

**UNVEILING RACIAL BIASES: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF
TRANSFORMATION EFFORTS IN TWO HISTORICALLY WHITE
INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS IN THE EASTERN CAPE**

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Abstract

This study critically examines transformation efforts in two historically white independent schools in the Eastern Cape, with a particular focus on race. Using cultural capital and critical race theory as analytical frameworks, it evaluates the schools' approaches to racial issues in relation to the needs and expectations of black alumni, drawing on their lived experiences.

The study employs semi-structured individual interviews with former staff members involved in transformation initiatives, black alumni, and external experts in education and transformation. It explores the extent to which private schools' transformation management surrounding race and transformation efforts align with the realities and expectations of black students, identifying areas of convergence and divergence between institutional policies, their practical application, and student experiences.

Findings indicate a persistent gap between the schools' transformation efforts and the expectations of black alumni between 2013 and 2023. Participants reflect on the challenges of navigating institutions originally designed to exclude them, highlighting the tensions between policy rhetoric and lived reality.

This study underscores the necessity of substantive and sustained transformation within educational institutions to address systemic racism. By interrogating the intersection of policy, practice, and student experience, it contributes to ongoing efforts to promote racial equity in South African schools and globally. The findings emphasise the urgency of dismantling systemic barriers and advocating for meaningful, anti-racist change to create inclusive educational environments where all students can thrive.

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"If they don't give you a seat at the table, bring a folding chair." - Shirley Chisholm.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Contextualising the Study

Education has long been a central site through which inequality in South Africa has been produced and reproduced. Colonialism and apartheid systematically entrenched racial hierarchies within schools, privileging white students while ostracising black students to inferior institutions designed to maintain social control (Kallaway, 2022; Behr, 1984). The transition to democracy in 1994 came with the imperative of transformation: a promise to create schools that were inclusive, equitable, and reflective of the values of a democratic society (Dolby, 2002; Chisholm & Sujee, 2006). Yet, three decades later, the persistence of structural inequalities suggests that education has not been fully transformed. Whiteness continues to operate as an institutional norm in many historically white schools, shaping experiences of belonging, exclusion, and identity (Fataar, 2015; Hunter & Van der Westhuizen, 2022).

The Eastern Cape provides a particularly significant context for exploring these dynamics. While the province is widely recognised as one of the poorest in South Africa, with public schools often under-resourced and struggling to provide quality education (Department of Basic Education, 2022), it is also home to some of the country's most prestigious independent schools. Founded in the mid-to-late 1800s, these schools that this study focuses on were established as extensions of British colonial and missionary projects (Kallaway, 2022; Randall, 1995). Their traditions, Anglican affiliations, and institutional cultures were explicitly designed to uphold European ideals of civilisation, morality, and education. Today, they continue to carry significant cultural capital, attracting students from across South Africa and internationally. However, their continued prestige raises important questions about how transformation is understood and practised in institutions built upon exclusion.

This study examines transformation in two historically white independent schools in the Eastern Cape, focusing specifically on race and the lived experiences of black alumni. By situating the research within this provincial context, the study highlights both the particularities of elite schooling in a largely under-resourced region, and the broader dynamics of race, power, and privilege in post-apartheid South Africa.

Background to the Study

The role of schools as microcosms of society has been widely recognised (Mason, Hong & Kiesel, 2021). In South Africa, historically white independent schools embody both the legacies of exclusion and the potential for transformation. Their exclusivity -manifested through high tuition fees, Anglican traditions, and British-derived curricula - has historically positioned them as bastions of privilege (Pretorius, 2019; Dolby, 2002). While these schools now admit students of all races, research suggests that inclusion has often been conditional upon assimilation into dominant white norms, rather than an embrace of diversity (Fataar, 2015; Mukisa, 2022).

National policy frameworks, such as the South African Schools Act of 1996, mandated inclusivity and equity in schooling (Dolby, 2002). Yet, scholars argue that transformation in independent schools has often been superficial, with institutions adopting diversity discourses while avoiding substantive engagement with racism and exclusion (Chisholm & Sujee, 2006; Willand, 2021). This “performative transformation” reproduces power structures by positioning whiteness as the invisible standard while marginalising black identities (Dolby, 2002; Hunter & Van der Westhuizen, 2022).

The Eastern Cape context makes these dynamics particularly stark. Independent schools in the province exist in sharp contrast to the underfunded public schools surrounding them, illustrating the deep inequalities of South Africa’s education system (Motala & Dieltiens, 2008). This juxtaposition foregrounds the need to critically interrogate how elite schools, which hold disproportionate influence, negotiate transformation in ways that may either reinforce or dismantle structural inequities.

Problem Statement

Despite three decades of democracy, evidence suggests that historically white independent schools continue to reproduce racial inequalities even as they claim to embrace transformation and diversity (Fataar, 2015; Dolby, 2002). Institutional cultures rooted in colonial and apartheid histories persist, with black students and alumni frequently reporting experiences of alienation, assimilation pressures, and racial microaggressions (Mukisa, 2022; Owens, 2020).

The central problem addressed in this study is the difference between institutional claims of transformation and the actual experiences of students. While independent schools often present themselves as inclusive and progressive, the realities faced by black alumni suggest that deep structural and cultural barriers persist. This raises the question of whether such schools have genuinely transformed, or whether they continue to reproduce whiteness and privilege in subtler ways.

Research Objectives

The study seeks to:

1. Critically analyse the transformation efforts of two historically white independent schools in the Eastern Cape.
2. Explore the lived experiences of black alumni between 2013 and 2023 in relation to race and transformation.
3. Examine the role of transformation management and institutional policy in shaping school culture.
4. Identify areas of convergence and divergence between institutional claims of transformation and alumni expectations.

Research Question

The central research question is:

To what extent do the transformation efforts of the two historically white independent schools in the Eastern Cape align with the lived experiences and expectations of black alumni?

Supporting sub-questions include:

- How do black alumni describe their experiences of race, belonging, and exclusion within these schools?
- How do institutional policies and management practices engage with racial transformation?

- In what ways do South Africa's broader historical and socio-political contexts influence how independent schools engage with transformation?

Focus of the Study

This study focuses on the intersection of race, education, and institutional culture in historically white independent schools. It employs a “racialised cultural capital framework” that draws on Bourdieu’s (1986) concept of cultural capital and the principles of Critical Race Theory (Bell, 2023; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). This framework foregrounds the ways in which whiteness functions as an institutional norm, while also interrogating how students navigate, resist, and sometimes internalise these dynamics.

By centring the voices of black alumni alongside the perspectives of staff involved in transformation management, the study highlights the tension between institutional authority and lived experience. This dual focus enables a nuanced analysis of how transformation is imagined, implemented, and contested in elite educational spaces within the South African educational context.

Significance of the Study

This study makes an important contribution to the growing body of research on race and transformation in South African education by focusing on historically white independent schools — institutions that have received comparatively less scholarly attention. By situating the research within the broader South African context, it highlights how these elite schools, often perceived as progressive, remain shaped by colonial and apartheid legacies. The findings provide insight into the gap between institutional commitments to transformation and the lived experiences of black alumni, thereby adding to research that interrogates how institutional cultures adapt to preserve privilege while appearing to transform.

The study also amplifies the voices of black alumni, whose lived experiences reveal the limitations of performative transformation and the persistence of racialised exclusion. By documenting these narratives, the study not only critiques institutional practices but also

creates space for new understandings of belonging, inclusion, and identity in historically white educational contexts. In addition, the findings have practical implications for school governance and policy, emphasising the importance of moving beyond symbolic gestures towards substantive, anti-racist change that dismantles systemic barriers and fosters inclusivity (Williams, 2000; Willand, 2021).

Furthermore, the study situates South African experiences within global debates on race and education. Similar struggles have been documented in historically white institutions in the United States and elsewhere (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Owens, 2020). By engaging these comparative perspectives, the research underscores the global relevance of examining how whiteness operates within elite educational institutions. Importantly, this study deliberately centres black individuals - particularly the voices of black alumni - in its analysis. By foregrounding their lived experiences, it challenges the historical silencing and marginalisation of black individuals within South Africa's historically white independent schools. Through this focus, the research contributes to broader efforts to decolonise education by resisting the dominance of whiteness in knowledge production and institutional culture. Placing black people and black academics "on the map" is not merely an act of recognition; it is also a step towards redressing historical erasures. In this way, the study underscores the importance of producing knowledge that advances social justice and contributes to building a more equal and inclusive society for the future.

Chapter Outline

The dissertation is structured as follows:

- **Chapter 2** reviews existing literature on colonial and apartheid legacies in education, the persistence of racial inequality, and previous research on transformation in schools.
- **Chapter 3** outlines the methodological approach, including the qualitative design, sampling strategy, and ethical considerations.
- **Chapter 4** presents the theoretical framework, elaborating on cultural capital and Critical Race Theory.
- **Chapter 5** provides an in-depth analysis of findings, drawing on alumni and staff reflections.

- **Chapter 6** concludes the study, summarising contributions, implications, and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature relevant to understanding transformation in historically white independent schools in South Africa. Its purpose is to situate the study within broader debates on race, education, and inequality, while also identifying the gaps that this research seeks to address. The literature review is organised thematically around the historical legacies of colonialism and apartheid within education, the development and implementation of transformation policies, and scholarship on race, identity, and belonging within educational institutions. It also considers research on independent schools and elite reproduction, before situating the South African case within global debates on race and elite schooling.

The chapter begins by contextualising independent schools within the broader South African education system, highlighting their deep historical roots in colonial and apartheid structures. Despite the official dismantling of apartheid more than three decades ago, the vision of a transformative and inclusive “Rainbow Nation” remains threatened by persistent discrimination and structural inequality. Independent schools are one arena where white privilege and cultural dominance continue to be reproduced, often under the guise of transformation. The two schools at the centre of this study, located in the Eastern Cape, are illustrative of these dynamics. Established in the 1800s, they carry strong histories and traditions, positioning themselves as prestigious boarding institutions that attract both local and international students. Yet, their historical foundations and elite positioning raise critical questions about the extent to which transformation is genuinely embedded within their institutional cultures.

By engaging with these themes, the literature review provides a framework for understanding the complex interplay between history, policy, and lived experience in shaping transformation in historically white independent schools. It also identifies gaps

in the existing research, particularly the underrepresentation of black alumni voices and black voices in academia, which this study seeks to address.

Historical Legacies of Education in South Africa

Colonialism & Education in RSA

The decolonisation of education cannot be achieved without an understanding of the colonial history that shaped South African education. South Africa has a complicated racial history due to the harsh colonialism and the apartheid regime. Systems of formal education were formed in the United Kingdom and various other northern countries when areas became urbanised due to the industrial revolution. Drastic societal and economic changes were brought about due to the industrial revolution, prioritising work that was driven by capitalism that essentially changed the way global relations worked, and still work today (Kallaway, 2022: 48-53).

The systems that were grounded during colonialism became the core of so many global systems, including labour and education – dominated by racial differentiation. White European settlers arrived in South Africa, starting the colonial period in 1652, where white superiority was heavily enforced. European imperialism and capitalism were the driving forces for the changes that the African continent was about to face. In the South African context, the British and the Dutch were the main settlers who arrived as dominant powers, aiming to ‘develop’ South Africa to be on the same level as the modern European societies (Kallaway, 2022: 47; Windel, 2009: 16-17). The two schools were founded between 1850 and 1880, with direct connections to Britain and Scotland through the processes of colonialism. The founding of the schools was part of the approach to further instil their ideals onto the colonised state.

The church played a major role in the era of colonial rule, and still plays an important role in the educational context of this study today. ‘The church’ is commonly used to refer to Anglican and Nonconformist churches (Kallaway, 2022: 49). Indigenous South Africans were initially exposed to formal education by church missionaries, who were the leaders in various decisions in the shaping of the South African society to suit their ideals. Peter Randall (1995: 40) calls the missionaries, the agents of cultural change of their time as they laid the foundations of the society, influencing black South Africans to abide by their

wishes, ranging from sectors of education to labour. The church, with an emphasis on the Anglican church, was successful in establishing their 'service' to South Africa as prestigious and ideal. This is still seen today in the idealism of white, English-speaking Anglican schools (Kenway and Lazarus, 2017: 267; Randall, 1995: 150). Despite the shift from religious education to secular and science-based education during the time of colonialism, the Anglican ideals remained stable in the structures they initiated. Church services and religious practices are still common practice in independent and government schools today. The church is regarded as a fundamental pillar of the school, playing a vital role in its values and community over the years of its existence.

It is important to note that the term 'black' in this dissertation is adopted from Steve Biko's (1977: 48) definition of black. This includes black South African, Coloured and Asian people; encompassing those racially discriminated against during apartheid. This is fitting to the underlying argument of the dissertation that lies in the liberation of black people and anti-racist activism. It also aligns with my identity as a Coloured person, raised to acknowledge that blackness is a political identity

The educational experience of the English and later the colonised Cape in South Africa was widely debated - leading to two opposing views on the modern and global capitalist order. Some argued that the aim of education was to enhance social control and conformity, while others argued that it was for humanitarian reasons, encouraging empowerment and engagement with the modern world (Kallaway, 2022: 47). The colonial education systems were sometimes considered as 'development' for the African context, but as time moved on it became clearer that these systems were put in place to maintain the segregation between white Europeans and black Africans. It was the motive of the British immigrants to recreate the economic and political conditions of their home through education which then flowed into other avenues of their modern system. This allowed British power to persist, creating what Randall (1995: 151) discusses as the colonial mentality which essentially psychologically manipulates the colonised mind into believing that culture and language of the coloniser is superior to their own. This seemingly unconscious devotion to colonised systems is what made colonialism so successful, to the extent that its benefits are still reaped today (Van der Westhuizen, 2018: 35).

The colonial period is often forgotten in the South African context, due to the recent and harsh experiences of apartheid. It is important to consider that which came before apartheid to have a complete understanding of the roots of racial inequality and white supremacy in the educational context and the wider society. This is crucial in being able to identify oppressive structures and institutions within the complex history of South Africa.

Apartheid Education in South Africa

Apartheid was formally instituted in 1948 with the rise of the National Party. The racial segregation in South Africa that was prevalent in colonial policies were intensified by apartheid. A rigid system was created to separate people based on their race, establishing laws and regulations that controlled nearly every aspect of life for black people in the country. One of the most significant aspects of apartheid was the forced removal of black people from areas deemed for white occupation, leading to the creation of segregated townships and homelands. This system not only restricted access to land and resources but also shaped the daily experiences of black South Africans, subjecting them to systemic discrimination and violence. Education became a tool of apartheid's racial hierarchy, with the government implementing policies like the Bantu Education Act of 1953 to ensure that black people received a substandard education, preparing them for menial labour rather than academic or professional careers. These educational policies reinforced the deep divisions within South African society, ensuring that the apartheid system would continue to thrive and further entrench inequality.

Life experiences of black and white individuals were known to be vastly different during the times of colonialism and apartheid. While black people made up a large majority of the South African population, the apartheid laws ensured that they inhabit a very small percentage of land and resources (Krantz, 2008: 291). The racist and inhumane behaviours toward black people were not new to apartheid but became legalised during this time. Black people were forced out of their homes, abiding by the Group Areas Act which allowed the white apartheid government to announce any area as a white area. This meant that only white people could live in these areas, disrupting black communities as they were forced to live in isolated townships or homelands (Krantz, 2008: 291; Trotter, 2009). Black people were strictly controlled in all areas of their lives - faced with harassment, intimidation and even murder, explained by Krantz (2008 291-292).

Education during apartheid was consistent with the entrenched system of racial separation, reinforcing the violent and dehumanising experiences faced by black people. Systems of education for white people were commonly adopted from the British education systems, which also held close relations to Christianity, as mentioned before (Behr, 1984: 5; Behr & Ngubentombi, 1988: 4-5). These systems were built to educate white people, creating an educational barrier between black and white people in South Africa. White students were taught more academic subjects while black students were prepared with practical subjects, preparing them for blue-collar work (McKeever, 2017: 119). Emphasis of the British imperialist and colonial intentions was seen in the Bantu Education Act of 1953 which further reinforced the inequality between white and black people. The racial inequalities continued to show during apartheid in the kinds of schools that were accessible to people of different races.

The Bantu Education Act played a crucial role in deepening racial inequality in South Africa. By placing black education under state control, the apartheid government dismantled mission schools that had previously offered better educational opportunities for black students. Instead, an inferior system was introduced, designed to limit black South Africans to labour-intensive and unskilled jobs, ensuring their continued economic and social subjugation. Government funding for black schools remained a fraction of what was allocated to white schools, resulting in overcrowded classrooms, a severe lack of resources, and poorly trained teachers. The curriculum was deliberately structured to provide only the most basic education, reinforcing the idea that black South Africans were only suited for menial labour. By restricting access to quality education, the apartheid government ensured that racial divisions remained deeply entrenched, limiting opportunities for social mobility and sustaining the oppressive structures that defined apartheid-era South Africa.

The institutionalisation of apartheid entrenched systemic racial inequality in every aspect of life, with education serving as one of its most powerful tools of oppression. The deliberate design of the Bantu Education system ensured that black South Africans remained in a cycle of poverty and subjugation, reinforcing the broader social and economic hierarchies of apartheid. By depriving black students of meaningful educational opportunities, the government systematically denied them access to higher-paying jobs and professional careers, effectively maintaining white dominance in all

spheres of society. These deep-rooted inequalities did not disappear with the official end of apartheid but continue to shape South Africa's educational landscape and broader socio-economic conditions today. The legacy of apartheid-era education remains evident in persistent disparities in school resources, access to quality teaching, and overall academic outcomes, highlighting the long-term consequences of racialised education policies.

Transformation Policy in Post-Apartheid Education

Defining Transformation

It is important to provide a clear definition of transformation for this dissertation and its institutional context. Transformation is an ongoing process of change that aims to shift structures from exclusive and colonial relations of power to improved structures that promote equity and equality (Williams, 2000: 168). Institutions such as independent schools can be seen as microcosms of the wider society as their social and political practices reflect that of the greater society they exist in (Mason, Hong and Kiesel, 2021:165).

The epistemological, conceptual, and institutional aspects of transformation provide a clearer understanding of how these schools can evolve to become more inclusive and equitable in their practices, structures, and cultures. The independent school is part of a wider community, making it integral to the growth, development, and well-being of the broader community they serve. The school should create opportunities, foster unity, and act as catalysts for positive social change. The three aspects of transformation unpack the complex idea of transformation and how it can be achieved.

One aspect of transformation that is relevant to this context is the epistemological aspect (Williams, 2001: 168). This dimension deals with knowledge that exists – whose voices are represented and how knowledge can be redefined in a more inclusive manner. It is essential for knowledge of African origin to be valued and given the same respect that is given to westernised knowledge. Transformation in the epistemological field requires active and critical (re)evaluation of knowledge promoted by institutions. This is important as epistemology is what reflects the institution's priorities and who holds dominance in norms and practices. An example of epistemological transformation can be

seen in the decolonisation of school curriculums where marginalised voices and perspectives are brought to the forefront in texts. Decolonising westernised school curriculums provides a more inclusive representation of the students and staff at the school as knowledge of different cultures, classes and life experiences are shared with respect and value. It is possible to have a coexistence of knowledge of African and western origins and frameworks.

Another aspect of transformation is the conceptual. This refers to the physical geography of South Africa and what is accessible to whom. Equity comes into play in the conceptual dimension of transformation as the aim is about challenging unequal access and ownership in spaces in South Africa as a blatant reminder of spatial laws during apartheid (2001: 169). The conceptual aspect of transformation goes deeper than the level of reformation, seen in some policy changes in the late 90's in South Africa as these were just considered surface level changes by many as underlying inequalities remained (Chisholm and Sujee, 2006: 142; Albertyn, 2007: 276). Despite changes in policies and laws in various sectors of South Africa, inequality remains. It is through conceptual transformation that access to sufficient and quality resources and services can be attained by all South Africans, regardless of their intersecting identities. Transformation is necessary to provide equitable access to people of all intersecting identities and break down barriers of exclusion.

The institutional dimension of transformation is the final aspect of Williams (2001) that I believe is relevant to this study. Institutions – public and private – all embody and perpetuate certain values and beliefs, making them a crucial component in the functioning of society. Due to the racialised and unequal power structures that are ingrained in the South African history, Williams (2001: 170) explains the racially exclusive norms that institutions carry. The schools that this study investigates reflect power dynamics that were established during the colonial era – once traditional sites of privilege and exclusivity. These schools preserved hierarchies of race, among others, through their traditions and values that marginalised black individuals. The role of institutional transformation is to dismantle these legacies by promoting diversity in practice among students, staff and leadership. Schools contribute to the wider community, making their role crucial to the improvement of the society the institution exists within. The role of management in institutions is crucial in implementing and sustaining change.

In the context of the independent school, management incorporates various individuals in different fields including academics, transformation, council, finance, etc. For this study I will be focusing on transformation management and the role that they play in implementing institutional transformation. Institutions need to remain accountable for their roles in moving along with the processes of change.

Transformation is a multifaceted process with each aspect playing a crucial role in dismantling the legacies of apartheid that still haunt the post-apartheid society. These three dimensions are essential in creating schools that not only reflect South Africa's democratic ideals but actively contribute to building a more just and equitable society.

South Africa has a unique relationship to transformation and education due to the previous colonial and apartheid systems. The task of the post-apartheid government was to restructure these systems that were built on ideals of discrimination and exclusion to become systems of equity, access and transparency. It has been noted that the symbolism and intentions attached to transformation in education was not nearly as successful as the actual implementation of transformation efforts in education within the country. Bush (2007) discusses the importance of committed and well supported members of the internal management of schools to reach the necessary transformation objectives within schools.

Race, Identity and Belonging in Educational Spaces

From Apartheid to Post-Apartheid: Race and Access in South African Schools

Understanding the distinction between public and private education in South Africa is crucial for addressing the research question of this dissertation. As previously noted, race has been a central factor in the country's history, and it similarly influences the historical divide between public and private schools. The terms 'independent school' and 'private school' are used interchangeably in this dissertation and in South African dialect (Pretorius, 2019: 95).

Public schools in South Africa are owned, funded, and controlled by the state under the Department of Basic Education. However, public schools are categorised into quintiles, a system designed to allocate funding based on the socio-economic status of the

communities they serve. Schools are divided into five quintiles, with Quintile 1 schools serving the poorest communities and Quintile 5 schools serving the wealthiest. Quintile 1 to 3 schools are classified as no-fee schools, meaning that they receive full government funding and do not charge school fees. In contrast, Quintile 4 and 5 schools, which are located in more affluent areas, receive less state funding and are allowed to charge school fees, often supplemented by additional fundraising efforts. Some public schools in these higher quintiles also have a level of autonomy, where facilities are not owned by the state and school fees provide additional resources, leading to disparities in educational quality between lower and higher quintile schools (Pretorius, 2019: 95).

As the name suggests, independent schools operate separately from the state. Their primary source of income comes from tuition fees, which are often exorbitantly high, making them accessible mainly to the wealthy. These schools also receive funding from alumni networks and private donors. Selod and Zenou (2002: 354) explain that parents play a significant role in the governing bodies of private schools, influencing decision-making and resource allocation, whereas public schools—particularly those in lower quintiles—have limited parental involvement in governance, often due to socio-economic constraints. This distinction between public and independent schools, combined with the quintile system, further reinforces inequalities in access to quality education across different socio-economic groups in South Africa.

Apartheid brought significant complexities to the education system as all schools were to enforce racial segregation, regardless of their affiliation with the government. Policies brought about during apartheid ensured that people of different races not only lived in separate areas but that they received education within those separated areas. This deliberate separation enabled the apartheid government to systematically provide black South Africans with an inferior education, reinforcing social and economic inequalities (Selod and Zenou, 2002: 4).

Several policies were implemented to enforce and sustain this racially segregated education system. As mentioned before, the Bantu Education Act of 1953 was one of the most significant policies, placing black education under state control and designing a curriculum that prepared black students for a life of manual labour and servitude. The Extension of University Education Act of 1959 further reinforced segregation by prohibiting black students from attending white universities and instead establishing

separate, underfunded institutions for different racial groups. The Group Areas Act, as discussed prior, also played a critical role by physically separating communities, ensuring that black students are confined to schools within their designated areas. These policies collectively entrenched educational inequality, limiting opportunities for black South Africans and ensuring that apartheid's hierarchies remained firmly in place.

As apartheid was nearing its end in 1990, some white public schools became semi-privatised. This meant that financing and control was given to the parents which further preserved the privileges that the white public schooling system provided white people. Semi-privatisation could be seen as a technique to create an extra barrier, as it prohibited the possible racial integration that was to come as white people feared this. By 1996, semi-privatised public schools became what they are still called today, "Model C" schools (Selod and Zenou, 2002: 5). Both model C and private schools used their authority in the new post-apartheid era to make tuition fees high, essentially preserving the high standards of education in the affluent areas, despite the racial integration.

There are great disparities between public (including model C schools) and private schools. Black parents who can afford for their children to go to private schools would often prefer to provide them with that education as previously "black schools" are not well resourced or funded. Private schools which are in the white areas of the apartheid urban structures have greater access to funds and resources than other schools, as well as low pupil to teacher ratios, making the quality of education very high. Such access to resources and funds were prohibited from black schools during apartheid and these schools still suffer with low quality education – to no fault of their own (Selod and Senou, 2002).

The Persistence of Racial Inequality in Schools: Whiteness, Privilege, and the Struggle for Transformation

Since the end of apartheid, South African schools, like most public institutions, were expected to undergo reform and transformation to become inclusive, diverse, and equal spaces, aligning with the vision of a "rainbow nation" and eliminating all forms of discrimination. What happened instead, was the manipulation of racism by the teaching and administrating administration staff and parents of previously "white" South African schools. The term "whiteness" in a South African school context alludes to distinct cultural and social practices that idealise British or first world standards (Dolby, 2002:9).

Race is continuously evolving and adapting, subtly embedding itself in spaces of power and influence. Instead of promoting social justice, school management and leaders redefined their spaces of white privilege and exclusion, shifting the focus away from traditional understandings of “racism” and framing it instead as part of the “school culture” - the accepted norms and practices within the school environment (Fataar, 2015: 7).

As Fataar (2015: 9) mentions, the South African education system faces multiple challenges due to the social and political reorganisations of the country since 1994. The end of apartheid brought about new shifts, experienced along with the rest of the country in various institutions and structures. Policies such as the 1997 South African Schools Act expected schools to have democratic and transparent policies to rectify the blatant racial discrimination at schools during apartheid (Dolby, 2002: 9-10).

Chisholm and Sujee (2006: 142), Dolby (2002: 11-15) and Fataar (2015: 3-7) all discuss the matter of racial discrimination being a prevalent issue in schools despite years of democratisation. The questions surrounding democratisation and desegregation of schools persist and remain largely unresolved. In her examination of a newly multiracial, working-class high school in Durban, Dolby (2002:7) describes a 'pedagogy of whiteness,' in which school administration perpetuates whiteness despite South Africa's social and political transitions. There is a constant reproduction and perpetuation of racism in various structures within schools – from the sports field to the staff room and even within the social spaces that parents share. The school environment can be a place that is alienating to anyone – staff, student or visitor – who is not white (Dolby, 2002: 7; Fataar, 2015: 56).

Invisible Whiteness

The social construct of race is at the forefront of the study, with lived experiences and the school's institutional culture being affected by race. Familiar comments made in the current post-apartheid era are “apartheid was long ago, get over it” and “why does race still matter?”. These comments tend to come from a place of defensiveness and ignorance when the topic of racial inequality is brought up, diminishing the relevance of racial matters by describing the end of apartheid to be the end of all experiences of racism. While apartheid did end blatantly racist legislation and violent behaviours, it did not eradicate the existence of race and racism – including the social organisations and

systems of power. Shona Hunter and Christi van der Westhuizen (2022) discuss whiteness and how it has happened to manifest on a global scale. What the colonial history of South Africa shows, along with several countries worldwide, is how whiteness is institutionalised to become an ideal characteristic of the wider neoliberal approach. Colonialism, as previously discussed, established the foundation for whiteness to dominate both societal systems and individuals. A democratic South Africa, including the formal education system has seen some positive development in terms of racial equality, but none to a degree that shows full racial equality. Despite institutional efforts to downplay racial inequalities, racism remains deeply embedded in society, and its effects have not diminished. Instead, it persists in more subtle forms than before, with its harm being dismissed or misinterpreted, making it appear less visible while continuing to shape social and economic realities. However, racism is still experienced overtly, with many individuals facing direct discrimination and exclusion in various aspects of daily life. This demonstrates how whiteness has successfully resisted the end of apartheid by adapting and embedding itself within post-apartheid's societal structures. As Dolby (2002: 15) expresses, race is malleable, constantly produced and reproduced in various institutional contexts. Because race is not stagnant, racism extends beyond interpersonal interactions. Whiteness has been described as a dynamic and shifting racial system that continuously adapts to maintain dominance, shaping the structures within which people exist.

What Hunter and van der Westhuizen (2022: 3-4) make clear is the importance in understanding whiteness to disestablish whiteness. They emphasise the need to pay attention to white supremacy – how it functions, how it has contributed to history and its current domination. Being able to identify the ways whiteness functions to an oblivious society is crucial in the decolonial process as the aim is to uproot the perpetuation of white supremacy. This is applicable to the study as the issues of racial inequality and white supremacy are not confined to the independent school space but is part of a broader societal issue.

Described as a pandemic - racism is destructive to the bodies of black people who experience it. The disproportionate allocation of funding and services across communities is a clear indicator of racism in the South African context. As a consequence of apartheid, predominantly black communities, that were once designated areas

exclusively for black people, are still placed on the backburner for adequate education, service and basic rights (Maharaj, 2020). The social, geographical and economic factors that black people still face is also met with the impacts of racism on the body. Hunter and van der Westhuizen (2022: 5) elaborate on the increase in incidents of post-traumatic stress disorder in black individuals and the universal reality of premature and violent deaths of black people. An example of this universal reality is the murder of George Floyd in the United States in 2020. This tragedy is a prime example of the effects of racism on a global scale. Today, white supremacy has become nearly invisible through universalising itself as the original way of doing/being or the norm. This study aims to understand what is hidden amongst these norms and unveil the effects institutionalised whiteness has on black individuals and their lived realities. By revealing the lived experiences of black alumni in a historically white independent school, I place a micro lens on a macro situation that exists in the wider South African context as well as a global scale. This study also aims to highlight how important it is for white individuals to be present and active in the process of anti-racism, transformation and decolonisation. This requires the unpacking of what Hunter and van der Westhuizen (2022: 10) elaborate on as invisible, ignorant and seemingly innocent whiteness. An anti-racist and diverse community requires learning and unlearning from all races as we consciously and subconsciously perpetuate the norms that were formed by whiteness.

Toni Morrison (1975) characterises racism as distraction, keeping non-white people working tirelessly at proving their existence essentially holding them back from thinking beyond their defensiveness. She expresses this in the following words.

“The function, the very serious function of racism, which is distraction. It keeps you from doing your work. It keeps you explaining over and over again your reason for being. Someday says you have no language, so you spend twenty years proving that you do. Somebody says your head isn’t shaped properly, so you have scientists working on the fact that it is. Somebody says that you have no art, so you dredge that up. Somebody says that you have no kingdoms, so you dredge that up. None of that is necessary. There will always be one more thing.”

These distractions are built into societal norms, distorting the focus for black individuals as they are kept from producing knowledge and new things but rather kept in a cycle of defending their identities. The same concept of distraction applies in the invisible

operations of whiteness where there is a universalised manner of viewing and interpreting things. The white gaze tends to form part of distractions as it is limiting and oppressive to the experiences of black people – not only in literature but in the physical world as well. With whiteness placed as the norm, blackness is positioned as abnormal or wrong. The systems of whiteness, particularly in urban environments, play into these differences, forcing blackness into a position of guilt where black people are immediately held responsible for negative experiences of white people such as danger and crime. Hunter and van der Westhuizen (2022) express that whiteness portrays itself in an innocent and invisible way, holding itself responsible for all positive aspects in the environment and shifting responsibility for violence and other wrongdoings onto the hyper-individualised subject which is the black person in this context. The terror and hostile feelings presented by white people is what Nirmal Puwar (2004) describes as an organisational terror where certain spaces or positions have been ‘reserved’ to preserve their norms. The assumption is that anyone who is not white will endanger the norm with their presence, becoming a threat to the territory of whiteness. In the context of this study, the historically white independent schools can be seen as a space that holds an unnamed norm of whiteness, protected and perpetuated by those in positions of authority and those who have attended the schools.

There is an element of doubt placed on black individuals or cultures existing in the same spaces that carry white norms. Black people who become members to these spaces are under a constant spotlight, observed by the white members or white authority. In these spaces, the black individual must work twice as hard to be accepted and become nearly as successful as their white peers. Black people tend to have to prove themselves in these positions as well as carry their family or community name as a form of representation in their success and acceptance.

As Nirmal Puwar (2004) describes her book, *Space Invaders*, she emphasises the importance of refusing and destabilising whiteness – something that can be done with the very presence of a black individual. Instead of abiding by the rules enforced by institutionalised whiteness and racism, black individuals need to develop new norms and understandings that dethrones the privilege whiteness holds. This study intends to amplify the voices of black individuals who are taking up space in institutions that do not easily accept them.

Independent Schools and the Reproduction of Privilege

Existing Research and Global Perspectives

The following section discusses the existing research on the topic of the study. The fields of race and transformation in education, particularly secondary independent education is not extremely vast. The research that does exist within the context has guided me to understand how I can approach my study and where gaps still lie within the field.

While the Eastern Cape provides a very small context, it remains relevant in the wider global and sociological context. It provides detailed insights into the local dynamics of the schools which can relate to broader theoretical frameworks and universal ideas. This study does not exist independently as I have been provided with foundational understandings of the topics of race and transformation in historically white independent schools. This study aims to provide more information to the field by focusing on the specific context and connecting it to previously existing theoretical frameworks.

Julia Willand's study (2021) is an example of similar work in the social science field that critically examines the independent school environment and the intricacies of relationships between students, alumni and the application of transformation efforts. Willand focuses on the power of social media along with the pressures of protests such as the 2015 #FeesMustFall and 2020 #BlackLivesMatter in initiating power shifts in systems that have historically been determined by white people in positions of authority. This study exposes how transformation can be performative and how this is damaging to students – black and white. As mentioned before, the independent school is a microcosm of a greater society, meaning that the school holds a civic responsibility to promote ways of being that are open minded and appreciates differences among individuals. The role of transformation interventions is observed by Willand (2021), identifying the expectations of the management and how they intervene in unravelling deep roots of racial violence, discrimination and resistance to transformation within the independent school systems. A priority of transformation efforts, as mentioned by Willand (2021), is the use of language that is both critical and racially literate. Language is essential in the efforts of transformation as it is a driving force of inclusion or exclusion. With the appropriate language, communities can be equipped to converse in constructive and honest ways. This is a manner of disrupting power dynamics in systems where the authority is in the

hands of white people. Language is a tool that can introduce a wider sense of acceptance and community, removing the element of privatisation of diversity and replacing it with transparency to the community the school serves.

Willand's study emphasises the power that young people possess, proving that with the amplification of marginalised voices, their cries can be heard, and changes can be made. Transformation is a constant, ongoing journey that requires active efforts from various members of the school community.

Shose Kessi and Josephine Cornell (2015) have done various studies on race and transformation in the tertiary context of the University of Cape Town (UCT). While there are clear differences between the university and high school settings, with different systems and power dynamics, the historical foundations and current racial climate remains similar. In 2015, Kessi and Cornell examined the lived experiences of black students at UCT and discourses of race and transformation. This study identified three main findings that encompassed the reflections of the students and the racial dynamics at UCT. The findings include the student's identity reflections, everyday experiences on campus and the historical and institutional barriers that contribute to the racial dynamics experienced by the students.

This study links the real-life experiences of black students with the often-unassuming practices and symbols of exclusion. Black students reflect on feelings of disconnect between themselves and the institution and their white peers. One participant described the internalised inferiority felt due to daily experiences of racialising encounters. The theoretical framework of cultural capital plays a role in this study, as it does in mine. Kessi and Cornell (2015) explain how black students are stuck between resisting and assimilating into whiteness, seen through the expressions of cultural capital. There is a sense of familiarity that white people tend to feel in the location of UCT due to the cultural symbols and practices carried by the institution. Due to the history that links as far as colonial times, cultural capital remains as symbolism of whiteness that has prevailed over time.

This study by Kessi and Cornell is relevant in discussions of my study as it looks at how black students are perceived in the institutional space, how they identify in the complexities of the university and how transformation efforts can further remove black

students towards exclusion. Institutions tend to use transformation performatively, upholding the existing power structures that exclude and marginalise black students. This study is one of many that emphasises the importance of active and meaningful transformation.

Researchers such as Owens (2020) allow me to provide a comparative perspective on transformation efforts and black students experiences in the historically white independent school as she writes from the context of the United States. As a black woman who has been a student in a historically white institution and now works in a similar space, we share similar experiences and views on identity challenges, transformation and social justice for our communities. Owens (2020: 2) describes a contradictory situation where the work she does is emotionally taxing and often traumatic due to her personal experiences, yet it remains profoundly beneficial to the Black students she serves. The challenges Owens once faced in university were the same challenges that black girls were facing in the school that she was now employed at. Some feelings experienced were isolation, rejection and inadequacy, making the school environment difficult to navigate as black students do not feel that they belong. She explains a scenario where a black parent raised concern about their daughter having potential difficulty transitioning and thriving in the school based on her race. Owens initially wished to respond to the parent by referencing Jordan Peele's 2017 film, "Get Out" but rather reassured the parent that her daughter will be supported through her transition into the school. The reference to Jordan Peele's film in this scenario highlights how institutions, particularly those with deep colonial roots, can be performative about embracing transformation and diversity, using it to seem progressive. The reality behind the superficial transformation efforts are attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate deep systemic racism and marginalisation. The film is a critique of environments that promote inclusivity outwardly but maintain harmful power imbalances within the institutions systems. Owens (2020) emphasises the importance of resistance and finding community within fellow black peers. One can find affirmation and confidence through challenging dominant norms, advocating for oneself and feeling supported by peers – of all races – while doing this. While the geographical and historical contexts differ between South African schools and the United States, the experiences of black student and the transformational work that is required is very similar. This shows that racial inequality and active transformation is a universal topic, making the contributions of this study and those like it beneficial to various societies.

Kristan Puttick (2011) and Mukisa Mujulizi (2022) have both done studies on lived experiences of students regarding race and educational institutions. Puttick focuses on first years – both black and white – and narratives of race and racism in the post-apartheid South African context within UCT. Mujulizi's study looks at the lives of black alumni in private schools in Cape Town. Both studies examine the role of a black student in a historically white institution, highlighting the identity challenges and expectations of transformation efforts of the institutions. A common finding of both studies, that is also reflected in my study, is the mutability of racism, often hidden in behaviours and beliefs within institutions. Racism is perpetuated by whiteness, which is the driving force, remaining superior as an extension of colonialism. Just as my study looks at a post-apartheid context, these studies emphasise the issues of racial inequality in historically white educational spaces despite the many years as a democratic country. The aim of these studies involves amplifying the voices of black students who may not always be supported and heard within the institutions they occupy.

Intersecting Identities and Inequalities Between Private and Public Schooling

There have been continuous debates over the post-apartheid time (Motala and Dieltiens, 2008; Chisholm and Sujee, 2006) comparing independent schools in South Africa to government schools. The topics of education and race relations, class, gender and education are deeply intertwined, producing complex identity negotiations for students and staff in South African schools, regardless of the control of the schools. One major difference seen between public and private schools in South Africa is the level of resources, opportunities and access that is available (Motala and Dieltiens, 2008: 127). While government funded schools were faced with policies to enforce change under the post-apartheid government, they were left behind due to the lack of support and action of government and the lack of resources made available to them. On the other hand, independent schools could proceed to improve their resources and quality of education due to their dependence on private fees. This is where the intersecting struggles of class, race, poverty come into play as the majority of Black South Africans – who are the majority attendees of government schools - are disadvantaged due to the position that institutional racism places them in, even after apartheid. Insert statistics here and reference

The deeply rooted history of independent schools provided their institutions with a head start at the crucial time that was the beginning of democracy. The progress of independent schools in an educational aspect is excellent, but the societal reality shows that independent schools are places of great privilege, requiring specific forms of access to be accepted and successful (Dolby, 2002: 20).

It is through power at an institutional level that racism was able to persist through the end of apartheid. Dolby (2002: 7) describes how whiteness was perpetuated by school managements to remain separate from the new democratic South Africa. The decisions made by the institutions of schools, seen in literature by Dolby (2002), Chisholm and Sujee (2006) and Soudien (2007), show surface levels of integration as Black students are allowed into these spaces. While integration of races is a great achievement for the time, the post-apartheid era brought about a major need for assimilation into white schools. Fataar (2015: 4) mentions the complex social and cultural dynamics that Black students must face in an educational institution that rejects their natural identity.

To dismantle the deeply rooted systematic barriers in South African education, institutions need to be critically analysed. Independent schools are easily disregarded to be elitist and privileged – accepted for what they are, as Fataar (2015: 7) mentions, cultures of exclusion. Independent schools need to be transparent about their policies and practices on topics of racial transformation and diversity. This must be done to ensure that students of various intersecting backgrounds can access independent school spaces and succeed, accessing opportunities without assimilating to whiteness.

The Racial Climate in South African Education

The existing literature on education in a post-apartheid South Africa does not fail to mention the intersections of education with race and class in the context. One example of blatant racial discrimination occurring in a school is discussed in a News24 article (2015) where a Curro school in Pretoria arranged their students into classrooms based on race. Black students were placed in one classroom while white children were placed in a separate classroom. The management and staff of this particular Curro school are reported to be “white only”. The News24 article reported the communication of an apology from the school and that they were to implement transformational changes in the school (News24, 2015).

There are multiple incidents occurring in South African schools that are examples to the need for transformation to be an active discourse in high schools. One significant event that sheds light on the racial dynamics of the era is the widely shared peaceful demonstration at Pretoria High School for Girls in 2016. Young female students participated in this protest, rallying against restrictive regulations and biased criticisms targeting Black students over their hair (Mahr, 2016). This demonstration brought attention to the persistent discrimination prevalent in South African schools, gaining widespread attention as it went viral. The events of 2016 underscored the enduring racial tensions in the country, occurring more than two decades after the welcoming of democracy, yet revealing continued degradation and marginalisation of Black individuals. The impact of this viral protest prompted other educational institutions across the country to review their policies and stances on discrimination, striving to become more actively inclusive and diverse (Alubafi, Ramphalile, and Rankoana, 2018: 2).

More recently, the Black Lives Matter movement sparked up in 2020, against the deep-rooted perpetuation of racism and colonialism within the frameworks of institutions and systems across global societies (Sobo, Lambert, and Heath, 2020: 243-244). Both physical and virtual demonstrations called for the dismantling of exclusionary, oppressive, and biased systems on all fronts, including educational institutions. Black Lives Matter advocates for inclusive systems and seeks to foster cultural changes that promote a sense of belonging for Black individuals in the spaces they occupy (Thomas and Ashburn-Nardo, 2020: 741-743).

Racially charged incidents are not a rare occurrence in educational institutions, or in the global context. These incidents are the examples that prove the need for active and engaged transformation to take place in educational institutions. Dolby (2002: 8) discusses the regeneration of race over time, disguising itself to become unrecognisable as race, but rather becomes the general practices and structure of the school life. To historically white schools, whiteness is part of the identity of the school, which has then been used to escape "blackness". The staff and management who had the power to define the school policies and practices held the power, carrying whiteness as an identity they are proud of. (Dolby, 2002: 8-10).

Despite the changes in a democratic South Africa, Black students still struggle with identity negotiations in historically white independent schools – as seen in my honours

research essay (Ferreira, 2023). Past students expressed a lack of racial representation in their school, which proves the need for institutional, conceptual and epistemological transformation to constantly take place.

James Baldwin broadly discusses race, often mentioning that it is a political reality rather than personal identity struggles. Racialised experiences of black students in South African schools are relevant to the individual's identity navigation but it is also a reflection of the history, culture and valued experiences of the institution. Racialised incidents discussed, whether it be segregation or protests, are not isolated events but manifestations of a deeper systemic issue within the education systems. Schools are not only reflections of society; they are responsible for shaping society. Considering existing research, race continues to dictate who does or does not belong.

As discussed earlier, race is a social construct that was designed to sustain power structures of colonialism and apartheid. Whiteness is extremely immersed within South African traditions, cultures and even within curriculums in educational institutions. These are all avenues for whiteness to remain in authoritative positions and marginalise black people, particularly black students in this context. There is a common thread of superficial transformation in schools across South Africa whereby schools present as diverse and constantly developing to the public. This study intends to delve deeper into the experiences and management of transformation within the schools of focus, interrogating the ways race may continue to shape educational experiences.

Based on the findings of this study and many others, we cannot put our racialised history behind us as there are still remnants of racial hierarchies within our schools. The past needs to be confronted in order to prosper as the democratic and equal country South Africa prides itself to be.

Conclusion

This chapter provided a critical overview of the historical and more recent literature on race, education and transformation in South Africa, narrowing the focus on historically white independent schools. Tracing back to the colonial and apartheid-era, highlighting the roots of racial segregation in education to demonstrate how these legacies continue to shape the schooling system today. The discussions in this chapter shed a light on the

persistent structural inequalities that privilege whiteness within independent schools, reinforcing hierarchies despite the formal end of apartheid over 30 years ago.

The concept of whiteness as an institutional norm continues to shape the cultural and social environments of historically white schools. Previously existing studies have demonstrated how institutions such as these independent schools maintain exclusive practices, often requiring black students to assimilate into the dominant norms. Black students are then met with identity struggles because of the school steering away from embracing diversity in identities. This aligns with theories of cultural capital, which illustrate how privilege is reproduced through education, often marginalising those who do not possess the dominant forms of capital.

The literature also underscores the limitations of superficial transformation efforts in schools, emphasising the disconnect between policy and lived experiences. While schools have introduced diversity initiatives, research suggests that these efforts are often performative, failing to challenge deeply embedded power structures. Critical race theory provides a valuable lens for understanding these dynamics, revealing how racism continues to manifest in subtle and systemic ways.

By engaging with these existing debates, this chapter has established a foundation for the study's critical analysis of transformation management in independent schools. Few studies have examined independent schools, and almost none centre the voices of black alumni. This study intends to address that gap.

Chapter 3: Methods

Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methods used during the research process to achieve the study's objectives. The aim of the research is to gather an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of black alumni regarding race and transformation management, as well as a critical analysis on transformation structures of two historically white independent schools in the Eastern Cape. An in-depth understanding of the experiences and practices regarding race and transformation in the specific school contexts was necessary, making qualitative research design the most suitable to achieve the objectives.

This chapter will discuss how and why qualitative research is relevant to this study. The following section will discuss the research methods used, along with their limitations. Sub-headings found in this chapter include in-depth semi-structured interviews, explaining the research participants and ethical considerations before concluding.

Research Design

The research aimed to gather an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of black alumni regarding race and transformation management, as well as a critical analysis on transformation structures in the two schools. The design best suited to these aims is qualitative research. Qualitative research positions the researcher in the real world, using interpretive practices such as interviews, observations and photographs to understand a social context in its natural environment (Creswell, 2016: 46-47). Qualitative research is often used to interpret human experiences – studying the meanings people attach to their lives. This form of research provides insight into the ways in which race is experienced and negotiated within institutional spaces, uncovering narratives that may otherwise remain unseen. Given the focus on transformation and racial inequalities, qualitative research is essential in uncovering the structural and cultural factors that shape individuals' interactions within historically white independent schools.

Methodology

Semi-structured Interviews

A common method used in qualitative research is interviews as the researcher intends to understand people's lives and the meanings they attach to certain experiences (Bryman, 2012: 470; Lichterman, 2021: 584). Interviews, particularly semi-structured interviews, are beneficial for qualitative research as the focus is on the point of view of the participant. The aim is to understand their point of view and what they believe to be important within the context of the research (Bryman, 2012: 470). The natural act of talking makes it easier for participants to be part of the research, especially if they are in an informal and comfortable environment.

Flexibility is a word that reoccurs in conversation of semi-structured interviews as it encompasses various aspects of the form of interview. Flexibility can be seen in the use

of the interview schedule – the instrument of the research – as it is used as a guide, followed to a certain extent. While it is important to have a clear purpose for the interview, the researcher may sway slightly from the order or questions of the interview schedule to collect the best responses from the participants. Qualitative interviews, such as semi-structured interviews, intend to collect responses that are rich and detailed (Bryman, 2012: 470-471). If a participant needs more steering toward a better response or has more to say on a particular aspect of the topic, the researcher can be flexible in the questions they ask and prompts they use.

As I aimed to gain an in-depth perspective into two areas - the lived experiences of black alumni of the two historically white independent schools and a deeper understanding of the history, experiences and goals of the transformation management of the schools – semi-structured interviews appeared to be the most appropriate method. This method allowed me to have conversational, face to face, semi-structured interviews with each participant to find answers to my interview schedule questions. Face-to-face interviews were flexible in the possibility of being in-person or virtual as some participants were in different provinces and countries to myself as the researcher. Despite the change in location in some interviews, there was always an opportunity to create a safe and comfortable environment for the participant on the other end of the interview. As mentioned before, an interview schedule was used, guiding the direction and flow of the interview. Some points of the interviews required the interview schedule to be altered as the interview guided the flow of the questions. The changes in the interview schedule did not steer away from the interview's purpose as all important questions were asked and topics were discussed in the interviews. Using semi-structured interviews creates an environment for the participants to further elaborate their responses, sharing what they believe is important about the topic.

Participants could freely express their experiences and opinions on race and transformation, letting me as the researcher gather rich and detailed responses to my interview schedule. The use of semi-structured interviews allowed the participants to provide examples in their responses, clearly reflect on their lived experiences from their time at the schools and express important events and moments to support their responses. While the topic of race can be triggering for some due to their experiences, the environment of the interview was comforting, and I did not force any participants to

respond or elaborate on anything they were uncomfortable with. Participants received the interview schedule before the interviews occurred, allowing them to have an idea of the topic and how in-depth they would like to go with their responses.

Sampling (research participants)

I have used two non-probability sampling techniques – purposive and snowball sampling – to select participants for my study. Purposive sampling allows the researcher to determine which characteristics participants should have, forming the target population and identifying the sample of that population to suit the research goals (van Haute, 2021: 249). One of the study's aims was to explore the lived experiences of black alumni regarding race and their perspectives on the school's transformation management. Another aim was to fully understand the history, progress and future goals of the transformation management staff at the two schools. The final aim was to understand the importance and influence of transformation structures in historically white independent schools, with external experts on transformation and education. Purposive sampling was the most suitable technique as I hold strong affiliations with past students and staff members of the two schools that this study focused on.

Using purposive sampling, I selected the most appropriate characteristics of participants to achieve the research objectives. I had 3 separate groups of participants to fully achieve my objectives. Group 1 required participants to be black and South African and have matriculated from the two historically white independent schools between the years 2013 and 2023. This group was asked about their lived experiences regarding race and racial discrimination at the school and their perspectives on transformation management. Group 2 required participants to have worked in transformation management at one of the two schools between the years 2013 and 2023. This group provided insight into the formal and informal policies and practices of transformation management, its history and its goals. Group 3 required participants to have no clear affiliation to the two schools and have experience in facilitating or consulting in transformation management in the educational field in South Africa, preferably involving historically white independent schools. Purposive sampling was combined with snowball sampling for each of the three groups. I had initially gathered participants to form the sample groups and asked them (in the interviews) to mention other possible participants who suit the characteristics set out in my purpose sampling technique. The use of snowball sampling allows participants

to identify additional potential participants to be included in the sample group (Olsen, 2012: 24; van Haute, 2021: 250).

My affiliations with the two schools allowed me to directly recruit black alumni between the relevant years to participate in the study, but also ask other fellow alumni to identify potential participants based on their connections. The same affiliations with the two schools directed me towards people who worked in transformation management in these schools between 2013 and 2023, forming my initial sample group 2 and broadening it with snowball sampling. I formed my third sample group based on people mentioned in South African literature on education and my personal experiences with facilitators and consultants in transformation and education and increased the number of participants through snowball sampling. Group 3 provided a clear understanding of what should be expected from transformation management in historically white independent schools in a post-apartheid era of South Africa. All prospective participants were informed of the topics of the research, being race and transformation in independent schools. This ensured that participants agreed to the interviews with full knowledge of the topics.

The data was collected using semi-structured in-depth interviews between 45 minutes and one hour long. Interviews took place in person and virtually. All interviews were conducted in spaces and manners where the participants felt safe and comfortable – in public but quiet spaces or virtually using Zoom with their cameras on or off. As mentioned before, the topic and interview schedule were made available to participants before agreeing to participate, ensuring that they understood the kinds of questions asked and the objective of the study before they agreed to participate.

Analysis

This study employs a thematic analysis to identify repetitive patterns that appear in participant responses. Thematic analysis is a qualitative approach that allows the identification and interpretation of patterns within the data collected. A thematic analysis is suitable for this study as it provided a closer understanding of the experiences and structures based on the information provided by participants. This form of analysis is methodical and rigorous as the transcripts of interviews were read multiple times. The transcripts were supported with notes documented by me as the researcher and interviewer that observed emotions, tone and body language of participants throughout the interviews. Codes were derived from the similarities in responses such as historical

factors, institutional cultures, racial inequalities, and transformation in the school context. These codes were heavily informed by the theoretical framework of Cultural Capital and the Critical Race Theory to guide the study to remain within the focus of the topic. Codes are then grouped into themes based on patterns in the responses, these lead to the different chapters in the analysis as thematic analysis guides the production of analysing the data in a structured manner. Evidence of the themes are seen in the way that the analysis is structured, with meaning being clearly expressed and discussed within the context of the study. The themes that inform the analysis provide the narrative, answering to the research question of the study.

Limitations

There are a few limitations to this study. Due to time constraints, a small sample size of the three groups were used for interviews. Participants from groups one and two all attended or worked at one of two historically white independent schools. This made the data specific to the context of the two schools, and not generalisable to all historically white independent schools. The research objective focused on racial inequality and transformation, with a focus on black South African alumni experiences. Black students from other countries are not part of this research, neither are students of other marginalised identities. The intention was not to exclude individuals of other ethnicities and identities but to deeply analyse the racial aspect of transformation management due to time constraints. Further research should include a larger sample size with more diverse marginalised identities including ethnicity, race, gender, sexuality and class levels. Despite the limitations of this study, it still provides valuable insights into the sociological field of racial inequality, transformation and education in South Africa and globally.

Ethical Considerations

Rhodes University's Higher Degrees Committee and Ethics Committee approved this study before research was conducted. All guidelines of the two committees were adhered to throughout the research process. All participants voluntarily participated in the study, with no coercion or force. Each participant read and signed an informed consent document before the interview began. This document emphasised voluntary

participation and an understanding of possible risk despite no harm being brought to participants in the research process.

Confidentiality was guaranteed to all participants. There are no identifying characteristics of participants shared in the study. Participants are given pseudonyms in the data analysis and throughout the study, preventing any harm to the participants. The name and location of the two schools used in this study are also withheld to protect all those who could be negatively affected by the findings of this study under the ethics approval number: 2024-7950-8963.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter aimed to explain the suitability of a qualitative research design to achieve this study's objectives. The research methods used were elaborated on, including the research instrument of interview schedules, explanations on non-probability sampling used, data collection and analysis. Ethical considerations and limitations of the study were discussed in the final sections of this chapter.

Chapter 4: Racialised Cultural Capital Theory

A 'racialised cultural capital framework'

The primary aim of this study seeks to critically analyse transformation management efforts and structures at two historically white independent schools in the Eastern Cape. Through a 'racialised cultural capital theoretical framework' the experiences of black alumni and the personnel who occupy transformation positions within the schools will be analysed. Because this study seeks to combined two different theoretical tools, i.e. critical race theory and cultural capital, this chapter will therefore examine and discuss these tools and concepts that make up this 'racialised cultural capital framework'. The choice of theoretical framework is informed by a specific acknowledgement of the previously white educational institution and the history of the South African context. Lastly, a 'racialised cultural capital framework' is favoured because race is intricately

related to culture, as racial identities have developed cultural expressions in varying contexts.

To arrive at a 'racialised cultural capital framework', this study infuses Pierre Bourdieu's (1986) theory of cultural capital with critical race theory. Pierre Bourdieu's concept of capital, from which cultural capital emerged, is an example of how resources, both material and non-material, shape our experiences of the social world in positive and negative ways. This amounts to what Bourdieu called the "practical logic" or "feel for the game" which refers to the way individuals apply their cultural capital to effectively navigate everyday situations (Bourdieu, 1977: 110). It often involves unconscious acting aligned with norms and expectations of a particular context, such as the independent school environment.

Bourdieu used the concept of capital from Marxian economics, but he broadened its meaning and distinguished between different forms of capital. Capital in Bourdieu's logic may be thought of as the "resources individuals possess that give them power within a field. The central proposition of social Bourdieu's theorization about capital is that networks of relationships constitute a valuable resource for the conduct of social affairs" (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998: 243). Capital, including cultural capital, is both a possession and is relational. Individuals may acquire cultural capital through social structures and networks. This is the possessional aspect of cultural capital – examples being, where individuals acquire skills or educational qualifications and adapt to language dialect and fluency or knowledge of a certain culture. Cultural capital is used as a resource in the relevant contexts once they have possessed it – consciously or unconsciously. Cultural capital is relational as it is only relevant in the context it is structured in. The social context determines the value of cultural capital as different social spaces have varying levels of value and understandings of abstract and material things that are considered cultural capital. Bourdieu distinguished between three forms of capital: economic capital, cultural capital, and social capital. It is therefore cultural capital that underpins the theoretical base of this study.

Bourdieu used cultural capital to refer to non-financial assets that influence, reflect, and enhance an individual's social position. Additionally, cultural capital aided in formulating a better understanding between the relationships of power and culture within societies, on an individual and group level (Swartz, 1997: 190). This, he used to explore French

educational institutions as the education system is seen to be a main reproducer of social inequality and resembles exclusive behaviours in the wider society (Bourdieu, 1974). To make the theoretical framework for this study a 'racialised cultural capital framework', critical race theory will be used as an additional theory as it foregrounds race and racism and advocates for meaningful outcomes regarding racial inequalities (Bell, 2023: 33-35). For this study, critical race theory is conceived as an aid to cultural capital insofar as it identifies social inequalities and particularly includes a racial focus of this study by arguing for cultural capital as also embedded in race and racism independent (previously white) educational institutions. As South Africa celebrates its 30th year of democracy, race still plays a crucial role in the socio-economic inequalities that transpire in the South African society. The foregrounding of race is not done with the intention to exclude the identities that intersect with race, but rather to deeply engage in the racial aspect of inequality while acknowledging the intersectionality that exists in identities, inequalities and lived experiences.

Cultural Capital

As previously mentioned, cultural capital refers to non-financial assets that may influence a person's social standing such as culturally validated consumption patterns, skills, attributes, tastes and objects. Cultural capital encompasses both tangible and intangible forms of symbolic power, representing a collection of valued cultural resources acquired through an individual's socialisation and experiences. In Bourdieu's sociology, symbolic power is the ability to influence behaviour by controlling meanings of symbols and ideas in manners that are accepted by society (Huang, 2019: 46; Swartz, 1997: 74). Put differently, symbolic power refers to the ability of the dominant/privileged groups or individuals within a particular field to normalise certain methods, ways of being, or ways social life as the norm.

Sullivan (2001), looking at the nexus between cultural capital and educational attainment in the UK, argues that cultural capital is about familiarity with the dominant culture in society, and that the education system, in their context, assumed the possession of cultural capital. Sullivan (2001) goes on to acknowledge that this assumption makes it difficult for lower class children to succeed. Similarly, Dumais (2002), in the America context, argues that cultural capital posits that the culture of the dominant class is

transmitted and rewarded by the educational system. In the context of this study, because the schools under study exist as raced spaces, as argued in the previous chapter, cultural capital is primarily employed to explore the experiences of Black alumni during their times at the schools against the efforts to transform the cultures from the perspectives of transformation officers (TDI's) at the schools. This aim is based on the idea that aspects of family life, particularly cultural resources, function as a form of capital that helps students navigate school expectations, gain social acceptance, and feel a sense of belonging (Lamont & Lareau, 1988). This is because cultural capital can be exchanged and used to perpetuate exclusivity within the specific context of a field. In this regard, capital in its entirety, as Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992: 101) refer to it, as a determining factor of enablement or exclusion from a field and the experience the specific field has to offer.

Cultural capital is defined by three states, i.e. Embodied, objectified, and institutionalised (Bourdieu, 1986: 241; Huang, 2019: 46). These three forms of cultural capital can be used as a 'ticket' to gain entry and advantages into spaces that hold specific levels of status or privilege within a field or context. The context that Bourdieu places cultural capital within is called the "field" such as educational contexts. This is not a physical field, but a "distinct realm of social life (such as religion, culture, or education) that has a relative autonomy" (Wacquant and Bourdieu, 1989: 3). The authors go on to define a field as a socially constructed network of relations between agents and positions within society (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). From this definition, each field has its specific set of laws, norms, values, and hierarchies that are often implicit, making it the norm within the network. The rules or laws within a field are often made by those high up in the hierarchy and are generally followed by everyone who subscribe to the field (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 99-100). An example of a field in the context of this study is the field of education. While this aligns with Bourdieu's research on education as a field, this study's different aspect is that it focusses on race rather than class positionality. Because fields are networks of relations within society, Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992: 38-9) also argue social phenomena should not be examined in isolation but rather be situated within the "context of interactions with other historically, institutionally, culturally and interpersonally situated referents". It is in this light that the educational experiences of Black alumni at the two independent schools are examined in relation to their racial identities. Cultural capital is suitable for this study as it carries significance in

understanding how social identities can translate into educational advantages or disadvantages. (Tanyanyiwa, 2014: ii). This does not only shape the experiences of students while they receive their education, but the long-term experiences relating to their identities and education.

Three Forms of Cultural Capital

Cultural capital is not able to replace any other form of capital, such as social, economic or symbolic, but it can be transferred to a different form of capital (Huang, 2019: 45). Possessing familial wealth is an example of how economic capital can be transferred as familial wealth can be used for good quality education (institutionalised cultural capital), which positions an individual to have good social networks (social capital) and a high chance of attaining a well-paying job (economic capital). This is an example of economic capital being transformed into social and cultural capital. Cultural capital is seen to have a particular value within the relevant field and can vary between fields. Each of the three forms of capital can be examined through the feedback of participants in conversations of the alum's lived experiences and the conversations on policy and practice by the staff members who occupy transformation and diversity roles within the schools.

The first form of cultural capital is the objectified state. This is the material realm of cultural capital that signifies cultural status through owning a material object (Bourdieu, 1986: 242-246). In the context of this study, an example of objectified cultural capital would be one of the latest Apple technology products or clothing items from high-quality brands. While this form of cultural capital is not produced by the school and rather by the family, having these objects becomes part of the unsaid norm of being a student at the two schools. Owning expensive technology or clothing is seen as a tool to prove belonging in the space with familial wealth. This example shows how important the social institution of the family is in Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital as it contributes to the exclusive behaviours and cultures in the educational space (Bourdieu, 1977: 87).

The second form of cultural capital is the embodied state, which is seen in physical behaviours and attitudes, forming what Bourdieu describes as relevant to habitus (Bourdieu, 1986: 244). Habitus refers to deep-rooted habits, behaviours and attitudes that are shaped by social backgrounds and experiences. According to Bourdieu, Habitus refers to one's disposition, which influences the actions that one takes. The Habitus can

even be manifested in one's physical demeanor, such as the way one carries oneself or walks (Dumais, 2002: 46). Tanyanyiwa (2014:68), citing Bourdieu (1993), argues that the habitus “represents the ways of acting, feeling, thinking and being, gained from our cultural history that generally stays with us across contexts (they are durable and transposable); and in turn determine how we make choices to act in certain ways and not others”. Bourdieu (1990) characterizes the habitus as durable, meaning that an individual cannot spontaneously transcend its implications through personal will” (Barrett, 2014). The habitus is generated by internalizing the social structure and one's place in it. It is through this internalization that one comes to determine what is possible and what is not possible for one's life and develops aspirations and practices accordingly (Dumais, 2002: 45). It is in this regard that Tanyanyiwa (2014) regards habitus as a product of history.

Knowledge and culture tend to be internalized, shaping the thoughts and actions of individuals in social situations. The embodied state is expressed by Huang (2019: 46) as a combination of knowledge and culture gained from the family and school environments. This can be seen in styles of conversation and English being the dominant language in the space. A common example of the embodied state is seen in the context of Cape Town private schools in a study by Mukisa (2022: 41-43) is the experience of changing accents. Students who participated in this study mention changing their accents to suit a white, English accent to avoid being mocked for their natural accents that does not sound like a white accent. Black students found themselves actively and sometimes unconsciously changing their accents to fit the common English accent. This is an example that uses language as a form of capital as it determines acceptance or judgment, and exclusion simply based on the manner of speaking the same English language. Schools uphold this embodied state in the ways in which they present themselves in their school rules, their presentation to the public and their curriculum.

The third form of cultural capital is the institutionalised state which is an academic qualification or institutional affiliations that are seen to hold social recognition and status (Bourdieu, 1986: 245). As Tanyanyiwa (2014: 74) mentions, the education system is crucial in the allocation of statuses in the wider society. Schools and universities are crucial in the upholding of institutionalised cultural capital, but the level of cultural capital varies depending on the educational institution and the cultural values and curriculums it enforces.

Cultural capital is useful for this study as it creates a lens for identifying privilege and hierarchies of power within the independent educational spaces the study focuses on. Cultural capital observes power in the context of the study by viewing culture as a resource. Lareau and Weininger discuss cultural capital by describing it as something that provides access to scarce rewards and is subject to monopolization and often transmitted intergenerationally (2003: 567). When looking at education through the lens of the cultural capital framework, the institutionalised nature of school communities can be seen to include and exclude based on social and cultural terms. This study intends to highlight this aspect of independent school cultures.

One major aspect that the theory of cultural capital lacks, as mentioned by Tanyanyiwa (2014: 57) is the concept of transformation. Transformation is a crucial aspect in my research as it goes beyond identifying the problems and aims to critically analyse how change is ignited. For this reason, the critical race theory will be used in addition to the cultural capital theory to reveal what could be considered the hidden potential of the cultural capital theory.

Cultural Capital as a Theoretical Framework

Cultural capital has been widely used as a theoretical framework across various fields, including gender and family studies (Silva, 2005), health (Shim, 2010), and especially education. Bourdieu originally applied his theory to analyse the French education system (Bourdieu, 1974), while more recent studies have used cultural capital to examine academic performance (Barone, 2006; Breinholt & Jæger, 2020; Sullivan, 2001), among others. These contemporary studies strongly support cultural capital as a foundation for exploring inequalities by identifying what is valued and what is not within specific environments. Breinholt & Jæger (2020) and Sullivan (2001) begin their research by examining the different forms of cultural capital—objectified, embodied, and institutionalised—to understand how these forms contribute to social status within their respective fields. Once the value of certain behaviours, possessions, and qualifications is established, cultural capital is applied to the educational context. For Breinholt & Jæger (2020: 28), this context is early childhood education in the United States, while Sullivan (2001: 893) focuses on the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) in the

United Kingdom. Each study adapts cultural capital to fit the specific educational context of its research question, highlighting its relevance across different studies.

In most studies, cultural capital is used to prove, as Kingston (2001: 88) mentions, that the socially privileged will receive better service, reception and results, particularly in education, which in turn creates an easier pathway to economic success in the wider society. What underpins the theory of cultural capital, as the title suggests, is culture. Kingston (2001: 96-97) argues that culture is important and hierarchical as it sets the standard for spaces like schools, but the way that Bourdieu believes that culture is shaped can be limiting as it places the dominant forms of cultural knowledge and behaviour in a context on a pedestal. This implies that cultural difference is not approved of and that change within the relevant fields are not possible.

Barone (2006: 1051-1052) acknowledges the power of cultural capital as it has been defined in this chapter and is relevant when looking at the specific area Bourdieu focuses on which is societal relations and experiences in the context of educational inequality. In the modern context, this precise focus on what inequalities is prevalent can be limiting, allowing cultural capital to act as a foundational theory which can be built upon with additional theories such as the critical race theory used for this study. Another example is Tanyanyiwa's combination of cultural capital, and the capabilities approach by Amartya Sen (Tanyanyiwa, 2014). By combining additional theories to cultural capital, it creates a strengthened lens for the relevant study.

Cultural capital is a beneficial theory for revealing inequalities and identifies a relationship between structures and individuals, but it does not provide solutions or ideas for transformation for these perpetuations of inequality. This is why it is important to support cultural capital with an additional theory to advocate for active change and the promotion of equality.

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory (CRT) began in the late 1970s and 1980s with legal scholars; Alan Freeman, David Trubeck, and Derrick Bell (Ladson-Billings, 2009: 112). The theory was built on the foundations of legal theory with the intention to highlight the inequalities in the United States by centralising the issue of racial discrimination within the inequalities.

Scholars like Derrick Bell were active in the civil rights movements of the 1960s, which inspired their dedication to equality through the critical race theory (Ladson-Billings, 2009: 110-112). CRT acknowledges that racism can be difficult to address as it has become so intertwined with the norms of society that individuals internalise, particularly after blatant racism is opposed in laws surrounding independence and equality. In this light, the study seeks to link this with Bourdieu's notion of habitus as durable dispositions that are both a product of history and dominant cultures in the present. It is argued that there is little incentive for racism to be eradicated as it benefits certain groups of society, who also hold power in several societal hierarchies (Delgado et al., 2023: 8). Race as an integral part of culture in historically white schools means, through CRT, explores what Singh (2021) has called a racial habitus, a process through which "racial identities are produced but also subject to constrained change and adaptation".

CRT can be used to elevate the cultural capital theory in this study as it aims to understand social situations such as inequalities, as does cultural capital but a dimension of activism found in the foundations of CRT. The relevance of CRT in this study is its emphasis on components of race and transformation in the educational and social context. This creates a sense of hope that there are solutions to the issues of racial discrimination that are still deeply entrenched in social structures and institutions (Delgado et al., 2023: 8). As previously mentioned, race is closely related to culture and therefore racism becomes embedded in racialised institutional cultures. Cultural capital is useful in identifying unequal cultural experiences within a racialised structure and critical race theory supports those ideas by identifying them as well as furthering the perspective to advocate for change and equality. Ledesma and Calderón (2015: 207) acknowledge that there is not one single way that racism is experienced but that it can be experienced across various intersecting encounters of identity, including, sexism, ableism and classism, among others. The recognition of intersectional identities proves that the intention of CRT is not to exclude other aspects of identity but to highlight and deeply engage with the aspect of race to critically analyse the experiences of historically underrepresented populations and challenge racist structures and institutions to lead more inclusive and equal systems. As cultural capital has a broad perspective on understanding the inequalities of societies, CRT concentrates the lens on race and activism, forming a strong lens that identifies the issues and sources of inequality and aims to find solutions to these issues by supporting structures that advocate for equality.

Critical Race Theory in Education

Gloria Ladson-Billings and William Tate introduced CRT to the field of education in the 1990s (Ladson-Billings and Tate, 1995). This connection not only opens the theory to analyse systems of education but also promotes the use of the theory in scholarship to come, as Ladson-Billings (2009: 110) explains. This connection between CRT and education shows that race is a major element contributing to the reproductions of inequality and just how deeply intertwined race is with property rights in the United States. The emphasis on race is justified in United States' context due to the history and traditions that form the foundations of American culture and institutional structures. While the South African history is not identical to that of the United States, there are many similarities in the forms of racial discrimination – individually and institutionally – that makes the critical race theory relevant to the South African context. One of the biggest and most controversial points made by Ladson-Billings and Tate in 1995, which she continues to make in 2009, is that race still matters. This could be seen in the discussion of whiteness as a form of property in the United States. Ladson-Billings (2009: 116) explains how the highest value is related to property rights and ownership. Whiteness can be seen as a form of property as it has value and privilege attached to it – seen in the way white people were allowed access to various privileges and spaces that people of colour simply could not, based on race. These privileges extended beyond property and infiltrated throughout societal institutions in the United States as well as in the apartheid context of South Africa. There is a strong connection between the value of whiteness in these two contexts that is still seen today in the perpetuation of racial inequalities in fields of labour, economics, and education. Ladson-Billings (2009: 117) uses CRT to challenge the structures of schools as they are seen to reinforce the privileges of whiteness, perpetuating racial discrimination and inequality in the educational spaces which disadvantages black students. The instructions that teachers receive is made to benefit the white child, constantly placing the black child in an inferior position due to “issues” of discipline, instruction or assessment.

Ladson-Billings (2009) identifies racial discrimination in education as a factor that influences the distribution of cultural capital. This observation highlights how institutionalised forms of cultural capital are affected by systemic inequalities. The American education systems that Ladson-Billings and Tate look at in the 1990s and early

2000s and the reformed education systems in South Africa (with a focus on independent schools) both relate in the issue of racial discrimination where there is deeply embedded and disguised racial issues that hold black students back. Black students do not reach the full potentials that the education systems promise to supply, which white students are often seen to access (Fataar, 2015: 3-7; Ladson-Billings, 2009:). The problem with these inequalities lies in the normalisation of it all, specifically after more formal laws in both the United States and South Africa promote anti-racism; any issues of racial discrimination are overlooked or minimised by those who benefit from the perpetuation of racism.

Comparing South Africa and the United States of America

As mentioned above, CRT is built in the context of legal scholarship in the United States but is not bound to this context alone. Bernard Magubane (1987) creates parallels between the United States and South Africa because of colonialism and capitalism perpetuated in both countries. More recent studies have shown that the effects of colonialism and capitalism still affect the well-being of individuals today (Williams et al., 2012: 10). This links back to the point of Ladson-Billings (2009: 115), that race still matters and will continue to matter unless deeply rooted racial discrimination is eradicated. Regardless of the differing details between the contexts of the two countries, critical race theory is still relevant and is used in various South African studies on education and the arts, among many other fields (Govenden and Chiumbu, 2020; Moorosi, 2021). Not only has critical race theory been applied to the South African context, but it has been done so with great success.

Conclusion

Critical race theory supports cultural capital as it aims to identify areas of inequality, with an emphasis on race, and offers possibilities for hope and more inclusion. Both theories look at the forms of inequality with the intention to eradicate it. CRT emphasises this by insisting on amplifying the voices of the marginalised and creating a counter narrative that speaks against racial inequalities in the educational field. Through the expressions of individual experiences and understanding the policies and practices of the schools surrounding race, the forms of cultural capital can be better understood within the

context and critical analysis can be made on the links of race, transformation and the historically white independent school context with an intention to advocate for meaningful and inclusive change in educational environments.

Chapter 5: Data Analysis – Reflections from the Fieldwork

Introduction

This chapter presents a qualitative analysis of the data that serves as corpus for this study. The lived experiences of ten black alumni at the independent schools, the subject of this study, are analysed and understood against the timeframe of 2013-2023. In addition to the experiences of the alumni, external expert opinions on education are brought in to provide a broader South African perspective on social justice and racial inequality. Furthermore, individuals who have worked in transformation management provide insight into the inner workings of the structures of transformation in the schools. The combined theoretical framework of cultural capital and critical race theory provides a lens through which the analysis is framed. Additionally, in the context of this study, this theoretical lens is used to offer a perspective on the impact of racial inequality and the

efforts of transformation for black students and alumni in in historically white independent schools. The framework highlights that racism does not just exist blatantly but describes the different ways microaggressions can be prevalent in historically white institutions such as the independent schools.

Group Identification	Number of Members	Relationship to Institutions	Relevant Background & Demographic Information
Group 1	10	Alumni	Black, mixed gender, 2013-2023 alumni
Group 2	2	Transformation Management	Play key roles in transformation development and management
Group 3	3	External Consultants	Have experience in transformation consulting in historically white independent schools

Reflecting on the Interviews

The interview process brought about many reflections for participants and for me as a researcher and an alumnus of one of the schools that the study focuses on. Only through the conversations held in the interviews was I made aware of just how unique and sometimes sensitive the experience of being a black student in a historically white independent school can be. While these lived experiences were not widely shared amongst students, it does not disregard the existence of these experiences – whether positive or negative. I have come to realise through the data collection process that the work of my study can make small yet significant changes to individuals through comfortable and safe conversations about racial inequality and personal experiences without judgement.

My reflection on the challenges black students face in historically white independent schools was amplified by a comment made by one of the male alumni participants.

“It’s [the interview] therapy for some of us... it’s unraveling the trauma, and you don’t have to pent it up inside. I think that’s why quite a couple of black boys can be very hesitant in going back to that space [the school] because it is a source of trauma.”

He further expressed the following:

“So again, I thank you for the platform. I think you also provided me with a healthy platform to speak on these issues whereby I can freely open up on them.”

Many participants from group 1 described the interview process as being unexpectedly challenging as they had suppressed their feelings and challenges about school for so long. One participant said the following.

“I feel weird, I really do because these aren’t things that I ever thought about or like reflected [on]. And I feel like this is my first time I’m actually doing a proper reflection of how much of an impact my race had on my high school career and what role it played.”

This participant also mentioned that most conversations regarding race in the school context revolved around black students educating white students about race and it was rarely about their self-identity as black students. This was a common experience for me while in the school system where this interview conversation validated lived experiences for myself and the participant.

Black women are often the healers in situations of racial conflict whereby white people tend to expect lessons on race that does not feel too personal or emotional, otherwise the black woman may be seen as over sensitive, making her points invalid. I wish to redirect this narrative with this study to a position where white people can be responsible for their own racial education and black people can comfortably express their racial identity however, they wish. Black people can no longer be expected to be the faces of transformation, picking up the pieces when their white counterparts make mistakes. A participant from group 3 who has worked in transformation consulting and teaching in independent schools mentioned the following.

“I can’t spend my life and my education cleaning up after white people because sometimes that’s what T&D [transformation and diversity] feels like... people call you

when they've spilt the milk, and you must come and figure out how to put the milk back into the bottle"

A main point that came out of group 3 participants was that the sector of transformation and social justice seems to be unregulated, emotionally taxing and underpaid where two people of differing identities can be doing the same work, but their compensation can be drastically different within the context of consulting in transformation at schools:

"Every time we would send an invoice... they ghosted us. I was like, so you want us to come and do really psychologically heavy lifting work and then you don't wanna pay me. This is not free labor and but it's because white people only understand black people's labor as coming into solve their problems for a pittance."

She, a black woman, then explains how a white man has been doing the same work in this sector as herself:

"When I heard how much that guy was being paid, I was like the hell you're paying me the same amount"

Expressing that this man's services were paid well and paid efficiently, unlike the services she did for the same institutions. The experiences of black women in emotionally taxing consulting work leads to the wider discussion of intersectionality and racism. While the time limit of this study could not allow me to delve deeper into the intersecting identities and their varying experiences.

Intersectionality is a key aspect of critical race theory which emphasises how multiple forms of oppression can intersect to shape unique experiences for marginalised groups. Intersectionality forms part of the foundation in understanding how race and gender inequalities intersect in the lives of Black women. Jacinta Kent (2021) explores intersectionality through the link between scapegoating and the pervasive "angry black woman" trope, which shows just how often black women are denied the autonomy to define their own lives. Black women are rather subjected to labels and identities imposed by people in positions of power – predominantly white men, but also black men. This situation reflects the intersectional duality of oppression that black women face with racial discrimination in predominantly and historically white systems, and gender-based marginalisation in black communities. Kent (2021) elaborated on this dynamic with

examples such as the black suffrage movement which was male dominated and the women's liberation movement which was largely centered on the experiences of white women (Kent, 2021: 361). The use of CRT aids in emphasising how intersectional ideas are vital for understanding the intensity of challenges black women face – challenges that are rooted in the broader framework of systemic racism and patriarchy.

There are always intersecting factors regarding identity, including race, gender and class. This includes the differing experiences people face in the same context, further emphasising the importance of inclusivity.

The conversations held in the interviews held such profound reflections for me as a researcher and an alumnus. This process has allowed me to feel more comfortable in my processes of healing trauma and pain. It has been a journey of redirecting trauma away from situations of anger and bitterness towards situations of healing and restoration that promotes healthy conversations with others and oneself. The study allowed me to believe that there is a possibility of creating safe spaces for clear communication about past racial traumas without judgement and feelings of fear.

What is transformation? Heart work

The word “transformation” lies at the crux of this study, making its definition crucial to understanding the entirety of the study and the perspectives of participants. While transformation means different things to different people, there has been common understanding and open discussion through interviews to make sure that participants are clear on what they deem to be transformation.

The early stages of the study required me, as the researcher, to become clear about what transformation means to me and why I find it to be so important to the educational space. Transformation refers to the intentional and ongoing processes of challenging and dismantling systemic inequalities that are rooted in the historical legacies of colonialism and apartheid in South Africa. My understanding of transformation addresses issues of racial inequality, culture and power dynamics within historically white institutions. Transformation requires actions that foster inclusivity, representation, diversity and equity. I believe that transformation needs to be a continuous process; always active and engaging with the community of the institution and its surroundings.

The more intricate details of transformation efforts were discussed with all participants, creating a more concrete definition of what transformation is for all to understand in this study. A main point brought up in interviews was the difference between what transformation is and what it should be, bringing some differing views among participants.

“It can be a buzzword because people don’t put in the work... The word transformation within itself is not a buzzword, because then it speaks to your willingness to change and be agile and move with the flow.”

The participants of Group 2 explained how imperative action is in the work of transformation. Just as South Africa is finding its feet as a democracy, institutions are still grappling with ways of approaching transformation that is suitable to their history and needs as organisations. According to ISASA (Independent Schools Association for Southern Africa) website, organisational transformation and diversity management is a requirement for South African organisations.

A 2009 study (Walton et al.) provides a wide scope on the areas of transformation, with a focus on independent schools in South Africa. Transformation in education does not solely include race – it is inclusive of abilities, background and identity. One purpose of ISASA is to hold expectations for independent schools to be equipped with staff members who can support students of all walks of life. The study commends efforts of progress made but also identifies the gaps that exist within the implementation of transformation efforts. The findings of the study revealed that some institutions find difficulty in the transitions of policies to meaningful action. The gap between policy and implementation is where many institutions tend to fall through the cracks, leaving black students and students of other minority groups to face negative experience with minimal support.

The study by Walton et al. (2009) emphasises the need for transformation to be an active process that is followed through with practices drawn from policies. Strategies and engagement with transformation require continuous assessment. The work of transformation can be uncomfortable as it addresses topics that could be considered taboo or problematic. A participant from group 3, who was brought in as a facilitator at the boy's school, mentioned how there were limits to what she could discuss with the boys.

"They [the school] were very comfortable letting us come in and talk about race, but the minute you talked about rape and 'men are trash' and gender, especially rape culture and masculinity, they don't want to talk about it."

She emphasises the importance of intersectionality and why these discussions are relevant to discussions of race. The controlling hand that determined what she could and could not discuss with the boys led her to have conversations that she described as "shallow" due to the limited language and topics. This scenario is an example of how transformation in schools can be performative, holding restrictions to suit the institutional culture that exists within the school. The same participant described this as a lack of accountability on the school's part as they make a few changes within the system but do not tackle the complex and uncomfortable truths that need to be disrupted for real transformation to occur. She described it as follows.

"They're taking it [transformation] away from institutional power... they will just tinker with a few things and hire a few black staff members and then the problem persists. You're dealing with 300 years' worth of history that this country has no ability to deal with because we haven't trained people."

She highlights the lack of accountability within the school staff and governing body. The leadership of the school are to be held accountable and responsible for growing towards an inclusive and diverse space. Part of growth includes uncomfortable realities and a willingness to change which is where the challenge between policy becoming practice lies. ISASA can be praised for having the requirement for schools to have transformation and diversity management, but they do not have any guidelines of how this is supposed to look or what the expectations are for these roles. This allows each school to present transformation in a way that suits their system; in the case of the boys' school, it seems to be a neglected area within leadership. With no guidelines on how to unravel the years of exclusion and trauma, the transformation sector has become unregulated whereby individuals who do the same facilitation and consulting work are not paid equally and the work that they do is heavily criticised. This is elaborated on by a participant in group 3.

"This is not transformation – people seem to think 'oh well we have ticked all the boxes' and then ask why we are still mad. It means that we haven't solved the problem."

She goes on to say that a large part of working in transformation is being gaslit, questioning one's own abilities and beliefs on race and transformation. Further in our interview, this participant expressed why the word and actions of transformation – as it currently stands – does not align with her beliefs and wishes for more access and equality within independent schools. She mentions the role of the black middle- or upper-class parent, who does not have the capacity to be involved in the social politics their children may be involved in.

“They’re not using their muscle of having any kind of political power to change the school. They too are part of this problem because they don’t want the schools to change. They will tell their children to ‘suck it up, you’re gonna get into UCT. You’re gonna get the connections, the nice English and the social capital. These are the same children who suffer when they get to UCT – they are not resilient. They have an identity crisis because they can no longer speak IsiXhosa. No one is talking about the consequences of the black children in the system because they got into UCT and they’re gonna get great jobs. No one is talking about transformation in relation to your [black alumni] life.”

While this perspective includes subjective opinions, the main point remains the same; that transformation, as it exists within historically white independent schools, is structured to suit white people within the system. This creates a perpetuation of exclusion and social and cultural norms of whiteness. As this participant mentions later in the interview, the black students and more importantly, black students on scholarships are still having the same experiences, despite the so-called transformation efforts.

All participants in groups 2 and 3 problematised the notion of black people, particularly black women, becoming responsible for attending to issues regarding race. Participants have relayed that black women in the staff group become the automatic guidance and educators on race and racism, while everyone else takes a back seat. The same situation is mentioned by the black female alumnae regarding issues among peers. The cycle is as follows: a racial incident transpires, the black woman is assigned as the facilitator or mediator, this role is time consuming and mentally taxing. The black woman works hard to ensure that the incident is managed but there is minimal support and awareness on the issue outside those involved. Once the black woman raises her grievances, she is ridiculed and misunderstood as the stereotypical “angry black woman” despite having

valid complaints. A participant who has worked in transformation management in one of the schools emphasised the role of community within transformation:

"We also have to make sure that everybody can support the vision of the school when it comes to transformation, within their department. This ensures that we have representatives everywhere, whether it is in sports, drama, music. Each person forms part of a greater strategy."

This participant did not confirm or deny whether these representatives exist, while another participant expressed their opinion on transformation work as more of an isolated experience.

"I can't spend my life and my education cleaning up after white people. Because sometimes that is what T and D [transformation and diversity] feels like. You're cleaning, you're the nanny. White people call you when they've spilt the milk, and you must come figure out how to put the milk back into the bottle. And then they don't want to pay you enough. Every time we would send an invoice to [redacted]; they ignored us. So, we do really psychologically heavy work and they don't want to pay me. This is not free labour, but it's because white people only understand black people's labour as coming in to solve their problems for a pittance."

Another external individual who has done transformation work with both schools in the past described the work as a "tick-box exercise". This description became common in most interviews. Each case she worked with was treated as an isolated experience with the aim of solving the issue with the individuals involved. When staff were involved, there was little engagement from them in the training programs, making it difficult for transformative action to infiltrate through the school's various departments, despite the efforts made.

The discussions were rich in goals and visions for the future of transformation in independent schools, but unveiled the real challenges in the transformation work that currently happens within these schools. Tackling issues of inequality and deeply rooted institutional cultures is not a simple task. It requires effort from many and awareness of the greater issues we face as a country.

What Transformation *Should* Be

Participants from all groups expressed their ideas on how to improve transformation, based on their experiences and educational backgrounds. These ideas include understanding the bigger picture, disrupting spaces and putting consistent work into the cause. These are just a few of the ways participants envision successful and sustainable transformation. While some of these ideas may not be viable for years to come, due to logistics, policies and external factors, they are still considered to be relevant and worth discussing as the hope is that transformation will continue to flourish and be more integrated into the goals of schools.

For The Students

Participants of Group 1 were asked how they wished transformation could improve. The two main outcomes of this question were consistency and integration. It is explained by some in the following quotes.

"I wish it started earlier. I wish it was introduced more formally at an earlier stage. Back in Grade 8, because I feel like that's a really important time. Because now you have all people from different parts of the world like different ethnicities... It could have been a great subject for Life Orientation to be included in the curriculum."

An old boy expressed the lack of consistency in the events throughout the year. Youth Day, Worker's Day and Heritage Day are what he considers "trademark events" where there is expectation to present as a diverse and inclusive institution. He showed appreciation for the events for happening but felt that each event was isolated with no continuation or discussion beyond the time allocated for the event.

"I think relation is very important. What themes are you focusing on and how could it relate to students also?"

He described these "trademark events" as out of touch with the context and what is relevant within the school as the speakers are often not connected to the experiences of the students. The disconnect between the speakers and the students, as well as the events not being better integrated into the school through themes or further discussion, led this participant to believe that transformation is not a priority for the school. He wished that there were themes for discussions and times allocated for staff and students to have

insightful and open conversations regarding topics of identity, culture, race and more relating to transformation efforts. This idea would bring in consistency and better understanding of visions

Consistency and integration go hand in hand when transformation is an active effort. By assigning time within the curriculum or school day, students can be introduced to various perspectives and realities, opening their minds and teaching students to adapt to different environments. By the time students complete their final year of high school, they could have had various interactions with individuals of different backgrounds, leading them to have better world views and knowing how to present themselves in different scenarios.

By starting discussions and sticking to themes within transformation, differences can become more accepted and normalised in the school space. Not only does this require the school staff to be more involved in the transformation processes, but there needs to be a willingness to acknowledge the past, have the difficult conversations and be open to change. Schools hold a responsibility to develop young minds to think critically, be empathetic and engage with their community.

For The Staff

Improving transformation in the realm of the staff groups requires a different approach to that of students. Staff members are the primary drivers of change within the educational institution. With the appropriate resources, support and willingness, staff members can be properly prepared to be agents of change. Some black alumni in Group 1 identified staff members they felt safe with and others they considered to be detached from happenings of transformation, based on how they felt in the presence of these staff members.

"I loved going to tutor sessions because that was just like a moment where I can breathe, especially in Grade 8 where every day is filled with fear. I noticed that he is a teacher of colour, and he was serious about taking care of us."

The staff members who students considered to be safe spaces were noted to be black staff members. There was often a connection between these black staff members and their involvement in transformation work. As the transformation requirements of ISASA are not supported with sufficient resources and requirements for staff, those who are placed

within transformation management roles and those who support these efforts tend to be black staff members and those who are passionate about supporting and caring for all students. Based on the responses of participants, school leadership should be held more responsible for transformation efforts. This includes providing sufficient and regular training on themes of transformation. As educators, the role within the school should be to promote and support transformation in all realms, a participant from Group 3 explains it as follows.

"I believe it is the work of education to be focused on transformation. It is not only important; it is the mandate. If, ideologically and philosophically, we understand education as a process of enlightenment, then it must be about elevating human consciousness, not merely aligning human function."

Here, I was reminded of how crucial education is in shaping people's mindsets, particularly those of young and impressionable people. The approach to sharing knowledge and interacting with students should be of such a caliber that students feel safe and valued in the classroom. It is not just the work of black individuals and those in transformation management to prioritise change but is a collective responsibility of the school community.

The word community was a common word in discussions of what transformation should be. To work as a community there needs to be an element of trust amongst members. Students reflecting on feeling afraid and dismissed in their school experiences does not align with the idea of being a good community. The first step to approaching transformation, particularly antiracism is

"It's by telling the truth. Start by admitting that the history exists and that the schools are made in the image of it."

Our discussion acknowledged a statement of apology that one of the schools shared amongst the 2020 Black Lives Matter movement after receiving a lot of backlashes. The apology did exactly what this participant expected, admitting the history. The letter states that the school expresses regret, accepts responsibility, genuinely repents and requests forgiveness. Almost five years later, our question was, "now what?". Now that transparency about the racist history is made public, how can one hold the school accountable and ensure that transformation is happening?

A pillared strategy was shared by a Group 3 participant who has done work in implementing this strategy within an independent school elsewhere.

"We set up a three-tiered strategic vision. We put learning into one pillar, community engagement into another and equity into the other. The idea is that all of these form what will be our social justice strategy that shows that learning about racism is not enough, you must practice it. You must meet people, talk to people, break down the walls that divide us from society that discrimination often creates."

This vision provides a solution for the institution being stuck in the theoretical discussion of transformation. All pillars of this strategy require action from all areas of the school community to be successful.

As mentioned before, education is crucial in understanding and awareness. With the correct resources and readiness of staff members, the foundations of engaged citizens are instilled in the students. Community engagement brings real-life interactions and opportunities for students to make connections with people that societal barriers may have withheld them from. Interacting with people from different walks of life fosters empathy and reminds us of the life beyond our own bubble. This is particularly important in the context as most students are boarders, spending every day within the confines of the school campus and interacting with peers and staff. One tends to be out of touch with what goes on in the world around you. At the core of transformation lies equity which aims for all to be treated with fairness and for justice to prevail.

By incorporating this three-tiered vision, each staff member and student is part of a shared commitment to deeply engage and commit to the change. No participant considered the work of transformation management to be easy or simple. It is emotionally draining and sometimes very uncomfortable, but the participants expressed their commitment to the job. A group 3 participant explained that justice can mean something different every day:

"Sometimes justice is a generation of students who need a particular message, sometimes its grounds and kitchen staff needing to be treated fairly. Sometimes it's ensuring that parents are able to see the pieces and see how internalised discrimination limits the work of transformation in schools because they are undoing the work at dinner tables. Sometimes it is also going right into the

community and just doing good work, tending to the hungry and suffering, knowing that we ourselves are hungry and suffering in other ways.”

Group 2 participants reiterated how dynamic the role requires you to be.

“We need to be agile and allow kids to learn and explore. That means that you need to be willing to change. If you work in a school and you’re not willing to change, you’ve got trouble. And that’s why the word ‘transformation’ within itself is not a buzzword because it speaks to your willingness to change and move with the flow.”

The Wider Lens

One of the questions in interviews with Group 3 participants was how should schools approach transformation, particularly anti-racism? There is no simple answer to this question, as seen in discussions above. The complexity was grappled with in the following discussion.

“There is always a problem between the systemic, the structural and the individual. We have to change the individual to change the systemic, but that’s not enough by itself. It becomes difficult to make systemic change, so when you bring it down to the microsystem – that’s your institutional culture that needs to change. One of the ways to do that is to shift individuals within the culture... You have to work with individuals that have the opportunity to shift culture, but culture is very enduring. It’s systemic, it’s embedded. In education, I believe that conscientization—the process of raising awareness and critical consciousness—is essential. Working with the individual is necessary and it’s the only way I know how to shift the systemic.”

Here, the legacies of white privilege and systemic inequality are brought to the forefront as they have contributed to the institutional cultures that still stand today. It is important to consider the context that these schools were designed within. This participant explains how change needs to occur at multiple levels to be sustainable and successful. Individual transformation is necessary as the institution is made up of people, but changing the individual only is not sufficient. Along with the work for individuals, there needs to be a focus on dismantling the systemic barriers such as having more diverse representation in the curriculum, moving away from exclusive traditions and having leadership that ensures all individuals are valued and heard. It sounds like a simple feat, but the defiance of a historically white independent school is more aggressive than one tends to assume.

“These systems of power know how to protect themselves and widen the gap between the rich and the poor the more ammunition you give them.”

Based on the lived experiences of students and the efforts of current transformation management, it is clear that changes cannot be made within days or even a year. The reflections of Group 2 and 3 participants reinforce that transformation within these schools need to be ongoing and fearless in their steps toward change. This is not possible without collective effort, with everyone contributing to personal development and untangling the tough roots instilled by colonialism and whiteness.

The wider perspective includes taking inspiration and guidance from those around us. The constitution was recommended as a potential guiding document used to ensuring that independent schools are aligned with what it means to be a democratic South Africa.

“These are very practical ways that the constitution gives us a framework to which we can unpack the social justice that is says is important.”

The guidance of the constitution was recommended as a starting point or a checklist for schools to make sure that they are aligning with the larger society they fall under. Just as the individual makes a small contribution to the institution it forms part of, the institution contributes to the society it exists within. Not only can strong community bonds be made by the continuous efforts of the independent schools, but other schools and even businesses can be inspired by the genuine efforts of transformation. The goal is to provide students and staff with experiences that are fair to all and support their learning in positive ways, including the promotion of social justice.

Lived Experiences

“Tough Skin/Black Skin”

If I had to describe the general lived experiences relayed by black alumni of the girls' school, I would describe it as a good, wholesome experience with the fine print elaborating on the challenges. Participants elaborate on this description when they discuss having to be defensive and present a “palatable” version of themselves to fit into the culture of the school environment.

One participant explains navigating being a student here as a generally positive experience under the circumstances of staying resilient.

"I would say overall I had a good experience. However, I feel like that was due to having to grow a tough skin... I was usually having to guard myself, have tough skin and learn to defend myself".

Another participant explained how this same defensiveness that was also seen as confidence developed in her experience.

"I think that [my] confidence at times became defensiveness because of the way that my social cultural identity was perceived and projected onto me by other people; including other people of color, not just white people, and whiteness as a broader construct."

The response of defensiveness tends to create a dichotomy between positive and negative experiences for alumni. This portrays the sheer complexity of emotions that black students face while navigating their way through the predominantly white space in their formative years. Successful navigation of the school space seems to require a baseline of tolerance or resilience of black students where they understand that they must defend their identity and position amongst their peers. There is no clear recognition of who or what leads to black students having such distinguished perspectives of their sense of belonging, but from young ages they become aware of their differences. Some participants explain that the lack of representation amongst staff and students made them feel that they had to prove themselves while other participants picked up on their physical differences compared to their white counterparts. From the age of 10, one participant expressed the lack in confidence and self-identity.

"I didn't feel confident at all ... I think that's when I started noticing the difference between 'okay, I'm black, I'm not white. I look a certain way. I don't look like this'. That's when I kind of realised that there is a '[school's name] girl'. This is an image of a [school's name] girl, and I don't quite fit that mold... like I was curvier. My hair was not the same... There were things that made you feel different. And that affected my confidence a lot. Yeah, and my identity, I kind of didn't know who I was because at this same time I felt too black for school and too white for home".

Robert Carter (2007) explores race-based traumatic stress which is where individuals react with defensiveness in environments that are racially hostile to them, including microaggressions which sometimes go unaccounted for. Due to previous years of colonialism and apartheid in South Africa, race was used as a determining factor for social and legal reasons. This caused different races to develop different cultural norms and patterns, creating a link between race and culture. Carter (2007: 18) describes culture as “a system of meaning with values, norms, behaviours, language, and history that is passed on from one generation to the next through socialisation and participation in the group’s organisations and institutions”. The “image” and “mold” described by a participant above of the typical girl of this school aligns with the culture of the institution. Whether the black participant acknowledged her differences based on experiences of microaggressions, blatant racism or different cultural patterns, they all apply to relevant definitions of racism which can result in stress and trauma reactions over time. Sue et al., (2007: 271) describes microaggressions with the following: “racial microaggressions are brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color”.

When black students are introduced into the independent school environment, they are met with a certain form of cultural capital, privileged by the school community. Part of cultural capital is ways of behaving, interpreting and thinking. These forms of cultural capital are never explained but are undisclosed rules or expectations for individuals within the institution. The cultural capital prioritised by the schools that this study focuses on, as does the majority of historically white independent schools, aligns with white middle- and upper – class norms. This can be seen in language, physical presentation and social behaviours. The conflicting feelings participants express about not knowing who they are, feeling misplaced in their home and school environments, illustrate the habitus cleft of Pierre Bourdieu. The social and behavioural norms that black students are attuned to do not align with that of the new school environment. There is then a misalignment between their habitus (ingrained dispositions) and the expectations of the school environment. The protection and perpetuation of habitus, seen in cultural capital, is damaging to black students as they are faced with internal conflict. As one participant has mentioned, they do not fit in at home or at school, leaving them in

an uncomfortable middle ground where they are trying to navigate an identity that fits into two cultures.

There are two distinct paths of “survival” black students tend to take when they are met at the crossroads of their identities – to assimilate or to go undetected, remaining an outsider. Some participants explained how they had attempted both forms of survival, while others felt better under the radar or with assimilating. Both options place psychological and emotional strain on individuals as they reflect on feeling constantly threatened. There is the possibility of a potential attack on their identity at any point in their day, leading them to always be defensive. To others, their defensiveness is sometimes misread to be aggression which stems back to a deeper structural issue within the school. The cultural capital that is normalised in the school environment is structured to suit the ideal student, who has historically been white and only white. The cultural capital is built to exclude black students, placing their presence under scrutiny despite the changes in laws and policies. The cultural capital stands as a measure of belonging for the institution, reminding black students that their presence is conditional. There is no validation to the experiences black students face regarding their identity and the discontinuity in their environments. The habitus cleft illustrates just how damaging and prevalent the capital struggle is in the educational institutions.

“Prove Your Existence”

Where you come from and how you gained access to the school plays a major role in the experience you could have as a black student. Black students whose parents could afford tuition and black students who were granted scholarships to attend the school were treated differently. This is explained by a Group 1 participant:

“There's definitely two clear types of experiences and they're both linked to the type of black girl that you are. What I realised is if you want to pursue your scholarship or came from the township, the likelihood of you having a great experience... It's very low. But if you're more palatable than you can survive perfectly. In fact, you can be one of them... almost”

She then goes on to explain that she was considered a “palatable black girl” by her white peers and felt a sense of acceptance due to this stereotypical label. Despite enjoying the sense of acceptance, she mentioned the following.

“For as long as your identity is ignored and pushed aside, you'll never feel like one of them”.

The stereotypical label of the “palatable black girl” was damaging to this participant as it led her to make sure she stayed in the confines of this identity when surrounded by white peers and staff. This meant that she had to remain aware of her surroundings to not fall out of line by projecting any personality other than a black girl that can be tolerated in the predominantly white space. The focus on being a “palatable black girl” was more relevant to her assimilation to whiteness and less to do with blackness and black identity.

“Be Grateful” and Move On

Being palatable was not only about behaviour, but about being able to afford experiences and possess certain belongings that aligned with the silent expectations of the school's cultural capital. Coming from a wealthier family aids the assimilation process as the fear of being ridiculed for not having a MacBook or Converse shoes is not a factor. For some, including myself, it meant that we had to pretend we could afford the lifestyle our peers so easily lived. My parents, like many others, made sure that I always had money when we went on school trips and that my shoes were never too outdated. I knew that it was not easy for my parents to rake out thousands of rands for a secondhand MacBook or even to afford visits to friends on holidays, but it was a sacrifice they made to make sure that I felt some sense of belonging. As a teenage girl, material things seem to be so important, sometimes even determining your value as a person – being able to own things within the same bracket as my peers made me feel like I had more of a right to exist amongst them.

The institutional culture perpetuates white identity and praises black students who are tolerable in the way they conduct themselves, especially if they excel in a certain realm of school activities. Another participant who attended the school on a scholarship used academics as a form of distraction and isolation.

“I drifted away from my identity, but what I did do was just create a wall around myself where I ended up just being focused on academics and trying not to focus on everything that was happening around me, because it really did feel like it was overwhelming... you constantly feel like the whole entire world is on your shoulders”.

Based on these responses, race tends to relate to feelings of stress or insecurity as alumnae were constantly defending their racial identity and culture if not pushing it away, ignoring the complexity of being a black student in a predominantly and historically white institution. While the experiences of all black students do differ, the commonality lies in the rejection or silencing of their naturally possessed cultural capital, including their sense of identity.

Another contributing factor to defensiveness in black students was the beauty standards and expectations found in the culture of the schools. Social identity and dating are a major component to the average teenager, making beauty standards an important part of identity navigation at that age. When asked about social experiences, one participant responded with the following.

"No, I was a fat black girl. That didn't fit the beauty standard because there was a whole thing about that, like the schools that we went to, they're so big on a certain standard of beauty."

Another two participants mentioned not feeling desired - socially and romantically - due to the beauty standards of the institutional culture.

"I felt like I was not wanted. I felt like I was not the beauty standard"

And

"The dating life at school... that was just not great. That was like one of the biggest challenges I think socially... We were limited in choice, and we were just not a choice for boys."

The topic of body image and beauty ideals plays a major role in the journey of self-identity, particularly when you form part of a minority in the institution. Seen in the reflections of the black alumnae above, their sense of belonging was minimised even more in the social space as they did not feel valued in their natural identity as black students in a predominantly white institution.

For participants who attended the school on scholarships or bursaries, the common response to struggles with identity and social groups was to be grateful that they can exist in the space, belittling their challenges. One participant recalled hearing "be grateful" on multiple occasions.

"I wouldn't say the school looked out for us. Many conversations were based on the idea that you are in the school now, so be grateful that you are here. Abide by the rules and know that if you do something wrong, you'll be out of the school, while knowing that the white kids will have multiple chances after doing the same thing."

The impression was that black students should not act out of line or question any unfair treatment because they have been granted with the privilege of attending the school. Another participant recalled being in the principal's office regularly for accusations of bullying and aggression. What was seen as bullying and aggression by staff members was the participant standing her ground against microaggressions being made towards her. She explained how there was always a monitoring eye placed on the black students and her white peer acknowledged it.

"One of my good friends mentioned that it never made sense to her. She said, 'I was terrifying, why was I never called to the principal's office?'... The white girls were smoking behind the water tanks while I was being told to smile because I don't look friendly."

Participants are expressing being villainised by the staff and fellow students who are perpetuating the institution's dominant cultural capital. Based on participant responses, existing as a black student is a slippery game of survival that no one prepares you for. Whether it is maintaining the facade of being part of a particular wealth bracket or attempting to meet the silent expectations of the prioritised cultural capital, there is a constant fight to prove that they do deserve to be there and receive the same opportunities as their white peers. The systemic marginalisation attacks black students' sense of belonging, causing them to suppress their authentic selves as a matter of survival. These reflections expose the hidden costs of navigating a space designed to exclude them while demanding their gratitude for being allowed to exist within it.

Defensiveness

One participant describes the navigation between their defensiveness of their identity and comfort within the institution as a learnt balance.

"By the end [her final year of high school] I kind of found a balance in being very comfortable just being who I was and not necessarily feeling the need to defend

myself as much. There was like a hot pocket in the middle where I was quite fiery and aggressive in my defence, and I think the aggression element of that kind of simmered down by the time I left because I just become so comfortable in being myself. I was like, well, I actually don't have to fight you [the institution] about it anymore. I'm just gonna be who I am and accept the consequences of that."

This kind of defence was explained further in the interview when she gave an example of racism and stereotyping from her peers and teachers that warranted her defensiveness.

"They tease me and taunt me to the point where they knew I would react. When I reacted, they'd be like, 'oh, yeah, don't forget, she's a coloured girl from Cape Town, she'll stab you. She has a knife under her pillow' and like teachers will say stuff like that, not just my peers. But the fact that an authority to figure would feel comfortable to say that whether it was a joke or not. It was said out loud in a room full of very malleable teenagers who then jump on the bandwagon and then be like, oh, that's so funny we can say things like that without any repercussions."

Defensiveness and alienation, as seen in the participants responses, is a self-protective mechanism black students use to preserve their identity in an environment where they feel misunderstood or marginalised (Tatum, 2017). Based on participant responses, the cultural capital of black students is not valued or appreciated as the environment prioritises cultural norms that are grounded in whiteness. This environment is also described as colour-blind racism as race and racism is minimised - irrelevant in contemporary society. This is based on the work of sociologist and critical race theorist Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2011) who explains how racism persists in subtle ways in a context like South Africa that is post-apartheid. By minimising the existence of systemic racism, racial inequality is more difficult to challenge as it is assumed to be irrelevant. Bonilla-Silva and Dietrich (2011) describe the colour-blind racism ideology and how it defends contemporary racial order. While this perspective gained popularity in the 2010s, Bonilla-Silva's perspective challenges this by proving that racial inequality is still extremely prevalent in the US, seen in people and institutions all over the country (Bonilla-Silva and Dietrich, 2011: 191).

This example of colour-blind racism is comparable to the lived experiences of black alumni in the independent school context due to the dominance of whiteness in groups and institutions in the South African context.

Cultural capital and the habitus cleft play a role in the perpetuation of inequality in the institutional setting of the school by reflecting the norm as that of the dominant group, as explained by Bourdieu (1986). Based on the history of South Africa and these specific independent schools, the dominant group – historically and currently – remains white, upper-class communities as discussed before. By placing privilege and value in the knowledge, behaviours and norms of this group, black individuals are challenged with the disconnect between their own culture and that of the institution they are placed within. Black students are left with no choice but to assimilate to the valued norms or face isolation and alienation – both responses include defensiveness whether it is reflected in external behaviours or internal challenges.

“Fit In or F*ck Off”

Within the first few minutes of all interviews held with male participants of Group 1, the conversation around assimilation arose. The common statement heard around in the boys’ spaces was “fit in or f*ck off, particularly heard by the younger grades, from the older boys who they are expected to look up to.

“Fitting in is very important, especially when you’re in Grade 8. You’re treated like nothing so it’s either you assimilate, or you’re cast out.”

Another participant reflected on the consequences of years of assimilation and how it has caused challenges around his identity.

“I took that [schools name] mentality into the rest of my life and then the world quickly showed me that is not how things work. Trying to assimilate, and your body is rejecting it because that’s not who you are, you’re doing things that don’t reflect who you are. So, I have been trying to heal myself from that, and there’s still an ongoing process of unlearning and realising – even four years later... It’s kind of like survivors guilt, like you feel guilty for who you felt like you had to become to survive there but you also survived or whatever I can call it.”

He later attributes a lot of the trauma he is healing from to the “culture of silence” within the institution because grievances were never spoken about or appropriately handled. He explained how he was led to internalise a lot of things despite growing up in a culture where collaboration and sharing feelings with others was valued.

“The [schools’ name] mentality of just shutting up and keeping quiet... You end up gaslighting yourself, asking yourself if that was bad or just the way it was supposed to be.”

Fitting in was framed as an ultimatum, instilling the idea that there will be no tolerance granted towards nonconformity. There was a sense of fear instilled in younger students, by older students, leaving them to fear rejection by the institution. The feelings expressed by black students shows how conflicting identity navigation was for them, from early ages. The idea of fitting in or being rejected seemed to align with the norms of the institution as the excluding behaviours were not questioned or problematised by staff or anyone else in an authoritative position.

The normalisation of these behaviours shows just how complicated transformation efforts can be in institutions. To break down systems of exclusion, the individuals within the system need to be able to identify the problematic behaviours of their colleagues and peers. The determination to preserve history and traditions within independent schools remains strong. To some, these schools are viewed as pockets of the past, with no efforts to adapt to being more inclusive. The efforts of an individual attempting to create change within the institution can seem like a drop in the ocean against the hierarchical structures as it is so easy for them to shut out any cries for change. It is easy to feel despondent as a black student, trying to survive in a space that was built to exclude you. One participant provided a lighter perspective.

“I had to realise that transformation is a lineage and not a moment. I’m just part of the lineage of being part of an active fight and actively trying to make the school a better place.”

Each little action contributes to greater change, easing the pressures that individuals often feel - the weight of needing to drastically change the culture of the institution.

“As long as I am a force for good and I am using my voice to amplify the voices of others. I am not using my voice to perpetuate a culture of silence. I had to understand

that it is an ongoing fight and it's not something you can give up on, no matter how frustrating. It's a sense of hope that things can get better."

He believes that the challenges he faced and the work he did towards transformation will benefit future generations, possibly including his black children. The efforts of individuals and small changes that do become successful should not go in vain as they eventually will contribute to a wider change.

An older participant echoed the same sentiment by saying.

"I want our future generations to go to these schools. They deserve the legacy... That's why I didn't keep quiet in 2020, why I will never shut up. I'll keep disrupting the normal."

The "legacy" she speaks of alludes to the fact that many white students have generations of relatives who have attended the school before them and are lined up to follow in their footsteps. The longstanding traditions and cultures are partly kept on due to the involvement of past students who continuously contribute to the development of the school and further support them by sending their children to the schools. These involvements, including financial donations, places these individuals in positions of authority as they contribute to the betterment of the school.

Participants have mentioned that they would not get the same level of discipline that a white student would, despite the disobedient action being the same. A real-life scenario was given whereby black students were being bullied and villainised. Instead of supporting these black girls, the school further humiliated them for trying to speak up for themselves by making them present an apology to the entire school.

"They didn't do anything while a white student got wasted drunk and got suspended for like 2 days? But those black girls got threatened with getting kicked out of the school. What the hell is that?"

The behaviour of students and staff that has been brought up by participants placed many question marks around the inner workings of the transformation processes. For some students, they were ridiculed for speaking up and others chose not to speak up against racial injustice based on the experiences their peers had. There was a common

understanding that black students should not cause a scene because their behaviour would be villainised.

The 2020 Turning Point and Perspectives of transformation

2020 stands as a pivotal year for Group 1 participants – whether they had matriculated by 2020 or not. The murder of George Floyd in the United States sparked the Black Lives Matter movement in May of 2020 which became a global outcry against racism and discrimination. One participant attributed the wide reach of the news surrounding George Floyd to social media. While there are many dangers of social media, particularly for young users, a positive aspect is the amount of learning and understanding that can happen through social media. The Black Lives Matter movement was a turning point for participants of all ages. Based on participant feedback, the discussions that were happening in social circles and social media was about racism and discrimination – everyone was talking about race. In the closer context of the schools and alumni circles, social media posts were shared of personal experiences of racism and discrimination at the two schools. Both schools faced backlash based on the experiences shared by alumni, almost forcing the school to act in some way.

The girls' school held Zoom meetings as a form of reconciliation between those who had experienced racism and discrimination and the institution. Many participants, in varying interview groups, had attended some if not all the scheduled Zoom meetings. One participant described the zoom sessions as the “TRC”, referring to the 1995 Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa. The comparison to the TRC was made in a slightly sarcastic light, relating to the controversies surrounding the TRC. While the intentions of both the TRC and the Zoom calls were to facilitate a peaceful way forward from racial injustices, the grievances expressed were not always adequately addressed. Black alumni poured out their hearts and essentially relived traumatic experiences of racism and discrimination, with hopes of big changes. While the expectations of black students may have considered to be overly ambitious at the time, their expectations should not be regarded as unreasonable.

Based on responses from various participants, 2020 tends to stand out as such an important year because some individuals have grown older and figured out the language and vocabulary to address their feelings,

“Back then we didn’t have the language to explain how we felt.”

Another participant reflected on a suppressed memory as a 13-year-old.

“We [himself and another black student] came back from the showers and Mr [redacted] had already started inspections. So, we were running back in our towels, back into the dorm, and he stopped us and said, ‘Geez, what were you guys doing in there? Rubbing the black off of you?’ and we kind of just laughed it off and just forgot about it. Someone recently asked me about my most racist experience at school and this memory came rushing back to me. I shouldn’t have been going through that at 13 years old.”

A common experience identified throughout the interview process was that participants were victims of outright racism, but they did not know how to vocalise their discomfort. For some participants, they did not realise what they experienced was racism, until years later when they were equipped with the appropriate vocabulary and understanding of racism and discrimination. 2020 was the year where many participants consider a shift in their perspectives, reactivating the trauma that their younger selves experienced. The experiences surrounding the 2020 zoom meetings were filled with vulnerability, overwhelm and revelations for many black alumni and staff member.

Among these intense feelings, there was a glimmer of hope. Participants who matriculated in 2020 or later were still students at the school when the Black Lives Matter movement arose. These participants considered 2020 as a year of change, where they started noticing more active change happening surrounding race and transformation.

“2020 was the biggest year for transformation. There were so many talks online and our grade even organised seminars with the boys and we discussed new topics every week that was really insightful. There was a lot of transformation effort, and I think before 2020 it wasn’t really present.”

Another participant who was in matric in 2020 held a similar sentiment but came across more sarcastically.

"2020 was a terrible year all round but it was a good year for transformation. We had a lot of people engaging in a lot of conversations and there were transformation representatives assigned in houses."

This participant later expressed that these efforts that he was so hopeful about were short lived as support was lacking.

"There was support for transformation but not as much as there should have been. There were certain things that a lot of people were for, but there were a lot of things that they wouldn't even begin to talk about."

Group 1 participants who had already matriculated by 2020 did not share the same perspective on transformation for the school in 2020. They explained how counterproductive the process was, as there have been very minimal efforts of reconciliation since May 2020. One participant mentioned the use of her expertise during this time frame, with no fruitful results, despite her labour.

"I thought, I'm already doing this kind of work and thinking in other spaces, I can see what I can spare for the sake of the school because I did want the school to grapple with it and the only way I could be sure of that was if I was to participate. I'm not going to sit on the sidelines and complain that nothing's changing. It was part of my responsibility as an old girl to be able to hold space in these forums and contribute in a way that felt participatory and not passive."

This participant remained open to communication and held the school accountable at various points since 2020 but eventually decided to take a step back.

"I took a step back because I was fatigued by the lack of progress. I cannot keep knocking on a door that is not going to open in the time that it says it's going to open. There was a lack of feedback. We put a lot of effort and input into what we were doing for the school for free and the school just took so long to get back."

No participants denied the existence of progress in transformation, in fact, there have been responses praising the school's management for leading transformation efforts. Despite the existing efforts, participants have felt that more could be done. There was a shared perspective that individuals were putting in more effort towards the cause of transformation, and the energies of the schools were not matching their efforts, bringing

delayed progress or radio silence. This suggests that transformation is not a priority in the greater perspective of the institutions.

Since 2020, there seems to have been a decline in progress. One indicator of progress in this study has been the observation of the websites of the two schools. I have gathered information from the two websites to better understand the schools' approaches to transformation. Over the 12 months that this study has taken place, one of the schools' pages dedicated to transformation has remained the same. This page consists of 4 photographs from the same event and just over 100 words explaining that the school has adopted a policy and is dedicated to promoting transformation while addressing historical inequalities. A participant from Group 2 who has worked in transformation management described the approach of the schools in the period of these years,

“So, when you look symbolically to what meets the eye, things have progressed. I think where we are now, 2020 and post, is trying to talk about the things that we don't see. So, the unconscious biases because our policy attends to that.”

While expectations of transformation vary amongst participants, everybody has a unified goal which is not necessarily a destination but a continuous movement – to get to a place where transformation is prioritised and not questioned. While it is difficult to measure transformations and all of its aspects, the experiences of students should be a major telling factor to explain where the school is in terms of transformation efforts.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the lived experiences of black alumni in historically white independent schools, highlighting the tensions between institutional transformation efforts and the realities faced by students. Through the lens of cultural capital and critical race theory, the findings illustrate how deeply embedded systemic inequalities continue to shape the educational experiences of black students, often forcing them to navigate spaces that were never designed for their inclusion.

The reflections of participants reveal a clear disconnect between policy and practice. While transformation initiatives exist, they often fall short of addressing the core issues of racial inequality, exclusion, and the burden placed on black individuals—particularly black women—to lead change efforts. The performative nature of some transformation

strategies, coupled with a lack of accountability and meaningful engagement from school leadership, reinforces existing power structures rather than dismantling them.

A key insight from the study is the emotional toll that these experiences take on black students and staff. The expectation that black individuals must educate their white counterparts on race, combined with the pressures of assimilation and the dismissal of racial grievances, creates an environment of exclusion masked as diversity. Participants' narratives underscore the resilience required to exist in these spaces, yet also reveal the long-term impacts of racial trauma and identity negotiation.

Despite these challenges, there is a clear call for transformation to be an ongoing, intentional, and collective effort—one that moves beyond symbolic gestures to substantive, systemic change. The study emphasises the need for historically white independent schools to actively engage with issues of race, power, and privilege, ensuring that transformation is not just a theoretical commitment but a lived reality for all students.

Ultimately, the findings highlight that transformation is not a destination but a continuous process. For meaningful change to occur, schools must not only acknowledge their histories but also take deliberate action to foster truly inclusive and equitable educational environments. The responsibility of transformation should not rest solely on the shoulders of black students and staff, but rather be embraced as a shared commitment by the entire school community.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This study has critically examined transformation efforts in two historically white independent schools in the Eastern Cape, focusing on race and the lived experiences of black alumni. Using cultural capital and critical race theory as theoretical frameworks, the study has explored the extent to which transformation initiatives within these schools align with the needs and expectations of black students. The findings reveal a persistent gap between institutional policies and the everyday realities of black students, shedding light on the ways in which systemic inequalities continue to shape independent school environments in post-apartheid South Africa.

A key theme that emerged from the research is the dissonance between performative transformation efforts and substantive change. While schools have implemented policies aimed at fostering diversity and inclusion, these measures often fail to challenge deeply embedded power structures and racial hierarchies. Participants highlighted the emotional burden of navigating institutions that were historically designed to exclude them, as well as the expectation that they bear the responsibility of driving transformation. The narratives shared in this study underscore the resilience required to exist in these spaces, but also the need for institutions to take collective responsibility in dismantling systemic racism.

Furthermore, the study has demonstrated that transformation cannot be a superficial process driven by external pressures or institutional reputation management. Rather, it must be an ongoing and intentional effort that interrogates historical legacies, challenges existing power dynamics, and fosters truly inclusive educational environments. The role of school leadership, staff, and governing bodies is critical in ensuring that transformation policies are not merely symbolic, but actively reshape institutional culture in ways that benefit all students equitably.

This study contributes to broader discussions on race, education, and transformation in South Africa, providing insights that are applicable beyond the specific case studies examined. While the focus has been on historically white independent schools, the findings resonate with challenges faced by educational institutions globally, where issues of race and inclusion remain central to debates on equity and justice.

Recommendations for Future Research

Given the scope of this study, there are several areas that warrant further exploration. Future research could expand on the intersectionality of race, class, and gender within independent schools, examining how these factors shape student experiences in different ways. Additionally, longitudinal studies tracking transformation efforts over a more extended time period would provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of policy changes and institutional commitments to racial equity. Further research could also engage with a broader range of historically white independent schools across South Africa to compare transformation practices and identify best practices for meaningful change.

Final Reflections

As South Africa marks three decades of democracy, the findings of this study serve as a reminder that transformation in education remains an unfinished project. Schools, as microcosms of society, have a responsibility to actively engage with issues of race and power, moving beyond rhetoric to create spaces where all students feel a sense of belonging. The responsibility of transformation should not rest solely on the shoulders of black individuals, but rather be embraced as a shared commitment by the entire school community. Only through sustained, intentional, and collective efforts can historically white schools truly dismantle the systemic barriers that continue to shape educational experiences along racial lines.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Ethics Approval Letter

 RHODES UNIVERSITY <i>Where leaders learn</i>		Rhodes University Human Research Ethics Committee Main Admin Building, Drostdy Road, Makhanda, 6139, South Africa PO Box 94, Makhanda, 6140, South Africa t: +27 (0) 46 603 7314 e: ethics-committee@ru.ac.za https://www.ru.ac.za/researchgateway/ethics/ NHREC Registration number: RC-241114-045
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7 August 2024

7 August 2024

Miss Alyssa FERREIRA

Email: g20f7847@campus.ru.ac.za g20f7847@campus.ru.ac.za

Review Reference: 2024-7950-8963

Dear Miss Alyssa FERREIRA

Title: Unveiling Racial Biases: A Critical Analysis of Transformation and Diversity Policies in Two Historically White Independent Schools in the Eastern Cape

Researcher: Miss Alyssa FERREIRA

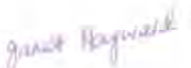
Supervisor(s): Dr Thoko Sipungu

This letter confirms that the above research proposal has been reviewed and **APPROVED** by the Rhodes University Human Research Ethics Committee (RU-HREC). Your Approval number is: 2024-7950-8963

Approval has been granted for 1 year. An annual progress report will be required in order to renew approval for an additional period. You will receive an email notifying you when the annual report is due.

Please ensure that the ethical standards committee is notified should any substantive change(s) be made, for whatever reason, during the research process. This includes changes in investigators. Please also ensure that a brief report is submitted to the ethics committee on the completion of the research. The purpose of this report is to indicate whether the research was conducted successfully, if any aspects could not be completed, or if any problems arose that the ethical standards committee should be aware of. If a thesis or dissertation arising from this research is submitted to the library's electronic theses and dissertations (ETD) repository, please notify the committee of the date of submission and/or any reference or cataloguing number allocated.

Sincerely,



Dr Janet Hayward

Chair: Rhodes University Human Research Ethics Committee, RU-HREC

cc: Ethics Coordinator

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Appendix B: Participant Informed Consent Declaration



PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION

(To be signed by research participant/s)

Project Title: Exploring the lived experiences of identity negotiation Black alumni in historically white independent schools in the Eastern Cape between 2010 and 2020

Alyssa Lana Ferreira from the Department of Sociology, Rhodes University has requested my permission to participate in the above-mentioned research project.

The nature and the purpose of the research project and of this informed consent declaration have been explained to me in a language that I understand.

I am aware that:

1. The purpose of the research project is to **explore the experiences of identity negotiation of Black students who went to independent schools in the Eastern Cape.**
2. Rhodes University has given ethical clearance to this research project **7192** and I have seen/may request to see the clearance certificate by contacting the Ethics Coordinator (ethics-committee@ru.ac.za)
3. By participating in this research project I will be contributing towards **raising the voices of Black individuals in the academic world with real and unfiltered experiences in areas that are relevant to their existence in current society. This research project aims to promote the idea of active movement towards transformed and diverse schools in South Africa.**
4. I will participate in the project by **participating in a semi-structured interview of 45 minutes on the topic of lived experiences at historically white independent schools in the Eastern Cape. Questions will be based on experiences, race and transformation and diversity.**
5. My participation is entirely voluntary and should I at any stage wish to withdraw from participating further, I may do so without any negative consequences.
6. I will not be compensated for participating in the research, but my out-of-pocket expenses will be reimbursed.
7. The following risks are associated with my participation: **the interviews may bring up negative emotions associated with the reflection of experiences of being Black students at a historically white independent school.**

Rhodes University, Research Office, Ethical Review
Ethics Coordinator: ethics-committee@ru.ac.za
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8. The Researcher intends to publish the research results in the form of **a research essay submitted as part of an Honours degree** however, confidentiality and anonymity of records will be maintained and my name and identity will not be revealed to anyone who has not been involved in the conducting of the research, **unless I indicate to the contrary/recognize that as a public figure my identity will inevitably be/become known, in which case I agree to accept the loss of anonymity.**
9. In terms of the Protection of Personal Information Act (No. 4 of 2013) it remains my right to request the Researcher to provide me with a detailed explanation of exactly how confidentiality and anonymity of the data I provide will be achieved. I may also request to know exactly how my personal information will be stored securely, for how long it will be stored.
10. If any data collected from me for this research project is to be used by the Researcher for any further study, I am to be informed in writing and my written consent requested again. I need not give consent for the new research if it is incompatible with the initial purpose of the present study (POPIA, s15(3)). Equally, I can simply reject the request. In such cases, a formal request needs to be made to me by the researcher via the Ethics Coordinator (ethics-committee@ru.ac.za).
11. In terms of the POPI Act, I possess the right to receive feedback about this research. This will take the form of **receiving the final submission of the research essay that includes the findings and analysis of the data recorded that involved their participation. The document will be emailed to them as feedback on the interviews and the progress of the research study** unless I elect not to receive this feedback.
12. Any further questions that I might have regarding the nature of the research and/or my participation in it will be answered by **Alyssa Lana Ferreira, G20F7847@campus.ru.ac.za**
13. By signing this informed consent declaration, I am not waiving any legal claims, rights, or remedies. A copy of this informed consent declaration will be given to me, and the original will be kept on record by the Researcher.
14. I **agree/disagree** (delete inapplicable) to the Researcher's request to take photographs, or videobing me as part of this research project only for the purposes of capturing and analyzing data, recognizing that agreement here will not compromise my anonymity.
15. I **agree/disagree** (delete inapplicable) to the Researcher's use of voice recording of my comments and opinions during interviews, the purpose of which is to ensure the accurate recording of my views/responses. Furthermore, I have the right to request a copy of the interview transcriptions to confirm that my opinions are accurately recorded

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I,, have read the above information / confirm that the above information has been explained to me in a language that I understand and I am aware of this document's contents. I have asked all questions that I wished to ask, and these have been answered to my satisfaction. I fully understand what is expected of me during the research.

I have not been pressurised in any way and I voluntarily agree to participate in the above-mentioned project.

.....
Participants signature

.....
Witness

.....
Date

Appendix C: Interview Schedule for alumnae (Group 1)

Interview Schedule for alumnae (Group 1)

Group 1 required participants to be black and South African and have matriculated from the two historically white independent schools between the years 2013 and 2023. This group was asked about their lived experiences regarding race and racial discrimination at the school and their perspectives on transformation management.

Understanding the lived experiences of the black alumnae at the schools:

1. What years and grades did you attend the school?
2. Was there a particular reason for attending this school?
3. How would you explain your general experience of your time at this school?
4. Did you feel confident in your identity while being a student there?
5. How did you feel about your race while at school?
6. Do you feel that your race impacted the way you were treated by others (students and/or staff members)?
7. How do you feel about your race now?
8. Were there any challenges you faced during your time at school?
9. Would you attribute these challenges to your race or any other part of your demographic? If yes, what and why?
10. Would you send your children to this school and why?

Perspectives on transformation at school:

1. Were there transformation representatives or transformation management in the school while you were there?
2. Did you feel that the transformation structures were helpful in creating positive changes in the school?
3. How did students and staff respond to any transformation action?
4. What is your opinion on the structures and practices of transformation management?
5. How did your school experience shape your view on transformation?
6. How do you view transformation, now?

7. Do you feel that the school community valued and represented your voice and racial identity? Why?
8. What do you wish was different in the aspect of transformation while you were at school, or now?
9. Do you communicate with your alma mater in any way?
10. Are you involved in their programs that seek transformation tips and support from alumni?
11. Do you have any other comments or questions?

Appendix D: Interview Schedule for Transformation Management Staff (Group 2)

Interview schedule for transformation management staff (Group 2)

Group 2 required participants to have worked in transformation management at one of the two schools between the years 2013 and 2023. This group will hopefully provide insight into the formal and informal policies and practices of transformation management, its history and its goals.

1. Tell me a bit about yourself. Where are you from, where did you attend school and university?
2. How did you get involved and interested in the work of transformation?
3. Do you feel that race is important in the role you fulfilled?
4. Can you tell me about the history of "transformation and diversity" at this school?
5. What sparked the initiation of transformation in the school?
6. Do you feel that the role of transformation is well understood by the public – including parents and old students?
7. There are policies available online, do they accurately represent the goals of transformation in the school?
8. What were the intentions and aims of transformation in this space?
9. Who are identified as the identity groups that transformation looks out for?
10. What sort of practices are implemented by the transformation structures?
11. What responses has the school received about these changes?
12. What do you see changing in a realistic long-term trajectory with regards to transformation?
13. Do you have any other comments or questions?

Appendix E: Interview Schedule for External Consultants (Group 3)

Interview schedule for external members (Group 3)

Group 3 requires participants to have no clear affiliation to the two schools and have experience in facilitating or consulting in transformation management in the educational field in South Africa, preferably involving historically white independent school.

1. Tell me about yourself. Where are you from? Where did you receive your education?
2. What is your current job description?
3. What sparked your involvement in work in transformation?
4. How would you describe transformation in the South African context?
5. Do you believe that transformation is important in spaces of education and why?
6. How should schools approach transformation, particularly anti-racism?
7. Do you know of any requirements regarding transformation for schools?
8. How have you been involved in transformation in education?
9. How do you wish transformation could reshape education in South Africa in a general sense?
10. How do you wish transformation could reshape anti-racism in education in South Africa?
11. What does it mean to be involved in active transformation to you?