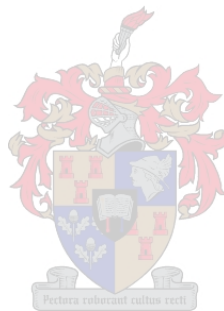


***Black in White: The Private and Public Lives of Black Alums in  
Cape Town Private Schools***

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**Thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master  
of Arts in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at Stellenbosch University**

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**December 2022**

## **Declaration**

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the sole author thereof (save to the extent explicitly otherwise stated), that reproduction and publication thereof by Stellenbosch University will not infringe any third-party rights and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

December 2022

## Abstract

This thesis explores the private and public lives of Black alums in Cape Town private schools. The thesis is interested in understanding whether elite schools are truly becoming more inclusive in 21<sup>st</sup> century South Africa, or if their attempt to reproduce elite status has meant the transmission of “Whiteness” and the alienation of Black students. I begin by exploring the history of education in South Africa and how elite schooling is rooted to this history in such a way that affects 21<sup>st</sup> century Black students who attend these schools. I show how Whiteness emerges in this history of elite schooling, and continues to be experienced in contemporary post-apartheid South Africa, even if its meaning may not be fixed or constant. Whiteness takes the form it does because private schools, like the ones explored in this thesis, seek to emulate elite schools that are tied to the British colony. In this pursuit of an ‘eliteness’ a set of tones and codes emerge that schools nurture in their students, one that may produce alienation for Black students inside and outside of this space. I therefore look at the ways in which Black students have existed in these spaces that can often be quite hostile to their existence. I further theorise the class experience of students at these schools and try to establish how race and class might intersect at elite schools. I further show that queer students also face similar rigid structures within these schools that force them to interrogate their identities in such a way that cisgendered, heterosexual students do not. This thesis relied on a qualitative method of analysis, drawing on 10 interviews with Black alums of two private schools. I supplemented these data with some of my own experiences of one of the two private schools. This allowed me to recognise the relations and intersections between race, class, gender, and sexuality in these spaces which became the basis for my chapters.

## Opsomming

Hierdie tesis verken die private en publieke lewens van Swart alums in privaat skole in Kaapstad. Hierdie tesis is geïntereeserd daarin om te verstaan of elite skole werklik meer inklusief raak in die 21ste eeu in Suid-Afrika, en of hulle poging om elite status te reproduseer eerder die transmissie van “Witheid” en die vervreemding van Swart studente beteken. Ek begin deur die geskiedenis van onderwys in Suid-Afrika te verken en oorweeg hoe elite skoolopleiding gewortel is in hierdie geskiedenis op so ’n wyse dat Swart studente, wat hierdie skole bywoon in die 21ste eeu, daardeur geïmpak word. Ek wys hoe Witheid na vore kom in hierdie geskiedenis van elite skoolopleiding, en hoe dit steeds ervaar word in kontemporêre post-Apartheid Suid-Afrika, selfs wanneer die betekenis van Witheid nie altyd beslis of konstand is nie. Witheid neem die vorm aan wat dit doen omdat privaat skole, soos die skole wat in hierdie tesis verken word, poog om elite skole wat aan die Britse kolonie gekoppel is, na te volg. In hierdie strewing na ’n ‘elitheid’ kom ’n stel tone en kodes na vore wat skole in hulle studente koester, een wat binne en buite hierdie spasie vervreemding vir Swart studente mag veroorsaak. Ek kyk dus na maniere waarin Swart studente bestaan in hierdie spasies wat dikwels nogal vyandiggesind teenoor hulle bestaan kan wees. Ek teoretiseer verder die klaservaring van studente in hierdie skole, en probeer om vas te stel hoe ras en klas by verskillende interseksies met mekaar mag kruis by elite skole. Ek wys verder dat queer studente ook gekonfronteer word met soortgelyke rigiede strukture in hierdie skole, wat hulle forseer om hulle identiteite te ondersoek op ’n wyse wat cis-geslag, heteroseksuele studente nie doen nie. ’n Kwalitatiewe metode van analise is toegepas op 10 onderhoude met Swart alums van twee privaat skole. Dit het my in staat gestel om die verhoudings en interseksies tussen ras, klas, geslag, en seksualiteit in hierdie spasies te herken, wat die fondasies vir my hoofstukke geword het.

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## Introduction

During Iver's early life his mother always tried to explain the concept of colour and race to him. These attempts were not always successful because, according to Iver, "it's difficult to explain race to a mixed-race child". His mom would try and use illustrations to explain that his dad is Black and she is White and "that is why you are the colour that you are".<sup>1</sup> Iver would accept what she told him but, as a child, it always felt like an arbitrary explanation because he had never fully encountered race socially. That was until he went to Evergreen College in pre-school and an older boy asked a peculiar question. The exchange, which is paraphrased, went as follows:

Boy: "Are you adopted?"

Iver: "No, why?"

Boy: "Did your mom get you from some kind of house? Like, is your mom your actual mom?"

Iver: "Yes. Why would you say that?"

Boy: "Because you're Coloured, and she's White."

For Iver, this interaction did two things, firstly, it made him recognise that socially, his skin colour being different to that of his mother was significant on a couple of fronts. It was not just that he was a different colour to his mother, but that his mother and father were from different races and had a child together. This indicated to Iver that not only his existence was being questioned, but the idea of a Black man and a White woman being together was something to consider. The second thing he learnt was that his skin colour was associated with a distinct ethnic group that has an established socio-historical background that he did not share, nor identify with. While a young Iver was not able to entirely comprehend how he was being racialised, as Iver grew up, race became deeply rooted in his identity. This was not the only interaction of this nature that he was exposed to, and it was something he encountered both within the confines of Evergreen and in public. However, it was at Evergreen that this frequent questioning of his identity would be raised. Iver would often get annoyed at this line of

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<sup>1</sup>In this thesis I will be capitalizing Black, White, Brown etc. As with MIT Philosopher Sally Haslanger's thinking, I wish to highlight the artificiality of race by not stating them matter-of-factly, the same way one would write colours (i.e., black, white, brown), rather, I will capitalize them in order to denote their social construction. This will not include direct quotes from texts.



questioning and his being “pigeonholed into a cultural group” with which he did not identify. This was the beginning. When he first began to realise “my dad is Black, my mom is White, and that’s not a normal thing”. This formed the foundation of his understanding of race as a concept and the constant interrogation of his identity throughout his life.

Iver’s story of encountering race in this way is unfortunately not unique, in fact, many Black South Africans encounter issues of race in some way throughout their lives.<sup>2</sup> The socio-historical context of the country almost demands this. But the private school context in which Iver first encountered queries of race created an anxiety, one that forced him to choose a specific racial category as a form of self-identification. Evergreen College is a private school in Cape Town which educates the children of some of the wealthiest individuals in South Africa and internationally. It is a school with a history that is tied to the origins of education in South Africa in some interesting ways and has therefore established itself as one of the top elite schools in the country.

Black students have historically been excluded from participating equally in the education process. If this exclusion was haphazard and informal, by the onset of Apartheid in 1948, this became a legislated division. Until the abolishment of Apartheid, most Black students were excluded from being educated at the same institutions as White students. Interestingly, Jeremy Seekings and Nicoli Nattrass (2005) argue that in post-Apartheid South Africa, class has taken over from race as the biggest identifier of privilege. We therefore find ourselves in a unique period, one in which both Black and White people can participate in acts of privilege. It is this fact that has shaped the new racial composition of the once heavily segregated elite schools in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Even if students like myself, Iver and the other participants have access to elite education, this thesis will show that the socio-psychological implications of entering these institutions are not equal. Students identifying as Black therefore face a particular difficulty when entering these spaces.

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<sup>2</sup> This thesis will use the term Black throughout the paper, not as a skin colour demarcation, but rather in Steve Biko’s (1987) use of the term Black. To Biko, Black people are “those who are by law or tradition politically, economically and socially discriminated against as a group in the South African society and identifying themselves as a unit in the struggle towards the realization of their aspirations” (1987: 48). In essence, I use the term to engage with a more inclusive use of the term in recognizing that my participants are of various cultural backgrounds. They all agreed to the usage of the term as an identifier of their own individual identities.

At elite private schools, Black students are forced to confront their identities and positionalities within spaces that are still predominantly White, suggesting that class has not, in fact, trumped race in this sphere. In this thesis I discuss the history of education in South Africa, its ties to the British Empire and how this history has fundamentally affected the shape of schools in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. More specifically, I will examine the history of elite schooling by taking a closer look at Evergreen College and its relationship with the Colony. Elite schooling has both historically and contemporarily been typified by exclusion. It is this very exclusion that is foundational to their elite status which is why it is fundamental to explore these exclusionary tactics historically and illustrate how these tactics might have persisted well into contemporary society. In addition to Evergreen, this thesis examines another Western Cape school, Redford Academy. This school is also a private school, however, unlike Evergreen, was formed in a post-Apartheid South Africa and is co-educational. Redford's brief history and modernity is used as a comparative tool in understanding what makes a school elite. I explore the ways in which Evergreen and Redford might be functionally similar but more importantly, how they differ in their elite statuses. I wish to assess how modern private schools might still be influenced by historic private schools. How do the forms of racial exclusion and alienation felt in an historic private school appear in a private school established after Apartheid? Do the forms of eliteness produced post-Apartheid manage to escape the weight of the colonial past for Black students?

In addressing these questions, I examine the role which Whiteness must play in how these private schools exist and how much of a Whiteness is explicitly and implicitly produced to maintain this so-called elite status. This is fundamental as Adam Howard argues that schools are sites in which social values and behaviours, positive or negative (racism, homophobia and hazing for example), are transmitted, and reinforced onto students to maintain a cultural hegemony across generations (2007: 111). The school to which a parent sends their child becomes incredibly important, as it not only educates a child officially through the curriculum, but also unofficially through the hidden curriculum (Jachim, 1987). Considering South Africa's segregated history, elite private schools were predominantly White, where public schools were predominantly Black. However, there lies a greater nuance to this segregation as prior to the passing of the South African Schools Act (SASA) in 1996, the National Party took steps to "protect white schools – the best in the system – in the face of impending change that would necessarily see the end of racially-based privilege" (Christie & McKinney, 2017: 9). They did so by giving White schools the option to change their demarcation based off the 'Model'

system, so long as each respective school's governing body elected to do so. There was 'Model A' which allowed a school to remain fully private, such as Evergreen and Redford. 'Model B' allowed the school to remain a state school, however with the provision that 50% of the student body remain White. Finally, 'Model C' schools would "get a state subsidy but would have to raise the balance of their budgets through fees and donations", alongside admitting Black students of up to 50% of their enrolment (Christie & McKinney, 2017: 9–10; Maharaj, 2005: 48).

In 1992 the government declared all White government schools as 'Model C' and thus maintaining their ability to be state-aided, with "white-controlled governing bodies having substantial powers over finances (fees structure), admissions and property" (Christie & McKinney, 2017: 10). In other words, these schools became a curious mix of public and private, allowing these schools the possibility of mobilising financial resources through fees to shape the school and how racial integration happened. The passing of SASA in 1996, which confirmed the powers of these schools' governing bodies, therefore did little in the way of desegregating these schools, as their powers had been maintained through the formation of the new post-apartheid government. In brief, when Apartheid was abolished and segregation was criminalised, it was left to school governing bodies to manage how integration happened, with the levying of fees a mechanism to manage the terms of that integration. Mark Hunter argues that a school's status was dependent on its "white tone", which was characterised not just by the student body but also by its ability to emulate British Public schooling (2016: 324). Schools needed to symbolise Whiteness to maintain their status. That, alongside the introduction of a fees based structure amongst state owned, 'Model C' schools created different types of oppressive attitudes and structures (Francis & Hemson, 2006: 211). With the introduction of Black students into formerly White spaces, these schools attempted to utilise a multicultural approach, with a strong emphasis on bringing together different people into one space. But, this approach is criticised by Francis & Hemson, amongst others, for lacking an exploration into the power and conflict within society (2006: 214–215). This fosters a space in which pro-LGBTQIA+ and anti-racist policies are passed within schools, yet racism, homophobia, transphobia and the like are still heavily prevalent.

There lies, then, an important distinction between the elite schools discussed in this paper, as compared to the formerly White, 'Model C' schools. Aside from the distinction of Private as opposed to state-aided, what separates these private schools is their fees with

Evergreen college reportedly being between R200 000 – R300 000, and Redford being between R50 000 – R150 000 per Anum, for matriculants. For state owned schools, the fees range anywhere between R8000 – R20 000 (“Education in South Africa: a guide for expat parents | Expatica”, 2022). This distinction becomes important therefore, as the schools largely covered in the literature I utilise in this thesis, which are state-aided, are different to the elite schools analysed. As Christie and McKinney highlight, ‘Model C’ is contemporarily used to designate former White schools in a way that “signifies a historical link to white privilege” (2017: 11–12). Quite importantly, almost all of these schools charge fees and remain the best resourced and highest achieving public schools in the country. But it still remains to be said that as a result of the difference in fees, the elite schools discussed in this thesis exist in a different space and come to symbolise something vastly different to public schools.

In its early years then, a school like Evergreen was powerful because of what it symbolised rather than its education. Adam Howard argues that schools are symbolic in nature and “symbols and symbolic referents can summarize and/or elaborate cultural values” (2007: 134). As argued by Leya Mgebisa (2021), the choice of school is still heavily driven by race and class. The symbolism of Whiteness therefore becomes imperative for schools wishing to draw in a particular pool of parents. However, private schools had an embedded exclusivity because of their high fees. With the distribution of wealth being what it was and still is, these schools exist as White spaces, and prospective parents are aware of this. Private schools thus promised more than just a White tone, they also offered a particular *code*. I derive the concept of code from CLR James’ reflections from the 1920s on private schooling in Trinidad, a British colony. Codes in this context refer to actions, behaviours and rules of living which are instilled by private schools onto their students. The duality of the tones and codes therefore gave private schools not only something that shaped their desirability and, therefore admissions, but also something that promised established forms of conduct that would be instilled in their students, and in which prospective parents are willing to invest.

I therefore ask in this thesis, how might private schools like Evergreen and even more contemporary schools like Redford, in their active pursuit of the capture and maintenance of Whiteness, accommodate its newly restructured and non-racialised student body? How does a Black student enter this space? What are the experiences of Black alums in Cape Town private schools? What does it mean to be Black in a space that seeks to maintain its tones and codes, and thereby seeks to reproduce Whiteness? In my 2020 honours study, I discussed my first

encounter with Frantz Fanon's (1952) *Black Skin, White Masks*, a text which played a massive role in my decision to research this idea. In the very first page of his book, Fanon writes "at the risk of arousing the resentment from my coloured brothers, the black man is not a man" (1952: 1). In this text, Fanon (1952) goes on to describe the psychological phenomenon he observed which Black men encountered when entering a White world.<sup>3</sup> He further laments the nature of an inferiority complex that formed within Black men due to being economically and psychologically driven to believe in their own inferiority. For me, this text represented the first time I had felt academically visible. It was the first time that my own personal experience, although not directly similar, felt lived and experienced by another. Having attended Evergreen throughout my entire school experience, I was raised in a White world.

What that did to and for me was to fracture my own identity, my identity as a Black man. For many years, I could never understand why I had struggled with a sense of self until I read Fanon, who so eloquently illustrated what it was I was experiencing. What I felt was an immediate elation, joy, and pride. But these emotions were immediately followed by confusion and frustration. My frustration was that it had taken so long for me to feel recognised, and that my fractured identity was not an inherent developmental flaw but something which is shared and experienced by others. It was also because Fanon released this text back in 1952. His context vastly differs from mine, in terms of geographical location, history and century. Yet his experience, and that of the people he wrote about, gave a student living in 21<sup>st</sup> century South Africa a visibility. It became interesting to me that, despite the differences, the experience was similar. What this current project aims to do is to examine the historical and political reasons why so many Black students come out of these spaces with the same sense of having fractured identities.

Gaia, an Indian-Italian alum from Evergreen added another element to this research namely, what it is to be a queer Black student in a White, cisgendered-heteronormative (cis-het) school. Through Gaia's experience, we examine the realities of forming an identity, not just racially but also in terms of gender and sexuality in a space which is so rigidly structured to suit a particular type of student. I will thus examine Evergreen's ties to the British public school system and how this rigid structure of same-sex schooling is another element of elite

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<sup>3</sup> Both Fanon (1952) and W.E.B Du Bois (1903) very specifically used language that was centred around men, I believe leaving women out of their discussions was intentional and reflective of their context. However, it is not my intention to exclude women from this discussion.

education which was deliberately formulated to produce a particular ‘boy’. In my research, I examine how Gaia had to contend with their Indian heritage as a result of bullying. In addition to being the first openly queer student at Evergreen, Gaia had to contend with a space which was explicitly and implicitly violent towards someone who did not fall into a heterosexual box.

Their identity was constantly being questioned by others and by themselves. I therefore explored the ways in which masculinity at schools like Evergreen is performed and perpetuated. How different expressions of masculinity are often met with resistance and finally, how non-heterosexual sexualities are opposed. At Redford, Tyler explained her experience of both masculinity and femininity. Being a Black woman in a co-educational private school meant that the performance of masculinity manifested in diverse ways. Of note however, was how Tyler struggled with her own femininity at Redford, as even while being a heterosexual woman, her sexuality always came into question. This is also tied to a deeply racialised history that has seen Black women face a similar yet vastly unique experience to Black men when it comes to race, gender, and sexuality. More importantly, this thesis explores Tyler’s struggles with identity which troubled her throughout her time at Redford.

My experience, together with those of Gaia, Tyler, and Iver, are just some from the interviews I conducted and utilised in this thesis to explore these themes. The alums I interviewed all went through an experience which is unique to the world of elite private schooling and one which, I believe, needs to be examined further. Their lived experiences and struggles with their self-identification, and my inability to define who I am, are all rooted in a deeply intricate and divided history. The goal of this thesis is then to raise a few questions namely, are private schools in post-Apartheid South Africa inclusive spaces or are they participating in a culture of accommodation to their new, non-racial student body? And to what extent are these schools’ pursuit and maintenance of eliteness furthering a racial division sown in the history of South Africa?

## **Conceptual Underpinnings:**

To maintain a conceptual throughline, this thesis has specific terminology that will be used throughout the text. Although many more concepts present themselves in the thesis, these

are the key underpinnings. There are certain key concepts such as Whiteness, Blackness, Femininity, Masculinity etc. that are also significant to the thesis, in line with my social constructionist approach. These definitions are being redefined by practice, amid a dynamic society. The preliminary definition of these concepts will therefore be explored in depth within their respective chapters.

### **Elite Schooling**

Defining a school as elite is the result of a multitude of factors. Considering I describe Evergreen as an elite school, it would be important to recognise a working definition to avoid confusion. However, I will not define what constitutes a school as ‘elite’ as this thesis is an exploration of that very definition. Kenway and Lazarus (2017: 265–266), for example, have a definition that requires the school to have been one hundred years or older, records of success in public exams, how influential their alums network is (government, industry, arts, and sports for example), high school fees etc. and, importantly, they must be modelled on British Public schools. Although this definition does work in Evergreen’s case, it does not fully account for how eliteness might be copied and created, for example, through certain codes that a school like Redford could copy and attempt to instil at their institution. Eliteness therefore might be something that can be captured and recreated, thus, limiting it to an institution that is one-hundred years or older, might be restrictive. It also does not consider Whiteness and its influence over what is considered elite. We will therefore explore these avenues to paint a clearer picture of eliteness, specifically within the Western Cape.

### **Codes**

Codes refer to specific markers, whether physical, for example, in the uniform one wore, or the way one walks, or the abstract, for example, learning the formalities of language, how to speak, when to speak and in what context these different speech patterns should take place. Codes are thus mannerisms that one must learn to be accepted into a specific space. C. L. R. James (2013) highlighted in his book *Beyond the Boundary* how acquiring a specific elite school code allowed certain Black members of his community access into the elite world of the colony. This thesis will therefore explore how these elite codes were constructed through the colony and how they are maintained at schools such as Evergreen. Codes in this text are tied specifically to the term ‘elite’ and we explore how a contemporary school like Redford

might attempt to capture an eliteness through manufacturing codes similar to those at Evergreen.

### **Tone**

Mark Hunter (2016: 324) describes the process by which a school attempts to create its own meaning or symbol, as the “tone” of a school. This “tone” that they produce is important to a school’s attendance levels, but more importantly, the racial composition of that school and its reputation. It is thus important for schools to maintain a White tone to attract a specific student body and fee-paying parents. Tone differs from codes, in that codes are specific to private schools and are more of an internal process, whereas tones are produced by both public and private schools and are an external process of presentation.

### **Hidden Curriculum**

The Hidden curriculum refers to the values, gestures, sayings, topics, etc. that can all be used to suggest a narrative for students to consider outside of the formal curriculum in place (Jachim, 1987: 84). It is therefore focused on what is taught implicitly through unsaid messaging such as a teacher reprimanding one student for an act whilst leaving another student doing the same thing unpunished.

### **Total Institution**

According to Erving Goffman, total institutions are those which encompass a total character that is symbolized by their social distance from society at large which is often built into their physical structure with high walls, barbed wire, locked doors, etc. (1961: 4). A social arrangement within modern society is that a person tends to sleep, play, and work in separate places, with different people, under different authorities and without a “overall rational plan” (1961: 5–6).

### **Disculturation**

A “disculturation” refers to an individual being stripped of their former identity and suffering an almost complete identity overhaul, one that, in fact, makes it difficult for one to return to life outside of a Total institution (Goffman, 1961: 13). I use this term in conjunction with the double consciousness, and although discussing two very different phenomena, there is a connection in which the loss of identity is tied both to race and institution.



## **Double Consciousness**

According to W. E. B. Du Bois, a double consciousness is when “... one experiences a state of Two-ness, not wholly Black, never wholly White, one is stuck in a perpetual state of “double consciousness”” (1903: 8). This specifically refers to the plight of African Americans in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when Black Americans were emancipated from slavery but soon discovered that they were not entering an equal playing field. Having to contend with their identity as Black people and as Americans (which implicitly means White), these people had a struggle for identity in this period. Alongside this was a search for a merger of the two identities which Du Bois (1903) posits as a solution to the problem of the double consciousness, a search for Black excellence.

## **Muscular Christianity**

Muscular Christianity developed in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, emphasizing the relationship between sport, physical fitness, and religion (Watson, Weir & Friend, 2005: 1). The thought was that sport played a fundamental role in the development of Christian morality, physical fitness, and “manly” character (Watson *et al.*, 2005: 1).

## **Method**

The research I undertook for this thesis was based on a qualitative research design (Bryman, 2001: 313). I chose this approach because it allowed alums to foreground their experiences in their own terms, and was truly the best method for my project. This research was not focused on a number-driven, quantitative approach because I was less focused on the number of Black alums who experienced something similar to myself and my participants, but on the experience itself, and what effect it had on them. The interviews were therefore not rigid in nature and were semi-structured (Bryman, 2001: 315) to allow for the research to be open to more than was initially anticipated entering the interview process. Three major themes to this research were anticipated, namely Race, Class, and Masculinity. However, this interview structure allowed me to discover more themes on identity, sexuality, and femininity. Furthermore, due to the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the research had to be based entirely online. The interviews were held individually with each participant, taking

place on Microsoft Teams and zoom calls. I used a combination of snowball sampling and theoretical sampling (Bryman, 2001: 323–324) to obtain my pool of participants. This was possible due to my connection to Evergreen and having undertaken similar research in my honours project. I was therefore able to contact my participants directly and gained access to additional participants through their recommendations. Through my connection to alums from Redford I was able to gain a satisfactory number of participants from this school as well.

The data gathered was analysed using some elements of content analysis and thematic analysis. I ~~used content analysis to~~ draw a comparison between Redford and Evergreen's self-presentation of their school's values, nature, and curriculum, by analysing their school websites and other public materials such as social media accounts. Through these spaces, I was able to analyse specifically each school's approach to diversity and multiculturalism, or lack thereof. The histories of the schools, as documented by the websites were also examined in conjunction with my research on the history of education in South Africa and finding the intersections. These were then observed in relation to the alums experiences of the schools and how these aspects may differ. Thematic analysis ~~was chosen because it~~ utilizes "web-like illustrations (networks) that summarize the main themes constituting a piece of text" (Attride-Stirling, 2001: 386). This focus on themes was central to my thesis as a thematic analysis draws attention to the underlying meaning of the answers given by participants. This enabled me to utilize my intuition when processing the data gathered (Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen & Snelgrove, 2016: 101). However, as helpful as intuition can be, it can often be skewed by personal biases.

Being the unique position that I am, as both participant and researcher, there needed to be a deep introspection throughout this process. Recognising the existence of biases does not mean one will be completely objective in their analysis. But, I did not want to negate my personal experience all together either as this was crucial to my research process. I therefore utilised my experience to recognise a few key things. Namely, my individual experience is my own and so too are the participants'. What I seek, therefore, is not a quantifiable set of criteria with which each participant must fulfil. Rather, I seek a shared experience as a direct result of being within these schools and being Black. However, this did not mean that every Black interviewee had the same experience and I was open to that fact. A participant did have an experience that was fairly different to the others and myself. But, importantly, this did not contradict the principle power structures that led to an overall, shared experience between the participants. I also note that in my experience at school, I was not a passive observer but an

active participant in many of the rituals and events discussed throughout. I therefore constantly found myself examining my own positionality within the same structures I wish to draw attention to. I believe this emerges throughout the paper as well. But most importantly was the participants and their stories, as they were the ones who shaped this entire thesis.

The main themes of this thesis, which form the basis of my chapters, were found throughout the interview process. This is a form of analysis that lies at the centre of qualitative research analysis and gathering. The three themes discussed throughout the thesis are not mutually exclusive and are, in fact, more interconnected than initially anticipated. This made the thematic analysis even more important as it allowed the themes to function on their own, whilst at the same time synthesizing, categorizing, and structuring (Attride-Stirling, 2001: 388) many more elements of the other themes discovered in the research process. With research like mine, in which themes are circumscribed by history and context, thematic networks will allow me to highlight the symbiotic relationship between each theme explored in my research (Attride-Stirling, 2001: 389). Having engaged in this work before, there was an element of anticipation for certain themes to emerge, such as Race and Masculinity as these were the basis of my research questions. However, others emerged through the interview process such as femininity, gender expression, and a struggle with identity. More themes that did materialise, such as the reinforcement of a racialised hypermasculinity through hook-up culture, for example, were not chosen to be elaborated upon for a multitude of factors. Namely, the interviewees largely shaped where my exploration would turn and the topics not chosen were only briefly touched upon. I therefore chose to focus largely on what was said, as this was ultimately what was important to my participants.

## **Participants**

I was able to contact six potential interviewees through various methods of communication (emails and WhatsApp, for example). I focused on recruiting Black participants for my research; however, I used Steve Biko's conceptualization of Black, which encapsulated more than just skin colour but also represented those which are not White. My previous connection with Evergreen allowed me to contact those interviewees through friends and colleagues. I initiated a connection to Redford which allowed me to contact four

other Redford alums, all of whom are women. I did struggle to recruit interested Redford male alums which led to my pool of interviewees from Redford being exclusively women.

The participants were of varying racial backgrounds, and all of them, in some way, experienced a form of racial discrimination. However, the extent to which they recall this discrimination, and the intensity of these incidents, varies amongst the participants. It would therefore be unfair to conclude that all the alums interviewed experienced the same phenomena discussed in the thesis and it would be unfair to describe their time at school as solely based on discrimination. There was a participant who stated clearly that their experience at Redford was devoid of racial discrimination. However, this does not detract from the experience of the students who did experience such discrimination. The participants all gave-informed consent prior to taking part in the interview process. An important part of this consent process was that of anonymity, therefore throughout the thesis, all my interviewees' names and any other identifying information has been altered. The information given below is therefore limited but still important in identifying the interviewees in the thesis.

Azure (She/Her) – is a former student of Redford who was the most recent matriculant of the interviewees. She has Zulu and Indian parentage.

Tyler (She/Her) – is a former student of Redford and held a prestigious position within the school. She has a long history with the school as she completed all her schooling there. She has different regional Coloured parentage.

Cyrah (She/Her) – is a former student of Redford and was an international student, thus offering a unique perspective on the Black experience at the school. She has Black parentage.

Parker (She/Her) – is a former student of Redford and attended the high school only. She is of Black parentage.

Gaia (They/Them) – is a former student of Evergreen and attended the school from high school level. They have Indian and Italian parentage.

Iver (He/Him) – is a former student of Evergreen and attended the school throughout his entire educational years. He is of Black and White parentage.

Topher (He/Him) – is a former student of Evergreen and attended the school at high school level. He is an interviewee from my previous research but is identified here because he plays a prominent role in this research as well. He is of Black parentage.

## **Chapter Outline**

This thesis is divided into four chapters. These four chapters are organised around a major theme that emerged from the data collected from the alums of Evergreen and Redford.

### **Chapter One: The Making of Elites**

In the first chapter I discuss the elite culture that is cultivated within Evergreen and, at times, Redford through the physical (school grounds) and hidden (codes and messaging imparted implicitly by the school). I thus draw your attention to the history of education in South Africa and how the shifts in power in Southern Africa from the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the 21<sup>st</sup> century dramatically affected the nature of education. Notably, I discuss the racialisation of education through the Dutch East India Company (DEIC), the British colonial project and finally the National Party and Apartheid rule through the work of A. L. Behr (1984) and M. E. McKerron (1934). This racialisation process is notable as it shows an unmistakable relationship between ‘elite’ education and race. Within this background lies the history of Evergreen, its conception, and its relationship to the colony and how this effectively shaped the form of education being delivered to its students. Alongside that was the ambivalence and increasing distance of Evergreen from the Apartheid project, being more in favour of a British Metropolitan approach. With its historical ties to the colony, I explore how Evergreen and, in many ways, Redford participate in a racialisation process through their attempts to foster an ‘elite’ culture within and outside of their respective schools.

### **Chapter Two: “Black is bad, White is right”**

In this second chapter I attempt to continue the discussion initiated in the first chapter but with a specific focus on Whiteness. This chapter therefore delves into what Whiteness is,

how it is devoid of definition, how much history and who is in power affects it and, finally, how we might benefit from identifying it. More importantly, this chapter discusses the effects that Whiteness has on Black alums and their experiences of self and identity. Utilising the history of education discussed in Chapter 1, I analyse the ways in which ‘elite’ schools attempt to shape a very particular type of student, one who is historically not Black. Citing W.E.B. Du Bois’ “double consciousness” (1903), we ask what it means to be Black and creating an identity in a White space, what struggles it might have presented to my participants and how it might shape their identities to this day. Finally, we discuss language, using the work of Fanon (1952) and the role it plays in further producing a disculturation within the alums and how their navigation of this aspect affected not just their personal lives but permeated into their familial and social lives as well.

### **Chapter Three: Making an Elite Class Consciousness**

This third chapter discusses how class structures formed in South Africa as a racialised process. Citing Jeremy Seekings and Nicoli Nattrass (2005), I explore their argument that class has taken over from race as the number one factor in determining privilege. This may be true, but the experiences of Black alums suggests that race is still an unavoidable factor in the process of privilege. Through the work of Lazarus & Kenway (2017), we explore the racialisation of the ‘elite’ class consciousness that is produced within Evergreen and Redford with a Marxian analysis of class. I then discuss the ways in which students at both Evergreen and Redford participated in a form of class consciousness through ritualised acts such as singing songs at Rugby games. These acts painted a clear divide between the White elite schools and the predominantly Black public schools, thereby creating a racial hierarchy through these ritualised acts. I therefore examine how this might create conflict within Black students who attend these schools and how they navigate this conflict. Finally, I examine how the schools themselves and the uniform act in a way as legitimising objects.

### **Chapter Four: Masculinity and the Practice of Gender & Sexuality**

This fourth and concluding chapter delves into the practice of gender and sexuality at both Evergreen and Redford. It begins with a discussion on Muscular Christianity and the ways in which British public schools, and subsequently schools that were modelled on them, used

physical activities to form a moral, heterosexual masculinity. I illustrate how this played out at Evergreen through the reverence of Rugby and tradition. I further illustrate how different forms of masculinity were policed and how non-heteronormative sexualities were treated with violence. This created a hegemonic masculinity, one which was favoured over others and had an ostracising effect on those who did not conform. Through the experience of Gaia, a gender non-conforming person, we explore how this violence is carried out and how they navigated their way through school. I then explore Redford and the ways in which gender was performed. Through Tyler, I explore how femininity was codified and how this affected someone who did not fit the standards of that codification. Notably, race played a significant role in both the masculinity and femininity that was expected at Redford and Evergreen alike. So, through these experiences, we are given not just a perspective on gender and sexuality but also the racialisation of that process and the further effects it had on the participants' conceptualisation of self.

# Chapter 1: The Making of Elites

## Introduction

Evergreen College's campus presents itself as having found a perfect balance between modernity and tradition. When entering the premises, one is immediately confronted with a state-of-the-art Pavilion followed by vast Rugby and Cricket fields. The further you venture into the school, the older the buildings get. Buildings that were constructed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century are still standing and give the school a feeling of prestige which, for the students, is a sense of pride. We would often get visitors from other schools admiring the grounds and highlighting the feeling that the school was modelled on an old British University. Our uniforms consisted of what were called 'Number Ones' which was a suit-like attire consisting of a blazer, white shirt, dark grey pants, and black shoes. The 'Number Twos' were a khaki shirt and shorts and 'Number 1,5's were a combination of Khaki shorts with a white shirt and blazer. The ties were significant as they each represented the position a scholar held within the school. You had the option of wearing the standard school tie, your house tie (which had to be earned in some way) and various other ties which were awarded or earned through academic, sporting, or cultural achievements. The Number Ones were always a favourite of the students and would often garner the most praise from outsiders (including parents of the students). The Blazer itself has a standard school badge displayed on the pocket. But much like the school ties, more may be added to the badge as you earn certain leadership positions in academic, sporting, and cultural activities. Admittedly, these are almost always limited to the head 'prefects' of the school.

The uniform serves as a source of pride for most students. Some of us would often feel more comfortable leaving the school premises in our school uniform than in our civies. But, notably, for Black students, the uniform became something more. I would often feel less watched by store clerks and mall guards when I entered shops in my Number Ones which resulted in a form of validation. I would often ponder why I felt superior in my uniform, superior on my campus. For a long time, I was happy to revel in this feeling of superiority, while being completely cognisant of the fact that, at this same school that I praised, were I to wear the Number Twos, students would mock me because I looked like a 'Robben Island prisoner'.<sup>4</sup> It was for this very reason that even during the summer heat of 38°C, Black students

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<sup>4</sup> Prisoners on Robben Island would have to wear Khaki coloured attire.



at Evergreen would refuse to wear the Number Twos, which was the official summer uniform. Number Ones therefore became symbolic. Wearing the Number Ones became a method of legitimising our own positionalities as students, rather than a walking target for racial ‘jokes’. It is in this way that the heat became a more manageable discomfort than racism.

My experience at Evergreen and the kinds of messages that the uniforms and ties offered, drew my attention to C.L.R. James’ *Beyond the Boundary* (2013). In this text, James describes 1920s and 1930s Trinidad, in which elite schools served – through academic and sporting prowess – as the route for Black students to gain social advancement. These advancements promised the possibility of transcending that colonial situation. This meant, for James, acquiring a formal knowledge and skill at sport, in addition to learning a set of English elite school codes that put a premium on ‘restraint’ (2013). These codes marked one as a member of such a school. While few people would have access to such elite codes, the burden of acquiring the code in a colonial situation fell differently on people of colour, who had no generational connection to the code. Black people did not have the aristocratic ancestry that White people, especially settlers from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, attempted to construct in the colonies. Black people were therefore and still are, members of these schools only through financial resources. For me this meant a particular connection to the school uniform, of being seen unmistakably as part of the school so that I would be recognised as wearing that code. This also produced a dissonance in me, of having both pride in the school’s history and heritage, as well as being functionally aware that that history did not include me. The uniform symbolised, in clothing form, what the school premises symbolised on a substantial scale. It symbolised a colonial elitism.

For Tijo Salverda, elites are defined as persons who “occupy commanding positions in some important sphere of social life [...] a group that has privileged access to, or control over, particular resources which may be mobilised in the exercise of power” (2016: 125). A colonial elitism therefore seeks to preserve a web of relations created within these spaces that would further reinforce their access to the resources that are relevant to the elite. Shamus Rahman Khan argues that the inequality which emerges through schooling comes as a result of cultural traits that students develop at these elite schools (2016: 181). These traits that develop through learning your level of hierarchy or rank through the prefect system. Learning where to walk, what to wear and how to wear it, how to eat, how to write, and how to speak. Additionally, you learned who is considered valuable and who is not, who deserves respect and who should be

despised. These traits emerge through explicit or implicit instruction and are the codes within which students who attend elite schools learn to become an elite. In the case of Evergreen, it was specifically a colonial elitism.

This is by no means a stroke of serendipity; Evergreen lies at the centre of the Cape Colony. It places itself as one of the oldest and most ‘prestigious’ schools, not just in the Cape, but in the country. This history also coincides with the evolution of Education in South Africa, thus placing the school centrally within the conceptualisation of the Colonial Cape through to contemporary society. In the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, your status as an ‘elite’ school mattered greatly. This status, however, was only given to schools that could best imitate schools such as Eton (Kenway, Fahey, Epstein, Koh, McCarthy & Rizvi, 2017: 2–3). This imitation was not borne of admiration towards curriculum nor any envy of the schools’ ability to formally educate students. British elite schools, known as public schools, provided a model that was imitated because of what they produced, both during a student’s attendance at the school and, importantly, after they had left. As Rahman Khan (2016: 176) argues, it is not enough to be highly selective or extremely rich to be marked as an elite school. It is about the vastly disproportionate control over access to resources such as “academic capital, social ties to elite families and other institutions of power, the capacity to guide and transfer culture, economic capacity, and human resources” (2016: 176).

The focus of these schools was therefore about creating a “common cultural identity” for the future leaders of the nation. 19<sup>th</sup>-century public schools were thus in existence to train the Empire’s political, administrative, and military elite (Berghoff, 1990: 148). It needs to be noted that this common cultural identity was based around the asset of values that would endure across time. But they were not common across the entire population. Rather, they existed as clear markers of distinction. These schools were so successful at this production that between 1886 and 1916, more than 60% of cabinet ministers holding office in the British Empire had a public-school education, with Eton accounting for 34.7% of that number (Berghoff, 1990: 148). Eton was also home to 75% of the Empire’s biggest landowners. As such, private schools in the Cape would attempt to mimic many of the traditions of English public schools. This would extend beyond their academic curriculum, learning “the classics” for example, and towards the traditions associated with English boarding schools, the sports they played, prefects, houses, school crests with Latin mottos, right down to their uniforms, thus ensuring social control

(Kenway *et al.*, 2017: 18). There was a sense of loyalty and character that these schools were building for the British Crown (Kenway *et al.*, 2017: 3).

Morrell states that South African single-sex boarding schools for boys in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century “provided education at the secondary level of the sons of the colony’s white elite” (1993: 27). One of the goals was to maintain a connection to the colonial superpower to train the boys into being ‘worldly’. This meant having scholarships that would provide access to the universities in Britain for instance, to maintain both an elite in the colony while producing elites for the mainland, much like we see in James’ (2013) work. Schooling in South Africa was thus modelled on the British public school system and the purpose and result of this education was the “production of a rugged, rather than cerebral, masculinity” (Morrell, 1993: 27). It was around this time that schools were being intertwined with the occupational structure in place (Morrell, 1993: 27). This meant that schools gained a new level of importance as they were slowly turning away from a strict ‘day care’ for the colony’s elite but a space for these children to be directed towards certain sectors of the economy. According to Morrell, this system was hierarchically structured and had the social effect of perpetuating social inequalities and class structures (1993: 28). It was thus an almost seamless system of the creation and production of society by operating as a sophisticated network for the settler population to “dominate the colonial, commercial and agricultural order” (Morrell, 1993: 29). This was ensured as boys from these schools would stay connected with one another through old boy communities. They then became “magistrates, judges, lawyers, businessmen, politicians, ministers of state, colonial and later provincial administrators” (Morrell, 1993: 29). By creating a network of not just members of society, but those who ran society, the schools were, in effect, making major strides in ensuring power within the colony’s structures of influence.

This chapter therefore begins to confront Evergreen and Redford in their attempts at creating, maintaining and further perpetuating these structures, which were once central, and arguably are still central, to so-called elite schools. Jane Kenway argues that elite schools around the world are currently positioned in direct correlation with the various systems and regimes of “social, cultural, political and economic power” (2017: 9). With that apparent level of influence, schools such as Evergreen need to be observed against schools such as Redford. Evergreen was central in the colonisation process occurring within the Cape as a space for the colony’s elite to educate their children. Their status in contemporary society lends itself to this very history and Evergreen does not shy away from this history. One of the most important

themes of this chapter is the production of exclusivity, and its ties to Whiteness and colonial exclusion. It is quite easy, when reading about history, to forget who the story is excluding. In my discussion of English public schools above, I drew your attention to their ability to produce powerful elites. But equally as important, is their ability to shape who can and cannot become an elite. This thesis contends that education is central to the production of an elite and that this necessarily excludes most people. This is contrasted against the backdrop of a non-racial South Africa and whether this non-racial categorisation is applicable, at the very least, to these private schools. My research site, being elite schools, exists as a stark reminder of an attempt by members of the Colony to set themselves up as elite. The space was set up as aristocratic from conception but sees a shift in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. How exactly does this manifest?

## **A Brief History of Education**

A brief history of the British Cape Colony reveals the nature of education in the 1600s to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. According to Jane Kenway (2017: 1) military conquest and strategic trade were not the only ways in which the British Empire achieved the exportation of its cultural institutions. Schools emerged as a key cultural institution that spread the Western traditions of knowledge. They were expected to “bring modernity to the colonies” (Kenway *et al.*, 2017: 1). These schools were geared towards modes of interpreting the world in such a way that cultivated a loyalty to the colony. Thus, schools became fundamental to the functioning of the Empire (Kenway *et al.*, 2017: 1). This particular use of schools was not applicable in the Cape until 1806, when the English took possession of the Cape (McKerron, 1934: 17). Prior to this period, schooling was vastly different. When the Cape was first settled in the early 1600s, state education did not exist in the form it took in the 1900’s or even contemporary South Africa (McKerron, 1934: 56). The Dutch East India Company (DEIC) had control over the Cape prior to the British and deemed the religious instruction of “the wild and brutal people” to be imperative to their cause of spreading Christianity (McKeron, 1934: 156).<sup>5</sup> British colonisation of the Cape and its subsequent modelling of schooling took place in the shadow of the early

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<sup>5</sup> McKerron was a figure as in the very next sentence of this book, he refers to the “Bushmen” as “a race of poor physical and mental endowment and could not resist the invasion of stronger races” (1934: 156). While I do use McKerron as a resource, his positioning and beliefs cannot be ignored.

DEIC control of the Cape. This process of colonisation thus sought to set itself against the Dutch practices in place, including, by the 1830s, slavery.

### **A Glimpse at ‘schooling’ at the Cape, 1600-1800**

Throughout the first 150 years of this control, the focus of the Company was commercial, meaning that any educational legislation or programme was doomed to fail due to its opposition to commercial aspirations, and indeed did fall apart when the DEIC was nearing bankruptcy prior to the shift in control (Behr, 1984: 4; McKerron, 1934: 17). The Church, and the Dutch Reformed Church in particular, was still dominant in their control of education. Teachers at this time existed in the form of minor Church officials and gave mostly religious instruction to the children (McKerron, 1934: 56). Notably, education was not limited to White children either.

A school for “slave children” was opened in 1658, with another opening in 1663 and instructing White and Black children alike (McKerron, 1934: 156–157). These schools run by the Church, otherwise known as ‘mission schools’, were incredibly important in the education of Black people (Behr, 1984: 173). That education, of course, was limited to religious instruction, but education similar to that of White people, nonetheless. The importance of these mission schools is revealed in the enrolment numbers of schooling up to the end of “the first quarter” of the twentieth century. Behr notes that 2 702 mission schools had 215 956 students, compared to the 68 ‘state schools’ which had 7 710 pupils (Behr, 1984: 173). This, according to Behr (1984: 173), reveals the lack of participation of the state in Black education; in fact, this was the case well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Schooling with British colonial rule at the Cape from 1806**

At the time of occupation in 1806, the total White population of the Cape Colony was about 21 000. Only by 1850 had the 100 000 mark been reached and the subsequent discovery of diamonds on Kimberly in 1867 caused the White population to grow more rapidly (Behr, 1984: 4). To put it into perspective, by 1910 the White population had grown to just over 1,25 million (Behr, 1984: 4). According to McKerron, it really was not until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, when we see this increase in the White population, that they began to have a problem with their children being taught alongside children of other races, which thus led to a concerted effort to create separate schooling (1934: 156–157).

The Cape colony in the early to mid-19<sup>th</sup> century – 1839 to be exact – established a department of education (Behr, 1984: 173; McKerron, 1934: 22). In effect, this meant that all “mission schools” were under its control. It also meant the limitation of religious instruction, and the state grants given to schools, as well as the promotion of Greek and Latin instruction, as a shift towards the so-called classical languages (Behr, 1984: 6; McKerron, 1934: 22). Embedded in all of this was also the anglicisation of schooling when the first British teachers (mainly Scottish) were required to teach the English language grammatically together with arithmetic and the principles of Christian religion (Behr, 1984: 6). This form of schooling was not formally restricted yet, although there was a significant difference between state schools and mission schools namely, funding. In 1839 the government decided to institute first- and second-class schools (these are schools that do not include mission schools) which were known as “established” schools (McKerron, 1934: 24).

### **The founding of Evergreen College**

In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, Evergreen College was founded as an all-boys school in the Cape. According to the school website, it had a clear objective; “to give a sound Education to the youth of the colony”. The school followed the principles of the English Church as it was founded by a Bishop, with its first principle being an “English Clergyman”, placing itself as a private school and neither a state nor mission school. This was a widespread practice as many schools were founded by a member of the Church, giving rise to names such as St Joseph’s, St Mary’s etc. In the late 1800s, for example, Natal built a number of schools started with a similar purpose of housing the youth of the colony which, to this day, remain some of the elite private schools (Morrell, 1993: 28). Evergreen continued to expand, although slowly, with the increasing White population in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Education in the period of the DEIC was elementary and was primarily a means of spreading religion within a colony with slaves. This approach shifted in 1854, when the High Commissioner and Governor, Sir George Grey, initiated a policy of “gradual political and economic integration of the white and black races” (Behr, 1984: 166). According to Behr (1984: 166) there was an understanding amongst the British that people were to be treated according to “civilization” and not race. By this point slavery under British rule had been abolished. The notion of civilization could, of course, not be divorced from racism. But its

mechanism was different from slavery. It assumed that all people were people, but some were more cultivated and worthy than others. It took for granted that White people might find the means to become 'cultivated' far more easily than Black people, but it was also clear that not all Whites were cultivated. Indeed, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in South Africa, Whiteness was not monolithic, with the treatment of the Boers in the South African War of 1899-1902 (Behr, 1984: 4) presenting unambiguous evidence that the British did not think some Whites worthy of any humane treatment whatsoever.

The war, according to Behr, was borne out of a spirit of “patriotism, nationalism and [...] fanatical chauvinism” (1984: 4). The Dutch population in this period was becoming increasingly unhappy with the rule of the British because in the Orange Free state and the Transvaal they held different feelings towards Black people (Behr, 1984: 166). The Great Trek which began in 1835 was a rejection of the British push to place Black and White people on an equal footing (Behr, 1984: 166). The Voortrekkers (Dutch) were not prepared for this to occur, which led to the birth of a new people – the Afrikaner nation (Behr, 1984: 4, 166). This period gives us the first dramatic shift in education as education in the 19<sup>th</sup> century looked vastly different and began to take new forms in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This is due to the Union of South Africa being formed in 1910, which comprised the Cape, Natal, Transvaal, and Free State (Behr, 1984: 4). By 1913 we see the first of many legislatively exclusionary measures taken against the Black population in a push to separate races with the Native Land Act of 1913 (Behr, 1984: 168). This act prevented Black people from purchasing land outside of designated areas, which segregated the Black population geographically. This change in leadership in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century is particularly important because it influenced education and the type of exclusion that would take shape. Nonetheless, the first mention of Black students at Evergreen was in the 1920s, which was when the school established a “Night School run by senior boys for Black people working in the neighbourhood [...]” as noted on the school’s website.

### **The Apartheid Period**

The 1948 general election saw victory for the National Party, with a manifesto that called for “political and social ‘separateness’ or ‘Apartheid’ for the white, coloured, Indian, and black” people which was in pursuit of the preservation of the White race (Behr, 1984: 166). One of the aims of the National Party was to cut ties with the British Empire, by leaving the

Commonwealth and putting South Africa first. This was in addition to establishing English and Afrikaans on an equal footing. They additionally saw themselves as the bearers of Christian civilisation and it was their duty to “guide the other groups towards eventual freedom in a peaceful manner” (De Kock, 1971: 43 in Behr, 1984: 166). This institutionalised a White supremacist ideology that had far reaching consequences. At Evergreen it meant the closing of the night school as a result of the Bantu Education Act of 1953, which restricted the instruction of Black and White students in the same institution (Bauer, 2020). This, according to Evergreen’s website, led to the “closing down of the Night School and other welfare projects undertaken by the boys for the benefit of black South Africans”.

By 1970 however, certain private schools began to admit “carefully vetted black pupils” (Hunter, 2016: 336). According to Kenway *et al.* (2017: 3), schools that were making this shift were doing it less out of seeking a genuine integration of races within the schools, rather, they were seeking to maintain their cultural imprints as colonial schools (Kenway *et al.*, 2017: 3). This provides a window into the country, and the school’s social and political climate of the time, with the Soweto uprising of 1976 taking place during this period. According to the school website, isiXhosa was introduced as a subject in the mid-1970s. The early 1980s saw the appointment of a new headmaster, one who introduced a “a number of ideas which were ahead of their time, and which did not sit well with many of the Evergreen family” the website noted.

The website continues by stating that one of these introductions was the fundraising “both for extra buildings and to bring black students into the school on bursaries” which “changed the face of the school”. What the website fails to mention is that private schools at the time were restricted to a certain quota of a maximum of 33% of Black students to maintain their education license. This is according to the “Evening Post”, a newspaper article (“Cape schools’ black ‘quotas’”, 1984). Thus, the introduction of Black students around this time was not unique to Evergreen. This ability to adapt to changing cultural tastes and major political changes was an aspect of celebration amongst schools of this status. They could therefore maintain their own versions British public-school tradition in a changing social climate (Kenway *et al.*, 2017: 3).

What may have been unique to Evergreen, however, is their seeming opposition to the National Party, and maintaining their ties to Englishness, in relation to the language and Empire. There is a newspaper article from 1986 in “The Aida Parker Newsletter” which



highlights how Evergreen's headmaster at the time, bussed a couple of students wearing their school uniform to an End Conscription Campaign (ECC) meeting to hear speakers such as Desmond Tutu ("The Aida Parker Newsletter", 1986). The article swiftly condemns these actions and questions the schools' loyalty to the country, questioning whether they care "for a free South Africa or a Marxist Azania". This act of rebellion represented the school's lack of concrete support for the Apartheid, and Afrikaans dominated, government by encouraging their boys to avoid signing up for the military and war.

### **The production of Elite Values at Evergreen**

Much like the elite boarding schools of Natal, Evergreen is a signifier of settler values (Morrell, 1993: 29). In fact, Evergreen is a far stronger signifier of settler values due to its origins being tied directly to the colony, which were firmly planted long before the boarding schools of Natal. The fact that these schools were boarding schools was also a fundamental factor to their power (Morrell, 1993: 34). For example, I went to boarding school at Evergreen when I was seven years old. I lived within the confines of the school for 12 years. The only time I was not in school uniform was at bedtime and weekends. I lived with my peers for much of the year and considered the house matrons and masters parental figures to me. School was fundamental to my youth and upbringing. In fact, more so than the role my parents played in my life. These are facets that are not dissimilar to Erving Goffman's (1961: 7) conceptualisation of a "Total Institution", which will be discussed in a later section. The importance of that comparison, however, lies in the level of influence and control the institution had on my life from an incredibly early age.

This structure was all quite deliberate. A boy's experience was to be total and created to foster "an atmosphere of intense communality, capable of generating powerful emotions associated with the school itself" (Morrell, 1993: 34). Loyalty was key at Evergreen, more specifically the ways in which it presented itself. Loyalty to one's school was drawn immediately and vigorously through our mentors and peers. You were also taught to build loyalty within your house and your grade. So, at every level, team spirit and loyalty towards peers, authority, house, and school were instilled into you. This had many implications such as the creation of a hegemonic masculinity, including creation of spaces, groups and, most notably, the drawing and redrawing of racial lines. This is especially poignant in these elite schools which sought to exclude more than to include. As stated, Evergreen's inclusion of

Black students only began formally in the 1970's. It was not just Black students who were excluded however; according to Morrell, the children of White working-class families were not admitted either as these were the times when financial assistance was limited to children of old boys (Morrell, 1993: 38). This fact speaks volumes to the racialisation process as not being strictly racial but permeating through class lines as well.

Academics such as Adam Howard (2007: 111), Dennis Francis (2019: 20) and Amanda E. Lewis (2003: 284) view schools as institutions for fostering and transmitting social values, beliefs, and inclusions. Lewis (2003: 284) argues that “schools are one of the central institutions involved in the drawing and redrawing of racial lines”. Each of these thinkers tackle schooling from a unique perspective, be it along racial (Lewis), gendered (Francis) or even class (Howard) lines. However, these are all intersectional and often work with one another. Schools, by definition, are created to “prepare members of the younger generation” for their eventual adult roles; they are sites that pass the cultural and social baton (Howard, 2007: 111). This means that the transmission of social and cultural values is drawn into the fabric of schools and their purpose. However, schools can also be spaces in which more negative values and behaviours are transmitted (Howard, 2007: 111). Education can thus be used politically and schools are aware of this political power, which affects the ways in which a school chooses to symbolise itself.

Mark Hunter (2016: 324) describes the process by which a school attempts to create its own meaning or symbol, as the “tone” of a school. Before we elaborate on that definition, I would like to note that there is a difference between what Hunter (2016) defines as “tone” and my definition in this thesis, emanating from C. L. R. James’ (2013) work, as “code”. Hunter focused his work on public schools and argued that their presentations to the public, both externally and internally, matter. This ‘tone’ that they produce is important to a school’s attendance levels, but more importantly, the composition, racially, of that school and its reputation. How White a public school appears shapes its popularity, and in turn its capacity to charge and collect fees. However, this offers a different dynamic to private schools. Private schools, at least in South Africa, already have a White tone due to the relationship between race and class in this country. It is therefore not enough to just have a White tone, to be an ‘elite’ school. Public schools, for example are focused on tone and less about code because their schools are more accessible to the public, and a tone which is Black. Tone thus becomes fundamental to their presentation.

Private schools need to sell both their tone and their code. As established earlier in this chapter, the ways in which elite schools impart a certain code is done through their curriculum, traditions, and general rules of being in the school. These codes are often tied to the schools' oldest traditions and the historical significance of these traditions. This code is therefore not easily replicated nor manufactured, but that is not to say it cannot be done. As will be shown in a later section, more modern private schools do attempt to capture the essence of this code themselves to encapsulate that differentiating factor between private and elite. But they never successfully embody the codes as well as schools with Evergreen's history. This code is, therefore, one of the factors that separates a private school from an elite private school. We shall explore this dynamic further in the section, but for now we will examine Hunter's (2016) description of tone.

According to Hunter, schools which followed the British public-school model and thus separated their schools according to sex ensured that boys' schools had a "virtuous internal tone" which was embodied by the headmaster and in boys who became "well adjusted, honourable, moulded into unthinking conformity ... [loyal] to authority" (Randall 1982: 26 in Hunter, 2016: 324). For girls' schools, which were slower to be established, the goal was to "transform girls into polished gentlewomen who would be respectable wives of society's leaders" (Hunter, 2016: 324). The post-Apartheid, non-racial schooling environment caused an interesting shift within schools and parents alike. A tendency to retain a good proportion of White students emerged within formerly White schools (Hunter, 2016: 341). Schools understood that for parents to make a long-term commitment to their school, they not only had to hold their present prestige, but also to consider the direction in which the school was headed.

These were often influenced by a perception of whether a school was accepting too many students of colour and had therefore "gone black" (Hunter, 2016: 341–342). One of the teachers Hunter interviewed confessed that they were "walking a demographic tightrope" because to attract middle-upper-middle income Black families to their schools, they would have to preserve their White numbers (2016: 342). This is where Whiteness shows its importance as even parents of colour show their desire for their children to attend 'White' schools (Hunter, 2016: 343). Hunter is careful here, however, when discussing 'White' toned schooling, as he does not use 'White' as a rigid racial category. In fact, he emphasises that White tone is used here for branding purposes, as some of the most prestigious schools are now

excluding some of the poorer White students due to high fees while also accepting more upper-middle class Black students (Hunter, 2016: 351). This, in effect, redefines the meaning of Whiteness to reflect the importance of branding to a school's prestige, finances and "the racialization of this prestige" (Hunter, 2016: 351).

In this way, Howard argues, schools become complex systems of meaning which are "collapsed and loaded into a single symbol" (2007: 134). Their role in ordering and understanding the world is what makes schools so valuable and important. Aside from the parents who choose which school they wish to send their children to, and the students themselves, schools are also influenced by society at large and are therefore often built and sustained for and through political motive. It is because of this very implication that Amanda E. Lewis (2003: 284) understands racialisation not as something that happens to people and institutions, but that people and institutions are racialising agents and forces for the reproduction of race. This is particularly important to understand when analysing schools within South Africa. If one is to analyse a school which began under such political conditions, then one must recognise the socialising power that schools hold. As Foucault (1984: 123) noted "any system of education is a political way of maintaining or modifying the appropriation of discourses, along with the knowledges and powers which they carry", cited in Pam Christie (1990: 37). Schools are symbolic of the political climate within which they are founded; it cannot be avoided and therefore must be observed and acknowledged.

### **A Brief history of Redford: A private school founded after Apartheid**

Redford Academy has a much shorter history than Evergreen. In fact, Evergreen is roughly one hundred and forty years older than Redford. Having been established in the late 1990s, Redford high school is an independent English-speaking, co-educational private school in the winelands of the Western Cape. The school was founded after Apartheid and was therefore open to all students of colour, in the most technical sense. This should have meant that the school's general racial composition would be fairer, but post-Apartheid, private schools exclude students along class lines more so than strict racial lines. Redford was interestingly founded around a period in which schools were working through a cooperative form of desegregation, meaning schools were expected to accept the "cream" of Black students

(Hunter, 2016: 322). Due to their fee structures, private schools would exclude most Black students in the 1990s anyway. However, in the early 2000s, this was replaced by an aggressive competition between schools as there was a crop of private schools entering the market. This led to public schools leaving behind their “genteel tones” to compete for these so called “desirable” students (Hunter, 2016: 322). This simply meant ‘students who could help promote the White tone of the school and had fee-paying guardians’ (Hunter, 2016: 322). This is not to say that Redford was being explicitly racist by excluding Black students.

However, my evidence suggests a racialisation process taking place at Redford. For example, my interviewees always noted that they were one of a handful of Black students at the school. Redford is not excluded from Hunter’s (2016) observations about schools that were being founded in the late 1990s to early 2000s. According to Hunter, the newer upper middle-class private schools show more of an emphasis on academic results than sports results, in addition to a preference for co-education and seek to distinguish themselves from older schools (2016: 340). According to Azure, a former student of Redford, the school would often stop student-led “traditions”. She notes

*“I remember there were always things that were kind of traditions that had been built into the school from the student side. And I can say Redford is definitely not a traditionalist school. Because they would always try and break [the traditions] down and be like “nah we don't want that”. And it's interesting 'cause they always want to build this Legacy and [...] that “we're an elite school, we have these traditions, and we have these things”. But then when students suggest them, they never really want to do them. They're like, “We don't want that as a part of our school”, “We don't want that to be tied to our name”. [...] there were always excuses.”*

This reveals that the school did, in some way, attempt to build a code, ones similar to Evergreen by virtue of them being traditions. But they did also try to steer away from what some would term “traditionalist” schools tonally. This tonal shift was interestingly not at the expense of building their own identity as well. One of the attributes that Hunter gave these types of newer private schools was a “free-thinking” and not “following” student structure (2016: 340). And this too presented itself in my interview with Azure as she noted

*“[...] there were lots of things that were unique to Redford that could be seen as like... stupid things, for example, on Wednesdays we were allowed to go to school late. That used to be a tradition, [and] you'd wait for high school because in high school you knew that on a Wednesday you can go to school at 9am.”*

However, this too was scrapped and according to Azure, students were disappointed about this. One of the things that revealed itself to me most during this interview, was that the school, as much as it did seem to try to stick to a tone, did not know what that tone was. In fact, one could argue that the tone might have simply been to be like schools such as Evergreen, without having either the history nor symbolic power of Evergreen. This is where the conflict arose. In trying to capture the same tone and codes that Evergreen imparts, one cannot choose specific aspects of the tone and codes because it is the totality of the codes and tones that Evergreen has built historically that draws the attention of desirable prospective parents. These elite codes and the tone of the school are packaged together and sold to those who can afford to send their children to Evergreen. But, simultaneously, they promise that a particular kind of student will come out of the school, with the knowledge that the old boys' network will appreciate this too and will therefore benefit their child in some way.

For schools like Redford, where that history does not exist, it becomes difficult to form that identity. One of these difficulties is the creation of these codes and tones. As Azure pointed out, Redford does not necessarily want all the associations tied to elite schools, while also trying to become one itself. Elite schools in contemporary society do, in some ways, look outdated and elitist to some people (Kenway & Lazarus, 2017: 268). This is a tone that they have not attempted to shy away from. In fact, this very tone might be one of the factors that draws prospective parents to these schools in the first place. This is something that came up in multiple interviews, however a good example of this may be the “slave bells”. Redford, a school established in the mid-1990s, had bells on their premises that were called slave bells, in commemoration of their founder. Azure discussed these in further detail.

*“So, the ‘slave bells’ on campus were two structures that were [...] in the exact same form of a “slave bell”. There were two on campus. One was an original slave bell from when our school was a farm. [...] And the second one was built for the founding headmaster or something like that. When he*

*left the school, they wanted to put something to remember him and they put up a slave bell. Because there was already one [bell] that like “we might as well keep it uniform”. [...] And the one slave bell was actually in the main entrance towards our school.”*

These bells, Azure pointed out to me, were only rung on specific occasions, and were used to symbolize the start of an important event within the school. What intrigues me most about these bells is less about the reason they were rung and more about their existence in the first place. The existence of the bells begets a few questions, namely, why was the second bell used to commemorate the first headmaster of the school? Why was this bell called a slave bell too? I think one can – and should – have many more questions. But the reason I raise these questions is to highlight the most important one; what did these bells symbolize to the school and why did they fight so hard to keep them from being taken down? The theme of tone is one that keeps being raised because it is important to understand that tone, more specifically a White tone, is an important currency to these schools.

### **The Role of History in shaping tone in Elite Education**

One tool which older schools like Evergreen use to build and maintain their tone is history. The history that Evergreen has, for example, as being one of the oldest schools in the Cape and thus a firm standing symbol of the old colony, means that they can use that tone to present a certain level of eliteness. A tone that newer, more modern schools cannot. According to Kenway *et al.* (2017: 20) there is a lot of weight placed on “ancientness”. It is seen as a signifier of stature and resilience. In addition, lengthy tradition is regarded as an “elevated virtue” and the school’s role is to preserve it as best it can (Kenway *et al.*, 2017: 20). The existence of the slave bells was contested by many students throughout Redford’s history; however, the bells were only recently removed after a couple of years of discussions held between the school’s community. It is this and the other stories the interviewees shared with me that reveals a tonal dissonance within the school itself, as though the school is having trouble with how they might achieve a similar tone to that of Evergreen; Elite. It is through these traditions, some of which will be covered in a later chapter, that one can see the school’s attempts at a White tone. I would argue that in seeking to preserve the old and new bells, the

school was attempting to hold onto what little historical significance these may have added to their ‘tone’.

Kenway *et al.* (2017: 20) argues that this infatuation with ‘greatness’ is invariably male. British public schools were in fact all-boys schools and were thus tied to this ideal (Kenway *et al.*, 2017: 20). With that in mind, can a school that is co-educational, and without (much) history achieve an elite status without those qualities? It is impossible to have this discussion without noting the importance the decision to be a single-sex or co-educational school plays when discussing ‘elite-ness’. There are elite private all-girls schools in the Western Cape for instance, I covered many in my honours work (Mujulizi, 2020). Elite all-girls schools were founded much later than all-boys schools and had to be “responsive to several conservative aims” (Kenway *et al.*, 2017: 110). These include the production of “flawless femininity”, which entailed cultivating “women’s special duties of being sexually pure wives and mothers” (Kenway *et al.*, 2017: 110).

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, conditions are vastly different. The national curriculum is based entirely equally between boys' and girls' schools, although one can argue against this because of the existence of “home economics” in girls’ schools and not in boys’. The existence of elite private girls' schools, however, are key in that at a certain point, education was geared toward cultivating a hegemonic British cultural standard. Thus colonialism, capitalism and Christianity and their relationship with one another was fundamental to schools and education (Kenway *et al.*, 2017: 50). The separation of all-girls schools and all-boys schools begins to make sense when viewing it through that lens. When trying to understand what makes a school elite, it becomes less about the addition of women into a previously ‘all-boys’ club, but more about the element of having all genders being educated together, as this was not a cultural standard in the colonies.

So, to achieve the pinnacle of elite status, then, a school must have history that is tied to the colonies, must be single-sex, and must in some way or other be extremely exclusive to the wealthiest population group. Redford only checks one of those boxes, this may explain why they might be having trouble in positioning themselves as an elite school. Although this desire has not been stated explicitly, the implicit application of these traditions and an attempt at cultivating a history, I would argue that the school is attempting to achieve this status, whilst also being aware of the flaws associated with this endeavour. One of the key attributes to these



elite schools is their ability to maintain longevity, especially within ever-changing social climates (Kenway *et al.*, 2017: 20). This is a feature in which Redford is afforded a certain element of freedom. Elite schools are bound to and by their history. They are therefore conservative institutions by nature. They cannot afford to change too much because their identities are forged by their past.

This can be seen in the way these schools will often find ways to retain their social distinction (Kenway *et al.*, 2017: 4) and push back against certain changes, corporal punishment, initiation rituals and the prefect system, to name a few. When Redford has faced challenges along these lines, they have been reluctant, but have shown an ability to make the necessary changes. The example of the slave bells can be seen as one. Those have now been removed after years of deliberation. However, they were eventually removed, and the school retained its White tone. Evergreen, on the other hand, took many years to instate Soccer as a sport for example, as some parents and old boys felt it would ruin the tradition of the school by losing Rugby players. It is this dynamic that makes these two schools so interesting to observe as they both are examples of the ways in which tones and codes affect a school's status.

## **The Hidden Curriculum**

The example of the Slave Bells illuminates how a school might attempt to create its tone externally. An external tone is used for prospective parents, current parents, and potential investors. However, there is an internal process that also lends itself to tonal creation; One which is less explicit than an already explicit process; *the hidden curriculum*. This refers to the values, gestures, sayings, topics etc. that can all be used to suggest a narrative for students to consider outside of the formal curriculum in place (Jachim, 1987: 84). As such, schools like Evergreen or Redford might create a certain tone for students to internalise and reproduce. Nancy Jachim argues that values, especially ones concerning relationships and information are “inherent in the symbolic structure and procedures of the classroom environment” (1987: 83). We cannot have one without the other, it is a symbiotic relationship and one that is inevitable in education. Thus, to have the debate around whether teachers should take the role of imparting specific values to students would not garner many results (Jachim, 1987: 83). Whether it be the teacher as an individual, or the school as an institution, social values are already imbedded into both and will present themselves in the most peculiar and hidden ways.

At Evergreen, an interesting point is the way prefects were set up. By the time I was in grade 8, students in leadership roles were not allowed to be called prefects anymore. The initiation system had also been ‘abolished’ the year before and therefore, technically, these structures did not exist. However, upon arrival, grade 8s were termed “new boys”, and we were under strict orders to listen and to obey anyone in the years above us. We were assigned mentors, however this mentor/mentee relationship was rarely about teaching a mentee about how to navigate the school and was mostly geared towards a master/servant relationship. We were tasked with cleaning their rooms, waking them up, making sure they got food on time etc. Structurally, we were taught that we were at the bottom of the pecking order and needed to act as such.

The hidden curriculum would also present itself in the ways in which teachers elected to have certain discussions while avoiding others. For instance, if the topic of race was discussed and someone said something racist, teachers would often play the role of devil’s advocate, or choose to do nothing. Arguments were therefore structured in such a way that the typically outnumbered Black students would then have to lead the discussion or elect to ignore it. In this way, teachers were not saying or doing anything racist, but the decision not to do anything at all, considering such discussions, was a drawing of a racial line. The hidden curriculum will come out in many ways throughout this paper as I found it to be fundamental to the ways in which Black students navigated these schools. I implore you to keep an eye out for it yourself as I will not always be discussing it explicitly. Much like the phenomenon itself, it will be hidden in plain sight.

Crucially, when I discuss the schools in this thesis as spaces and institutions that create and reinforce racial lines, I do so not with the intention of stating clearly that schools are deliberately White supremacist institutions. I do so with the intention of highlighting that without properly analysing the origins of the institutions themselves, schools can continue to be racialising spaces. Whether you choose to be a racialising institution or not, is therefore not a valid rebuttal when the foundation of your institution is being scrutinised. It is for this reason that I chose to analyse Evergreen and Redford in particular. In scrutinising the origins of said schools, one can begin to understand why certain so-called traditions and rules are in place over others. Why one institution symbolises ‘eliteness’ while the other attempts it. The totality

of an institution plays a fundamental role in this characterisation process. Understanding how institutions create their tools is fundamental to processing how they might use them.

## **Total Institutions:**

Schools, especially boarding schools, can exist in small vacuums that are almost entirely external to society at large. In this way, schools are the perfect spaces for imposing values and morality on students who will eventually form a part of our society. However, what became clearer to me is that schools are not the only institutions that function this way. In fact, there are many institutions that function similarly to the ways in which schools do, some to a far more extreme level than others (prisons, universities, rehabilitation centres etc.). One of the most discerning facts of this, however, is the fact that every institution has encompassing tendencies and had observable characteristics (Goffman, 1961: 4). These characteristics which Goffman (1961) discusses are not all applicable to schools and in fact may not be applicable to all the institutions he discussed in contemporary society. Many things have changed since he wrote. However, his work is still important to explore as there are observations he makes which are inherent to institutions. In fact, Goffman (1961: 5) himself admits that the characteristics of total institutions are not strict. Rather, they are shared by each institution. They filter into one another and in understanding one, another's structure can be better understood.

According to Goffman, total institutions are those which encompass a total character that is symbolized by their social distance from society at large which is often built into their physical structure with high walls, barbed wire, locked doors etc. (1961: 4). According to Goffman, a social arrangement within modern society is that a person tends to sleep, play, and work in separate places, with different people, under different authorities and without an "overall rational plan" (1961: 5–6). A central feature of total institutions is, therefore, their ability to break down these core tenants into these three separate spheres of life (Goffman, 1961: 6). What this means is that certain aspects of life are conducted under the same single authority and must be in the same physical space (Goffman, 1961: 6). Additionally, an individual's daily routine is conducted in the immediate company of a large group of other people, who are treated alike and are required to do the same things together (Goffman, 1961: 6). All the events of the day are tightly scheduled and planned meticulously through formal rulings decided by a body of officials (Goffman, 1961: 6). Finally, the various activities are

brought together into a single rational plan that is designed to complete the aims of the institution (Goffman, 1961: 6).

These are all characteristics that sound broad and can in fact be tenants of places that are not necessarily total institutions (factories, for example). Goffman recognizes this but states that the key difference is in the institution's willingness to extend the "ordinary line of authority" (1961: 6). That is to say, it depends on whether the institution is keeping these activities voluntary and therefore individuals can opt-out of said such activity. So what Goffman is arguing is that the totality of an institution is determined by whether it controls various human needs by the "bureaucratic organization of whole blocks of people [...]" (1961: 6). I would argue that, according to this definition, we can in fact characterize certain schools as total institutions but not others. Even those that fall under the definition are far less rigid than they might have been in the past. Schools that are foundationally boarding schools and have remained as such to this day could fall into the status of a total institution. Boarding schools in Grahamstown, for example, are isolated from Port Elizabeth and are therefore only surrounded by one another. Students are thus not treated to daily external social activities outside of the school's boundaries. In that sense, the total control can be examined, but for a school like Evergreen, the water begins to muddy. Evergreen offers full-time Boarding, weekly-boarding and being a day scholar. Redford offers the same options to students. We therefore need to have a nuanced discussion here as to whether these institutions can be labelled total in nature.

At Evergreen, for full-time boarders who comprised mostly international students, life was structured from the first minute to the last. From breakfast at 07:15am to the conclusion of prep time, at 21h30, every minute was under the control of the school. Additionally, each student was required to take up a sport in both Winter and Summer so that your afternoon was spent at practice, which was between 15h30 – 17h30. Dinner followed at 18h30. The only 'free' time which was not controlled by the school was during weekends, which for boarders was also monitored. For weekly boarders, there was more space for freedom outside the institution's boundaries, and even more so for day scholars who would go home every day. That is not to say that their days were not structured, but that they were less institutionally influenced once they left the premises. Can the school in its entirety be labelled a total institution? The daily functioning of students was meticulously planned and ordered in such a way that gave complete control to the authorities of the school. So, in some ways, yes,

Evergreen and Redford could be regarded as total institutions. However, it is important to note the differences in freedom between what Goffman's (1961) definition provides and what we see in schools today. Can an institution be total if only some of its individuals are controlled to a greater extent than others?

One of the core tenants of a total institution is that there is always a clear distinction between authority and the 'subjugated' (Goffman, 1961: 6). That split is what separates those within the institutions with power and those without. However, in schools, this dichotomy exists in an extremely nuanced way. For example, there is a clear distinction between those with authority (the teachers, headmaster, stooges etc.) and those without (the students). However, the creation of the prefect system began to spread the share of power onto specific students as well as teachers. Thus, some students within the school are afforded a certain level of power over other students. This power is not even the power that comes from peer admiration or respect given to certain individuals due to social status for instance, but a legitimized power given explicitly by the school. In this case, many schools today have made that clear distinction between authority and the 'subjugated' a grey area as well. So, can schools be total institutions without these core tenants? Again, the answer is yes, as Goffman stated, he is not interested in rigid characteristics but shared characteristics that give these spaces a certain level of power over a large group of people. That power extends to influencing not only what one does, but how one thinks. In other words, these institutions can have control over the values one embodies, and how to integrate into society.

Therefore, I want to shift the discussion away from whether schools are or are not total institutions, towards the effect that these institutions have on a large group of individuals. One of the core tenants of a total institution is control, the moulding of an individual into a predetermined set of values and moral codes which have been dictated by the institution itself. As Goffman argues, total institutions do not substitute an individual's own unique culture for something already formed (1961: 13). When people enter these spaces, they have already formed their own culture from their community or even another institution which they had previously attended (Goffman, 1961: 12). Therefore, when they enter a new institution, it is the job of the institution to mould these individuals into the ideals, morals, and values of that institution. It is a process which Goffman (1961: 13) refers to as a "disculturation". This refers to an individual being stripped of their former identity and almost undergoing a complete

identity overhaul, one that in fact makes it difficult for them to return to life outside of the institution (Goffman, 1961: 13).

Goffman argues that institutions purposefully create and sustain a tension between the “home world” and the institution’s world and that this persistent tension is what is used as leverage to manage a large group of people (1961: 13).<sup>6</sup> This manifestation lies in its stripping of individuality. It is one form of control that has been used on inmates as well as soldiers. These institutions understood the power of control by the demarcation of certain individuals’ being categorized into hierarchical structures. One cannot control an army of individuals, therefore, make them into a collective. What makes us unique is our individuality and to strip that from someone is to remove the possibility of dissent from your point of view. It is a powerful tool.

I do not believe schools provide students with the same level of disculturation that prisons, the army, and other institutions do. Not only because these institutions benefit far more from this process than schools might, but as I have previously mentioned, schools have a level of freedom that these other institutions do not provide. It is far more difficult to strip an individual of their own unique culture when that individual is not physically removed from it. In future sections, we will see examples of how this disconnect often affected certain students with various backgrounds. But the process of disculturation is still important to analyse because even though a school does not have that level of power and control over all its students, this does not mean that they do not have any control at all. Therefore, even if a disculturation does not occur to the extent that Goffman (1961) and Foucault (1975) discussed, there is evidence to suggest that there is still something that occurs. A partial disculturation, if you will.

This phenomenon would often present itself in Black students, because when attending a private institution, Black students would often have the most “cultural uniqueness” and were therefore more likely than white students to be encountering an institutional disculturation. There was a more severe disculturation process that would take place. In fact, Fanon, in *Black Skin, White Masks*, discusses a death and burial of one’s local cultural originality occurring

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<sup>6</sup> In fact, Michelle Foucault has a similar argument in his discussion of what he terms “docile bodies” (1975: 135). He argues quite plainly that the process of stripping people of their identity creates room for the reprogramming of a completely new person, one who has no singular identity but a collective identity. This collective identity is then used to produce and reproduce within a large body of people whatever social, cultural, and moral values you wish them to hold (Foucault, 1975).

when a “colonized people” find themselves face to face with the culture of the civilizing nation (1952: 9). It is important to note the differences in context and discussions which Fanon (1952) and Goffman (1961) are describing. For Goffman (1961), this disculturation is more of a structural, institutional process that is focused on stripping an individual of their original cultural practices. For Fanon, this process is more of an embedded racialising process that takes place when “colonized people” enter the so-called mother country of the colonizers (1952: 6). This disculturation process is embedded in society as a way to remove the so-called uncivilized status of the colonized and force them to adopt the mother country’s cultural standards, which are considered civilized (Fanon, 1952: 6). Fanon is arguing a more societal-based disculturation and Goffman’s disculturation occurs on a very structural level.

To Fanon (1952: 9), language holds an insurmountable amount of power, and it is language that is often the first catalyst of the disculturation that Black people feel when in the presence of White spaces.

*“Every colonized people—in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality—finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country. The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country’s cultural standards. He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle” (Fanon, 1952: 9).*

In other words, language becomes a tool to be wielded by Black people to gain access into the White world. Much like the codes that are imparted in schools such as Evergreen, language is one code that is imparted through the hidden curriculum and Black students are aware of this. Fanon and Goffman are thus, fundamentally, discussing the same phenomenon and we can see this play out in a few of my participants. For example, Parker, another former student of Redford, noticed just how much she had integrated into her school, particularly through language, stating:

*“[...] the shift happened going from school to varsity where [at school] everyone around me speaks like me. This is what I hear all the time, so I didn't feel odd or different. Then when you go to Varsity and you're with people who were in predominantly Black schools or come from the villages*

*etc., they are the ones who point out like “oh you speak a certain way” or “you behave a certain way.”*

Parker did reveal, however, that to her this was not a school function, but a particularly Western Cape phenomenon. To her, because there were fewer Black people around her, it meant that she would have to “behave a certain way”. Interestingly, this discourse shifted towards not just her private school, but private schools in general, with her stating;

*“I think also part of it is maybe the whole private school thing. Because even when I was at Brixton School for Girls, it was pretty much even in terms of White and Black. So, I had lots of Black friends that were around Black people a lot more, but you still behave a certain way. [...] There's like a certain, “polish” that's expected of you when you're in a private school, you know?”*

Of note, however, was Parker’s discussion about her background and culture throughout her schooling experience and how that ended up playing a role in high school. In high school, I found that students had learnt how to code switch in various conversations depending on who they were speaking to. Code switching is the act of switching your language or accent to curry favour with the ‘in-group’ (Koch, Gross & Kolts, 2001: 30). For example, if one is surrounded by White people, one may feel compelled to switch to an accent which is more accommodating in that situation. This lent itself to Fanon’s (1952: 14) theory on language and its power in relation to people’s cultural history. Language, to Fanon, affords one a certain level of power, a power to “support the weight of a civilization” (Fanon, 1952: 8–9). So, when one begins to internalize a language that is foreign to their home language, one begins to lose touch with it. I do not mean this abstractly, because people who have not assimilated or acquired a new accent will point this out to you. As Parker described:

*“So, I'm Zulu but I haven't grown up speaking Zulu. I can understand it and Xhosa. My mother speaks to us in English though. So, what I find is you almost tried to Africanize your accent. Or when you're around other Africans, [you try to convey that] I'm still one of you.”*



It is in this subtle act that Parker recognized her positionality as a person whose accent has changed as a result of her upbringings and surrounding. She must change the way she speaks to not lose the people she is trying to connect with. To Fanon, there is a literal personality change that occurs when one learns a new language (1952: 14). Every dialect is a new way of thinking he argues, which means that anyone who learns a language that is not of the group within which they were born, suffers a dislocation (Fanon, 1952: 14). Fanon states this with absolute certainty, and I am inclined to agree. Parker is dislocated in this way from her peers. Simply by virtue of having to code switch around her peers, she is having to do something which they do not. She is having to ‘prove’ to friends that she is African enough. At least enough to avoid the jokes. In Parker’s case however, I do not believe that this dislocation has occurred to the extent to which Fanon describes the phenomena. To Parker, having to code switch is nothing more than a minor inconvenience, if that. She has also not lost friends or touch with her family as a result of this and is therefore okay with continuing with her life in this way. She is someone who does not “let people tell me how I should be”.

In Cyrah’s case, however, there was more of an internal battle that took place, one which I had faced myself due to me lacking the same “I am who I am” personality as Parker. When I was in high school, one of my biggest confrontations was with myself and my identity. I never felt Black enough, to put it frankly, and one of the reasons amongst many, was that my accent was often used against me around my Black and White peers. Not only at school but at home as well where, still to this day, when I return home, I get mocked for my “White accent”. This would lead people to tell me I am not Black, or I am too White and would therefore lose the power to determine and define what Blackness meant to me. I felt, at the time, that it was always something that was assigned to me rather than something I could claim myself. It was of particular interest however, to hear just how many Black students faced the same issue within their experiences at school. Let me take a moment to return to language, and allow Cyrah, a former Redford student who is from Namibia, to illustrate what would happen:

*“If you went to private school in Namibia, people would be able to tell 'cause you had that private school accent. So now I would end up having a private school accent but with a Cape Town accent. So when I came home people were like, “I don't understand what you're saying.” Which... I feel like they're lying (laughter). You can definitely hear what I'm saying. [...] Like it sucks because, when I'm in SA I'm not South African enough but when I'm*

*in Namibia, I'm not Namibian enough. [...] I'm like [throws her head back in frustration] where do I fit in?"*

This is an example of a partial disculturation that takes place within many Black students in these private schools. Interestingly, this process is very subtle and not explicit at all. But a direct effect of these schools attempting to maintain their White tone, whilst also introducing Black students into the student body, has created a space in which assimilation is almost inevitable. In this one example, using language, we can see that an accent is something which plays a role in the culturation process of these institutions. If you do not have the right accent, then you will be mocked or teased, depending on your audience. So, when it is used against you, as in Cyrah's case, you find yourself trying to figure out where you belong.

These schools have not deliberately taught Black students how to change their accent. It is not a part of the curriculum, nor is it something most schools would be aware was taking place. Thus, the hidden curriculum is such a crucial factor when observing schools alongside their totality as institutions. These are phenomena that schools can flat-out deny they are practicing and yet some Black students have come out of their experiences feeling this disculturation that Goffman (1961) ascribes to total institutions. One must then ask a myriad of questions. For instance, to what extent can we label these schools as White institutions? If these schools argue that they are not doing any of this deliberately, then how do we address systemic issues embedded within the literal structure of the school? And I think one of the most important questions is; if this is something we can observe racially within these institutions, then how many more intersectional issues are at play in similar ways to race? How much more exclusive are these schools beyond race?

It is these questions that will be developed in the following chapter. However, the key points of this chapter are that there are multiple factors at play within schools, some which remain hidden and others which are clear as day. If the result is students of colour experiencing a dissonance, then why aren't these schools open to changing their 'tone' and how might we be enabling these schools to continue to be exclusive spaces in the guise of history and wealth? In my reflection on the history of these two schools I argued that the history is especially important in producing the basis of eliteness, through tradition, even to the extent that at Redford, traditions had to be copied or invented. I then thought about the hidden curriculum at

these schools and examined these schools as total institutions, conveying a particular tone and code. I reflected on language and how language at these schools was moulded to shape individuals into an elite that was distanced from backgrounds that were not of White, English-speaking origins. All these questions point to one major concerning factor, namely, that of the symbiosis between elite-ness and Whiteness. Having explored the White tone in this chapter I deliberately left out the discussion on how to define Whiteness. This is because the next chapter will deal even more explicitly with the encounter of Black students with the Whiteness of elite education.

## Chapter 2: “Black is Bad, White is right”

*“For not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man” (Fanon, 1952: 82)*

### Introduction

What does Whiteness mean at elite schools today? Departing from the history of these schools discuss in the previous chapter, I want to ask how Whiteness exists in formally non-racial elite schools. It must be noted that this is a study on the Black experience within these schools and seeks to examine the effects of Whiteness on Black students. This effect ties to what Du Bois called the “double consciousness” (1903: 8) and battle with identity that Black students in my study experienced. I am no more interested in what Whiteness means than what it represents to my interviewee’s identity formation within these schools.

In this chapter I will begin by exploring Whiteness as a concept, focusing not on defining it but its lack of definition. I will explore the emergence of Whiteness and interrogate its sustained existence, as well as how it has evolved through legal and legislative measures and beyond. I will ask how Whiteness manifests in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and more importantly, how it effects Black alums. Using Double consciousness, I explore how Black students at private schools must interrogate their identity and how they navigate this. One of the key features of the Double-consciousness is the challenge of a double identity, a pursuit that, for Du Bois, may have led to a “truer” self, that is a self with insight on society and its forms of oppression (1903: 33). How might this pursuit exist in 21<sup>st</sup> century South Africa and does it emerge in similar ways to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century of Du Bois? Using the interviews of Gaia, Tyler and Iver, we see that Whiteness does exist in practice, even as its exact definition is difficult to express, it does appear to participants to name an experience of alienation from institutional culture.

### Troubling Whiteness

Whiteness has generated such interest that many institutions have begun “White Studies” as a way to both confront and understand Whiteness as a concept. This, according to Bryant Keith Alexander (2004) may in fact be a problem. As Alexander (2004: 649) argues,

the risk of those who choose to study Whiteness, is the risk of essentialism. To study a thing is to confirm its existence. In fact, it goes one step further, to study a thing, in this case Whiteness, one is not only essentialising Whiteness as a phenomenon, but in fact creating its meaning in the process. According to Alexander (2004: 649), there is no “true essence” to “whiteness”, there are only historically contingent ideas of Whiteness which are dependent on social location. Therefore, the study of Whiteness becomes recursive, a “self-reifying practice”, it resists codifying and is only noticeable in its performance (Alexander, 2004: 650). According to Nadine Dolby (2000: 14), the “white race” has only existed for a couple of hundred years. This, coupled with the fact that Whiteness is ever changing, evolving, and remoulding itself into whatever it is needed to be within the global arena, means that there is no strict definition. In the US for example, both the Jewish and Irish peoples have only “recently” become White with these identities having been racialised as others up to a certain point in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Dolby, 2000: 6). Whiteness is therefore not a fact, but an amalgamation of identities that emerge and re-emerge from continually changing sets of circumstances (Dolby, 2000: 5).

The history of education in South Africa was discussed in the previous chapter to situate our discussion around a particular context at a particular time. What that discussion also revealed is that the history of South Africa is not a linear progression of one hegemonic White identity. Politically, South Africa oscillated between the DEIC prior to the 1800s, and the Empire 1800s – mid-1900s and towards White South African supremacy under the National Party during Apartheid in the mid-1900s to 1994. This resulted in multiple White identities being imparted throughout this period. The DEIC, for example, was a commercially driven entity (Behr, 1984: 4; McKerron, 1934: 17). Their existence in the Cape was therefore focused more on financial gains, leaving their racism to exist through capital. Once the Empire took over, there was a clear shift towards a very particular form of Whiteness imparted by the British. Whiteness therefore shifted from a commercial and Dutch existence to an Empire-driven, political goal.

The South African War of 1899 - 1902 (Behr, 1984: 4) was of clear importance in the shaping of Whiteness in South Africa. That war saw a direct conflict within South Africa about the Whiteness the country ought to be empowering. The Afrikaners wanted a national identity as they were becoming increasingly unhappy with British rule, which was focused on emulating the metropole. There was, in this period, a push-back from the Afrikaners towards the British as they felt the British were starting to place Black and White people on equal

footing (Behr, 1984: 166). South Africa thus shifted towards a legalisation of Whiteness through legislation such as the Native Land Act of 1913 which came just three years after the formation of the Union of South Africa (Behr, 1984: 4).

Considering its – according to Dolby (2000: 6) – new existence, Whiteness in South Africa took a very particular form in each of the 17<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The latter half of the twentieth century therefore highlights an interesting period in South African Whiteness. This period could be seen as a liberatory period. We saw a process of decolonisation worldwide, the civil rights movement in the US and the abolition of Apartheid to name a few. In many ways, this was the downfall of Whiteness. But, in many more ways, this was a time in which a set of standards were further entrenched as normal, or more candidly, as White. It is therefore important to situate Whiteness not just in a particular space but also a particular period of time. Whiteness shifted throughout these periods and took the form of whoever was in power to shape it. It takes the shape of its context much like a liquid in a mug. Crucially, its malleability shows how Whiteness as a concept becomes difficult to define, especially in South Africa.

In the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Whiteness began to be codified legislatively, seeing a direct relationship between Whiteness and the state and its treatment of its Black population. Under Apartheid, this was no longer possible and was explicitly prohibited through three acts; the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act (1949), The Immorality Amendment Act (1950) and the Population Registration Act (1950) (“Apartheid Legislation 1850s -1970s | South African History Online”, n.d.). These acts cemented the key project of Apartheid that separated it from the colonial project. Under the British, the tones and codes of Whiteness were acquirable. Learning these codes allowed a Black person to elevate themselves into a White position. Alongside that was the project of ‘civilisation’ and refinement. Apartheid was not about refinement, it was a deliberate attempt to protect White people, not Whiteness as a concept. Fernanda Pinto de Almeida points out that the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw a moment in which the boundaries of Whiteness were being produced, especially in rural South Africa (2015: 463). At the time, White Afrikaners feared a “verkaffering”, which is a White Afrikaans term for becoming Black and poor. This anxiety was later translated into the legislation of the acts that sought to really limit a racial “infiltration” as Pinto de Almeida put it (2015: 463).

Whiteness therefore emerged as ‘something’ in South Africa over a period of colonization, although its boundaries remained vague. In the Cape, for example, it was bound up with a Christian civilizing project that meant that certain people of colour could acquire a degree of Whiteness through purchasing land, racial mixing, etc. Dwight Conquergood theorises that “cultures and selves are not given, they are made, even like fictions, they are ‘made up’ [...] they hold out the promise of re-imagining and refashioning the world” (1989: 831 in Alexander, 2004: 650). Culture and its reality only exist in the act of doing and making, it is in the socially negotiated performative acts that it is formed (Alexander, 2004: 650). Therefore, for Whiteness to be discussed as an object of study, it must be acknowledged as a substantive ‘thing’.<sup>7</sup> When Whiteness is discussed, it can often be in symbiotic relation to Blackness “where whiteness grows as a seemingly ‘natural’ proxy for quality, merit, and advantage, ‘colour’ disintegrates to embody deficit or ‘lack’” (Fine, 1997: 58). In fact, we can see this very meaning of Whiteness be identified by Iver in how he describes Evergreen;

*“I just feel like there were constant reminders, in a super White environment like Evergreen, you're constantly being reminded about why it's so good to be White. [...] And why it's so frowned upon and ugly and ‘not nice’ to be Brown or Black or anything that isn't White and European. It's like the one is celebrated and you're like heralded if you can get that right and the other is shunned. [...] And there's small things, subtle things that happen every single day.”*

He continues;

*Whether it's in class and a certain teacher makes a comment that's kind of like ‘Ooh, that was...’ [problematic]. But you are part of the minority in that situation, so you don't bring it up and you kind of swallow it. And because you don't challenge it, you're like, is that actually true? and you go and think about it, and it festers in your mind. [...] and you eventually become numb to it that you don't actually [confront it]. [...] It just continuously reaffirms that narrative of: Black is bad, White is right”.*

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<sup>7</sup> By making Whiteness into a thing, this is not to say that its definition is fixed forever and thereby taking it for granted. Whiteness needs to be discussed not just as the opposite of Blackness, because discussing Whiteness in this context, may in fact be perpetuating White privilege (Alexander, 2004: 650).

Often in discussions of Whiteness, there is no acknowledgement of Whiteness as a performative act, which then further laments Whiteness as a default, ‘natural’ state, and colour as anything that is not that. In the example above, Whiteness is reproduced in an almost self-affirming way, by not being challenged. This is how Whiteness becomes hegemonic. According to Raymond Williams, hegemony can be defined as “a policy expressing or aimed at political predominance” (2015: 99). But we cannot restrict this terminology, as Williams argues, one of hegemony’s key features is that it describes a particular way of seeing the world, human nature, and relationships (2015: 100). Whiteness becomes hegemonic because it has permeated the cultural, political, and economic structures of South Africa. So much so that it wields a political dominance that demarcates it as the default state of being, culturally.

Whether the students or teachers at Evergreen in the earlier example said something explicit or implicit is not the main cause for concern. The concern lies in the reaffirming of White is right and Black is wrong. The importance lies in the underlying set of assumptions being produced. In a White space, such as Evergreen, Whiteness can be reproductive. Therefore, Alexander argues, Whiteness must be viewed as performative because it is linked with “access, the social construction of power, worth value, that leads to the [...] practice of privilege” (2004: 650). The repetition of Whiteness is what produces and maintains it. As Iver states, it is a “[well] oiled machine” that is designed to reproduce itself.

You will notice that the thesis’ title deliberately refers to the “experiences of Black alums”. Not singularly because that was my identity and this project was in large part an exploration into my high school experience, but also because the Black identity needed to be central to this discussion, as it is the Black identity I am exploring. Yet, I still discuss Whiteness because it would be dishonest not to. One cannot discuss Blackness, the history of schools and ponder whether they are inherently White institutions, without reviewing what Whiteness is. Even though it is not central to this discussion, Whiteness has historically been universal and that universality resides in “its already defined position as everything” (Nakayama & Krizek, 1995: 293). This universality, especially in the context of colonial and post-colonial private schools, needs to be defined and scrutinized to understand the recreation of racial lines and boundaries. It is therefore important to me to not fall into the trap of “the taking back of centre stage from people of colour, even in discussions of racism, so that white issues remains or become central in the dialogue” (Grillo and Wildman, 1995: 566 in Alexander, 2004: 654) that White studies, or in this case the interrogation of Whiteness, tends to fall into.



In my experience, the content of Whiteness was completely arbitrary.<sup>8</sup> Whiteness became a set of codes and practices from which Black students felt excluded. I say that as someone who lived his entire High school career being called ‘White’ by my peers of all racial backgrounds. I would say this gave me a unique insight into what people believed made someone White. Intriguingly, Whiteness was not just a set of universal characteristics, it is completely made up and is contingent on who your audience is. For example, to some, it was White of me to listen to Taylor Swift music. To others it was White of me to listen to mainstream rap artists like Drake. It ranged further than music, of course, into the foods I ate, the movies I watched, and even the activities I hinted at enjoying, such as surfing or skating. All of these are completely random, and my level of apparent “Whiteness” would range depending on who was judging my tastes. As stated, everything that is made to mean “White” is made up. In many ways, these examples can be seen as harmless and I would argue that yes, they can be. However, there are more harmful examples, such as one from Topher:

*“I guess being Black and being smart with something that was strange to White people. My Blackness and my being Smart was, I guess an odd [thing]. It wasn't common, but they treated me like it wasn't common. I am the only Black guy in first set maths, but like it doesn't have to be [treated] that way. [I was] made to feel kind of like a... not really like a quota per say, but as if like my being smart was always like, ‘Oh, he's that Smart Black guy’.”*

In fact, this is a trope that has long been understood in academia. Fanon (1952: 88–89), spoke of how, in the White world, it is not enough to be smart, that your intelligence is always preceded by your denotation as a Black person. Topher, in this case, is pointing to this very phenomenon of being the ‘smart Black guy’ and therefore not being just an intelligent person, but as intelligent in relation to Whiteness (Mujulizi, 2020: 18). Where my examples were less tied to sociohistorical examples, this does not mean that I was not faced with similar tropes. In this instance where intelligence is directly equated with Whiteness, one can see how racism

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<sup>8</sup> In Alexander’s application of the term, in the context of White studies, Whiteness is “a state of being defined by the social interpretation of pigmentation or melanin. Whiteness is an act of doing in terms of the social import that is placed on skin and how that manifests into specified behavioural relations to others within and without that now racialized category” (Alexander, 2004: 656). Whiteness thus has no foundational base for power except for its reproduction of itself. It is a performance, much like Judith Butler (1990: 270 in Alexander, 2004: 656) argues that gender is performed. In this performance of Whiteness, we see a repetition of acts, actions, and activities that sustain it as seen in the example Iver so eloquently discussed.

and White supremacy persist in their own formation and recreation. Whiteness should be understood as “not merely a discourse that is contained in societies inhabited by White people; it is not a phenomenon that is enacted only where White bodies exist. Whiteness is not just about bodies and skin colour, but more about the discursive practices” (Shome, 1999: 108). Much as Alexander (2004: 659) stated that his “acting white” only exists in relation to the social sanctions of not performing a perceived normative Black masculinity, Topher thought his admittedly elevated level of intelligence was not tied to a perceived normative Black masculinity which, in this case, is tied to what Posnock (2018: 334) referred to as the categorisations of Blackness; lazy, poor, dangerous, criminal etc.

As discussed earlier in this section, Whiteness in South Africa took vastly different forms when utilised by dissimilar sources of power. However, the liberatory period in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, may have in fact shifted Whiteness, rather than dismantled it. This was a phenomenon we saw occurring in the United States in the aftermath of the emancipation proclamation of 1863. In *The Souls of Black Folk*, W.E.B. Du Bois (1903) illustrates the experience of Black Americans in the first few moments following Emancipation. Du Bois (1903: 33) discusses the struggle that many African Americans faced in this period. “To him, so far as he thought and dreamed, slavery was indeed the sum of all villainies, the cause of all sorrow, the root of all prejudice; Emancipation was the key to a promised land of sweeter beauty” (Du Bois, 1903: 34). However, many of those African Americans also began to realise that it was not just about freedom for freedom's sake.

*“He felt his poverty; without a cent, without a home, without land, tools, or savings, he had entered into competition with rich, landed, skilled neighbours. To be a poor man is hard, but to be a poor race in a land of dollars is the very bottom of hardships.” (Du Bois, 1903: 36)*

For Du Bois (1903), the freedom that Black Americans gained from Emancipation was a freedom from slavery but not a freedom to freely participate in society as equal to the White man. Freedom therefore came with a restraint. In South Africa, Steve Biko (1987), wrote in ‘I Write What I Like’ about a remarkably similar problem. Unfortunately, Biko never lived to see the end of Apartheid; however, during his time as a vocal liberatory figure in what was the beginning of the fall of Apartheid, Biko highlighted the same issues examined by Du Bois. Biko’s focus was drawn more to the context he was in, thus he was drawn more particularly to

the “liberal ideology” driven by White South Africans at the time (1987: 22). Biko highlighted a game played by White South Africans which he termed “deliberate evasiveness”, something he observed would occur whenever they were asked about what they were willing to do in the fight for Black liberation (1987: 22–23). It was this reluctance to let go of their privilege that Biko saw White liberals as always remaining on the side of the oppressor. For Black South Africans, this meant that even if Apartheid were to be dismantled, racism, systematically, structurally, or otherwise, would remain in full effect. Even, or especially, when we saw its legislative dismantling in the face of the end of Apartheid in 1994. These two of many examples illustrate that the legal dismantling of slavery, colonialism and Apartheid alone have not solved the issue of systemic racism.

So, after Apartheid South Africa, formal racist laws were repealed and we saw, legally a non-racial society established, including some provision for the correction of historical injustice. But – does the experience of 21<sup>st</sup> century schooling represent the resilience of Whiteness or its decline amid increasing challenge? It therefore becomes easier to understand why and how private schools become racialised spaces if we are to understand Whiteness not as a racial demarcation that is tied to the body. It also becomes clear that when schools are attempting a White tone, they are doing so not out of racial demarcation. Whiteness, therefore, becomes less about White people/institutions, and more about people/institutions performing Whiteness (Alexander, 2004: 659).

According to Catherine Fox, Whiteness is “analogous to masculinity: just as masculinity has some correlation to maleness yet is not a fundamental characteristic of it, whiteness is not essentially attached to colour” (2002: 199 in Alexander, 2004: 660). She further argues, and I concur, that a Black person may be able to perform Whiteness with the knowledge of how Whiteness is enacted and the effects of it. Alexander continues “yet the effectiveness or the impact of such performances is of course contingent among the audience and the relative value/politics that they place on the relationship between skin, culture, and performance” (2004: 660). Thus, in understanding whiteness and the performative nature of it, along with the ways in which it is made and reproduced, we can begin to discuss the effects of Whiteness on Black students’ conceptualisations of themselves.

A question we need to explore within this chapter is whether the early 21<sup>st</sup> century has in fact helped to resolve this paradox. That on the one hand, legal racism is defeated but on the

other hand, new forms of racism and the entrenchment of Whiteness seem to appear strongly. Are we therefore at a moment, globally, in which Whiteness is more under pressure than before? Or is it asserting its resilience and longevity? All of this might suggest that we think of Whiteness as expressing a hegemony – a taken for granted set of values and norms – with the question being, is that hegemony under threat, or is it being recast in new ways? Or more theoretically still, does the naming of Whiteness bring what was taken for granted into the open and give it a shape, one that contests its hegemony?

## **Being Black in a 21st Century White Space**

Given that racial demarcations outside of physical attributes are social constructions, there is no singular definition of Blackness. Trying to define Blackness is as futile as trying to define Whiteness. It is an individual act of doing. But because it is also so deeply tied to context, Blackness can have collective meanings depending on where you are. Thus, the Blackness sought in this section relates to a Blackness that is in direct relation to Whiteness; but one that is situated in South Africa, in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century and, additionally, in relation to an elite code. One that was established long before this period and context. My focus is thus on what Blackness meant to my participants, and how it was forged in relation to their engagement with elite spaces and with what they understand Whiteness to be. Private schools like Evergreen imitated British public schools and became a model of private education in the colonial world. In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, these schools operated with a White student body, even though the number of Black students increased. In my final year at Evergreen, for example, we had 20 or so Black students in a grade of 150. Many of my participants from Redford shared that their school's Black student body was far less than that.

Beyond the actual demographics, we need to explore the culture of these institutions, and how Whiteness appeared. These institutions were what Elijah Anderson (2014: 13) termed the 'White space'. These spaces are defined by the overwhelming presence of White people and the simultaneous absence of Black people. Anderson (2014: 18) believes that when there is a lack of social contact between Black and White people, stereotypes tend to rule perceptions. This very knowledge can create a social distance between any 'unknown' Black person entering the White space and thus estranging them (Anderson, 2014: 18). A few of my

interviewees noted this shock when first entering their schools. For instance, Cyrah spoke of her first impression of Redford when she arrived.

*“So it was a little bit weird because I had never actually been to the school before I joined. And their whole prospectus and “these are our students”, Yoh! The lies! Oh my God, they went and they got every single POC, and they put them on the front of that brochure. So, I was like, “great, I’m gonna have a good time”. I get to the place and I’m like, “okay, this is super White”. So, I was a little bit shocked. But I was OK. [...] But then I think I definitely did start to miss the diversity.”*

Interestingly, the brochure was a definitive sign that the school is very aware of their existence as a White space and the importance of selling themselves as diverse. The usage of Black people as promotional pawns is something that is seen amongst many private schools these days which are trying desperately to steer away from their image as White spaces. In the case of Redford, Tyler spoke of the active colourisation of their promotional content. She said:

*“this was such a huge part of my school experience. [...] Whenever there was a photo-op, I would be in that photo-op. I was in grade four. I was in a class and there were two Black kids in the class as well. And the deputy head walks in, looks round and says out loud “Oh, there’s a lot of you here”. And proceeds to only call myself and the two Black kids. We gave each other this look, and we just knew. We walked up to the high school and there I saw my brother and I saw my sister. And we saw almost every other Brown kid and a ‘couple’ of White kids. Really only a handful. It definitely was the reverse representation of what the school actually looked like. And it was such an awkward experience because we couldn’t say no. And we had to just fake being happy, chatting. When we all knew we were just there because they were trying to paint a very different picture of our school’s diversity. So that happened about every year.”*

When asked how that made her feel, she responded.

*“Just very uncomfortable, very used. Exploited. I think that’s a good word because especially as a kid you, you don’t have the authority to say no. And,*

*yeah, it's just you... [frustration] You know that it has absolutely nothing to do with who you are as a person. They are not seeing you for the individual. I mean literally it kind of just strips you of your personhood because, yeah, they are ultimately just using your face, using your skin. And I don't know if it fools anyone that goes on the website."*

The school are keenly aware that they exist as a White space and thus use Black students for promotional purposes to publicly distance themselves from this physical truth. Tyler wondered out loud if it tricked anybody and as is evidenced by Cyrah, it did. To Cyrah, she was walking into a 'diverse' school and was shocked to see just the opposite upon arrival and it further distanced her from the space. While she states that eventually she was fine but that immediate shock and realisation that she had been lied to cannot be understated. It is here that we see the disjuncture between the school's demographics, a White code that the school imparts and this third element, the marketing of the school. 21<sup>st</sup> century South Africa is an ostensibly non-racial society. Redford saw its demographics as being White and it used its Black student body to hide this inequality within the school, whilst at the same time, it still promised a particular White code. One through which wealthy parents understood that, even while the school is diverse, its diversity does not overshadow its White tone.

## **Redford and the Importance of Language**

I wish to draw your attention to Tyler's statement about being used by the schools. The phrase "strips you of your personhood" speaks directly to what Fanon (1952: 83) characterised as the inability of a Black person to humanise themselves in a White space. To Fanon (1952: 83), the fact of Blackness is rooted in our inability to be a Black person – we must always be a Black person in relation to the White man. This disculturation occurs in an almost co-existent relationship, to alienate one not just from their race, but also from the race they are apparently 'acting' like. Which in this case is White. We see this very example in Tyler's experience at Redford, where she states:

*"Well, it definitely stemmed from just everywhere that I was. So, in school there were multiple parts to it because, it was not only the fact that like I was Brown and everyone or most of the other people were White. But even like*

*in Afrikaans, I did huistaal Afrikaans and my pronunciation of some of the words were also different. So even though we all spoke the same language, there was still a separation.”*

In Tyler’s case, she was not only dislocated by race but also by language. To Fanon, language is a powerful tool: “a man who has a language consequently possesses the world expressed and implied by that language. [...] Mastery of language affords remarkable power” (1952: 9). This case is of particular importance as Tyler language played a particularly significant role in her identity.

*“[...] it extended beyond the race thing because, it was also the fact that my home language growing up was Afrikaans. I was very much more Afrikaans speaking than English speaking and I couldn't call myself Afrikaans because I wasn't like an ‘Afrikaner’, I didn't have that Afrikaans culture even though the language part of it was a big part of who I was. It felt like I wasn't allowed to have that as part of who I am, because everything else that was associated with it, wasn't applicable to me.”*

One can begin to see how through language, Tyler felt excluded from participating in forms of her identity. In this case, it was particularly interesting because Afrikaans itself has a deeply racialised history. According to Adriaan Steyn, Afrikaans can be traced back to the “creolisation of the Dutch language which was first introduced to the African continent by 17<sup>th</sup> century settlers” (2016: 482). Due to the expanding slave society in the colonial cape, several dialects loosely related to Dutch emerged containing “shards of different languages spoken at the Cape” and became a language used among the slaves (Steyn, 2016: 482). These origins are what gave the language a stigma that was always related to “poorness”, or “Colouredness”, like “kombuistaal” [kitchen language] (Steyn, 2016: 482). In fact, it was at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that a group of White Afrikaans speakers saw Afrikaans as their language, and they disregarded any other variations from Afrikaans (Steyn, 2016: 482). In sum, this was what led to Afrikaans becoming tied to an Afrikaner identity.<sup>9</sup> However, as Steyn also notes, Black Afrikaans speakers outnumber White ones by around 60 to 40% (2016:

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<sup>9</sup> Steyn defines “Afrikaner” as White people who speak Afrikaans as a first language. Noting that not every White, first language Afrikaans person identifies with the Afrikaner identity, however, it is still important to use as this is the most definitive characteristic of Afrikaner identity.

484). This co-option of the Afrikaans language has clearly lingered and presents itself in Tyler's experience. In many ways, we can look at Afrikaans in Tyler's case as a microcosm of the Black experience in White schools. While her Afrikaans was not White enough it was, interestingly, not Coloured enough either.

*“Also then like at church or with family, particularly in church, a lot of the kids would not want to socialize or associate with me because they'd always come with the tagline “Oh you, you are acting White, why you acting White?”. So, in the White sphere, when I was told I was different, it was considered a compliment. But among Brown people being considered more White was then a huge insult. It was very difficult 'cause it's not like I ever actually wanted to be considered more White in the White space. In fact [it] actually really pissed me off, I'd get very angry. Because I wanted to identify more with my skin. But because I wasn't embraced in the environments where I was with people that looked like me, It was very difficult. The ‘who’ I was in terms of a racial sense, I couldn't identify it. I don't know how to describe what that felt like or even a little bit what it feels like because there's just a lot of otherness.”*

To Fanon, “to speak a language is to take on a world, a culture” (1952: 25). But, simultaneously, in the White world, one is not allowed to decide for themselves what that culture means to them. In Tyler's case even though she is adamant that she wants to identify with her colour, and she wants to take on this culture, she cannot inhabit it without being marked as inferior, in speech and in skin. This removal of choice from her is the fact of Blackness and it is what we see when there is a disculturation that occurs. This extended beyond school and as Fanon (1952) expresses in the first chapter of *Black skin, White Masks*, taking on the White world comes at a cost. To take on a language, by choice or otherwise, means on some level, one also loses a familial bond. When describing the case of a Black man returning home having mastered the language [of the colonizer], the responses from people at home were usually cautionary in nature: “watch out for him”, “he talks like a white man” (Fanon, 1952: 11). For Tyler, there was never a geographical change for her like there would be for an international student for example, as she still lived at home [Western Cape] and was a day scholar. However, there was a clear difference between the school she and her siblings attended (Redford) and the schools their cousins attended. This difference was that Redford was a White



space and therefore meant that in her daily life, Tyler was being discultured in a way that her cousins were not.

*“So, it does sometimes feel as if people don't believe how difficult a private school experience can be for someone of colour. So, [my cousins] just look at, “it costs a lot of money, so it must be good”. Growing up, it sometimes felt as if there was always a distance, because we didn't speak like some of our cousins. The best way I can explain it is, [...] it felt like they thought [that] we thought we were better [than them]. Because our lives were so immersed in our school environment.”*

Tyler continues, elaborating on the role which the school environment played in separating her from life outside of school. She says:

*“Yeah, so our lives were different. [We were] definitely very separate. School was very separate to home life, which was very separate to the wider family life as well. Even just in the neighbourhood as well. I know my neighbours, like I know their names, but I don't have a relationship with any of them because we didn't go to the same school that their kids went to. There was just no time where our lives overlapped enough for a relationship to be built. So, I definitely think that being at Redford became a bit isolating.”*

This isolation is key as not only did Tyler state that she wanted to identify more with her skin and whatever that culture entails but being at the school and experiencing life through that space meant she could not. She was removed from the choice of being able to participate in what was important to her identity. To be clear, to her, this identity was always a struggle to grasp. The ‘Coloured’ identity, like Whiteness and Blackness, is equally socially constructed.<sup>10</sup> It is rooted of course in sociohistorical context and spans the Cape as there are ‘Coloured’ people elsewhere. This is where Tyler’s identity dilemma also arose, as she notes.

*“[...] my dad side is very different to my mom’s side. And this also just has to do with the fact that my mom and her family, they're from the Eastern Cape. So, although they are classified as Coloured, they don't speak like*

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<sup>10</sup> It is important to note that this is not to ignore the existence of a shared culture nor the importance of one. But, to further lament the socially constructed nature of it. That does not mean it does not exist.

*Cape Coloureds, or they don't have the Cape Coloured accent. Whereas my dad's family, they're from the Western Cape, so that accent just didn't really carry over to us. I mean, we can code switch, and we do. It's not like we can't speak with that accent, but I think it's how the same way as South Africans, we can learn the American accent, we've learned [the Cape Coloured accent] as we grew up."*

In this case, the Coloured identity was split into two separate regional identities. As a result of different geographical locations and therefore a completely different context, the Afrikaans language does not differ beyond usage of certain words, phrases, and accents. For Tyler, spending most of her time with her mom and her side of the family, meant that their Afrikaans was different to that of the Cape Coloured Afrikaans. Even though, as she stated, they can put the accent on, there is still a distinguishable difference, and one that isolated her and her siblings from their cousins, neighbours, and church community. She was simultaneously too Coloured to be an Afrikaner but too White to be Coloured. It is important to note that, much like myself and most of my interviewees, Tyler's isolation was not so severe to the point that she did not have friends or form communities. Quite the contrary.

Most, if not all my interviewees had successful relationships with their peers and communities alike. In Tyler's case, she was chosen for a prestigious leadership role at her school. The isolation I speak of is much more subtle and rooted in the everyday nature of identity formation and what it means to be an individual who is part of a whole. Disculturation thus causes an internal identity crisis, one that is specific to the experience of Black students within these institutions. To quote Fanon, "In all truth, in all truth I tell you, my shoulders slipped out of the framework of the world, my feet could no longer feel the touch of the ground. Without a Negro past, without a Negro future, it was impossible for me to live my Negrohood. Not yet white, no longer wholly black, I was damned" (1952: 106). This state of being is not necessarily rooted in a feeling of inferiority, but rather, according to Fanon (1952: 106), a feeling of non-existence. Where most can feel a sense of self that is broadly tied to an ethnic background or community, students who enter these spaces, and are discultured by them, cannot.

## Double Consciousness and the Loss of Identity

Fanon (1952) does have a ‘solution’, to this and it is one that was shared by Steve Biko (1987: 71–72), that is, a push towards a self-consciousness rooted in Black consciousness. Instead of seeking outward affirmation and acceptance, the work must focus inward. To Biko, colonizers see “education as the quickest way of destroying the substance of the African culture” (1987: 70). Institutions such as Evergreen and in similar ways, Redford, had built an identity that was fundamentally tied to colonialism. The issue with integrating Black students into these spaces without scrutinising the foundational structures in place means that the structure will continue to perpetuate the “superior-inferior, white-black stratification” (Biko, 1987: 24). Integration of this kind is something Biko vehemently opposed, as he was “against the fact that a settler minority should impose an entire system of values on an indigenous people” (1987: 24). The sort of integration Biko did not oppose was one that sought “free participation by all members of a society, catering for the full expression of the self in a freely changing society as determined by the will of the people” (1987: 24).

The context in which Biko wrote this in is particularly important to consider. Apartheid rule was still in effect and Biko was a direct victim of it. When Biko spoke of integration in these absolute terms it was under a regime that prohibited integration altogether. It pains me that we do not have the privilege to hear what Biko would think of contemporary South Africa. What I do know, however, is that for a lot of private institutions, the structures in place were not scrutinised when Apartheid was abolished. Within these private schools, all that needed changing was a simple integration into an already existing set of norms, values, and codes of behaviour. This, in and of itself, is worthy of scrutiny as it allowed schools to present as being racially inclusive without taking the time to recognise their structures as being reproductive of a White system.

According to Biko, the only way these structures can even begin to amass any form of change, is to begin with the Black individuals themselves. There must be an infusion of “pride and dignity” and love for oneself and one's culture to revive what once was lost (Biko, 1987: 29). The difficulty of this, and what my interviews have revealed is that most, if not all, Black students are aware of the system they exist in within these schools. They are aware of the problematic nature behind distinct levels of treatment, different racist jokes, and this narrative

that White is what we need to strive for. However, there is no real recognition of this until one leaves the institution. For me, and some of my interviewees, although not all, this process of recognition, the true nature of what we went through such as disculturation, isolation and thus identity struggles, was only noticed once we were out of the institution itself. This isolation is deliberate, and some of those effects extended to a loss of love towards one's skin, and a loss of love towards one's identity. For Gaia, who is half Indian, half Italian, their racial categorisation was not one that fitted into any boxes, and they felt the pressures of that in a White space.

*“[...] it was more things like mischaracterizing my race. [...] Which is a strange disorientating experience, but nonetheless uncomfortable. And then obviously people will become aware of the fact that I was Indian as well 'cause I mean my mom is Indian and I'm quite open about the fact that I'm Indian because I like being Indian. [...] After that, you have like Curry in your lunch box 'cause your mom made potato Curry for lunch and that's a normal experience. [I had] Indian food in my lunch box and you sort of have the 'lunch box experience' where people like, turn their noses up to it or make snide comments about it smelling strange. And you start to feel embarrassed about your food. And that created a weird sense of embarrassment about being Indian for me. And I'm not super proud to say it but I definitely did feel some kind of shame towards my Indianness throughout high school. So, feeling weird about my mom coming to the school like for Eisteddfods or school events. I'd feel because the Italian side didn't get any flack at all.”*

Interestingly that loss of pride or shame in oneself is not an individual feeling. Many students of colour start to feel this way when their race is constantly being questioned, examined, and scrutinised. It can lead someone to feel shame, as Gaia did. Later in the interview Gaia returned to their Indianness noting that their love and celebration of Indianness and their “racial and ethnic identity” came from going on exchange for a couple of months in grade 10. It was during this exchange that they felt a sense of shared culture. They could share in celebration of their cultural roots, and they spoke of how experiencing Indian culture first hand, and not just from a racist history that is so often taught in schools, completely “revolutionised my racial perspective of myself”. They also brought this perspective back

home which, according to them ‘blew their family’s minds’. This experience not only showed them what they were missing in terms of their own cultural identity but also added to a sense of loneliness that they experienced at school. At Evergreen there were other Indian students but having experienced the sense of shame that may have been internalised, they never came together as an ‘Indian’ community. Indianness became something that was secondary to their identity, something to hide. Gaia experienced their own internal exploration into Indianness. Their own Black consciousness that was derived directly from their experience external to the school.

Unfortunately, not every Black student has an exchange programme to aid them in their search for their identity. Thus, it often forms much later in life, mostly after high school. This was the case for me and in fact this truth revealed itself in my interview with Iver. Iver is the son of a Black Congolese father and a White South African mother. He was raised exclusively by his mother and thus grew up in a White home, attended Evergreen from the age of five and was raised in almost exclusively White spaces. He is aware of this, stating that the situation was “weird” and that it took him a while to start celebrating his Blackness. For this Iver feels bad for “neglecting” his Black side but was also aware that “a lot of that was out of my power”. He lamented in the interview that being raised in these spaces did not afford him much contact with his Congolese side. Unlike Gaia, Iver was never exposed to the Congolese side of his life, and he has felt the effects of this as time has passed. He made it clear that he was never attempting to be White, but even in his lack of attempt, there were constant reminders and thus he was maybe “subconsciously trying to assimilate”. This is something that Fanon (1952) points to as being a part of the Black condition within White spaces. To Iver though, the (sub)conscious attempts at being White were futile and he was acutely aware of this.

*“[...] the overriding thing for me was [that] I felt frustrated, and I felt a little bit lost. I don't know if I'm going to articulate this correctly, but if you are not White, you will never be White. Like, there's nothing you can do.”*

This recognition, together with his recognition that he had no connection to the one side (the Congolese side) that may accept him, was devastating to him. It was in this moment that the interview became heart wrenching as Iver began to cry. He acknowledged that he had a right to a White identity, whatever that meant, because his mom was White, and she too has a history, and he has a right to share in that history. However, with the objective rejection of that

reality came the realisation that the identity he could claim, identify with, and most importantly be accepted by, was out of his reach. He had nothing to show for it “culturally”. This is at the core of his battle with identity.

*“that's been my biggest struggle, identifying with something. I always feel like fuck, what am I? I'm just in between. [...] it's not a thing of feeling guilty, it's just frustration. It's like fuck, I want this so badly, but it's not gonna happen. And you have formed as a human being. This is your culture. Your culture is very White. And I don't want to fucking be 'White'. I wanna be Congolese so fucking badly. And yes, I am fucking Congolese, like my dad is Congolese that will never be taken away from me. But culturally and community wise, that's where the sense of belonging comes from. Your sense of belonging does not come from ancestry. At all. It comes from your community, how you're socialized, your culture, that group. So, it's definitely more thing of frustration because I feel like I was given no choice and [no] fighting chance to be able to identify with what I feel like I want to identify with.”*

This quote connects to what W.E.B. Du Bois argued in *The Souls of Black Folk*, “one experiences a state of Two-ness, not wholly black, never wholly white, one is stuck in a perpetual state of “double consciousness” (1903: 8). Most illuminating to me is that Du Bois, in 1903, a century and a half ago, was writing about an experience within Black Americans who had recently been emancipated and were thrust into a systemically White world and their inner turmoil with dealing with this new reality. Today, we find this experience within not just Iver, but multiple interviewees from multiple schools that exist as White spaces as well. While this could be a widespread phenomenon in various locations, here it is clear to see that on a smaller scale, private institutions which are still functionally ‘White’ are causing an inner turmoil amongst Black students today that is remarkably similar to that of Black people in 1903.

The existence of this state of double-consciousness through the 20<sup>th</sup> and the 21<sup>st</sup> century illustrates how Whiteness has maintained its existence since conception. What I would like to focus on here briefly, is Du Bois’ (1903: 32–33) conception of the double-consciousness and its nuances. To Du Bois, the conflict of the Black American was a search for a self-

consciousness. But, more importantly, this self-consciousness was about merging “his double self into a better and truer self” (Du Bois, 1903: 33). This entailed not just “Africanizing” America because America had, ostensibly, “too much to teach the world and Africa”. While at the same time he would not “bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world” (Du Bois, 1903: 33). The focus was on the merging of two identities because both had qualities of their own that should not be lost. Therefore, to become a true self-conscious being, the Black American sought to “make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors closed roughly in his face” (Du Bois, 1903: 33).

This element of the double-consciousness is where I differ from Du Bois. Du Bois’ argument presumes that each identity, that of “American” which can be used to mean White, and that of “Negro” should be on equal footing. This would then allow one to select elements of both to secure a new identity, one that turns one into a “better and truer self”. However, this is not the case. The ways in which systems of power, such as racism, sexism, and class – to name a few – operate as zero-sum. Therefore, in this co-existent relationship between “American” and “Negro”, the “American” side has set itself up as the default. It will therefore never have much, if anything at all, to learn from the “Negro” because it is the Negro who must learn from the American. In this pursuit of the double-consciousness then, it becomes an arduous task to ask a Black American to choose equally from both sides of their identity because those sides are not socially equal. The “truer and better” self will therefore always inhibit more Whiteness than it does Blackness in the pursuit of acceptance in this world. In fact, it is at the very root of the inner turmoil Black Americans faced, that of being told their culture is not good enough and they need to become more “American” and rid themselves of the “African”.

My argument is that this turmoil and pursuit of the conjunction of two identities into one is skewed, does not mean it does not exist. There is in some a pursuit of an almost Black excellence. If Whiteness was, and arguably still is, perceived by some as the pinnacle of human civilisation, then the merging of Whiteness and Blackness may hold some weight, in that it allows one the best of both worlds. However, this is not what occurs. While becoming more White may allow you access into the White world, as Iver Illustrated earlier, if you are not White by skin, you will never be fully integrated. And in that pursuit of more Whiteness, you lose some access to your Blackness, be it individually or socially. Therefore, elite private

schools have become such a key focus. They promise access to the elite world through an elite code. This code, as I have and will continue to illustrate, is rooted in Whiteness. For Black students attending these schools, there comes a different weight to attending these schools. When my parents sent me to Evergreen, they knew of the access it afforded me, which is why I was sent there in the first place. It is here that Du Bois' (1903: 32–33) full conceptualisation of double-consciousness emerges. The loss of my Black identity is something neither they nor I had been prepared for but one that, having discussed this recently, we do not entirely regret. However, there was an understanding that sending me to Evergreen would grant me something of a Black excellence. I do not have a definitive answer as to what that entails. What I do know is that sending me to Evergreen gave me access to it; 'it' being a Black excellence and the elite space which afforded me the ability to merge two identities into one ostensibly "better self".

Tyler experienced something similar by commenting that she was aware of the weight and access that saying she went to Redford afforded her. She admitted to still using the name of Redford as a tool in certain instances to better position herself in a conversation with an old White man, for example.

*"[...]it definitely does carry weight and I will 100% [use it] if I ever feel judged or if I feel like I'm being condescended. Any sort of [situation] where I just feel like I'm on the back foot. Particularly with a White person, I will use the fact that I went to Redford because I know it immediately gains me some respect and I think it's absolutely disgusting. But yeah, it does make people treat me different."*

This is something many interviewees have noted they have done in the past. However, I do think there is a difference between utilising the access and power that going to these schools affords and revelling in that access and power. This is where the interview with Tyler got particularly interesting, as she admitted to a feeling of embarrassment that she went to Redford: "I don't think I'm proud to be a product of it. [...] I'm embarrassed to be a product of a place that is pretending to be something it just really isn't". I found this answer particularly interesting because to Tyler, the access that Redford afforded her is something she is willing to use but is not something she feels particularly proud of. I then asked Tyler to work through a thought experiment with me, one that would be hypothetical, but I was still interested in the answers. One of the questions I asked was, would she be willing to lose that access, that Black



excellence, if it meant that she would not have to go through this process of losing her identity, through this double consciousness? And, importantly, who does she think she would have become, had she attended a different, non-elite private school, and is that someone she would have preferred?

Her answer to this then brought up some remarkably interesting thoughts. To Tyler, the answer boiled down to “its complicated”. Tyler began her answer by saying that a week prior to the interview, she thinks she probably would have felt happier if she had gone to a different school. However, it was a conversation she had with her aunt that day that changed this perspective for her.

*“I think I am actually glad that I did go to Redford. And I think that the person I am now is a lot more aware because of it. And I don't know if a lot of POC's share this experience. [...] But because of the years of microaggressions [chuckles] and the years of trauma that's been brought up in the years of exposure to White people, [...] I'm a lot more aware when those things happen now to me in my adult life. Whereas I think when, from my perspective, I'm going to speak just about Coloured people. What I've seen from people I know [...] is that if you've grown up particularly around Coloured people [...] If something happens at work to me now where a White person says something or steps out of line, I'm uncomfortable by it and I'll confront it. I think if you haven't had almost two decades of being uncomfortable. [...] it's been my experience or from what I've seen, Coloured people just kind of like laughed with or dig at themselves, and say degrading things with the White people. Because they're trying to be easy going. And I don't know if that will ever be broken. If they will ever step outside of that? But every POC that I know that's been around White people for so long, and that's been uncomfortable for so long, we're gatvol of being uncomfortable now. And I think that's a better space to be in for change. I'm now more equipped to change my environment and to make sure people don't treat me a certain way than if I had been to a school down the road from where I live. I would have been so out of my depth, and I think I would have been so timid in my Colouredness that I wouldn't have been able to stand up for myself. 'cause I don't even think I would have known it was wrong.”*

I included this quote in its entirety because it is important to recognise what Tyler is saying here. She is not proud of having gone to Redford and is in many ways embarrassed by it. However, she does qualify or legitimise her attendance there by stating that she did, in fact, receive something of value. In this example, it is her ability to recognise White aggression and stand up for herself in those instances. It is one of many, but it was something that came up for her that she was happy to have acquired as a result of having gone to Redford. In this discussion I told Tyler of my experience and what I gained from Evergreen that I do not think I would have gained elsewhere, that being my access to the elite world. To me, Evergreen not only gave me access to Eliteness but it also taught me its codes and I qualify this as having gained an edge over others. Knowledge of the intricacies of the Elite world is what I feel I have gained. In my case, it is something I am happy to have acquired and I am also grateful to Evergreen for having given me that access. A Black excellence. I admittedly hated coming to that realisation, but it was something I had to confront in myself. But within this, something interesting also emerged.

Paul Willis (1977) authored a book called ‘Learning to Labour’. In this book, Willis observed working-class schoolboys and how their class position in life was not something that just happened to them, but was a culture that was created and perpetuated from their days in school (Willis, 1977: 2). One of Willis’ key arguments within this text is that this working-class culture prepares some of these students to give up their labour power and become workers for capital owners, which Willis argues is a form of self-damnation (1977). However, this self-damnation is not seen as such, it is paradoxically seen as “true learning, affirmation, appropriation, and as a form of resistance” (1977: 3). The boys were both damning themselves to a working-class life whilst simultaneously viewing it as the true way of living life. Some of these boys committed themselves to a school counterculture by skipping classes, not respecting teachers, and often bullying other students who would be focused on school. They valued the working-class life that they were about to enter because to them, that was where true masculinity was achieved, together with actual life experience and such. The kids participating in school and seeking to join the middle-class, for instance, were therefore made fun of and their masculinities were questioned.

During Tyler’s interview, it dawned on me that we might be engaging in the same type of qualification as the working-class boys in Willis’ (1977) text. In qualifying our experiences

at Redford and Evergreen, were Tyler and I not justifying our own subjugation? Was this not a way for us to rationalize our experience? For Tyler, interestingly, she was not trying to justify her experience, as to her, that experience was something she was embarrassed about. For me, however, it often does feel like a rationalisation process.

When I asked Tyler, after briefly describing Willis' text to her, whether we were engaging in a rationalisation process, her answer was "Yes, I think so. To an extent. To what extent, I don't know, but to some extent". She then added, "I don't think I'll ever admit these things to a White person". When asked why, she added "[because] It does kind of excuse my treatment or my experience. Everything negative then somehow becomes positive as it happened as a character-building thing". This is where I would like to draw our attention back to the original conceptualisation of the double-consciousness. The inner turmoil and pursuit of an identity is one thing. But it is the pursuit of the merging of the two identities that becomes ever more difficult. Considering the different contexts in which my thesis and Du Bois' text are written, it is a certainty that the difference in context, time and space will make the phenomenon of a Black consciousness different. That is why I would not argue that it is exactly similar. But the core tenants of Du Bois' Black consciousness, even with the pursuit of a Black excellence can in some ways still be found in our experience of this double-consciousness contemporarily, more specifically for Black alums.

For Iver, for example, the recognition of this state of being and subsequent fight against it came much later than it did for Gaia. Once again, it was once he had left Evergreen that he began to truly investigate his identity. This turmoil is something experienced in school, but only ever investigated or scrutinised once one has left the school. For Iver this came in the way Biko (1987) called for a celebration of Blackness in an analogous way that the Black Power movement taking place in the 1970s was calling for as well. Iver stated that for him to start celebrating himself and his skin, he had to go through an "unlearning" process. This meant that he had to investigate everything that the White space had taught and instilled in him for him to get to a place where he could begin to love himself.

*"The main thing that happened in my process of unlearning was appreciating and loving and celebrating my Brownness and my Black heritage and the parts of me that are Black and Brown. 'cause like I'm fucking confused. It's a very weird situation and it took me a while to start*

*celebrating myself and celebrating and appreciating the fact that I am Brown and everything that comes with that. And as soon as I started doing that, I started appreciating the beauty and being virtually far more attracted [to Blackness]. I feel like the hurdle was myself. It was like I didn't think I was beautiful, and I didn't think I was worthy. So automatically I was like 'anyone else who's Black or Brown is not'."*

Iver clarified that it was not about loving himself entirely, it was that he loved himself despite his Brownness, not because of it. Whereas now, he has started to celebrate everything about himself – ‘his skin, his lips, his nose’, all things he had never appreciated before or had learnt to love a little less. What we see here with Iver is that although his identity became splintered and he still feels he has not fully grappled with what that is, he has felt a lot more secure in his individuality. More secure in his personhood and his identity because of the shift towards Black love and his celebration of the self. On an individual level, this is a good thing. In fact, if all the alums, myself included, could have this individual revelation and recognition then we could all start to become better, more centred versions of ourselves. And I argue on an individual level, this is something all Black people should experience. Self-love is incredibly important to the formation of an identity.

However, considering all the experiences that Tyler, Gaia and Iver went through, it is not fair to expect an individual to do any more than this very act of individual self-love. This alone is not the solution to what is inherently a systematic, institutional problem. At least not at this level. If it were, I would argue then that a solution to this phenomenon is a push towards Biko’s (1987) conceptualisation of Black consciousness. Black consciousness, to Biko, “seeks to talk to the black man in a language that is his own. It is only by recognising the basic set-up in the black world that one will come to realise the urgent need for a re-awakening of the sleeping masses. Black consciousness seeks to do this” (1987: 32). I admire this push and wholeheartedly agree with its premise. I do think, however, that it is a very particular problem that is occurring in a very particular context (private schools). This is a way to use Biko’s work to illustrate that this is not something that can be done by the individual students themselves even if they were to come together as one. To Biko, racism was a strictly White problem. It was created, perpetuated, and continued by White structures and thus, it is a “white racism” (1987: 25). As such, it should not be expected of individual students to rise to the task of

dismantling private school structures since they will achieve nothing more than symbolic gestures and that will allow the core structures in place to persist as they can claim they are attempting to progress. This too is a phenomena Biko (1987: 22) pointed to as nothing more than helping White liberals subside their internal guilt.

Conversely, this is an institutional problem that needs to be solved institutionally. If, say, schools continue as they are, Black students will therefore only experience this ‘awakening’ of their two-ness fully, once they have left the institution. But that means that any students coming in will still face the same conditions. Thus, a cycle of Black students entering these Private schools’ White spaces will continue creating increasingly fractured identities within Black students. I would argue that even if the Black middle-class grew to such an extent that we saw the racial composition of these schools change, we would still find that Black students experience the same identity struggles. Therefore, it is not within an individual capacity that these issues can be faced or confronted, but a collective one. I would also argue, much like Biko (1987), it is not about integration per say.

To Biko (1987: 24), integration of Black people into white society is not going to help anything. However, integration by means of the “majority group in any given society” that must determine the direction in which the joint culture of the society must take is something to take note of. These schools are White and therefore do not cater to the cultures of much of the country. Their very existence and identities are tied to this White tone and code. Moving away from this would destroy the identity of these schools. Some may argue that this is reason not to change them. But I would ask, what is the purpose of keeping an identity if this is the cost? This is not about change for change's sake, it is about an integration that sees a more inclusive space within these private schools. That inclusivity should enable Black students to experience their culture not as a symptom of a racist history as is often taught in schools, but a celebration of cultures beyond their existence in relation to Whiteness.

## Chapter 3: Making an Elite Class Consciousness

### Introduction

In the first chapter we discussed the history of education and the exclusionary measures that took place within the Academic system in both national and private institutions. Evergreen's ties to the Metropole and their limited opposition to the national Party, meant that they were open to allowing Black students into their school from the 1970s onwards. Although this was also exclusive to specific Black students, and according to a quota, it still opened its doors to a changing demographic. Redford, which was founded in the 1990's and was therefore created in a context in which schools could no longer be racially exclusive, admitted Black students from the outset.

These measures, although limited, allowed private schools to become exclusionary through the ability to charge high fees. Class, in post-apartheid South Africa therefore changes the nature of elite education in one fundamental way; the shift from exclusion based on race and class to that of class alone. According to Jeremy Seekings and Nicoli Nattrass (2005: 300), the end of the apartheid era saw South African households' level of wealth dependent the number of wage earners which, were in effect, dependent on factors such as education and skill. Both of which are a legacy of past discrimination which saw the continuation of this discrimination, through education. White South Africans were therefore benefiting from the skills and credentials they acquired in the past and were able to pass on to their children. However, after apartheid there were also several Black families that entered the middle and even upper classes, and this allowed them to send their children to private schools (Seekings & Nattrass, 2005: 300). This shift therefore saw a rise in Black upper-middle income families, but that did not trickle down to the broader Black population.

In fact according to Seekings and Nattrass, "the expansion of opportunities at the top did not bring significant improvements for most of the people at the bottom" (2005: 301). This was down to multiple factors such as the ANC's push for deracialization within "labour market policies, public education, and social welfare policies" (Seekings & Nattrass, 2005: 341). But, the effect of this was an increase in interracial wealth by increasing the Black upper-middle income families, but doing little for working-class families. The maintenance of a wealth

distribution inequality thus persists where we see most White people still comprising of the elite and upper-middle income families, with Black families still dominating the working class (Epstein, 2014: 246). Private schools could therefore maintain their White student population, while still accepting Black wealthy students without their racial composition changing significantly (Bhana, 2014: 356). In effect, by excluding working class students, they were also ensuring that they did not become majority Black schools. Exclusivity was therefore factored upon the intersection of class and race, rather than race alone. Therefore, Seekings and Natrass argue that in post-apartheid South Africa, class has taken over race as the primary factor in determining privilege (2005: 300). Although this is true, it still presents an interesting dynamic within these schools. One that requires Black students, who attend these institutions, to still experience a racialised privilege that forces them to interrogate their own positionality and identity within these spaces.

## **The Racialisation of an Elite Class Consciousness**

It is not just enough to declare class as having taken over race. There are multiple elements to this class dynamic that became clearer in my research, a disculturation being one example. For one to feel it necessary to interrogate their positionality within these spaces, one must be feeling something deeper than a lack of belonging. According to Kenway & Lazarus (2017: 264), elite schools have not only maintained a “self-avowed” social superiority, but they have added to it a sense of moral superiority. This superiority has contemporarily been challenged and has seen a wave of elite schools publicly noting their disapproval towards class arrogance. In last few years, perhaps in response to the rapid circulation of stories through social media, public statements from institutions professing their commitments to anti-racism and anti-sexism are more common, and private schools are no exception.

Thus, elite schools could previously afford to be explicitly exclusionary based on race, were now no longer able to do so. Kenway & Lazarus (2017: 265) argue that these schools are learning that being ‘inclusive’ is no longer enough. However, this is not so simple, in that it requires complex ideological manoeuvring. As shown in previous chapters, elite schools need to maintain a White tone and reproduce a specific code to maintain their wealthy clientele. These schools thus need to find a balance between appearing to maintain their ‘moral codes’, at the same time holding ever so closely to their wealthy elite, while protecting their high status

(Kenway & Lazarus, 2017: 265). This information is not new, we have seen how this played out at both Evergreen and Redford's manufacturing of an elite code. However, what is particularly interesting is the introduction of a moral argument by Kenway & Lazarus (2017).

One thing that these schools do, particularly elite schools like Evergreen with the historical ties to British Public schools, is they claimed a superior virtue. Through their exclusionary tactics, ties to the church and overall structure, these schools mobilised a "history of virtue as a form of class distinction" (Kenway & Lazarus, 2017: 266). According to Bourdieu, class is constructed in such a way that the closer one is to a particular space, that is encompassed by a particular class, the more inclined one feels to "assemble practically to come together as a practical group, and thus to reinforce their points of resemblance" (1987: 5–6). By virtue of occupying the same spaces, people feel an obligation towards their peers within that space. That obligation manifests in a class consciousness. In his study of the reproduction of working class culture at schools, Paul Willis (1977) suggests that the relations of people to economic capital are 'subjectively understood and objectively applied. For him, it is these relationships that construct "both the identities of particular subjects and also distinctive class forms at the cultural and symbolic level as well as at the economic and structural level" (1977: 2). Therefore, one's position regarding labour power – the need to work in capitalism – comes to shape our position, but we learn values according to this through institutions such as schools, and these have individual and collective effects.

Willis illustrates this by arguing that not only is class shaped by and through manual labour, but also through, in his specific text, the working-class, counter school culture that was cultivated by the boys he was studying (1977: 2). The culture was preparing the boys for the manual work, which was a form of self damnation by taking on the subordinate roles within a capitalist system. Simultaneously, the boys also viewed this process and the working class culture "as true learning, affirmation, appropriation, and as a form of resistance" (Willis, 1977: 3). As genuinely interesting as this paradoxical element of working-class culture uncovered by Willis is, I wish to focus on the fragmentation and conflict generated in the school system, which becomes a catalyst in the shaping of different class ideologies and importantly, moral understandings.

In schooling in capitalist society, moral codes – around keeping time, valuing money – are therefore masqueraded as universal truths, but they in fact serve the specific dominant



class's interests. This is fundamental to grasp as elite schools such as Evergreen market themselves as vital for the cultivation of morality and virtue: the promise to produce students able to inhabit the most elite worlds and not to have to do manual work, illustrated poignantly by the war cry at Evergreen "one day you will work for us", as I will discuss below. This claim to a "morally elevated ethos" is one of the central features within the history of these schools (Kenway & Lazarus, 2017: 267). For Evergreen, ties to the colony and more specifically, the Anglican Church have allowed it to carry these moral virtues through the school both privately and publicly. According to Kenway & Lazarus (2017: 267) the cultivation of a strict Anglican Church morality, superior "character" and the ideal of "service" were one of the key features of the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. High social status at the time was associated with an elevated morality (Kenway & Lazarus, 2017: 267). One that was built through tactics such as Muscular Christianity, which will be explored in the concluding chapter. One fundamental feature of this period of time and in particular the spreading of this elevated morality was the focus on the so called 'civilisation' of the African people.

According to Kenway & Lazarus (2017: 267–268), the expansion of the British Empire and the subsequent incorporation of the public school model, saw an understanding amongst the Empire that they, alongside the schools, were "involved in a project of "expunging savagery and barbarism,[...] in the name of civilisation and freedom" (Hall, 2002: 14 in Kenway & Lazarus, 2017: 267–268). This is important as the notion of elite schools such as Evergreen functioning as moral utopias which produce a "moral "aristocracy", lives on [...]" (Kenway & Lazarus, 2017: 268). Therefore, when Evergreen engages in an act of class consciousness, they are not doing it based purely on class but also on race. The history of the school unfortunately has proven that race and class run concurrently and not independent of one another. At schools such as Evergreen, and at Redford as well, we cannot dismiss race as still fundamental to that process of privilege. It is clear then that the formation of a class consciousness, at least in these elite spaces, not only creates a racialised hierarchy between classes, but also moralises this process. As I will go on to argue, at Evergreen and at Redford, we see how students engage in an almost collective class consciousness which in effect reinforces the originally racialised hierarchies of race through class consciousness.

## **“One day you’ll work for us”: Rituals of Class Privilege**

According to Crain Soudien (2004: 105), class in education has often been used to discuss schools as mediums for social differentiation. Schools would do this by allocating people into specific class positions thus acting as a “sorting agency rather than an integrative agency” (Soudien, 2004: 105). However, this discussion fails to fully interrogate how class structures and influences work to maintain the cohesion of society. This is where the work of Althusser is important to Soudien and to this chapter because he explained how ideology worked in society through “what he called ‘ideological state apparatuses’; they transmit ruling class ideology and maintain the subject class in its subordinate position” (Soudien, 2004: 105). Soudien continues to argue that this discussion offers an insight into how domination is being rearticulated in an “extra-race” way (2004: 106). The dominant group seeks to maintain its hold on the social order and to do this, the dominant group wins people over to the class project. Soudien believed that it was critical that the dominant groups created a social consensus “in which classes occupy and accept their places” (2004: 106).

A social cohesion within society, one in which people within their respective classes bought in fully to their class position. We saw this in effect through Willis’ work and as we will see later in this section, students of elite institutions are in a way taught, implicitly or explicitly, to build a class solidarity with the elite. However, because post-apartheid, privilege is allocated through class, the elite shifted their objectives. Soudien argues “the social objective dominance, however, is not that of so-called whites, but a new elite comprising the core of the old white elite and selected elements from amongst the former subordinate groups” (2004: 106). School, therefore, becomes a space to nurture the elite class’s interests in the face of this new post-apartheid era. The focus here should consequently be on the complex ways in which class supersedes and displaces race as a way of determining the social character of schools (Soudien, 2004: 106–107). This process of socializing students into a collective class consciousness becomes a fundamental aspect to schooling within these elite schools that we should understand. It appeared in similar ways at Evergreen and Redford.

Before we do venture off into the examples, it is necessary to discuss exactly how and why this process took place. According to Pierre Bourdieu what occurs within these schools, as he terms a ‘rite of institution’, is a form of consecration, one that is aimed very specifically at producing a separate, sacred group (1998: 73). These schools create a form of “social rupture and segregation” that takes a carefully selected group of people and forms them into a separate group whose symbolic capital increase with the degree of restrictions and the subsequent

exclusivity of the group that is established (Bourdieu, 1998: 79). In other words, the students who attend elite institutions are deliberately separated and differentiated from students who attend other, non-elite schools. Bourdieu continues by stating that the students who attend these schools “become rich by proxy” through the symbolic capital (acquiring exceptional jobs, for example) that is brought in by their classmates and the entire alums network of the school (1998: 81). In short, the students who attend these schools also obtain other forms of ‘capital’ by attending these schools.

What occurs, at these schools is the formation of a “genuine common culture” (Bourdieu, 1998: 81) as a socialisation process. But this culture is not just assumed passively. It is an active process of building into each student a certain way of being. What is therefore taught is things such as “the imponderables of manners and deportment, the typical expressions, school slang, the shared turns of phrase, the particular kinds of jokes, and the characteristic ways of moving, speaking, laughing, and interacting with others, and especially with like-minded individuals” (Bourdieu, 1998: 83). This process according to Bourdieu is one of the fundamental projects of these schools, but importantly, it is this form of instruction that does not emerge from what is explicitly taught but what is tacitly taught (Bourdieu, 1998: 84). In other words, what is important is what comes through the hidden curriculum. The example below illustrates just how this instruction took place.

Cheerleading was always an important facet to school life at Evergreen. In the latter half of the week, depending on the importance of the rivalry, the entire school would gather on the stands of our main Rugby field to learn the school songs for the weekend’s Rugby, Cricket, or Hockey game. These meetings were never solely about singing songs however, as they served as an opportune time for an audience with the entire school. The cheerleaders themselves were chosen by the Grade 12 students and the most important characteristic being that they were either extremely comedic or extremely naughty. Students who often exuded a disdain for the school rules and academia were more often than not the students chosen to be on the team. The cheerleaders would use the time in between songs to discuss other non-school related matters. Namely, they would partake in a tradition called “Sportsmans”. In short, these would be a time for the cheerleaders to single out one or two boys and tell a deeply misogynistic story about how they ‘conquered’ a woman over the weekend, in explicit detail. Aside from these stories, the cheerleaders would use this time to rile the school up for whichever rival

school we were facing. This would range from made up stories about the school, all the way to motivational speeches to lament the importance of the rivalry.

The captain of the Rugby team would be expected to speak prior to our biggest derby day. He was shown respect by the rest of the school being completely silent throughout the speech and chanting their name when they were done. It was the underlying messages which drew my attention. As discussed previously, Evergreen sought to create a particular kind of student. Namely, the Rich, heterosexual, White boy. This student was the bread and butter of the institution, and this was seen throughout the racial demographics of the school. However, it is important to note the ‘rich’ part of that creation. It was never enough to just be a student, the presentation of an elite, masculine student was integral. As stated previously, these cheer sessions were attended by the whole school, thus any new grade eight boys would learn, aside from other forms of instruction, what it meant to be an Evergreen boy. Accordingly, the speeches given by cheerleaders and captains alike were often filled with statements such as ‘we need to show these “scum” where “they” belong’. Words such as ‘pests’ and ‘peasants’ would often be thrown around from the crowd. It is important to note, however, that not everyone was on board with this as murmurs and nervous laughter could be heard whenever things got to this level of hate. But the messaging became clear; we are better than you because we are richer than you.

If the message was not clear enough, once the speeches were done we would rise to chant one of our many cheers that were increasingly explicit. The cheers would range from songs about the opposing students being the result of incestuous relationships, down to directly financial. The most popular cheer that represented this being “one day you’ll work for us”. This was sung in direct view and earshot of the schools leaders and parents alike. It was particularly popular when we would be losing, which almost became a redeeming feature as ‘well, you might have won this game, but we’ll win at life’. The cheers were ostensibly not allowed by the school, going as far as punishing the cheerleaders when they did allow the cheer to take place. However, the cheerleaders themselves were more than happy to take these punishments as it further lamented their prestige. They would therefore encourage us to sing the songs while making a noticeably clear and public motion with their arms, to present as though they were asking us to stop. To us, it was a message to sing louder, giving the cheerleaders plausible deniability.

This form of elite presentation and celebration would extend beyond songs and speeches, down to students, as Topher recounted in his interview, “shouting like ‘where’s this?’ [does a money gesture]” to one of our rival schools. These gestures would encompass, quite infamously, students throwing coins at rival schoolboys and even one going as far as to tear a one hundred rand note in front of an opposing school. These actions had implications, those which were evident to everyone involved in these actions and those who were victims of it.

For Bourdieu, this assigns to the students an almost invisible nobility, that is built from attaching the students to a place and a status that are “socially distinguished from the commonplace” (1998: 102). This process might be thought of as a form of boundary creation, “a marking that creates a magical boundary between insiders and outsiders, often sanctioned by an actual enclosure” (Bourdieu, 1998: 102). Bourdieu uses the Great Wall of China to illustrate this better, noting, using Owen Lattimore’s words, that it was built as much to keep their neighbours out as it was to keep Chinese citizens in (1998: 103). Schools, in an analogous way, must create a boundary, one that is recognised by both those that are within as much as those who are outside of this boundary. While at the same time, to maintain their status, those who are within the boundary must accept the necessary constraints (Bourdieu, 1998: 103–104). Where I venture from Bourdieu on this reading is the idea that those inside must and often do accept the boundaries created. In addition to the socialisation process that takes place.

As we have seen, South Africa presents an interesting dynamic that differs from other countries. With an increase in students who were previously not allowed to cross the boundaries created by these schools, we see a new set of students who do not engage in these acts of socialisation uncritically. Topher, for example, lamented to me his general confusion and disdain at the chanting, gestures and general actions of the student body.

*“[...] the, ‘because [Evergreen students] have money’, narrative isn’t applicable to everyone at the school. And I think the majority of the people which it is not applicable to are the Black kids. And what does it mean to us [Black boys] to be in a situation where, even if we did have money, Black people understand what it’s like. Black people with money, I feel can understand more or like can see a person who doesn’t have money as more equal than, I guess White people with money [can]. Because we see Black people without money all the time when we go to Spar, when we got to school*

*and we are there being served by the cleaners and staff. We see that in making fun of someone because of their wealth, or their lack thereof, are you also making fun of their Blackness?"*

Topher gestures to a very key aspect that needs to be acknowledged and one that Deevia Bhana argues, that race and class in South Africa are impossible to separate (2014: 362). Topher also lamented earlier in the interview that Evergreen was particularly interesting because it was the only private school within its general vicinity. This meant that their Rival schools were always either public or semi-private schools. This created an interesting racial and class dynamic. One that saw a White elite school denigrate students and parents attending a Black middle-lower class group. Bourdieu argues that elite schools engage in these practices, which are similar to the hazing process, to shape individuals for their new existence and assimilate them into that environment (1998: 109). However, what happens when students who were historically excluded from this space, be it through race or class or both, enter it and begin to see that these practices were fundamentally racial? What we see is a student body who either rejects the process or faces a conundrum, one that forces them to interrogate their own positionality as a Black person, or as someone who is in a lower class than the rest of the student body.

Redford on the other hand was surrounded by many Model-C schools, ones that, according to Tyler, were academically equal to Redford. In fact, Tyler stated in her interview that one of the biggest difference between Redford and their rival school was the instruction of learning that took place. Redford being IEB and the rival school being NSC.<sup>11</sup> She lamented that even though they did not have the same chants or hard rivalry that Evergreen had with its opponents, something remarkably similar did present itself at these games. Redford's rivalry would present the same class dynamic we saw at Evergreen. Redford was mocked by its rival school as being the "walking, talking money bags" and "snobs", according to Tyler. While on the other hand, Redford saw their rival school as "thugs" and were said to be living in the "slums of [the Redford area]". Tyler noted however, that unlike the Evergreen rivalry, Redford and their rival school were not spiteful or hateful outside of this rivalry. In fact they were "super close family, friends, people who have known each other their whole lives". So these were kids

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<sup>11</sup> IEB is the Independent Examinations Board in South Africa which conducts private assessments and examination services for private or client schools (Rhode, 2022). The NSC is the National Senior Certificate is the traditional high-school certificate for grade 12 matriculants (Rhode, 2022).

who lived around each other yet still felt that one school held more of a social status than the other.

The examples from Evergreen and Redford alike are examples of the students themselves participating in this culture of class mobilisation. It was a deliberate attempt by the students to create a culture of disdain of the other schools to create support for their own. Within that dynamic came the racialisation of class and a form of othering in interesting ways. But this was not the only way this form of mobilisation was created. The schools themselves had a huge hand in creating and in fact perpetuating the idea that to be lower class is to be Black and visa-versa. At Redford for example, Tyler recounted a story about how the school would prepare for their sports games, or rather, the difference in approach when facing a school in a similar social position to them, versus when they were encountering a lower/working class school.

*“If we were playing against [main rival] for example, or [similar opposing school], which are pretty mixed schools, but there's a still large White population. We would just be told “you're playing against this team, this is your time”. “Be here this time to warm up on this court or this field”. [It was] very straight forward. But if we played against a school, where the team was exclusively Brown or exclusively Black then it was “make sure that you don't take your cell phones with” or “leave your cell phones with your moms if you're not coming through on the bus” and “if you're coming through with your parents, just make sure that you're keeping your bags together”. “Never leave your bags unattended”. Even if the POC school was coming to our school as well, it was kind of like “don't take for granted that they don't know the campus”. “Make sure you don't leave anything unattended”. Or even things like “make sure you're not leaving anything in the classrooms that are close to the bathrooms or close to the courts”. I think it kind of just reinforced that [idea that] as soon as it's a POC team, {sarcastically} ‘they're so poor, they're not necessarily “Bad people”, but they're just so poor, they have no excuse but to steal your stuff”.*

This form of messaging is less explicit and direct. The school is not telling you that Black people are to be feared, they are not telling you that your things will be stolen. What they

are telling you is to be careful and cautious, a message which is not imparted when encountering White schools. It is in the hidden message that the schools are drawing a line through a racialised reading of class, under the guise of caution. This of course had its effects, namely, it told the school's students that Black people were to be feared, were, to quote Tyler, "less than". This messaging came out in diverse ways amongst the students as well, as Tyler further highlighted that she would notice, whenever her Netball team would face a Black school, they would "shake each other's hands by their fingertips, or would not hardly even touch the other team because they were seen as less than, or dirty". This made Tyler very uncomfortable because, like Topher lamented, the racialisation of class means that when a Black person sees a White person acting in that way and having that sort of visceral response, you are imparting a message of superiority. Interestingly, Tyler noted that kids at her school would often steal, but when "it's a rich white kid that is stealing, then it's very hush hush [...] it's protected and sheltered. But as soon as it happens one time, where a phone goes missing when we're playing against a Brown school, then every other time we need to be on high alert".

This intricate relationship between race and class creates an intriguing dynamic as seen in the examples above. If we examine Topher and Tyler's experiences once again, they are pointing to Black students' awareness of this race-class relationship. This co-existent relationship between class and race therefore presents Black students who attend these schools with questions about their race and their positionality within the schools. I think more importantly, it was clear how White parents, teachers, and students alike all held racial biases because of this class-race relationship. It was often clear what positionality within society they expected Black people to hold; a position of inferiority. But it is important to note that being Black and being aware of this phenomena further perpetuates a disculturation and the double consciousness.

## **The intricate relationship between Race & Class**

Redford, although not as expensive as Evergreen, had a general upper-middle class family presence which made the Black students aware of the White tone the school was setting. Notably, Black students positionality within the school was always in question. The uniform at Redford did for Azure what Evergreen's uniform did for me. Azure told me a story about what taking off her uniform meant for her. In her grade eleven year, she was elected as a



Redford prefect for her upcoming final year. As part of her newly assigned duties, the school was hosting an open day on a Saturday, in which she was required to escort families of prospective students around the school grounds. After the open day ended, she went to the school bathrooms and changed out of her prefect uniform into her home clothes to catch a flight. On her way out, she realised she had forgotten something in the bathroom, so she put her bags down and went back in to fetch it.

On her way back out for the second time, she had no bags or any school items on her person that would suggest she was a student. It was then that she encountered a parent. Azure was not sure whether this parent was a parent of a current student or if they were a prospective parent. This parent, upon seeing Azure asked her to pick up some litter, lamenting that “the school is really clean all the time, but just make sure that when you guys are cleaning up, clean up properly”. To which Azure responded with an apology and told her that “as litter happens, we’ll pick it up”. The parent, clearly not understanding that Azure was a student questioned her statement and asked, “what do you mean as litter happens? Cleaning staff are meant to clean.” Before finishing this story, it is important to acknowledge the dynamics that unfolded in this instance. Azure was a student at Redford, and one that was just elected prefect meaning that she was a well-respected student. In the uniform, this position as a student and prefect was not questioned throughout the day. Much like it did for me, her uniform served as a sort of code. Elijah Anderson argues that White people often stigmatize anonymous Black people by associating them with “putative danger, crime, and poverty” (2014: 13). Without the uniform, Azure became codeless, anonymised. Anderson also states that “the most tolerated Black person in a white space is often one who is “in his place” – that is, one who is working as a janitor or a service person or one who has been vouched for by white people in good standing” (2014: 13).

Different to the Evergreen uniform, the Redford uniform has no colonial history that is attached to the wearer. However, this code still legitimised Azure’s presence on the school premises and, like Anderson would argue, would give Azure the ability to be perceived as “less likely to disturb the implicit racial order – whites as dominant and blacks as subordinate” (2014: 13). Without the code, Azure was reduced to what the parent saw as the next ‘best’ explanation to why a Black woman was on the premises. The parent assumed that she was a cleaner. In this instance, it is important to remember the co-existent relationship between class and race as in this country, as Blackness is synonymous with the working class. The parent’s immediate

presumption that Azure was a cleaner at the school has to do with this general categorisation of races amongst class categories. Fanon (1952: 82) stresses in his fifth chapter, *The Fact of Blackness*, that when you are Black in a White space, you cease to exist as a human, but an inferior being in relation to the White man, who in these cases is accepted as the universal human. One cannot simply be a doctor or a lawyer, or an academic, one becomes a Black lawyer, a Black doctor or a Black academic (Fanon, 1952: 88–89).

Azure was acknowledged as a student, although Black, within that space, courtesy of the code that gave her access into this space. Once that code was removed, her humanity was reduced to the next thing that the parent could attribute her to, which is a cleaner. The uniform therefore acts as a humanising tool because without it, her existence within this space was questioned. This parent saw the White space as exclusive to Whiteness and was open about that expression. Once Azure realised what the parent had presumed, she corrected her, stating: “I am actually a student at the school. In fact, I just did a tour. I am a prefect. And she goes “oh so they let anyone be prefect these days.”” It became clear to me in this moment that this parent was not just another victim of socialisation in a world in which inequality was explicitly racialised, and later maintained. She was someone who expected life to be that way. Azure further stated that to her, this moment never truly crossed her mind. She went off to her weekend and thought nothing of it. After the Black Lives Matter movement having a resurgence in 2020, Azure examined her past and if she remembered the school doing anything, she did not. What she did remember was “this singular moment with the parent that will always stand out”.

Black students having to defend their existence at their respective school was also present at Evergreen. For example, at Evergreen most of the scholarships, ones that were at least publicised, were given to Black students who were exceptional at sport, culture, or academics. These students often came from working class backgrounds and were therefore not immediately in possession of the codes needed to exist in Evergreen. This was not necessarily a dreadful thing, often their talent meant they held social capital in way that almost superseded their lack of codes. But what it did do was create a clear divide between the scholarship and bursary students, most of which were Black. Opposed to the fee paying students, most of which were White. However, it was in this minutia that class presented itself as tied to race. Topher highlighted in his interview that White students were never questioned about their ability to

pay the school fees. In fact it was expected that you were a fee paying student until you stated otherwise. For Black students however, the opposite was true.

*“I remember once I was talking to [White Student’s] dad about schools, [and] I get asked “how did you decide to end up at Evergreen?” and I was like, “well I watched Spud and I was thinking about going to boarding school and I was thinking between [two of the most expensive schools in the country], and then my dad decided Evergreen”. Then he was like “Oh, you guys could have afforded to go to [those schools]?” And I was like “yeah, I mean...” I don’t know it’s just like, like the question of affording never comes up when it’s to a White guy. But when it’s a Black guy, you come with something like, “Oh, you can afford this?””*

This was a major occurrence amongst Black students at Evergreen. I observed that there was often a motivation to prove that you were not on a scholarship because your elite status also mattered, socially. Iver, for instance, hid that he had been on a bursary in high school because he feared the reactions and treatments from other students at Evergreen. The importance lies not in the formation of class structures, rather, class's relationship to race and the effects it had on the students attending both schools. This association with class and race plays out in clear ways within both Redford and Evergreen. Tyler states for example:

*“[...] I think as a result of home life being different to school life, to a great extent, I intentionally kept it separate. A lot of my friends still don't know where I live and I don't know why I was never honest about it, but it's gotten so deep in this separation that I don't know how to backtrack. I don't know like how to come clean where I'm really from.”*

The fear of revealing where she is from and her neighbourhood being intentionally kept separate, did add to Tyler’s struggles with her identity. When asked to elaborate in a later interview, Tyler highlighted that she felt a sense of shame growing up. Her school once went on an outing that was on her route to school every morning, making it close to her house. On their way there she slowly realised that she does not live where her friends lived and from an incredibly early age, she started to feel a sense of shame from that. Tyler went as far as to not help a friend one night because of how she felt towards her home and her area at large. During

the interview I could feel a sense of lingering pain within that memory because of the realisation of the lengths to which she felt she should hide her home from others, stating that she still feels “like shit about that”. The feeling of shame was in large part adopted from her mother, who, whenever they would encounter someone who asked about where they lived, no matter the race or class of the person, her mother would always “mention a suburb close by which has more positive, or let me rather say, less bad connotations”.

In addition to her feeling like it was necessary to hide where she lived, Tyler noticed that at Redford, White students who were on bursary or had their school fees being paid by their Grandparents for instance, would often feel comfortable confiding in her about this reality. Additionally, they would try keep this revelation of sorts a secret. Tyler hypothesises that they would feel comfortable with her because there was a general assumption that teacher’s kids “either went to school for free or the knowledge that we got a discount”. She felt that it may have been this reality, that she may not have been at the school were this not to be the case, that White students would feel comfortable revealing that information to her. This is an extremely specific dynamic that is worth examining briefly, as in the South African context, this poses some very interesting questions. Notably, why the White students felt such a shame to be recognised as non-fee paying students and why they felt comfortable to reveal this information to a student of colour.

Peens & Dubbeld (2013) examined why it was that poor White people in South Africa, felt such a shame towards that categorisation. Peens & Dubbeld argue that the figure of the poor White in South Africa was cast as a figure that linked poverty and moral depravity, which implied that a racial and economic hierarchy was “naturally linked” and that poor White people were poor as a result of some “unnatural moral failing” (2013: 10). Being White meant that there needed to be a superiority to Black people, in all aspects, in this case, financially. This became a government project of sorts in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century that saw White men receiving preferential positions within the Government. “The state discourse at the time was ‘not a single white person should be allowed to go under’” which justified the Government’s intervention in things such as industry (Peens & Dubbeld, 2013: 10). This form of empowerment for White people in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century meant they improved their general economic position as they attempted to ‘reform’ White people into “productive members of society” (Peens & Dubbeld, 2013: 10).

This process was not only targeted at uplifting the White populous, but was also focused, quite keenly on the denigration of the poor White. According to Peens & Dubbeld, the poor White became portrayed as an aberration, which was done to instil a culture of “shame, guilt and self-denigration in the White mind through practice of highly scripted body modification and surveillance of the body” (2013: 10). Interestingly, welfare acted in such a way that both aided the poor, while simultaneously naturalising White people as “superior subjects and cast doubts on the morality of poor whites, as if to be white and poor was a sign of suspect character” (Peens & Dubbeld, 2013: 10). This morality was built through the Protestant ethic, which created a connection between economy and morality. One thing to note here however, is that this ethic does not only work in one direction. The moralisation of Whites as the superior subject and poor Whites as inferior and a moral failing, sets up Blacks as immoral and inferior. So not only was it creating an idea that being poor is a moral failing, but linking those things to one’s economic standing really created a dynamic in which to be poor and White was still seen as better than being poor and Black.

This dynamic is something that has continued well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and one we see emerging at Redford with the White students being afraid to be identified as one of the poor Whites at school. Yet they felt comfortable sharing this information with Tyler, because, as examined above, to be Black and poor is almost expected. We could even take this one step further and say that to be Black, in this line of reasoning, is to be a moral failure. The built in hierarchy in the socio-economic status of individuals at these schools became clear in the Netball team incidents discussed earlier, but also in very clearly in this instance highlighted by Tyler. Interestingly, Tyler did not try to keep her socio-economic background as much of a secret, although she did admit that there were times where she “did pretend a little bit like I wasn’t as middle class as I actually was [laughs]”. But we do see a reality in which students who were not ‘direct fee paying students’ felt ashamed of their position within the school and went to great lengths to hide this as a result of the Protestant ethic and the moralisation of economics.

To conclude, we discussed the ways in which class presented itself both at Redford and Evergreen, but notably, how Black students of all classes, were impacted by the ways in which it emerged within these spaces. Class differences exist at Redford in similar ways to the way it presents at Evergreen. However, it is in the codes of the cheers, the uniform, the sports and using that history of eliteness, all as one package, that Evergreen holds that Redford does not.

In this exploration of what it means to be elite and its apparent relation to Whiteness the focus is not on which form of eliteness is worse. That discussion is important and there are differences that do influence the students in very different ways, the production of an elite masculinity and the ways it racializes social situations such as hook-up culture, which will be explored in the next chapter, for instance. However, it is less about which is a worse, it is about noting its existence.

The existence of these class differences, that are explicitly linked to race, exist, and further perpetuate racial stereotypes. They therefore draw and redraw lines of racial segregation. In addition to this, they tie a morality to race and economy that follows a protestant ethic, one that demonises Black people and poor White people, to the point of feeling like these aspects are morally wrong. This directly effects students who attend both Evergreen and Redford. They are both similar in that they exist as a social representation of racialised class structures within society and perpetuate those structures. So, the question I pose and one that I believe needs to continue to be interrogated is whether we can separate this idea of an 'elite', private school from Whiteness. Can we deracialise the existence of eliteness without further recognising its almost inseparable ties to Whiteness as a concept? If we cannot, then how can these spaces continue to call themselves racially diverse, accepting and all encompassing, when in fact it does become clearer that these spaces are still in fact, very exclusionary?

In sum, the challenge of this chapter has been to think with the problem that CLR James set us when he asked us to think of the codes of elitism transmitted through elite schooling in the colonial Caribbean. If being elite is a learned way of being, what are the limits of Black students being socialised as elite? Do such elite codes point inescapably to an imperial imagination which is always already White? Or does post-apartheid South Africa offer an entry into a new kind of racial elitism? Based on my reading of class in this chapter, at Redford and at Evergreen, such elitism has not managed to escape its White and imperial past, even when it promises otherwise.

## Chapter 4: Masculinity and the Practice of Gender and Sexuality

*“Even if no one wanted to say it in explicit terms, I think we all knew what it fundamentally meant [to be an Evergreen student]. As far as an identity archetype goes for someone who goes to Evergreen, it means heterosexual. It means very hyper masculine. It more often than not means White, and it certainly means rich and wealthy. It's not even a secret.” – Gaia*

### Introduction: “Masculinity is a cornerstone of the culture”

In my time at Evergreen, Rugby held an almost religious fervour. From prep school, one of the best sporting achievements one could attain was selection into the school's 1<sup>st</sup> team. In prep school, it was the junior first team (grade sevens) that emulated the much grander prestige of the senior first team (Matrics): during my time, the junior first team had an entirely different Rugby uniform to the rest of the school. Their jerseys were not the thick material of old but a sleek, almost silk-like cloth which felt lighter. Not only were the colours on the jersey brighter but they also donned the school badge. But it was not just the jersey that was significant, it was what the jersey represented. The jersey became a physical representation of the first team, and more notably, the school. Even at that level, I recall parents and teachers alike paying particular attention towards boys who formed a part of the team. In fact, being in the team became a popularising process. Boys who were ignored the prior year, who hit a growth spurt and made the team, were now spoken of routinely. This process was magnified in the senior first team where the players would be mythologised to an extent. Additionally, we would anticipate their scores because, as I recall a senior student at the time remarking to me a long-held lore that, ‘if the 1<sup>st</sup> team loses, the whole school loses’.

Although I did not know it nor understand it at the time, what was being cultivated was a Muscular Christianity. Muscular Christianity developed in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century emphasizing the relationship between sport, physical fitness, and religion (Watson *et al.*, 2005: 1). Watson argues that this relationship is yet to be broken as this link between Christianity and Sport has managed to sustain itself well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century (2005: 1). The idea was that sport

played a fundamental role in the development of Christian morality, physical fitness, and “manly” character (Watson *et al.*, 2005: 1). Around the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, when the term was first used, there was a sizeable number of Protestant elites who advocated for sports to instil in people the “harmonious development of mind, body, and spirit” (Watson *et al.*, 2005: 6–7). This shift according to Watson *et al.*, led to the most significant socio-cultural development that evolved from Muscular Christianity; the dissemination of sport and physical pursuits in English Public schools (2005: 6–7).

In chapter 2 we discussed Whiteness and its effect on Black students. What emerged most prominently was the idea that Whiteness and Blackness is socially constructed. In fact, this construction is very difficult to define precisely because society itself is context specific and changes. Thus, race did not have a singular meaning, but its reality came out in diverse ways. Among Black students, their struggle to form identities was limited to their capacity to self-identify with what they felt was their desired identity. This preamble highlights that social constructions are not fixed, but are still often defined. However, these definitions are dynamic, and change over time. For example, there used to be a prevailing conception that men should not cry and show emotions. This was the stereotypical ‘strong’ man that was portrayed in movies that wanted to illustrate what a real man was. Contemporarily, however, the sensitive and caring heterosexual male has slowly taken over this leading role position (Lindisfarne & Cornwall, 1994: 15). Why did this shift occur? Does being a ‘man’ now mean to be both physically and emotionally distant, or being physically weak and emotionally present?

In this spirit, I will not attempt to define masculinity per-say. Rather, I will attempt to strip the concept to its roots. Once we have a firm understanding of masculinity, we will find that multiple forms of masculinities can and do exist. In recognising this, we will explore how schools such as Evergreen have historically attempted at defining masculinity within the mould of British Public schools. We will explore how mimicking this ‘Muscular Christianity’ from British Public schools might have affected boys’ understanding of masculinity and what it means to be a ‘man’. We also must examine how Muscular Christianity became a key component of the reproduction of elites and what it meant to the Empire historically and what that might look like in contemporary society. We will examine how masculinity in contemporary society has taken shape, what effects it may have on queer students and how this



form of masculinity not only effects men but women as well.<sup>12</sup> We must also examine the intricacies of race and masculinity and how it is not just about being a man, nor a White man, but a so called ‘elite White man’ and what that exposes.

## **Rugby and Masculinity at Evergreen**

When I moved from junior school into the high school, the jersey dynamics reappeared. The senior first team had two different kits, both entirely different to the kits worn by the rest of the school. This jersey was more difficult to attain, as one had to play a certain number of matches before one could keep a first team jersey as their own. That extended to the first team uniforms off the rugby field as each item (raincoat, scarf etc.) requiring a distinct set of criteria to be worn. The students who formed part of that team were akin to celebrities. Thus, the team itself played a popularising role on the team members. Additionally, the team members represented the school and were one of the only teams required to wear their Number Ones when going to their rugby matches. Again, utilising our uniform to differentiate those who were the ‘elite’ bunch amongst the students. The main Rugby field at Evergreen is considered sacred, thus adding to the allure of the team. The only people allowed to walk on the grass are senior first team rugby members who have played a certain number of matches for the team. Those who were given permission by one of these members were also allowed and this was policed heavily. Walking on the grass around school grounds was forbidden for everyone outside of Matrics and staff, so this was common. But it was the policing and protection around the field that I immediately noted. The ‘privilege’ of being able to walk onto the field was supposedly a tradition of old, which attached a sense of honour and respect to those who freely walked on the field.

Geographically, the school’s aesthetic around the Rugby field is also significant. In the first chapter we discussed how the school is built in such a way that transmits an air of history and tradition which is tied to the colony. This does not differ in the positioning of the Rugby field as it is situated directly opposite the school’s main Chapel. This Chapel is central in relation to the main academic buildings of the school and is quite a physical reminder of the

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<sup>12</sup> Throughout this chapter, I will use terms such as “queer”, “gay”, and “counter-normative” to refer to sexualities that are constituted outside of heterosexuality and cisnormativity, which, according to Francis are “institutionalized and pervasive”, to which I concur (2018: 407).

centrality of the Church to the institution. Directly opposite the Chapel and equally as central is the first team rugby field. The Chapel is, therefore, not only central to the classrooms, but correspondingly central to the main sport of the school. The Chapel is also flanked on either side by the school's oldest houses. I would not say that this positioning was deliberately created to symbolise a cross, but one cannot ignore the symbolism behind the positioning of each structure, be it house, Chapel, or field. This relationship is not ignored by the boys as the tradition of the rugby team is to run onto the field, not from the side of the field (as is common in Rugby) but from underneath the posts which are directly opposite the Chapel. The symbolic reasoning being that when you enter the sacred grounds, you are doing so with God at your back. This was quite a powerful tradition that is still in practice today and having been a member of the team, although not permanently, I got to feel what that meant.<sup>13</sup> At the time, however, the symbolism was never clear to me. It was not something I had observed until well into this thesis. Yet the feeling was always present. I am not a religious person and was not in my time at school, but I still felt the effect.

## **Hegemonic Masculinity**

As Nancy Lindisfarne and Andrea Cornwall (1994: 11) highlight, we can often be imprisoned by our language in utilising terms such as 'men', 'male', 'masculinity' and 'women', 'female' and 'femininity'. However, we cannot use these terms without then further reinforcing a binary understanding of gender. I, like Lindisfarne and Cornwall (1994: 11) will continue to use these terms but, will use them reservedly and I ask you as the reader to be critical whenever these terms are used. According to Oxford Languages Dictionary, the definition of masculinity is "qualities or attributes regarded as characteristic of men" ("Oxford Languages and Google - English | Oxford Languages", 2022). On the surface, this reads like a fair assessment. However, what if women were to show a quality or attribute regarded as characteristic of a man? Would she then be described as masculine? If so, this implies that women can have masculinity as well. This is something I think most people have encountered.

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<sup>13</sup> Traditions at school were often labelled as such without any real understanding of when they began. This tradition for example might not in fact be as old as we presumed. But the belief in something as a tradition often meant it went respected and unquestioned at the school. Thus, throughout this thesis, when something is indicated to be a tradition at the school, I can only speak to what was imparted in my, and my participants time there and not a documented fact.

Thus, would we consider masculinity as a strictly ‘male’ trait? These contradictions force us to evaluate what it means to be a man.

According to Lindisfarne and Cornwall (1994: 11–12), the conventional usage of these terms lies on a bed of premises, both explicit and implicit. For example, maleness and masculinity are often defined as what is not feminine or female. They are posed in direct opposition to one another. This, alongside the idea that masculinity, much like Whiteness, is universalised through biological, social, and sexual connotations (Lindisfarne & Cornwall, 1994: 11–12). Masculinity therefore appears as a quality which can be measured, possessed or lost. However, as we have discussed, Masculinity’s meaning might not be the same when examining different social contexts. Morrell describes masculinity as a “collective gender identity” rather than a natural attribute, therefore there cannot be one universal masculinity but many (1998: 607).

The problem with trying to define masculinity, according to Lindisfarne and Cornwall, is that it often implies that multiple qualities that are typical of, for example men, cannot be ascribed to a single person at the same time (1994: 18). To illustrate this better, let us assume that a man is physically strong, emotionally distant, ‘respectable’ and shows qualities of a leader. This then assumes that a man who has all those qualities and yet is emotionally open rather than distant, is not a real man. Which, of course, one could argue is the point. This discourse is purposefully focused on an idea of “an absolute, naturalised and typically hierarchised male/female dichotomy” where men and women are defined in terms of their opposition (Lindisfarne & Cornwall, 1994: 18). The idea of it being hierarchised is key here. As the goal of trying to define masculinity in such a way that it becomes hegemonic is not only to define men but also to create a system of power differentiation between men and women.

There is a power process at work that cannot be ignored and is seen in similar ways in the discussions around class and race (Lindisfarne & Cornwall, 1994: 18; Morrell, 1998: 607). As we see in Fanon, when, for example, he claimed that the Black man is not a man but must be Black in relation to Whiteness (1952: 84). This was not to mean that Black people were not human beings, but he was pointing to how in these White settings, Black men were considered less than human as a result of not being White. This is a deliberate form of hierarchically structuring individuals through race for the purposes of strengthening the power of White men. Similarly, by labelling certain traits as feminine, any man who held these traits would no longer

be considered a real man. A certain hierarchy thus becomes constructed along gendered terms (Lindisfarne & Cornwall, 1994: 18). Therein lies the importance of producing a hegemonic masculinity. However, before we delve into an attempt at defining hegemonic masculinity it must be noted that South Africa has a deep history of White supremacy that suggests that the White, ruling class masculinity was hegemonic (Morrell, 1998: 616). This was not always the case however as this does not cover all African life that was present within South Africa at the time. The divided history of South Africa has left it with a complex mix of gender regimes and identities (Morrell, 1998: 616). Race, class, and geographical location all play a role in the gender regimes which exist in the milieu of the country. Morrell further argues that masculinities do not only differ, but they also change over time (1998: 630).

According to Mike Donaldson, in Morrell, hegemonic masculinity is “exclusive, anxiety-provoking, internally and hierarchically differentiated, brutal, and violent” (1998: 608). Its defining features are misogyny, homophobia, racism, and compulsory heterosexuality (Morrell, 1998: 608). Hegemonic masculinity, should be less about the essence of masculinity. Rather, it is more focused on how particular groups of men have acquired positions of power and wealth, and importantly how they “legitimate and reproduce the social relationships that generate their dominance” (Lindisfarne & Cornwall, 1994: 19). Morrell (1998: 608) argues that it is important to find a conceptual agreement on what hegemonic masculinity is because, much like Cornwall and Lindisfarne’s argument above, we need to make sense of the power associated with masculinity.

Hegemonic masculinity therefore lies in an authoritative form of masculinity that seeks to define a particular kind of masculinity as the only form of masculinity. It is, therefore, the privileged forms of masculinity which purport to be the singular form of masculinity, those that determine what masculinity is and therefore set the standard that other masculinities are defined, that we can understand as ‘hegemonic masculinities’ (Lindisfarne & Cornwall, 1994: 19). This definition will thus purposefully correspond to characteristics that only a small number of men uphold. Yet, Lindisfarne and Cornwall argue, there are large numbers of men who are complicit in the reproduction and sustainability of a hegemonic masculinity (1994: 19). Why is this the case?

This occurs because essentialising differences between men and women, similar to Black and White, allows one to ‘other’ the category in opposition. This opposition therefore

becomes structured in such a way that can allow those in power to procure and maintain their power by the subordination of, in this case, women. In sum, this hierarchical formation allowed men to have power over women. According to Morrell (1998: 612), when speaking specifically to the South African context, Colonialism undermined the position of women. The system it brought “carried rigid gender ideologies which aided and supported the exclusion of women from the power hierarchy” (Morrell, 1998: 612). However, Morrell (1998: 608) alongside Lindisfarne and Cornwall (1994: 19), argue that hegemonic masculinity not only oppresses women, but also forces the subordination of other masculinities. By doing so, the hegemonic masculinity positions other masculinities as those that do not have currency or legitimacy (Morrell, 1998: 608). This dynamic is particularly drawn out in schools, especially those that are single sex. According to Morrell, studies have tried to show that hegemonic masculinity in school context creates and reproduces certain conditions that perpetuate the dominance of men over women (2012: 12).

As previously discussed, schools become socialising spaces, thus imparting ideologies that are tied to race, class and in this case, masculinity is not a surprise. The intriguing element to this information, however, lies in the particulars of the type of masculinity that is drawn out in schools. As has previously been highlighted, masculinity does not exist as one essentialised concept. It is fluid and therefore is beholden to changing contexts which tie into the race, class, sexuality etc. Thus, it is not just about a universal masculinity that schools are imparting, but an extremely specific kind of masculinity. Evergreen, having been founded in relation to the Colony, finds itself producing a very particular kind of masculinity. One that is tied to the very British Public schools it sought to emulate. Morrell for example describes how elite, colonial, and early 20<sup>th</sup> century White schools would use corporal punishment as a way to toughen boys and produce a “rugged masculinity which reflected the muscular Christianity of the British Public schooling system” (2012: 15).

It is therefore important for us to delve a little deeper into what forms of masculinity were shipped into Southern Africa and the Cape Colony. We do this to understand where a school like Evergreen might draw its ideas of what it means to ‘be a man’ from. We need to explore how this form of masculinity shaped our contemporary understandings of masculinity according to British Public schools. To do this, we begin by exploring what ‘Muscular Christianity’ is and how it shaped British Public schools in the eighteen to nineteen hundreds.

## Muscular Christianity

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, we saw the expansion of imperial rule into the sub-continent. It is not by mistake that these expansions were being led by wealthy White British men who had a Public School education (Morrell, 1998: 616). The notions of superiority and toughness that were taught in these schools reflected the ways in which colonial rule was established (Morrell, 1998: 616). It was during the late 1850s that Muscular Christianity became integral to the public-school education system in Britain (Watson *et al.*, 2005: 7). According to Kenway *et al.*, the distinctive ethos of the Victorian public school cultivated a strict religious morality, while also centring the school Chapel, in addition to building an ‘elevated’ character and an insistence on boy governance through prefects (2017: 21). The whole purpose of this endeavour was to encourage Christian morality. The idea, then was to build a character of “the future captains of industry and political leaders” which would, in turn, strengthen the British Empire (Watson *et al.*, 2005: 7). The morality that was built however, was quite intently tied to a notion of Kingsleyan manliness. Rugby became particularly popular because it allowed boys to learn how to “take hard knocks without malice” (Mason, 1981 in Watson *et al.*, 2005: 7) which was a desirable trait in the likely future leaders of industry and Empire.

These forms of masculinity materialised in Boys’ boarding school cultures and subcultures (Kenway *et al.*, 2017: 21). Athleticism became the essence of these schools with games like Rugby becoming glorified because of its ability to privilege the team over the individual and draw boys away from what was deemed ‘mischievous’. Boys could now be coached team, house, and school spirit, and ‘fair play’ through a sport that allowed them to drain the “excess steam produced in the highly charged atmosphere of the boarding house” (Kenway *et al.*, 2017: 31). The positioning of the Rugby field in relation to the Chapel at Evergreen was therefore no error, but a deliberate choice. It is Muscular Christianity in physical form and the message can be no clearer to the boys. Rugby was a priority for the school.

This is common as sports such as Rugby were central to school and house competitiveness and patriotism and to colonial “sturdy schoolboy masculine identity and heroism” (Kenway *et al.*, 2017: 31). Rugby at school was seen as the primary sports to play. Rugby functioned as a symbol of masculinity, because the physical nature of the sport would determine who was a ‘real man’ and who was not. Hockey, for example, was held in contempt

and considered the more feminine option to the masculine Rugby. It was not until our Hockey team became more entertaining and enjoyable to watch than our Rugby side that students started to respect it a little more. However, even that level of ‘respect’ was earned by the first team and not the other teams. Alongside the geographical relationship between Chapel and field are the hymns that were sung. It was tradition to sing what was unofficially the school song, both in Chapel and on the Rugby field as supporters. Hymns in Chapel were often mocked, and boys would often be reluctant to sing as it was, much like Hockey, considered too feminine an activity. However, our school song would be the one exception, alongside one or two favourites of the boys, and would be sung by every boy as loudly and passionately as they could, both in the Chapel and on the stands. That song became symbolic of the school, but also of the school’s love for Rugby in particular. We thus see how different activities such as sport and singing, can be feminised. Therefore, the act of playing a sport was as much a masculinising effect as singing songs, as far as you were playing the right sport, in this case Rugby, and singing the right songs, in this case the unofficial school song.

For certain boys at school, there was a genuine fear of emasculation. The hidden curriculum, in this case, plays a significant role in the masculinisation of certain things as opposed to others. It was on the boys to figure out what was masculine and what was not to avoid being called ‘gay’. This was historically significant to Muscular Christianity. The ability of sport to keep boys away from “temptations and contaminations” (Kenway *et al.*, 2017: 31). According to Watson *et al.*, some of these temptations were things such as “masturbation and homosexuality” which were not to be mentioned in the Victorian era (2005: 7–8). In fact, the criminalisation of homosexuality directly correlated with the ‘new’ norms of maleness in 1885, which allowed manliness to be defined as the precise opposite of homosexuality. Homosexuality was at the time a major concern to public-school masters, and this allowed Kingsleyan masculinity the ability to act as the hegemonic masculinity (Watson *et al.*, 2005: 7–8). Contemporarily, this has not changed at Evergreen. Performing a Muscular Christianity at Evergreen has therefore grown in conjunction with the growth of the school as an institution. It is an inseparable factor of being at such an institution. The strong focus on competition, hierarchy through leadership positions, age, academic and most clearly, sporting success. These all taught loyalty to the school, your house and according to Epstein (1998: 56) there is always an element of homosociality which was combined with a performance of

homophobia.<sup>14</sup> Muscular Christianity is therefore the hegemonic masculinity present in elite Public Schools in Britain in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and I argue is still the hegemonic masculinity in existence in schools such as Evergreen.

## Redford

Redford on the other hand has had a much shorter history and is therefore not beholden to the same structural phenomenon as Evergreen. This does not mean, however, that a Muscular Christianity is still not present at the school. In fact, according to multiple interviewees, Rugby for the boys and Hockey for the girls did hold a particular weight within the school. Although not as strictly as in Evergreen. The strict relationship between sport and Church did not play out in the same ways at Redford. This may be, according to a participant, since the school is not particularly good at Rugby, and it therefore could not demand much respect. But according to Tyler, the co-educational aspect of the school certainly effected the dynamics. Sports in general was in fact a popularising mechanism for both the girls and the boys. But it appeared in diverse ways for each. For the boys, it did not matter which sport you played,

*“If you played first team, in any big team sport I think [it] was really respected. For guys, cricket, Water polo, Hockey, Rugby. The rugby guys didn't necessarily have more respect than like a water polo guy [though].”*

However, this was in addition to other non-sport activities such as cultural activities carrying an almost similar weight. One was not dismissed because they played a musical instrument. Their popularity lay in their abilities to perform the activity. Although this meant that there was not much of a focus on Rugby, we see that the link between physical fitness and popularity was not as fundamental at Redford as it was at Evergreen. Interestingly however, there still existed a robust performance of homophobia and general toxic masculinity at the school. According to one participant, the homophobia at Redford would range from outward hate to the more subtle ‘as long as you don’t come for me, I’m fine with it’ discourse. One participant even highlighting that they recall one of the most homophobic students at the school later coming out as “gay and proud” after school. This story highlights that although those same

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<sup>14</sup> Nils Hammerén and Thomas Johansson (2014: 1) define homosociality as the social bonds between people of the same sex.



structures do not exist, there was still power in the performance of a particular kind of masculinity.

This was different for the girls at the school in that things got a little more complicated. Tyler lamented how for girls,

*“the boxes [categorisations] look a little different because you don’t get teased for the same stuff that a guy would. So, like a girl who reads a lot wouldn’t be considered a bookworm or a nerd or whatever, you’re just a girl who reads a lot”*

Tyler further lamented that for the girls, “I don’t think anyone was particularly considered for their skills”. She did state though that your skill determined who you spent your time with, be it in break time or other after school activities. Your skill set might not have mattered as much as who you spent your time with. Socially, it became less about skill and “more about how pretty you were, and the type of guys you dated”. If you did not participate in the act of “dating” guys, then your chances of being in the popular group were diminished. While at the same time, Tyler continued, this act was also policed as dating “too many guys” would mean “you were considered a slut”. So, there was a fine balance between how many social activities with guys you were participating in and which guys you were participating with.

Evergreen’s historic physical structure shaped the school and allowed it to further utilise processes of codes which we shall delve into in the next section. Some of these codes, although not as firmly established, still do appear at Redford, but in diverse ways, while at the same time still retaining a similarity through prefect systems and such. However, Redford cannot make use of a concentrated, codified masculinity in the same ways that Evergreen could, because of their co-educational structure. While making use of team sports to build character and morality can still be in effect, the limitations to a strict Muscular Christianity are still present.

## **The Performance of Gender: Masculinity, Femininity & Sexuality**

## **Masculinity & Sexuality at Evergreen**

The problem with the hegemonic masculinity expected at Evergreen, and in many ways Redford, is that it codifies masculinity. This is of course a problem as I have argued throughout this Chapter that masculinity is not fixed (Epstein, 1998: 49). What I am yet to illustrate is how masculinity is performed. Masculinity is not something you have; it is something you do. It is because of this that there are different masculinities that are formed as a result of different social positions such as your race, ethnicity, class, and sexuality among others (Epstein, 1998: 49). According to Judith Butler (1990: 14) in Epstein, masculinity should therefore be observed as something that is “inscribed on the body through continual performance” (1998: 52). This performance takes place in a particular time and is very fragile. This fragility, according to Butler (1990: 14) needs to be defined in a way that is produced within oneself and for other people (Epstein, 1998: 52). To illustrate this, let us use the case of Cooper. When we entered Evergreen in grade eight, all of us were immediately labelled ‘new boys’. This label had the apt effect of identifying our new presence within the school, but it was also deliberately used to highlight our powerlessness. It is in the early weeks of school in grade eight that you are tested by having to do daring, often extremely violent and dangerous activities, to establish a level of respect.

This period is an important socialising time for boys attending the school as Goffman (1956: 1) states, when individuals enter the presence of others, they seek to acquire information about each other. In these initial stages, information such as the general socio-economic status of the individual, their conception of self, their trustworthiness etc. are all things sought out in these first interactions (Goffman, 1956: 1). During this time therefore, the respect we sought was not just from the senior students but also from our peers because of our lack of knowledge of each other. Thus, everyone was inclined to participate to not look ‘weak’. There was an imbalance from the very first day however, as those amongst us who were either already known from the prep school or were rugby players already had somewhat of a name and therefore a level of respect built in upon arrival. Goffman (1956: 1) believes that observers can take clues from a new individual’s conduct and appearance which allow us to apply any previous experience with people with roughly similar to this individual. In the preliminary stages of knowing Cooper, my prediction was that he would struggle in this setting. My experience at Evergreen had given me an understanding of the type of students who would ‘struggle’ and those who would not. Cooper was White and therefore had different hurdles to jump through,

that were not race specific, that he had to overcome. Notably, Cooper was not only new, but he was also small.

Early into the year, one of the Matrics demanded we raid the grade nine dorm room. This was a demand we could not decline because of the senior, junior relationship established. This was bad not only because they were older but because we were explicitly not allowed in other dorm rooms without permission. The grade nines were very aware of our oncoming 'attack' and were therefore waiting for us to enter. Cooper, surprisingly, put his foot forward to be the first person to enter their dorm, as the rest of us were reluctant to. His decision that day led to an ambush and subsequently did not end well for him physically; he was beaten up, more so than the rest of us. However, his actions led to the Matrics viewing him as the 'strongest one of all of us' and he had effectively earned theirs and our respect that day. Goffman argues that the only way the initial conception of an individual can be broken is if the individual expresses themselves, intentionally or unintentionally in such a way that breaks this conceptualisation (1956: 1). Cooper behaved intentionally and immediately broke that initial conceptualisation that we all held of him in this one act. He correctly performed the hegemonic masculinity required in this space.

Cooper did not put himself forward that day because he wanted to be beaten up. He did so because of what the performance meant for his presentation as a 'man'. Goffman states that sometimes an individual will act in a calculating manner, expressing themselves in a given way to give the kind of impression to others that is likely to convey to others that which will benefit the individual (1956: 3). The reaction of the Matrics also held weight amongst us, fellow students, as we saw what it took to earn that respect. The performance of a sort of self-sacrifice in a dangerous situation was masculinising and therefore encouraged. Additionally, Cooper's Whiteness played a significant role in these initial stages. Masculinity is racialised, as Francis (2019: 4) argues, the formation of masculinity works in relation to the racialisation that takes place within institutions. Muscular Christianity was therefore not just about being religious and a 'man', but about being a religious White man. The normative position of Whiteness and how it is institutionalised is in relation to sexuality as well as gender (Francis, 2019: 1). My performance of masculinity was therefore different to Cooper's performance because as a Black man, I did not racially embody the White heteronormative position. This experience I highlight is therefore conducive of the performance White, heterosexual students would have to encounter to maintain their presentation of a White masculinity.

The violence endured by the students, according to Epstein (1998: 56), in the form of organised bullying, played a vital role in the formation of masculinities in elite schools. This violence is encouraged to be suffered in silence which indicates the mark of a 'real man'. Cooper would never think to bring this to the attention of a staff member because 'snitching' was another feminised act. One's manliness was defined in your ability to "stand up to a beating, to 'take it well'" (Epstein, 1998: 56). Boys are therefore willing to endure violent acts to avoid being labelled 'gay', or a 'pussy' and/or effeminate. Alternatively, they are willing to put themselves in serious and legitimate harm's way to solidify or further reinforce their masculinity. Performances such as Cooper's play out in a myriad of ways at Evergreen. Performing the right kind of masculinity thus became important to the conceptualisation of boys who attended Evergreen. Not performing this masculinity had its own consequences. Not just the fear of being labelled 'gay' or feminine but the violence attached to that label. I wish to note here that violence exists beyond the physical. Violence can often be imparted abstractly, verbally, emotionally and many other ways. The violence experienced by students who were labelled as queer at school or believed to be 'gay' was enacted, not based on the individual's self-expression as a queer person, but on others' conceptualisations of them.

There were therefore multiple students who were bullied at school because they were believed to be 'gay' who did not identify as such. As there were many students who were not bullied, but were in fact queer, and went through school relatively unscathed, because their performance of masculinity was what mattered. Not their sexuality. It is more important to examine the experiences of students who were queer at Evergreen to understand the levels of violence that occurred within this space. The masculinity that Evergreen demanded was a hegemonic White Muscular Christianity, that demanded 'manliness' in the form of violence through organised bullying, performative homophobia coupled with ideas around teamwork, leadership, respect and most importantly, that which is not homosexual (heterosexuality). If this is the hegemonic White masculinity the institution demanded, then we must ask what the experience of queer students was present in the school. Much like the presence of Black students in a structurally White institution created a dislocation and identity trouble within those Black students. Queer students would experience the same phenomena in a space that is strictly heterosexual and built around an ideal which is, that which is not homosexual.

Masculinity being tied to Whiteness therefore meant that Black students had to navigate the private school space racially, but also in terms of their masculinity. It is consequently easy to conclude that being both queer and Black in these schooling spaces means that you will receive multiple levels of discrimination. Francis (2019: 5) argues that Black queer youth may experience this discrimination in ways that are both similar and different from those experienced by Black heterosexual youth. The literature Francis draws attention to states that there are some key points to this phenomenon, namely, belonging to two minority categories means that queer students experience a double oppression in the form of racism and heterosexism (2019: 5). This oppression is intersected with race social class and gender and is experienced through homophobia, violence, and exclusion (Francis, 2019: 5).

It is this experience that draws my attention to Gaia who is an Indian-Italian alums of Evergreen. They are gender non-conforming and are a queer student. On top of the racial discrimination Gaia received, they also described the almost cognitive dissonance they caused on the school when they first came out at school. They were the first person to be openly gay student while still at school and this resulted in a general “violence”. This is because, according to Gaia, this was a new experience for most of the students at Evergreen. Not only were they openly gay, but they were also racially ambiguous and came from a “low-income primary school” which created a complete foreignness for the students at Evergreen. To Gaia, it was clear that they were not just coming out as a queer student, but this was “not as if one of their own had come out”.

*“It's not like a cisgendered, White rich boy that went to the prep school came out and they could navigate that in a more amicable way. It was someone completely foreign to them financially, racially, gender-wise, sexuality wise, coming out to them and that meant they didn't have to be as kind about it”*

When asked to elaborate, Gaia lamented that they are not a push-over. When they first came out and there was a backlash of students responding in their own ways, Gaia would not “back down from any push-back or confrontation”. Therefore, their experience at school when they first came out, right until they left the school, there was a barrage of “constant violent questioning”.

*“I’d be showing up to first period, [at] 8 in the morning, and someone be like “are you gay, I heard you’re gay?”. “Do you like sucking dick” [...] just constant daily insensitive questioning about my sexuality from the moment I came out. So, the status of my sexuality, what my sexual life looked like became a huge topic for people around me.”*

This of course, in an institution that is structurally heteronormative, is no surprise. Francis argues that in schools, heterosexuality is treated more positively (2018: 415). Aside from the general treatment of queer students outside of the classrooms, which will be explored further shortly, the classroom played a significant role in creating this space. Francis states that teachers play a key role in determining who should be considered normative and who should be seen as the ‘other’ (2018: 413). This was no different at Evergreen as Gaia acknowledges there were many instances where a teacher would say “some transphobic shit” and because no one else would say anything, they would have to be the one to say something. For Gaia this became a constant battle that they faced every time they entered the classroom.

*“It became a lot of fighting, I’ll say that. So, it became fighting peers, fighting teachers to sort of create a somewhat queer friendly environment for me to thrive in and grow up in. I do think it forced me to give too much of myself and my queerness, especially so. I took more than I needed to take.”*

Beyond the fighting, Gaia found themselves having to educate peers and teachers alike on these topics. This is what they meant when they said they had given too much of themselves. They were “constantly educating White boys” on the trials of being queer in the school space but at home as well. It became an act of giving to create the space they required to survive for themselves. This extended to even teaching a class for a teacher who did not know enough about gender and sexuality and thought it fit to ask the only openly queer student in the school to do so. This is a labour, Gaia points out, that students should not be required to do. A White, heterosexual student would not have to teach on White heterosexuality because of its acquired hegemony. A White, heterosexual student therefore has the privilege of navigating the space in a way that a school should be experienced by all students. One that does not require them to navigate race or sexuality. Gaia felt that this labour was more than okay to pursue for their

parents and friends who they loved. But “to do it for the average Joe at Evergreen and having to do it for the average teacher was a lot”.

To return to the violent questioning that Gaia would receive, what was interesting was Gaia’s ability to recognise in heterosexual students, their perception of them as a queer student, as hypersexual. The violent questioning such as “do you like sucking dick?” is supported by literature, as Francis (2018: 415) argues, queer youth are often constructed as “hypersexual”. This construction has a twofold effect in the classroom, it firstly regulates sexuality, in that it characterises being sexually charged and ‘out of control’ as inherently queer. Thus, instilling the belief that to be heterosexual is to be orderly, mature and the ideal form of sexuality (Francis, 2018: 415). The second effect is that this hyper sexualisation legitimises the gender and sexual violence directed towards them (Francis, 2018: 415). In the case of Gaia, it was not only the questioning that they noticed to be more frequent when they came out. It was in the ways heterosexual boys would treat them in a more hypersexual manner. Gaia noticed that they could weaponize this hypersexuality to be treated better by their peers.

*“I figured out a way to be well liked in general and this is an important thing to mention, especially in terms of my queerness. What I realized very early on was that weaponizing my sexuality was a good way for me to be accepted very readily. And I know that sounds strange in a homophobic environment, but I don't know what cultural factors of the 2010's collided to make that so. But I found that if I was flirtatious. I'm a very sexual person, just like off the bat. It's not like I was like feigning sexuality. I found, if I was very explicitly open about that and weaponized my sexuality and weaponized my flirtatiousness, it would do something in terms of stroking the ego of the men around me. In a way that could make them more readily accept me. So, I couldn't talk about Drag race with them. I couldn't talk about gender fluidity with them 'because that's all made up bullshit'. What I could talk to them about is how hot they are, 'cause that strokes their egos. And when I realized that – firstly, some of them were hot, just to be clear, like had a great time in high school on that front, I just want to make that clear – but when I realized that, I very much leaned into it and shamelessly so.”*

Gaia very quickly realised that “men love having their ego stroked” and in this way, they recognised the power of the stereotype produced within heteronormative spaces. They

recognised that the construction of a hypersexual understanding of queerness, allowed them to use that conceptualisation in a way that made the environment easier to navigate. This in effect allowed Gaia to exercise their sexuality openly in a heteronormative space. And it felt good for a while, however, Gaia noted that this was reductive to their self-conceptualisation. In a space which required the performance of a White, heteronormative hegemonic masculinity, Gaia, a Black, queer student could not perform that masculinity, or at the very least they were not willing to do so. Consequently, while actively performing their own sexuality, Gaia became subject to violence. However, they recognised that in the stereotypical understandings that students held of counter normative sexualities, namely that they were hypersexual, they could lean into that stereotype to be liked.

The problem, however, is that it was not Gaia's queerness that was accepted in this instance, rather, it was their treatment of the boys. Gaia recognised that their sexuality and their identity, was being reduced to this hypersexual stereotype. Again, to be clear, Gaia is a sexual person, they acknowledge that. But they are not only a sexual person, and their queerness is also not rooted in hypersexuality, it is rooted in a broader identity as an individual who grew up in a multiracial environment. This was an element of their identity they would have liked to explore more but they were restricted to this performance. Therefore, defining masculinity becomes a futile act. The assumption created in understanding a hegemonic, White Muscular Christianity is that the direct opposite of that is a 'feminised' homosexuality. This discourse creates a false dichotomy.

### **Femininity, Sexuality & Race at Redford**

Redford being co-educational offers a different, more complicated dynamic, as a performance of a particular kind of femininity exposed itself as well. Tyler highlighted her inability to grapple with her femininity and sexuality, stating that she still, to this day, feels like she cannot pull off certain looks because she does not see herself as fitting the mould of what it meant to be 'feminine' at Redford. So many people questioned her that she became distrusting of her own conceptualisation of her sexuality as well. What it means to be 'feminine' is therefore a phenomenon I wish to examine further. More specifically I would like to briefly explore Tyler's experience at Redford and unpack the ways in which femininity, sexuality and race emerged to form Tyler's eventual self-conceptualisation. At Redford, there



was a specific socialisation process that took place through sports and other activities with a particular importance on ‘looks’ in the socialisation process.

The popular girls at Redford mostly consisted of the sporty girls, but according to Tyler, this was not necessarily because of the sport they played. It was about the athleticism that was required in these sport that meant these girls had an ideal body type.

*“I think for the most part, the popular girls in general were sporty. So, it didn't really matter which sport they did, but they generally were sporty. They didn't even necessarily need to be first team, but like second team and up. 'cause I think our second team did compete quite competitively like in for example Hockey or Water polo. So, if you did one of those and you were even second team, that was good. Because that basically just meant that you were fit, and it meant that your body shape was acceptable. [...] I think it was more about like body type and then what you would be willing to offer someone if you dated them.”*

Tyler did note that there were several types of ‘popular’ for girls, but in terms of the socialisation process at Redford, this was what could be deemed, the ideal type. There was another element to this as well, having asked Tyler if race was a factor in this at all, she responded with a definitive “yes”. According to her, you could be popular if you were a person of colour, but that would be if you found yourself in one of the top teams and would therefore gain access into the space. It was then in the interview that a particular phenomenon began to emerge from the discussion. One that was tied to what Tyler said in the last sentence of the previous quote, “what you would be willing to offer them”. This indicated a hook-up culture at Redford, one that was in fact similar that at Evergreen although in this case, the boys and girls were attending the same school.

‘Hook-up culture’ is defined by Justin R Garcia as uncommitted sexual encounters, including “a wide range of sexual behaviours such as kissing, oral sex, and penetrative intercourse” (Allison & Risman, 2014: 119; Brimeyer & Smith, 2012: 462; Garcia, Reiber, Massey & Merriwether, 2012: 162). At Evergreen, this definition was used specifically because the hypermasculine, heteronormative nature of hooking-up at school was based around the number of girls you kissed rather than the sexual acts themselves (Mujulizi, 2020: 23). This

does present an interesting difference between Redford and Evergreen. At Evergreen, the boys would have little to no interactions with girls until social events over the weekend. This would then be used as an opportunity to hook-up with as many girls as possible, to solidify a celebrated status during the week. In my previous work I highlighted how boys would use the week as a time to discuss and share stories about their achievements over the weekend (Mujulizi, 2020: 23-24). The acts therefore became a ritual in presentation to the other Evergreen boys. But there were other moments when it was not just about quantity, but the quality of the girl mattered. Our matric dance for example, was a time when boys would aim to invite the girls who were considered the prettiest or the most popular, and this would not be an act of presentation just to the other boys, but to the girls attending as well. But these would be moments that were exceedingly rare and thus saw the focus at Evergreen being on a more quantitative hook-up culture.

At Redford, the qualitative element to hook-up culture did exist. But, Redford's co-educational nature meant that the boys were in daily interaction with often the same girls they would see at social gatherings. Therefore the element of presentation would not exist in the same way. Hook-up culture was not just about a presentation to the boys, but the girls as well. This means that the presence of girls, and the amount of time spent with those girls, introduces a new dynamic, one that disrupts the quantitative hook-up culture seen at Evergreen. Redford boys, similar to the Redford girls, would thus have to navigate the space in a far more intricate way. As, I would imagine, the quality of the girls that the boys hooked-up with mattered far more for the Redford boys, than the Evergreen boys. For Redford boys, that matric dance dynamic that Evergreen boys encountered once a year, would be a daily reality. It is therefore important to ask a complicated question, one around the process of recognition. At Evergreen, recognition came from other boys and the performance became quantitative. Whereas for Redford boys, the constant presence of girls introduces the ability to engage girls in a capacity that is not socially driven towards a hook-up culture. I ask then, to what extent does the hook-up culture at Evergreen, a single-sex school, become an internal practice, one that is geared towards a presentation of self for other boys? And to what extent does the hook-up culture at Redford become an external practice, one that is traversed by both girls and boys and sees the practice of presentation geared towards a greater audience?

We see that for the girls at Redford, however, things were still very different to the boys. The hook-up culture dynamic shifted in many ways. Multiple participants from Redford

pointed out how for girls, hooking-up was something you needed to traverse very carefully. There needed to be a fine balance struck between hooking up with the “right” boys, Tyler lamented, while at the same time not hooking up with too many boys out of fear of being labelled a “slut”. Tyler continued, “it’s a bit of a scandal if a girl hooks-up with like three guys at a party. If the guy hooks up with eight girls at a party, then he’s [revered]”. This difference in standards of navigating the hook-up culture exist due to a multitude of reasons such as sexism and misogyny, alongside a focus on rigid societal patriarchal understandings of sexuality. Women are perceived as the opposite to what men in society are expected to be. According to Garcia, men are seen as “active sexual agents”, but women are seen as “sexual objects, sexually passive compared to men, and women act as sexual gatekeepers” (2012: 167). This act of gatekeeping therefore becomes important in the navigation of hook-up culture as things such as respectability are often tied to this. More importantly, however, is recognising sexuality as “a meaning system that is constituted with race and gender, used to signify identities, and to allocate social rewards and statuses” (Wilkins, 2012: 166). What this means is that race, heterosexuality, alongside gender intersect to “unevenly allocate privilege and power” (Wilkins, 2012: 166).

As seen above, hook-up culture was central to the male identity and at Redford, although it appeared in diverse ways, it was important for the girls as well. To be a part of the popular girls, attend their parties and become that specific type of popular girl, some form of participation within the hook-up culture at Redford was fundamental to that. For Tyler, a Black woman, the dynamics were therefore particularly difficult to navigate. According to Bhana and Pattman, the heterosexual competition amongst girls in these spaces, “operates in ways that makes race a significant part of the competition” (2010: 381). Therefore, at Redford, race was central in your ability to hook-up with the boys. Cyrah, another former Redford student, highlighted her situation, stating that both the Black boys and White boys never really took her into consideration when it came to hooking-up. Black women are vulnerable to European beauty standards, especially those of a darker skin (Bryant, 2013: 80–81). These beauty standards in a way make Black women undesirable in the process of hook-up culture. As Tyler highlighted, it was not just the act of hooking-up that was important but also who you hooked-up with. The lack of desire for Black women in these spaces left them unable to participate in this socialising act. One that was fundamental to the feminisation of some of the girls at Redford.

For Tyler, participation was never really something she desired, but it was her inability to make that decision regardless that was notable. Originally, I asked Tyler why she felt her sexuality was in question and how this in turn resulted in her feeling insecure in her femininity.

*I think it genuinely is just because I wasn't hooking up with people. I wasn't dating anyone in general, because there was never any like sexual or romantic tension between me and the guys in my grade because no one wanted to date me. Or they didn't even like look at me as an option. Because there was never any of that, there was just an assumption that "Tyler is not into it" because my history just didn't reflect any relationships with guys."*

Her lack of participation in this culture almost had a self-fulfilling effect in that the lack of attention she was receiving led to a general idea to everyone else, that she just did not want to participate, which furthered her lack of participation. It also added another interesting element. Tyler felt more comfortable with her "temperament and short fuse".

*"[...] I had a fairly short fuse, so if someone frustrated me or irritated me, I wouldn't, like, snap necessarily, but I confronted it. I was a fairly confrontational person. And at break if the girls just decided [mockingly] "ooh let's play Rugby with the boys", I'd play along, but I played competitively [laughs]. So, I didn't have the pressure of having to think about "Oh guys must still think I look cute" or whatever so I think I just had a more aggressive demeanour."*

It was at this point in the interview that I felt it necessary to pause and ask Tyler how this all made her feel. I think often in academia there may be a tendency to explain the theory behind a phenomenon. In this case there are multiple avenues of exploration to delve into, Fanon's (1952: 45) chapter on The Black Man and the White Women for instance and the desire for Black men to seek White women to symbolically 'earn' a privilege. We could discuss the Angry Black Women Trope a paper by Trina Jones & Kimberly Jade Norwood (2017: 2046) in which they discuss the various stereotypes associated with Black women and their general exclusion from discussions around race and gender. There is the discussion I had in Mujulizi (2020) around the reinforcement of racial hierarchies through hook-up culture, with Black women being at the very bottom of that list. But I wish for a moment to explore this

quote by Tyler in its entirety as there is a deep humanity, I found in it that I feel needs to be highlighted. I asked Tyler what it felt like having her femininity be bound to how the boys viewed her and how she interacted with them. More specifically I wanted to know if she had recognised this at the time as well. She had. Stating, “I definitely was very aware of it because it affected a lot of my later decisions. And even again just things that I'm comfortable with”

For a long time, Tyler was the only girl in her grade to have quit choir and she then found herself together with all the boys who had not done choir. This placed her in an interesting dynamic as she was therefore present when the boys would discuss girls.

*“So, I was always there when the whole year group’s guys were ranking the girls, talking about who was the prettiest, why people were the prettiest. I was always just there, so I was just kind of like ‘one of the guys’. [...] So, I was never on the lists. 'cause they genuinely spoke as if I wasn't there. So, I genuinely think if they did consider me, I would have made a list. I never fucking made a list. Or just like every Valentine's Day, every seasonal crush change, just never being included in that. 'cause even the guys that my friends were trying to set me up with, didn't want to be with me because obviously if I wasn't a good enough choice for their friends, why would [emphasis] they want to pick me as well? You know?”*

She added,

*“I grew up thinking I was incredibly unattractive. [...] All my friends were very comfortable with like dressing in front of each other or even with dressing for sports. Like some girls would be very comfortable to not go in a cubicle and just change in the general bathroom area, not me. I always wanted to be in a cubicle. I still think some of my best friends have not even seen my thighs. I became incredibly ashamed of myself and my body, 'cause like you can't really cover your face. So, my body was pretty much the only thing I could control and cover and hide. And I think that's something that has then stayed with me because [...] part of the reason why I don't like wearing dresses, is because I just feel so exposed. It's so open. It just doesn't feel safe. I also prefer wearing like baggier clothes or oversized things simply*

*because it accentuates less of me. So, I think that definitely does come from just not being comfortable with myself.”*

Tyler’s internalisation of these beauty standards that have stuck with her to this day are feelings which Black women are often faced with. According to Susan Bryant (2013: 81) Black women often stand in contrast to what society deems as attractive. In Tyler’s case, she is faced with European beauty standards due to her presence in a White space which renders her colour as unattractive and undesirable. Bryant further argues that the internalisation of these racialised beauty standards can “perpetuate into a lifelong, intergenerational culture of self-hatred” (2013: 81). For Tyler, this internalisation has been lifelong and is still something she is working through today. But for her, she did not even realise that she was self-conscious. This level of self-consciousness was not something she noticed because in life, she is comfortable with public speaking, she was okay with attention on stages and was very extroverted. It was because of this that she had not realised she was comparing herself to other people until she got older.

The focus of this Chapter is masculinity, but I bring Tyler’s experience forward to suggest that the performances we are required to partake in within these structures of ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity’ cause a dissonance within students who do not fit those moulds. Even Redford, which is a far more modern school, one which is not tied to a colonial history, still faces similar issues to Evergreen. Femininity and sexuality in Tyler’s case was something she was not allowed to decide for herself. For both the girls and boys who attend the school, the choice of a masculine or feminine identity was tied to a very particular performance. It can become clear, therefore, that the opposite of masculinity is not a rigidly defined femininity. It would have been easy to work within the masculine/feminine duality framework and presume that when Gaia came out, their gender expression, that which was no longer fit for a White Muscular Christian categorisation, would be the opposite of that. But masculinity and femininity, much like race, are a far more complex phenomena in that they are rooted in individual history, race, gender, class, and ethnicity. They cannot be distilled into one box and has therefore no ability to be fixed. Masculinity is flexible in this sense (Francis, 2018: 27).

For Gaia, forming an identity therefore became an exceedingly challenging task. The school space that was explicitly one way, forced them to examine their own understanding of their identity. Looking back Gaia believes that their self-conceptualisation was fragmented.

*“You know, my idea of my queerness was not perfect. It was tainted and damaged, definitely. I thought I had to be a certain type of queer. If I was a ‘bottom’, so, like specifically with all the constant interrogation of my sexual life because people were so interested in that.<sup>15</sup> And I had to talk about it a lot in a way that made me feel like I had to be this bottom and the specific type of bottom and a specific type of femininity but not too femme ‘cause I’m not trans and so on. Which leads to the gender stuff that came later, where in fact I am trans in terms of the trans umbrella, I’m nonbinary, so like the suppression of my queer identity, like, it just ripples through all of that.*

This dissonance is similar to what we see Black students experiencing at these schools as well. Only, for Gaia this dissonance occurred on two fronts, namely their race and their sexuality. And much like the Black students who felt that their identity struggled within the bubble of school, and only formed or is still forming fully once they left that space, Gaia saw a similar effect. In Chapter two we discussed the effect that going to debate club outside of school helped Gaia in recognising the problems within their school. Similarly, debate club was pivotal in Gaia’s experience of other queer students. In this space they learned how to be argumentative, use their intelligence and abilities and skills to defend themselves. They also got to meet many queer students with many different identities and expressions which allowed them to build a sort of arsenal to utilise when they experienced discrimination at school itself. Therefore, outside of school, their identity and self-expression was strengthening more so than it was in school. “[...] one of the greatest things that I got in high school was ironically not within the school, but outside of it”.

Interestingly, for Tyler, a similar thing occurred. In the latter half of our interview, she discussed how she eventually got to meet more coloured boys in non-school settings, such as cricket scoring and meeting boys from other schools. It was here that she realised she was in fact desirable.

*“Particularly towards the end of my high school career, through cricket scoring, I was exposed to a lot of Coloured guys around my age. And it was only when interacting with them that I then realized, “oh. I’m not*

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<sup>15</sup> “A bottom is someone who likes to relinquish control during sex” (López, 2021)

*unattractive, I'm just Brown". I'm just unattractive to all the White boys around me. And some of the people that just don't like my personality. Or maybe they're just I'm just not their type."*

Once again, we see the power of the institution in their ability to remove students from social spaces and force a disculturation. Both Tyler and Gaia's fractured identity, be it through race, gender or sexuality was held only allowed to grow, not because of the school, but, because of something that came outside of the school. It is clear then that the experiences of Black women in a White space has an intense effect on their self-conceptualisation. In Tyler's case through both her heterosexuality and her femininity becoming things for others around her in that space to speculate rather than something she was able to self-identify and/or define at Redford. Similarly, for Gaia, a queer student of colour, offered an incredibly unique insight into the fragility and often baseless nature of the hegemonic understanding of masculinity at Evergreen. In understanding the origins of the type of hypermasculine identity Evergreen produces, we can begin to understand that experiences for any student outside of that hegemony is going to be subject to bullying through homophobia, violent and invasive questioning and general 'othering' that is prevalent in these spaces. It can be difficult to conceptualise this type of masculinity and gender performance and it was important to evaluate what that meant.

I want to emphasize, based on Gaia's experience that private schools were constructed from a colonial past, create spaces which are inherently restrictive and purposefully formulate a particular kind of student that they try to produce. These spaces therefore become socialising spaces, but it is not just the socialisation but the kind of socialisation taking place. The importance lies in the types of students they are trying to reproduce and why. But it is also important to understand that Redford, an institution that is far more contemporary than Evergreen also has its contentions with its students of colour in their formation of a femininity and sexuality. They too are trying to produce a certain coded student and if one does not fit into that mould, there are genuine repercussions to that inability to change. Whether they be through internal turmoil or external variables, the result is still the same at both institutions. It is therefore not just simply a matter of history, as a contemporary co-educational institution also experiences these problems.



We must question whether these spaces which are inherently exclusionary, whether old or new, are still conducive to Black students and queer students. If Evergreen and Redford became spaces which are more inclusive towards Black and queer students, would they still exist as the ideal private school. Would they still attract the types of students they are trying to attract? That being White and heterosexual? If a Black and queer student experiences discrimination in a vastly different and more consecutive basis than a White student, is that space inclusive. As demonstrated, these spaces which are inherently White and heteronormative, create a dissonance within the identity formation of students with these identities. It must therefore be questioned whether what they are producing is inherently tied to a White heteronormative superiority. More importantly, if these spaces became more inclusive and less tied to White supremacy, would they still hold the 'elite' status they do currently? If the answer is yes, then we should be able to conclude that the definition of 'elite' is not tied to race, gender, and class. If the answer to that is no, then we must examine what constitutes 'elite' and whether this categorisation can exist outside of White heteronormativity. Additionally, there is the question of schools becoming more inclusive and whether this is an act of genuine change or a matter of accommodating without changing.

## Coda

21<sup>st</sup> century South Africa offers a particularly unique period in the history of education in that we find ourselves in an ostensibly non-racial South Africa. I examined the public and private lives of Black alums in Cape Town private schools. Evergreen, being single-sex and tied to the history of colonisation within the Cape, while Redford is more modern and co-educational. I did this in the pursuit of answers to some questions that presented themselves in my experience as a Black student at Evergreen. These questions, explored in the thesis were all fundamentally tied to the foundational aspects of these institutions and how they present themselves. I therefore explored the history of education in South Africa, dating back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, right to contemporary South Africa. In this exploration emerged a change in leadership within the country that shape education according to the ruling party's desires. After Apartheid, I argue throughout this thesis, Black students feel an alienation that points to a renewed Whiteness at elite schools, made visible as a barrier for Black students at a moment in which formal racism has disappeared.

Whiteness emerged as a malleable character from the conception of education in the Cape, well into contemporary South Africa. Although leadership changed hands between the Dutch, the British colonial project, the National Party and now the ANC, Whiteness has been recrafted within education. With the non-racial society we now find ourselves in, Black students attending previously exclusive elite private institutions, is an increasing phenomenon as the middle-class of South Africa steadily expands. Some would argue this is a step in the right direction towards equality and inclusion within a country that is so deeply divided, racially. Yet, Black alums in this thesis have exposed how elite schooling remains connected to values and practices rooted in past racisms. These roots present themselves through explicit and implicit means in such a way that requires Black students who attend these institutions to interrogate their own identity and positionality within these spaces.

I argued then, that these private schools, in particular ones that are tied to a deep history of racial exclusion, function as institutions which formulate and perpetuate Whiteness. This then affects the ways in which Black students who attend these schools formulate an identity that is tied to their cultural or self-definition of Blackness. These schools also instil rigid understandings of gender and sexuality, ones that are extremely exclusionary of identities

which do not fall within those categories and result in similar struggles with identities. In addition to this, modern private schools, which model themselves off elite schools such as Evergreen, take on the same issues presented and might unknowingly continue the cycle of a deeply racialised schooling system in their pursuit of an elite status.

I further argued that modern private schools such as Redford have not escaped the weight of the colonial project that shaped the elite schools they modelled themselves off. In a non-racial South Africa then, we find that Black students are still having to contest with race in ways that force us to interrogate whether post-apartheid South Africa is in fact non-racial. Subsequently, I interrogated whether elite schools such as the ones explored in this thesis engage in inclusionary tactics for inclusions sake, or if it is a practice in accommodation. In addition to this, the rigid structures of schools such as Evergreen and Redford require students to get in line and embed themselves within an elite class consciousness. However, as emerged in the thesis, the inextricable link between race and class means that to engage in a class consciousness in elite spaces is to engage in the formation of racial hierarchies. This also exposed how morality is embedded in class belonging in South Africa in such a way that it becomes immoral to be Black, and to be White and poor.

Finally, I explored how the colonial norms around gender force students who are queer, gender non-conforming, or cisgendered and heterosexual but do not form part of that description in a hegemonic way, into a struggle for identity. The creation of masculinity, through performance, that is tied to a Muscular Christianity, requires students who attend these institutions to play the part. If one does not, then one is faced with violence, physical or otherwise. Femininity and its performance was also examined and found to be rigid but in interesting ways, ones that led a participant to questioning their sexuality as a result of not performing gender the ways in which it is required at Redford. We therefore find that to not be White, cisgendered and heterosexual and in the elite class, means being forced to participate in codes and rituals that may not form part of your identity. Elite schooling therefore comes at a cost for Black students, ones that White, cisgendered, heterosexual students do not face, making it a difficult space to exist. Elite schooling therefore needs to interrogate whether being 'elite' can be separated from Whiteness and whether Black students have a space within these institutions while these questions are not being answered.

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