progression severely. The lack of effort from both professionals' superiors to engage constructively with positive client relations and career development within the context of diversity, can leave professionals feeling unsupported, under-valued and marginalised. The employment practice of matching the right client to the right consultant is often used under the guise of putting the needs of the client first and making the client happy. However, it seems that this method of including and catering to the black demographic has limited the opportunities for professionals.

Furthermore, it has reinforced whiteness as an ideology that controls the restrictions and practices of other races.

### 4.8 The role of emotions and emotional investments

The affective turn within social theory has bred a wealth of insights into the embodied experience of divergent bodies within the material world (Steyn, 2014; Thien, 2005). Social theorists like Ahmed have delved into the intricacies of the social, political, cultural, and emotional to reveal its entanglements in novel ways. Ahmed asserts that affect flows like a current forming individuals and collectives in the effort to divide and bring together. From this standpoint, a process of othering takes place as individuals establish who they are, who matters, who should be feared, who should be hated, and who is lovable (Ahmed, 2004, 2007a, 2014). The post-apartheid discourse acts in the same manner, wielding Rainbowism, its positives emotions and promises of happiness as the tie that binds all its citizens. Hence, the sentiments of the Republic are socially channelled towards a specific process of Othering that chastises those that provide divergent narratives to the realities of the country.

Ahmed claims that happiness valorises social ideals and expectations like marriage, family, globalisation, and multiculturalism. These ideals are promoted as objects necessary to attain in order to be happy. Unfortunately, this public fantasy of happiness has its limits. One of them is the image of the happy citizen. Behind this image lies expectations to ignore the past injustices to explain the present; to promote meritocracy and equal opportunity as the reason for differences; to evade discussions on racism, and to be to abide by the status quo through gratitude. Therefore, the fantasy figure of the happy citizen erases signs of inequality or injustice under the sign of happiness. The claim that young professionals are happy and this happiness is behind the economic opportunities they have been afforded functions to justify the racialized forms of treatment.

One could say that more desperate images of the happy citizen have now emerged for the young black professional. The unfulfilled dreams and aspirations that were shaped by the collective ideal of excelling in a meaningful job, have now uncovered an array of not so positive emotions. This does not exclude the presence of happiness in the lives of the young black professional. It offers a greater understanding of happiness through the instances of unhappiness. The power of the image of the good life can be restored by engaging unhappiness as a sign of being held back or held up (Ahmed, 2007b).

Some of the unhappiness experienced by the young black professionals included feelings of loneliness, frustration and apathy as a result of exclusionary practices. The lack of community and inclusion have left some feeling quite isolated in their experience:

> *Uhm…The feeling honestly the word is loneliness. Its loneliness really and the thing about loneliness is that it functions outside of distraction. You can be distracted from a lot of our feelings. So, when you're lonely and there's still nothing distracting you at all and the things that should be distracting you are the causes of your loneliness. So, that's what it caused in me. In one word that speaks to emotion is lonely. It's very lonely. And when you're lonely you question reality a lot. Is this for real? And you can't relate to anything happening outside of you. – Participant 3*

> *Almost like you feel like a zombie. You feel like a zombie. Not trapped, you feel lonely also. Like a different kind of loneliness. A very weird kind of loneliness. – Participant 4*

In this instance, loneliness signifies an imagined future of loss that does not include unity of people of colour irrespective of race. Once again, the social order pushes the black body to

the margins. Interestingly, both professionals later described similar experiences of eating lunch in seclusion:

> *Because I just eat lunch at my desk I don't really like to get involved and because I'm the only black guy in the team you can imagine I'm not going to feed into that culture and I don't want to fit into the culture. – Participant 4*

> *I have lunch alone in my car… In my car every day… I don't want to eat at my desk because I won't have a full hour of lunch and I don't want to be in that office the whole day. Chomi, I have depression. – Participant 5*

Both professionals expressed a desire to be away from a work environment that excludes them corporeally. Their signs of unhappiness are depicted in their awareness of the spatial significance of their race. As Merleau-Ponty & Landes (2012) there are consequences to knowing the body within the body, and knowing the world.

Moreover, there are consequences when this knowing is voiced as an alternative opinion to the norm. One young black professional shared how her outspokenness about public unhappiness has fostered perceptions of her as an angry black woman:

> *No, they look at me as an angry black. Basically, you're an angry black. You're just into dysfunctional stuff because it's "rebellious".*

In reference to the fallist movements, her conventions were not welcomed by her colleagues. In fact, she was made a participant of socially bad things. The attribution of anger to the construction of the black woman is nothing new. Its imagery has acted similarly to justify acts of hate and discrimination towards her.

### 4.9 The effects of diversity hierarchies and institutionalised oppressions

Along with the historical and geographical implications, the unique ways in which people are living in and through their material worlds is what informs the politics of location (Steyn, 2014). The social, political and material world are inextricable as we uncover the distinction between ourselves and society, ourselves and others, and ourselves and our self. In other words, we are embodied in society and in history, in the very manner we live within it (Melançon, 2014).

The essence of my research project is embedded in this understanding of the self, the body and society. It is evident that young black professionals are constantly negotiating this critical positioning as a black body within society aware of its political limits and effects (Steyn, 2014). The intersections of race, class and job level were implicated in the experiences of a professional's colleague. Class and job level became the salient factor that determined the issuance of employment benefits:

> *So they were not paying her for those days she missed when her father died and I was like...So they also have this mentality of better blacks because there was *name omitted*, who when my first year there in 2013 his grandmother died and I think he disappeared for about 3 weeks. He was never deducted, he was a part of the professional staff. So I think they class Blacks. Not only are you black but within those blacks there are classes. *name omitted*, *name omitted*, *name omitted*, are the more educated blacks at the top.*

In this case, it seems that working-class women, particularly black working-class women, experience levels of gender and race-related hardship in this intersectional space from which middle classness normally protects more privileged women. Another female professional was

intrigued by the issues of class inequality and how this informed the rules of engagement between black professionals and support staff:

> *Like support stuff people that are there maybe the tea lady. The other black people that are in inverted commas below you. I'm not talking about how white people treat the support staff but it's all so interesting to see how black people treat other black people in the workplace because of their race and because of the position. I find it very it's almost like there's a checklist before you can have a certain kind of relationship with a person and I have noticed it in my environment of the we are not a lot of people comma in my very close environment now. We are three (3) black female professionals and 5 support staff. Maybe admin or tea you know those vibes I don't know there's a barrier and I don't understand. And for me, it's just my personality to talk to everybody and sit with you. But you'll see during lunch the people that will sit together or support staff or those who don't mind being associated with a support staff vs other black professionals. It's almost like they will make more of an effort 2 get along with those that are on the level or higher or even white people.*

The internalisation of spatial arrangements reveals the what is considered to be proper relationships between people and the moral social order (Steyn, 2014). In apartheid, South Africa, physical distance and close affiliation were seen to reflect a moral and class distance (Steyn, 2014).

### 4.10 Engaging with issues of transformation

The reality that corporate South Africa remains an entity built to support and mobilise the careers of its white citizens despite the inauguration of democratic values and statutes, does not evade the cognizance of young black professionals in this country. Even under the guise of multiculturalism and national unity, there is a lack of engagement with transformation. Resistance from employees of dominant positionalities takes the form of complacency towards diversity issues. One black professional shared this revelation by describing how white power and ownership of such spaces treats blacks as guests in the workplace:

> *Uhm for me. Honestly, it doesn't even matter. It's their house guys. It's their house. It's the white man's house…Would you change your set up because you got one guest here when you don't have to? I wouldn't. Just because there's one guy that different to me? Everyone else is the same. Nah, it's impractical. And it takes a lot of time, a lot of effort.*

The realisation that they have no entitlement to the current organisational system despite their privileges, promises of equality and failed efforts of transformation generates radical alternatives to how they see the future of the workplace and the black citizens working in it. Many share the importance of shifting from the futile exercise of white-centred social change whereby the hearts and minds of the white minority are appeased, to more radical efforts that attack white supremacy at a political level:

> *I think it can change but I think the political landscape has to change in South Africa for this white run type of business or this white mentality of running corporate…*

> *And even then even if they don't do that, the EFF lowers the confidence of white people just by them winning.*

An agricultural level:

> *They so scared that they're going to lose their land, I can't walk around thinking that I sh*t ice cream and unfortunately these things are linked. It's a scale and they're not going to change…*
>
> *That's the only way that you get white people to shape their attitudes, take something that means something to them and that is the land. Your land is your dignity.*

As well as focuses on the empowerment of the black community through black ownership:

> *Once Africans start running their own lives and different sectors, and food and finance and owning their banks and stuff.*

And the increasing circulation of economic funds by supporting black-owned businesses:

> *You're absolutely right. We can't all be business people but for me personally, I buy black. I buy black full on.*
>
> *I'm ripping my carpets out, upstairs. I'm getting my stuff from a black guy that's gonna do my carpets for me.*

These approaches to equality and social reform are nothing new. It draws on the agenda of outsiders working within. The ideas generated for the future share the importance of pursuing education and gaining work exposure in the workplace in order to pay it forward and become enhanced agents for change. Unfortunately, it places the work of transformation solely in the

hands of the marginalised. Unless there is an effort to tackle the minds of the oppressed and the privileged, history will continue to repeat itself.

## Chapter 5: Research Reflexivity

The process of self-reflection is a practice encouraged in social theory for the purpose of examining both oneself as a researcher and the research relationship. As Smith (2012) reiterates reflexivity can become a critical research practice in as much as it frees us from its own conditions of production and makes it possible for us to locate ourselves in practical relationships to the world. As a young black professional, myself, I was made constantly aware of my own subjectivities as a young black professional and where I have been located in society. However, I'm not sure that I could say that I know what means to be young and black in South Africa. Doing so would be a disservice to the multiple identities and subjectivities that are produced and reproduced daily. However, I can share some of my own personal experiences, with the intention that it may provide key theoretical threads into what might be important to other young black professionals in the country and how that impacted the interview process.

I am young, I am black, I am educated, I am employed, I am frustrated and at times scared. I live in a context that makes me anxious for my livelihood. As a young black woman, I am exposed to the risks that threaten me daily. I am warned of the dangers of driving or walking alone, especially at night. I am told to be careful of the intimate relationships I make, that may leave me blooded at the hands of my partner or infected with HIV and AIDS. I am vulnerable to the dangers of society because I am young, black and female. As Haanyama (2011) asserts "*I am constantly 'on the brink' of despair and disaster."* This is the context that I have come to live with just like many millions of other young people in the country, especially the young black female professionals I interviewed. We have been able to survive and thrive with the knowledge of the frequent atrocities that happen within our borders. Our

ability to love, to think, to dream, and to engage illustrates that our subjectivities go beyond pain and danger.

Throughout the interview process, I was made aware that the life of a young person is not just premised on danger. As a young black educated professional, I am located in multiple ways politically, racially and socially. I, along with other youth, navigate several spaces through my daily encounters, negotiating my identity across these spaces. Within the discourse of Rainbowism, I have been able to access various forms of privilege educationally, economically, professionally, and socially. I have come to learn that, not only have I been affected by the social spheres I have navigated, but that this exposure has created new constructions of the South African within a discourse of national development and changing notions of identity. This has raised issues of belonging, exclusion, political allegiances to the nation-state and what it means to construct one's identity in cultural spaces that are still transitioning.

Socially, many young black professionals have had to straddle different spaces according to the requirements of that space. As the researcher in this project, I was constantly made aware that in order to reconceptualise the suppressive construction of youth, destruction must be recognised as one of many components that inform young people's multiple subjectivities. Furthermore, that the presence of destruction is an opportunity for South Africa to make a change. My experiences fuelled me to tackle an issue that may have been taken for granted because of the propensity of the dominant discourse to perpetuate that South Africa has shed all remnant of Apartheid and the race issue has been dealt with. Fortunately, I took advantage of the current relevance of black youth in protest to expose the archaic traditions of the organisational space as fairly untouched by radical change. I carried and still carry a lot of baggage from my embodied experiences. This realisation influenced the way in which I felt during the interview, whilst researching literature and how I interviewed the professionals. It

is safe to assume that I had an effect, as a researcher, on every step of the research process. I found myself constantly aware of how my feelings may be influencing another or the data itself.

Reflecting on my presence and its effect. I believe all the young black professionals I interviewed identified strongly with me and there was a degree of ease to the conversation. At no given time, did I believe that they were telling me what I wanted to hear but then again, I am using my power to infer that conclusion?

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

This research report has sought to broaden and deepen the scholarship of organisational affect theory and critical diversity studies by exploring the significance of happiness, embodiment, and diversity, for young black professionals within the national discourse of faded Rainbowism. Today, corporate South Africa has become a multifarious environment whereby the politics of belonging acts as a complex dynamism that defines the ways in which its citizens establish a sense of community and collective happiness. Unfortunately for the young black body, corporate life is indeed a labouring process where one struggles to establish a sense of belonging and happiness. Through their everyday embodied experiences, it is clear that young black professionals are negotiating ambivalent encounters of identity, and belonging, struggling to promote the so-called ideals of Rainbowism. The construction of the happy workplace and South African rainbowism has become a tool for cultivating and sustaining the conditions of conformity that solicit expressions of heterogenous resistance rather than homogenous compliance.

The fading of the rainbow nation has reached a point where the re-conceptualisation of post-apartheid ideologies needs to be re-rooted into more meaningful soil. Research into the critical dimensions of diversity, organisational and affective scholarship can help solicit such

growth. Although there has been significant work done on diversity with organisational studies, there is a need for future research into the phenomenology of bodies in organisational spaces, more specifically the affective role of happiness. Such exploration may shed light on the feel-good principles that once comforted all South Africans after 1994 but now pacify the cries of unhappiness, making it difficult for South Africa to accept and understand the anger, and perceived violence amongst privileged young blacks.

I am aware that my project may have homogenised the young black experience by not integrating a more intersectional approach to conducting my research. However, I draw on the concept of strategic essentialism to address the social matter of race and not to essentialise the self-reported experiences by a group of marginalised people. Although my research focuses on professionals who are struggling to conform, this research report focused on individuals with alternative experiences. The broad range of experiences of young black South Africans indicated the various subjectivities inhabited by young black men and women whose very existence in the workplace challenged and disturbed the social system. As killjoys to Rainbowism, their expression and very existence in organisational spaces has broken the rules. At times they asserted their voices, exercising their agency to resist and other times, their bodies spoke louder than words. They were bodily transgressors whose narratives and experiences reaffirmed one another's realities. Forms of resistance and protest are not uncommon in the history of black youth. They have always been radically courageous and conscious in the face of injustice and continue to build solidarity to this day. The rise of the fallist movements have indicated this practice. However, the workplace in post-apartheid South Africa presents a challenging environment where non-traditional methods for building alliances, gaining support and forming resistance due to their minority status is required. Lastly, I sought to show how happiness and unhappiness can provide an additional dimension to understanding domination and the response to pressures to conform. These professionals

do not want to be changed in order to fit into a system, they want to be co-creators of the organisational space. As an echo of the “End of Rainbow” discourse, ultimately, the young black body and its affects hold the promise of destabilizing, radicalizing and unsettling us into new ways of being.

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# Appendix

## Interview Schedule

As a SARChI MA scholarship recipient, I am expected to incorporate questions that are relevant to the Chair's research (ideally, through interviews). Data collected through the asking of these questions will feed into the SARChI Chair's overarching research objectives. Ideally, my supervisor and I will work together to determine how to incorporate/modify these questions to suit my research project.

I am required to prepare a report (**10 pgs. for Masters, - 1.5 spacing**) for the Chair at the end of my data collection that presents the findings in relation to the questions below. The report will be both descriptive and analytical and will use direct quotes from data to illustrate key points.

***Reports are due to the Chair prior to the submission of the final research report or dissertation to the Faculty of Humanities.***

**Keeping this in mind, the section below provides greater description on the interview schedule:**

**Purpose**: The purpose of this research is to conduct semi-structured interviews with young black professionals working in corporate South Africa, in order gather and analyse their perceptions and feelings about conforming/assimilating into their organisational culture.

**Assignment:**

- Conduct a face to face interview with each individual at a convenient time and place
- I will need to audio record interviews (using cell phone) so that I can transcribe them

**Research Question**: What are the affective experiences of young black professionals in South Africa struggling to conform to the workplace?

**My 'target' participants:**

- People working in South Africa
- People who are between the ages of 20 – 35 years old
- People who are visibly black in ethnicity and/or identify as black in race or ethnicity
- People who are employed in any profession and/or considers themselves a professional in their industry e.g. Accountants, Lawyers, Engineers, Psychologists

**Part 1: Demographics**

1. Are you employed?

2. How long have you been employed?

| Less than a year | 1 – 2 years | 3 – 5 years | 6+ years |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |

3. What do you do (in terms of occupation)?

4. In which industry/sector do you work in?

5. Age range?

| 20-25 | 26-30 | 31-40 | 41+ |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |

6. How do you identify racially or ethnically?

**Part 2: Affective experience within organisation**

- How, if at all, has struggling to fit in to the culture as a young black professional come up for you in your workplace?
    - In relation to colleagues, clients, managers, opportunities for promotion?
- How, if at all, has this experience affected your career choices, opportunities?
- Does this issue ever 'spill over' into the workplace in any way?
- Are these struggles to conform something that people discuss at work? If so, what do they say?
- How, if at all, does your struggle to conform effect people's perceptions of your capacities, abilities, and ambitions at work? And elsewhere/generally?
- Are there certain kinds of emotions that you find yourself expressing as a result of your experience, how is that perceived by others?
- How would you describe your work culture?
- Have there been particular "emotional" moments?, when your emotions got the "best of you"? What happened?

Generally

- How, if at all, has struggling to fit in to your organisational culture as a young black professional had effects in a place other than workplace?
- How, if at all, has conforming to one's organisational culture changed over time? Are people\s attitudes changing regarding this?