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Shaping Young Women for the Future: A Case Study of a South African Girls' School

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AFRICAN GIRLS' SCHOOL

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Abstract

This project seeks to examine the place of private schools in preparing young women for a future in the new South Africa. Specifically, this project focuses on high school learners at South African Girls' School (SAGS) in Durban, South Africa. By examining ways of learning, succeeding and fitting in at SAGS as well as perceptions of a democratic South Africa and how the learners at this school see themselves fitting into the future of their country, we gain a fuller understanding of what it means to be a citizen of this country for a group that is not often studied. By looking at certain aspects of everyday life at SAGS, we can see how the hidden curriculum of the school shapes girls' understandings of themselves, each other and their country. As is always the case in South Africa, race remains a salient issue. By looking at where there is integration and where there is separation, we can begin to understand which divisions within society will be the most durable. As most of the existing literature argues, at SAGS it is clear that racial segregation still exists and is institutionalized; however, most students are able to find a way to feel at home and comfortable within the institution. Through this work of understanding how young girls are shaped by (but also play an active role in shaping) the institution in which they have spent most of their lives, important information is added to the literature on what it means to grow up in a transforming South Africa.

Introduction

In South Africa in the latter half of the twentieth century, the apartheid regime undertook one of the most extreme schedules of racial segregation that the world has ever seen. Having only celebrated nineteen years since the official end of this government, it is understandable that South Africa has yet to deal with many scars left by the National Party's apartheid policies.

The education system was left in shambles. The Group Areas Act of 1950, which stated that housing areas must be racially segregated and gave non-whites inferior land, and the Bantu Education Act of 1953, which declared that all schools must be put under the control of the government so that a different education could be given to learners depending on their racial categorization, are still having lasting effects on the pursuit of equality in South Africa (Spaull, 2012).

With the 1994 transition to democracy, fixing the broken education system became a governmental priority. Education was and is still seen as one of the biggest problems of the state, but it is simultaneously understood to be an institutional framework through which ideas of a new democratic state and a unified population can be realized (Fleetwood, 2012). The government is continuously pumping money into the education system, but the system fails to produce satisfactory results. Many government schools are failing to produce students who can pass the matric exam and go on to succeed in college. The majority of particularly "successful" schools in South Africa are formerly all-white schools (referred to as "Model C" schools) and independent (private or religious) schools (Carter, 2012). Much has been written about social transformation within these schools, especially racial integration and identity formation in the desegregated environment. Most of what has been written, though, focuses on the transformation in government schools and focuses on it through quantitative statistical analysis rather than

qualitative interactions with learners. It is important to add to the literature by looking at how this process of social transformation has happened in private and religious schools. While independent schools only educate a small percentage of the South African student population, these schools are a very significant subject of study because they are mushrooming in popularity and a disproportionately high number of students from independent schools consistently go on to hold leadership positions within society (Hofmeyr & Lee, 2004). It is generally understood that the independent schools are increasing in popularity amongst parents with the means to send their children because of the awful quality of government school education.

This study focuses on the experiences of grade 10 and grade 11 students at South African Girls' School (SAGS)[*]—an all-girls religious, private institution in Durban, South Africa, serving learners from grade R through matric. The case study of learners at SAGS will provide a framework for exploring larger questions of how various classes and races can co-exist and mutually create a country and a national identity. As some of the most privileged and successful learners in Durban, it is reasonable to assume that the young women who graduate from SAGS will go on to hold leadership positions within society. With this assumption, part of the objective of this research is to understand how the country's elite is produced (and reproduced). Because most existing literature focuses on the state of public or government schools, there is a notable gap relating to what happens within private institutions. Schools create space for learners to develop a sense of identity by interacting with each other, the institution and authority figures; they simultaneously represent a place where social cohesion and a sense of belonging can begin to exist amongst young learners.

The main objectives of this study are as follows:

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[*] The name of the institution has been changed to maintain anonymity. The names of administrators and teachers have also been changed.

- To understand ways of fitting in and succeeding for high school girls at SAGS

- To understand how learners at SAGS understand their place in a transforming, democratic South Africa

- To understand what learners, teachers and administrators at SAGS think are the main challenges facing South African youth

- To understand how students, teachers and administrators see the role of SAGS in the greater context of schooling in South Africa

In order to achieve these objectives, I completed two weeks of daily observation at SAGS. I observed students in the classroom and during their break times (see Appendix A for a sample observation schedule). I also organized five focus groups with students, and conducted interviews with teachers and administrators.

For the most part I found that integration is happening within SAGS in the classroom. Outside of the classroom groups re-segregate along racial lines based on perceived natural, cultural differences. Both students and adults see language as a divisive issue within the school. There are various ways that students are able to succeed within the school, but teachers play a large and respected role in picking favorites. Generally it seems that the students who are well-liked by teachers are also well-liked by their peers (as opposed to the negative "teacher's pet" stereotype). Most girls are able to feel comfortable and at home within SAGS based on the variety of quality activities offered. Zulu class also provides an important place within the school for the black Zulu girls to feel at home and in power.

Social capital can be gained in a variety of ways at SAGS. Though there are various types of girls within each racial category, general racialized stereotypes persist. The Indian girls, for example, are assumed to be nerdy and uncool. The black girls are rowdy and loud. The white

girls don't necessarily have a stereotype outside of the assumption that they are stuck-up, but this is more a stereotype of all learners at SAGS rather than one that is particularly tied to the white racial category. This is reflective of the fact that the white culture is still the dominant culture of the school and the other race (or ethnic or cultural) groups must find a way to assimilate and fit in to this existing framework. There also seems to be a lack of awareness of the extent to which SAGS learners are more privileged than and separated from the majority of South Africans. All of these factors contribute to the social landscape of the school. This social environment is necessarily reflective of both the current and the future environment amongst the elite within Durban and within South Africa, because a majority of these girls will go on to succeed at the most prestigious universities throughout the country. And, if they don't emigrate, they will go on to become the country's new elite.

This paper begins with a description of South African Girls' School to set the context of the study. This is followed by a literature review, summarizing research that has been done on the transformation of the South African education system since 1994 with a specific focus on what has happened in formerly all-white schools. This literature review is preceded by a discussion of the literature on the hidden curriculum in schools in the United States to set a theoretical framework for the study. I argue that the literature from the United States is relevant, because both countries have attempted to deal with racial inequalities primarily through access to educational institutions. Subsequently, both countries have seen similar issues of assimilation or re-segregation affecting identity formation within the classroom and cohesion within the school as a whole. This is followed by a description of the specific methodology followed during observations, focus groups and interviews, and a discussion of the limitations of this particular study. I will then summarize and analyze the general findings of this study. This analysis is

broken down thematically based on main points of discussion and observation. The paper

finishes with a few concluding thoughts and recommendations for further research.

      It should be noted that for this paper the racial categories of white, Indian, coloured and

black African (at times, specifically Zulu) will be used. Though I acknowledge that race is a

social construct and that these apartheid-era categories are problematic, I believe that they

present the necessary context for my observations.

Context

The research for this paper was undertaken at South African Girls' School (SAGS), an all girls' Christian private school in Durban, South Africa My first visit to SAGS was on a tour with my study abroad program. It was a swelteringly hot day in February. We had spent the morning at an overcrowded, under-resourced, un-air conditioned school in a nearby township. Upon arriving at SAGS we were greeted with smiling faces, cool air conditioning and complimentary lemonade—a stark change from what we had experienced that morning. The marketing director of the school gave us a tour. The first thing she explained was the beautiful stained glass ship in the window of the office reception area. We smiled and nodded along, quietly rolling our eyes once she turned her back. The school was seeping with privilege and colonial legacy. The required violin lessons in grade 3, the beautiful view of the ocean across the expansive playing fields, and the fact that every grade 9 now has an iPad made it hard to understand how one cohesive South Africa can exist, educated by one South African schooling system, that can somehow incorporate both of these extremes. This dichotomy sparked my interest and inspired my further observation, simultaneously because SAGS seemed so foreign but also so similar to schools I am familiar with in the U.S.

SAGS serves students from grade R through matric. In total the student population numbers over 800, with approximately 70 students in each of the grades. The racial composition of the school is slightly over half white with a large portion of both Indian and black African students, and a handful of coloured students and students of east Asian descent. For the most part, the black African girls identify as Zulu, though there are some exceptions (at least one girl with whom I spoke was from Swaziland and did not speak Zulu). The school fees per year are approximately 70 000 Rand and therefore the school necessarily caters to students from a high

socioeconomic status. There are scholarships and bursaries available. The scholarships are given on the basis of academic achievement. There are a number of particularly talented girls who can afford to go to SAGS because they are funded by private donors. The school helps to arrange these relationships. As it stands though, most of the girls at SAGS come from the wealthiest families in Durban.

For girls in grade 8 through grade 12 there is also the possibility of boarding at the school in the boarding house during the week. This attracts girls of low socioeconomic status, girls who live far away from the school and girls who are particularly involved and would find it easier just to stay at the school during the week. There are ten to fifteen girls in each of these grades that stay at the boarding house.

One hundred percent of girls at SAGS will pass matric and most will go on to university. Those who don't go on to university will either take a gap year or begin working. Thus, the environment within a SAGS classroom is quite intense. As a couple of grade 10 girls once explained to me in reference to a few of their friends who found "more appropriate schools", "they won't let you fail. If you're going to fail, you're out." Students are expected to perform at a high academic level consistently. Within the mission of the school there is an impetus to shape their young women to be leaders of the future—women who will be articulate, respond to their communities and address the needs of the time. The Christian ethos at SAGS is also strong, with group time for prayer at least three times a week.

It is also worth-noting teachers and administrators at SAGS are almost exclusively white. In the high school there are a few exceptions: there is one Indian English teacher and one black African Zulu teacher. There are no coloured teachers.

Literature Review

There has been much written on the transformation of South African schools because of all the attention that the education system has gotten since the 1994 transition. The majority of this research, however, is quantitative in nature and only a relatively small amount has been written based on interviews and observation of students. For a study of the experience of schooling, therefore, it is necessary to draw on theoretical framework developed outside of South Africa. Specifically I will be working off of ideas of the hidden curriculum of schools.

Theoretical Framework: The Hidden Curriculum

In reference to the schooling received by students living in capitalist America, sociologists S. Bowles and H. Gintis (1976) argue that it is the form of the education system rather than the content of that system that educates a student. Others argue that it is not just the structure of the educational system but also the active involvement of students in that structure that creates the hidden curriculum through a class culture (Blackledge & Hunt, 1985). Both arguments hinge on the fact that it is something outside of the explicit curriculum that has the largest effect on the experience of individual leaners—this is the hidden curriculum. James Vander Zanden (1993) defines the hidden curriculum as a grouping of unarticulated values, attitudes and behaviors that subtly mold children in the image preferred by dominant institutions. There are two ways to understand how the hidden curriculum affects students—one based on conflict and the other consensus. The consensus theory would argue that students are universally socialized by one hidden curriculum. The conflict theory, on the other hand, argues that students are learning different things depending on certain characteristics such as gender, race and socioeconomic status. This paper will assume conflict and differentiation as a theoretical basis.

Implicit knowledge is learned by students in a school through their interactions with each other

and with authority figures. In schools students are actually learning and being tested on specific

ways of behaving and explaining themselves that are outside of the official, explicit curriculum

(Blackledge & Hunt, 1985).

Under the theoretical influence of Pierre Bourdieu and C. Wright Mills, much has been

written about elite education and boarding schools in the western world. Mills argues that the

concentration of economic and cultural capital amongst an elite few who have much influence in

society leaves the masses nearly powerless, while Bourdieu argues that educational institutions

reproduce the structure of the distribution of cultural capital among classes, therefore creating

empowered and disempowered citizens on a basis of socioeconomic status and schooling

institutions rather than individual merit (Mills, 1956; Bourdieu, 1977). Drawing on this

theoretical framework, Shamus Khan (2011) has recently completed an ethnography of St. Paul's

School entitled *Privilege*. St. Paul's is one of a few very elite boarding schools in the

northeastern United States whose graduates, year after year, are funneled into Ivy League and

other elite institutions. In *Privilege*, Khan looks at the ways in which the American elite is

created and recreated in a context where elite institutions are becoming perceptibly more open

(in terms of accepting more students with various racial and ethnic backgrounds), but inequality

on a whole is increasing nationwide. Specifically, he explains that the inequality is increasing

because the wealthy are getting wealthier, not because the poor getting poorer. He argues that

rather than creating an exclusive elite that has certain interests and tastes as Bourdieu or Mills

may argue, the new elite must consist of "cultural omnivores" who are able to feel comfortable

and interact in a wide variety of social situations. The learners discover how to embody this

privilege through the formal curriculum as well as the hidden one. The most important quality in

these new elites is to seem at ease in all situations, and they learn this way of acting through aspects of the structure of their institutions, not through the formal curriculum.

In addition to examining how institutions shape students based on class identities, it is also interesting to look at how they shape students based on gender identities. Female students are encouraged to behave in a certain way in high schools based on the hidden curriculum. When dealing with issues of gender, many sociologists take an intersectional approach, arguing that there is no one "master identity." Instead it is at the intersection of categories—namely gender, race and class—that one's social identity develops. Theories of intersectionality argue, for example, that we cannot understand how race affects social identity without also considering how gender and class simultaneously affect that identity. This is how we must understand the influence of the hidden curriculum on students, because they must form personal identities based on some combination of their identities within these three categories. Identity does not happen in a vacuum but rather happens in relation to other groups. Concerning high schools in the United States there has been much written about the formation of identities within schools.

In *Women Without Class*, Julie Bettie (2003) presents an ethnographic portrait of the lives of girls, specifically working-class white and Mexican-American girls, in their senior year of high school. She argues that these girls have fundamentally different experiences in high school based on their race/ethnicity and class. In explaining how the female identity is constructed and enacted, she argues that middle class girls enact their femininity and gain respect in a certain way because they are white, middle class girls on the path to college. The Mexican-American working class girls, on the other hand, enact their femininity through more obvious gender display (wearing a lot of make up and revealing clothing) and gain respect and adult status

through blatant expressions of sexuality and motherhood. Beyond this gender argument, Bettie argues working class girls are put on a track in high school that leads to working class lives.

In South Africa literature on the ways in which race, class and gender intersect to create identities for teenage students in high schools is insufficient. Because South Africa and the United States have attempted to address similar problems of racial inequality through schooling, it is interesting to look at literature on the state of their schools through the lens of this identity formation literature, particularly in the case of privileged institutions where some degree of racial integration has occurred and the quality of schooling is similar to what can be found in the United States.

Transformation in South Africa

Khan's observation about the changing nature of the privileged, elite class can be extrapolated to an international context, especially South Africa. In South Africa much has been written about the changing racial composition of elite institutions. In South Africa it is also the case that institutions that were formerly exclusive and closed to certain populations, have become remarkably more open, but inequality is increasing within the country as a whole by many measures. In terms of schooling and education, many authors have examined the process of racial integration in schools, specifically the process of black African, Indian and coloured students enrolling in formerly whites-only schools. In general, the literature implies that racial segregation has morphed into class segregation in the years since 1994 (Hunter, 2010). There are a few exceptional non-white families who have been able to gain access to elite institutions through new wealth, but the vast majority remains impoverished. Though there are some exceptions, generally poverty still falls along racial lines. Studies of de-racialization have shown

that formerly subordinate groups have "been recruited or have promoted themselves into the [white] hegemonic social, cultural and economic regime" (Soudien, 2007, 112). The story of integration in schools, therefore, has been one of black students moving into formerly white schools and assimilating to the norms and expectations there, rather than one that promotes cultural diversity (McKinney, 2011).

The literature on desegregation within schools argues that it came in three stages: private religious schools began desegregation in 1976, followed by the end of apartheid schooling between 1990 and 1993, and then the post-1994 democratic era (Fleetwood, 2012). It should be noted that transformation happened differently depending on the type of school; public government schools changed in a way fundamentally different from independent schools, and formerly black, Indian or coloured schools went through a different process than formerly all white schools. Generally speaking the most visible racial transformation has happened in schools that serve middle or upper class learners. Schools that serve working class and poor learners are predominantly still single race schools and schools in rural areas are still dealing with treacherous conditions and a lack of resources (Soudien, 2007).

Most of this literature on desegregation is written from research based on the study of government schools. In South Africa, independent schools (private and religious institutions that receive no government funding) educate a very small percentage of the population. They are still an important subject of study, though, because students educated at independent schools continue to be overrepresented in positions of power, implying that they will produce particularly influential members of society (Hofmeyr & Lee, 2004). Further, the percentage of students enrolling in private schools is mushrooming because of the dismal conditions of so many government schools. The importance of the idea of private schooling in South Africa can be seen

in the Gauteng School Education Bill of 1995, which upholds one's constitutional right to choose

to educate one's child at a non-government run school. The legislation explained that it is

necessary to explicitly protect the private school's right to exist because of the history of

apartheid within this country. In apartheid South Africa, as a result of the Bantu Education Act,

private educational institutions were actively prohibited; all schools had to be under the control

and administration of the state (Hofmeyr & Lee, 2004). Because of this constitutional protection,

private schools feel secure in their position within society. The resource discrepancies that exist

because some parents can pay exorbitant school fees to independent institutions while others

cannot, add to the inequality of the already divided system.

　　　Within these new integrated school spaces, though, race continues to play a very

important role. Trends in literature imply that in desegregated schools, students will tend to re-

segregate themselves along racial lines. As Meier and Hartell (2009) argue, desegregation can in

fact lead to a heightening of tension and prejudice. It is generally argued that racial divisions

within integrated schools are a result of choice and not of racism—an issue of finding a group

with whom one can identify and feel comfortable. The conclusion is that in terms of friendship

and social identity race (often at its intersection with class) still remains an important factor for

youth, even in the supposedly colorblind and born-free generation in an "equal" and "non-racial"

South Africa (Fleetwood 2012). Seekings (2008) for example, argues that racism has

transformed into "racial discrimination in a softer sense," implying the lasting salience of racial

divisions.

　　　Looking for a reason for this continuing importance of race, Chisholm (2004) looked to

the role that teachers play in creating the school environment. She argued that teachers dealt with

the desegregation of schools in essentially three different ways. Some did not advocate for

further inclusion, some advocated for inclusion and upheld high standards without realizing the differing resources available to students, and others pushed for real egalitarianism. With the majority of teachers continuing to be white women in former whites only schools even as the populations within the schools change, the image of whites in power persists. These teachers (perhaps subconsciously) work with a particular cultural script that legitimizes some learners while making others illegitimate (McKinney 2011). The impact of race is also argued to be influential in determining the value that is ascribed to educational attainment (Keswell). The "colour blind" approach to the curriculum, according to Jonathan Jansen (2004), is just another way to make sure that the status quo is maintained.

In other literature on the development of identity within schools, there is a strong emphasis on who succeeds in an institution based on who feels comfortable and "at home" there. Tabane and Human-Vogle (2010) argue that social cohesion can only occur if all students can find a place within the school where they feel comfortable. This becomes more telling if we look at it through the work of Vandeyar (2008), which argues that schools mirror society but also are in the unique position to improve levels of social cohesion. If taken together, these two arguments imply that the areas where people feel safe and at home within the school institution will mirror those areas where people are able to feel safe and "at home" in the society, outside of the school classroom.

Comparison with the United States

Prudence Carter (2012) has recently taken an interesting stance, looking specifically at the similarities in the process of integration between schools in South Africa and those in the United States. This comparison is valid, she argues, because both countries were marked by vast racial inequalities on a social level and attempted to use the education system to remedy this

disparity. By drawing on data from schools in both countries, Carter argues that social

interactions within the school limit the success of integrationist goals. Specifically she looks at

the micro-level interactions between students in schools, and how these interact with the policy

level integration goals. She argues that "though educators may follow the laws, the power

imbued within the socio-cultural realms of schooling can be utilized—either intentionally or not

to undermine the project of integration."

Because the processes of integration within South African schools is similar to that

experienced in comparable institutions in the United States, it is valuable to look at how some

themes developed within the United States can apply to the case as it exists in South Africa. In

South Africa, as in the United States, it seems that an explicitly race driven set of divisions

within society has been (or is in the process of being) rewritten in terms of class divisions.

Schools are no longer necessarily all white or all black, but instead serve students of any race

from a specific class background (with the exception of scholarship students who must learn to

act as if they are part of a higher class). Within this context, race is still an important factor in

determining a student's social identity inside the school institution. Race is not the only factor,

because for students in high school, ways of performing femininity are sometimes as central as

ways of performing race in finding a place within the social environment of the school to feel at

home. In an institution serving particularly privileged students, the hidden curriculum teaches all

students to act in a certain way, but it may also teach students to differentiate themselves based

on their constructed racial, ethnic, class or gender identity.

Private education in South Africa exists at an important juncture of these different sets of

literature, as it simultaneously must deal with desegregation and an apartheid legacy, while

maintaining a history of educating and (re)producing members of an elite ruling class of South

Africa that are expected to act in a certain way. Females within desegregated private institutions provide an especially interesting example of the intersections of race, class and gender identities. In the United States, as in South Africa, elite institutions have opened to those who were previously excluded, but at the same time levels of inequality have increased. This would seem to imply that equality and inclusion are not the same. If we want to understand these increases in inequality, we must look at the groups who are in a state of transformation, which are usually those moving up the social ladder rather than down it.

It is also important to add the literature on this subject through qualitative rather than quantitative data, specifically qualitative data that reflects on the actions and beliefs of teenage learners rather than adults. Quantitative data, of course, can provide some useful information on general social patterns, but numbers certainly do not tell the whole story especially when one wants to understand how social identities are constructed and maintained.

Methodology

My initial contact with SAGS came from a tour organized by my study abroad program, led by the marketing director of the school. When I realized my interest in doing research at this school I got back in contact with the marketing director and she connected me with the headmaster of the school and the head of the high school. After an initial meeting with both administrators, where I explained my interest in observing and talking with high school learners, I was officially granted permission to do research at the school in the form of focus groups, interviews, and classroom observation. The head of the high school was my main contact, informing me of class schedules and briefing teachers on my research at their school.

Initially Mrs. Anderson gave me a schedule of the classes that I was to observe for the first three days. I had told her that I was interested in girls in the high school and I was particularly interested in observing English and History classes (because I assumed that in these classes there would be the most discussion). She also suggested that I observe Art and Life Orientation classes. After three days of this schedule I was allowed more freedom to revisit classes which I found particularly interesting or request access to other classes.

I decided to focus my studies on students in grades 10 and 11, and to focus my classroom observation on English classes because these classes tended to generate the most interaction and interesting discussion.

The bulk of my research was two weeks of non-participant classroom observation and observation during break times and lunch. My first interaction with girls outside of the classroom occurred when an English teacher invited me to a braai at the boarding house on the second day of my research. Graciously, I accepted and accompanied her. I spent this time informally interacting with students and teachers. The grade 10 learners were particularly excited to chat

with me and give me a tour of the boarding establishment. They were excited to gossip about their school and drama and to hear about what it was like to go to high school in the United States. I also took this as an opportunity to get to know teachers better so both they and I would be more comfortable during my classroom observation. I had more informal interaction with the learners during breaks and lunch time, but my non-participant classroom observation was for the most part supplemented with two focus groups with grade 10 students and three focus groups with grade 11 students.

Participation was voluntary in all of these focus groups. One from each grade happened during lunch break. The other grade 10 group happened with boarding students at the boarding house after dinner on a week night. One grade 11 focus group happened during one teacher's English class because she was particularly keen for her students to have an opportunity to chat with me, but the individual students were not forced to participate. In this case, though, it should be noted how the environment was slightly different because their teacher was present in the room the entire time. I did not get the impression that the presence of their teacher caused the students to act noticeably different than their peers did during the other focus groups. The other grade 11 focus group happened during morning break. Students were able to sign up to come to focus groups during the classes that I observed. I noticed that black learners dominated the space during focus groups and during class discussions about race sensitive topics or about the future of their country. To try to lessen the bias and to hear a multitude of opinions I organized my focus groups so that three were mixed race (reflective of the general population of the school), one was majority white and one was majority black. I did this by presenting the sign up list in classes that were not evenly attended by all races. By presenting a sign up sheet at the end of Zulu class I was able to get a majority black group while presenting a sign up sheet to a

predominantly white English class I was able to get the other dynamic. For my mixed focus

groups, in two cases I presented the sign up sheet in mixed English classes, while in the other

case I organized the focus group at the boarding facility (see Appendix B for specific breakdown

of focus groups).

My research was also supplemented by a formal interview with the headmaster, the head

of the high school and one of the Zulu teachers, as well as informal chats with other teachers.

These informal conversations happened during breaks in the teachers' lounge or before and after

a class which I was observing. They would usually happen at the initiative of the teacher as I

attempted to take more of a fly-on-the-wall approach to observation. The formal interviews were

semi-structured. I had a set of questions to follow which I wished to be answered, but it seemed

most helpful and comfortable to let the conversation flow in any direction because my goal was

simply to get their impressions of the school. Only in my interview with the head of the high

school did I give a list of questions prior to the interview.

Limitations of the Study

The information that I gathered for this project was limited in many ways. The primary limitation was time. Having only two weeks for active research, I did not have enough time to come to any definitive conclusions. For the most part I felt that I had free access to any aspect of the school that I found to be interesting; however, there was undoubtedly some degree of bias introduced into this study because of the nature of what exactly teachers and students thought I was doing at the school and how they understood my research. Mrs. Anderson had a particular understanding of my research and had a desire to showcase her school to me in a certain way. Therefore when she was solely responsible for organizing my daily schedule she would emphasize classes that she thought would be "interesting for me," placing me in classes that were particularly (perhaps atypically) racially integrated. Both teachers and students expected me to want to see and hear about certain things. They were quick to tell me which classes I would enjoy, which I would find particularly interesting and which I would undoubtedly find boring. Upon introduction, Mrs. Anderson would explain that I am a student from America studying integration in private school because few people have studied that before. I suppose it is logical that she and the other teachers assumed this is what I was looking at, but it was also unfortunate. In art, for example, the teacher pulled me aside to inform me that her classes usually weren't integrated because black culture and black students' parents didn't see much value in art and therefore they wouldn't enroll. Because some teachers seemed uncomfortable with the level of integration at their school they felt the need to justify the situation as they perceived it.

There was additional bias in terms of the girls who were interested in talking to me. Though I do feel like there was a general interest, as one of the girls in a focus group pointed out in reference to the group of girls who had shown up to my lunchtime focus group:

"You have a bias sample; we're all here because we're clever" (white female, grade 10, focus group).

On her part, this observation was quite astute (and reflective of her cleverness). The girls with whom I spoke had to be responsible enough to remember when and where to meet me and be willing to give up a lunch period. I do not feel as if one particular group of students was excluded from my focus groups. It was only in retrospect that I realized that English classes (where I made initial announcements about focus groups) were segregated by academic ability. It would have been ideal if I had made my announcements for focus groups in classes that were heterogeneous in terms of race and academic ability. Life Orientations, for example, would have been the ideal class in which to make the announcement.

My study was also limited because English classes tended to occur at the same time. I could only observe certain ones, and I did not get to observe the same class more than two or three times. Additionally, I did not get the opportunity to conduct any individual interviews with students. Though the focus groups were interesting and enlightening in terms of generally accepted views on the situation within the school, there may have been issues that girls did not feel comfortable discussing in front of their peers and would have rather spoken with me about individually.

Lastly it should be noted that I was limited by the nature of my appearance as a young, white, American female. Particularly because I was a foreigner, there seemed to be an expectation that I was judging or looking down on the South African culture, specifically the white South Africans.

Research Findings and Analysis

Inside the classrooms at SAGS girls appear to get along well with one another. It would be a challenge to point out any individual or group that is particularly excluded or segregated. All students seem prepared for and engaged in class discussion and lecture. There is no shortage of friendly cooperation. Quickly though, as the bell rings and morning break time begins, it becomes obvious that what is going on inside of the classroom is not necessarily reflective of what was going on outside. In class there was a set schedule of discussion and activity. The classes are very structured, and the girls are very focused. While in class it was safe and comfortable for them to interact with each other because they all stood on mostly common ground and shared common knowledge, during times when the schedule wasn't as defined, like break times or at lunch, the racial re-segregation became clear. At these times it was understood and taken for granted that girls of the same race would flock together because they share a culture and have things in common.

In order to understand where certain groups fit into the school landscape, and how the school as an institution plays a role in shaping certain identities (both shared identities and differentiated ones), it is useful to organize the observations thematically.

The Issue of Language: "You've got to come to Zulu class!"

When I first began my research I was only visiting English, History and Life Orientations classes. As I got to know the students throughout my first week and as they became accustomed to seeing me sitting in the back of their classes, a few Zulu girls pulled me aside to tell me that I must come to their Zulu class. I got the feeling that they were telling me this both because they thought the Zulu class would be interesting for my research (though they only had a vague idea

of what I was studying) and because this was their favorite class, a class in which they felt comfortable and had fun. I approached Mrs. Anderson, who had been arranging all of my class observations, to find out both when the grade 10 and grade 11 Zulu classes would meet and how I could go about gaining access to them. She seemed happy to hear my request and immediately sent an email to the Zulu teacher, though not without making a comment about how I probably shouldn't just drop in because the Zulu people tend to like a bit of notice. I assumed before going to observe the class that it would be mostly black Zulu girls, with perhaps one or two white or Asian girls. All students at SAGS are required to take either Zulu or Afrikaans, choosing which track to follow after grade 5. I first observed the grade 10 Zulu class. There were a handful of Indian girls and one white girl. The rest of the girls were black Zulu girls. From my first observations it was obvious that Zulu class is integral to the success of SAGS as an institution. There has been a good amount written about the importance of creating an environment where all the people involved feel comfortable and "at home" in their institution (Tabane & Human-Vogle, 2010). Zulu class seems, at least superficially, to add a place to SAGS where the Zulu girls feel particularly at home and in power. The Zulu girls are successful within this class and relax into their relationship with their teacher.

There is a continuing issue of language hierarchy within South Africa, generally, and within SAGS, specifically. Zulu is often seen as a class that should only be for girls who speak the language at home, and where only these students can succeed because it is simply "too hard" for the other learners. For non-native Zulu speakers it is often just assumed that Afrikaans will be a better fit and more useful. This subtle ranking of languages creates an underlying hierarchy within the school. As one of the Zulu teachers explained:

> "It is sad for a child who is living in KZN not to be able to make small-talk in Zulu, not to be able to go into the shop and ask for something in Zulu. To have a school cafeteria that has Zulu speaking people, and for these children to go and speak to these people in English, it is weird" (Mrs. S., Zulu teacher).

Though on the surface it seems to be a free choice which language the girls wish to pursue, there is a stigma attached to choosing either language. Afrikaans tends to be favored and encouraged by teachers and administrators, while Zulu is seen, though not explicitly, to be of less importance. The staff and administrators are not oblivious to this structural favoritism. When pushed to discuss what would make her school more inclusive, for example, Mrs. Anderson pointed to the lack of language diversity, explaining that they only make an effort to speak English rather than including Zulu in a more important way. Though this awareness exists, there does not appear to be any strong motivation to change the current state of affairs—with the exception of one Zulu teacher who forces her students to order from and chat with the Zulu-speaking school help in their native language, rather than in English.

The issue of language also came up frequently when discussing the racial divisions and groupings that happen at school during break times.

> "I think it has a lot to do with languages. At breaks and stuff the black girls sit together because they all speak Zulu to each other. Even Afrikaans people, you won't say they're white, you'll say they're Afrikaans. There are still color things that are language things, one hundred percent" (white female, grade 11, focus group).

In addition to affecting the relationships between racial groups at the school, language played a critical role in how the Zulu girls were able to construct their own identity. On one of my first days at the school, in a discussion about what it means for young black women to attend SAGS, a few girls chatted to me about the stigma that comes along with the way they speak. Since they speak with a particular accent they are accused of acting white. One young Zulu woman told me a story of going to the KFC at a local shopping mall and not being served

because she did not order in Zulu. The man working behind the counter assumed that she

couldn't speak the language because she acted and spoke "too white." Throughout my research

many other girls told me stories of having to prove their Zulu-ness by speaking the language. Not

only would girls try to prove this Zulu-ness through speaking in Zulu, but, according to some

students, many black African girls at SAGS would "push" their blackness by emphasizing

stereotypically black African behavior:

> "I find that because this is a privileged school and because of the history of Africans in South Africa—that they were always like put below and now that they are privileged— the black people in our school embrace their blackness more. They push it. They're trying to prove a point" (white girl, grade 11, focus group).

> "People know South African Girls' School girls are snooty, so black girls will try to make a point that they're not coconuts. Girls purposefully try to act as wild as possible" (black Zulu girl, grade 11, focus group).

"Coconut," a term that came up frequently in my research in reference to the black students at

SAGS, describes a girl who is brown on the outside but white on the inside, like a coconut. In

appearances she is "black" but in the way she acts (usually the way she talks) she is

stereotypically "white."

Carolyn McKinney has written extensively on the lingering issue of language in South

African schools and many of her ideas apply accurately to the situation as observed at SAGS.

She writes of how learners attach a certain sense of prestige to English accents that are deemed

to be more "white." She discusses the importance of values attached to language and accents in

youth identity formation in desegregated schools in Johannesburg. At SAGS the issue of accents

does not play a huge role within the school institution (at least in the upper grades) but it

undoubtedly plays a role in the lives of black students outside of school which in turn affects the

way they portray themselves inside of school.

Though it is not necessarily an issue of language, it is also worth-noting here that as the Zulu girls seemed to feel particularly at home with their black Zulu teacher, the Indian girls seemed to feel particularly at home with Mrs. Gupta, the Indian English teacher. There were noticeably more comfortable in this class, relaxed and more often making jokes than in their other classes. I don't think that Mrs. Gupta's English class is as integral to the success of Indian girls as Zulu class is for black Zulu girls, but I do believe that having teachers of races other than white is integral to creating an inclusive environment for all students at SAGS.

Break Time and Racial Segregation

The issue of racial segregation during free time came up frequently in my discussions with students and adults in the school. Most students and adults at the school were aware that this was happening and though they would not immediately identify the divisions as racial, after some discussion most would admit to the race-based nature of the divisions. Everyone with whom I spoke would normalize these divisions. Most explained it by nature of personal preference or cultural difference. Food was also a divisive issue as one teacher explained to me:

> "I think that happens because people do not know each other at all. A Chinese child will not be happy to bring proper Chinese food to school because now she is judged--she eats funny food. And a Zulu child will not sit proudly with a bowl of putu and some beans, or something like that, and an Indian child will be eating her curry sandwiches close to her chest like 'you mustn't see,' but when they have Woolworths, oh, it's like something for show. Maybe that is also why they sit in cliques, because you accept the others like you" (Mrs. S., Zulu teacher).

> Other students explained it in slightly different ways:

> "For all the integration there's also separation. Like at break and stuff. We're all friends, but they feel that they must sit together [people of the same race group]. And that's just because they're more alike to each other. You sit with who you relate to more. They talk to each other in Zulu. They're all very loud and like raucous and stuff. We just sit and they are jumping around" (white girl, grade 10, focus group).

"You can relate to them [people of the same race], because you can talk about stuff. If your parents act this way, it's easier to say my mom did this because then your friend can say my mom did this too" (black Zulu girl, grade 11, focus group).

This idea of racial differences seemed seldom to be discussed explicitly by the girls outside of my questioning. One girl told me a story of a girl explicitly discussing race, which was uncomfortable, because these racial boundaries generally act as unwritten and unacknowledged rules.

"This girl came up and said 'Can I sit with you? Because I'm black…' and we were like 'What are you talking about?'" (white girl, grade 11, focus group).

The idea of racial re-segregation within desegregated schools is common in the literature. Chisholm and Sujee (2006) argue that this happens because there is an important but often unacknowledged difference between the terms desegregation, integration, assimilation and inclusion. They also point out the importance of qualitative data for what one cannot understand based only on statistics of the changing racial composition of schools. They note that almost all integration has happened with black African, coloured or Indian students moving into formerly white-only schools. Therefore the desegregated environment is largely one of assimilation rather than integration or inclusion. It seems, though, as in the case at SAGS, the racial re-segregation during free time is a way for non-white students to resist total assimilation and to stay in touch with whatever they understand as their culture.

Who's Cool? : Social Capital at SAGS

When posed the question to students of what it meant to be cool at SAGS they never had a quick answer. Many would explain to me that there was no one cool girl and that the "cool" people at SAGS weren't the same as in America because not everyone wanted to be cool. A lot of students also explained to me that it was somehow cool to be a teacher's pet or to be

academically successful at SAGS. This story seemed to make sense, but with one large

exception.

From the outside, both within classrooms and during break times the Indian students, on

the whole, seemed to be the least "cool" though they were often academically successful. It

seemed that they weren't cool because, though they did fit the academic expectations, they did to

meet other requirements to be a successful student at SAGS. It would be foolish not to

acknowledge that variation exists within all racial categories, especially perhaps with the Indian

identity which is often connected with religious identity.

> In response to a question of what it means to be successful at SAGS, one girl explained:
>
> "In this school like they don't really encourage individualism. If you don't conform to what the school ethos is or the school image is then you're pretty much an outsider and you won't make it in this school. Like the head girl will never be a very artsy girl. She has to be sporty, clever, Christian, cultural. And to be a teacher's pet in this school, it is quite a good thing, in a weird way. Like if you're down with the teachers people won't diss you" (white girl, grade 11, focus group).
>
> "If you do well in school, and if you achieve great achievements then you are considered cool. The less smart people aren't as cool" (white girl, grade 10, focus group).

This analysis is interesting because it implies something that others would not explicitly discuss.

The culture of SAGS is largely created by the teachers and the adults at the school, because they

are so well respected, and it is a culture which favors a particular type of girl. Even though she is

academically inclined, the Muslim Indian student has a hard time fitting in with this stereotype,

because she won't necessarily play or succeed in sports and participate in other non-academic

activities. As one teacher explained:

> "But I find that, I'm not now being racist (laughs), with the Muslim people they are very much like that [tend to self-segregate]. That is one race that is difficult to break through. I think also with the religion and everything. They will accept you, tolerate you, but to a point. I think maybe their culture is defined by their religion more" (Mrs. S., Zulu teacher).

By looking at those who deviate from the norm and are deemed particularly "uncool" it becomes possible to see the dominant culture of the school. The white culture remains dominant. The most powerful people at SAGS (in terms of administrators, teachers and students) are almost exclusively white. Most of the well-known girls and their families are white. Most of the school functions are planned by and cater to people coming from a white South African culture. There is a long history to this school and it is one that has been dominated by serving white students. As the non-white students attempt to navigate the social hierarchy of the school, they tend to segregate themselves. It seemed to be the case that they would often proudly claim their culture, ethnicity and race.

There is also a general understanding that a certain degree of personal agency will allow you to succeed within the school. Both teachers and administrators will explain that their doors are open and that if the girls need something they simply must come to ask for it.

Though the black African girls also do not seem particularly to fit within the dominant white culture, they hold a very different place in the social hierarchy than the "Indian nerds." The black African girls, though they rarely seemed to have the "whole package" can achieve some level of cool status amongst the student body because of their stereotype of being loud and outgoing. Though this is not necessarily valued by the teachers in an academic setting, teachers and students appreciate the sense of fun that this seems to bring to the classroom and therefore the black African girls can become more "cool" because they are more "social."

The distinction between the perceived cool-ness of the black African and Indian population based on their stereotypes partially explains what it is that SAGS girls learn from attending their institution in terms of what qualities are necessary not just to get by but to

actually succeed within the school. Some girls also noted the importance of social capital outside

of the school institution:

> "Not to survive, but to be up there in the school it's about who you know. Okay like you can do well and stuff but at the end of the day if there's someone who does just as well as another person but they know more people whatever, teachers, families, people outside the school. If your families connected to the school then you get everything" (black Zulu girl, grade 11, focus group).

It seems then that SAGS shapes girls who understand that it is not necessarily only the obvious

qualities that matter. The school is evaluating and teaching more that just academics.

Exceptions

> "It's not bad at this school compared to other schools in Durban" (white girl, grade 11, focus group).

> "Our grade is special. Our groups aren't classified, everyone could sit in another group and you would be fine. There's no group like 'they're so cool, I want to sit with them.' We know it happens, though" (Indian girl, grade 10, focus group).

> "Our grade's one of the best, not joking, look at the matric year, how split are they. Look at the year below us. Our grade is probably the most diverse because basically everyone can walk up to most groups and sit down" (black Zulu girl, grade 11, focus group).

Generally speaking, there are two ways of looking at the idea of the "exception" at

SAGS. There is the idea of the exceptional student or group of students who does not fit certain

stereotypes within the school, and there is the idea of all students as the exception to the norm in

the greater country of South Africa.

It would be foolish not to acknowledge that there were certain times when the general

situation did not apply to individuals. Notably, this was the case with white girls in Zulu class. It

was also the case with some certain girls during break time. Though it is always valuable to try

and find general trends within populations, it is often just as valuable to look at the exceptions to

these generalizations.

In this light it is particularly interesting to look at the girls who cross racial boundaries and the ways they explain this action.

"I hang out with all the black girls and they're not in any of my classes" (white girl, grade 10, focus group).

"All the Indians sit together except me. I mean I'm friends with them, but someone even said to me last year, they asked me why I don't sit with Indians and why I have white friends. I mean it's normal, you know. Sometimes I just have more in common with different kinds of people" (Indian girl, grade 10, focus group).

It seems that the girls who cross from white groups to black or Indian groups do so because they didn't fit in to their original groups, and they choose to deviate. Students would often to point to these examples of exceptions in order to refute the idea that groups were divided on a racial basis. Students would explain that white girls would hang out with black or Indian groups (or vice versa) if they had more in common with that group. While I did observe this happening, understanding it as an "exception" or out of the ordinary only served to further enforce the racialized norms.

In addition to looking at exceptions in this sense, it also should be noted how groups of students tended to understand themselves as exceptions. Frequently the girls would describe their school to me as an exception because it is not as snobbish or stuck-up as comparable institutions. They would also explain their group of friends or their grade as an exception, explaining how they knew bullying or racial divisions or cliques would happen with the lower grades or with the matrics but it wasn't a problem from them. Though I cannot be sure whether this was actually the case and the grade 10 and grade 11 students were particularly less snobbish and less divided than other grades, I can't help but assume that their grades and groups of friends dealt with the same problems that they observed in the other grades. In addition, the admission that their grade or group of friends would have to be particularly special or different to avoid some of the problems

they admitted existed within the school, such as bullying and racial divisions and drama, proves the normalcy and presence of these problems on a whole. This seems reflective of the general attitude of students understanding the problem on an abstract level but not believing that they were a part of the problem on a more personal one. I imagine that this is a general human tendency, but it is interesting to look at how it was manifest within the SAGS population as a way to further understand individual learners' processes of identity formation.

Feeling Comfortable at SAGS: "Don't tell me you don't know—you don't want to know."

When I asked students about other schools in South Africa and about the way SAGS is perceived by these institutions, for the most part this discussion would turn to other similar schools, and those schools' assumptions about SAGS girls (that they are snooty and rich). The conversation never turned to discuss aspects of South Africa that were too drastically different than the privileged experiences that the SAGS girls have had. Because students within SAGS are opinionated and open-minded, girls would often describe their entire country in that way, explaining that their generation is different and will be different when they are in power. Some did realize that the world outside of the SAGS gates could look very different than it does from inside, but for the most part the girls seemed to live in a comfortably within a privileged South African world. Understanding that the girls with whom I spoke were between 15 and 17, it is important to note how heavily their opinions were probably influenced by the opinions of their parents.

Academically, they understand the problems that face the world, but they have a hard time conceptualizing that these problems exist so close to home. In their safe, locked, gated areas it is easy to remain detached and comfortable. This phenomenon is not unique to SAGS.

It is also interesting to look at how SAGS learners reflected on the benefits of growing up

in South Africa. When talking about why they are happy to have grown up in South Africa they

will talk about how aware it has made them:

> "I love SA but there are no opportunities. There's so much more out there. It's a good
> place to grow up. It makes you aware of everything, like social issues, crime, you don't
> go somewhere being oblivious. If you go to America where it's like a lot safer, you wont
> be one of the oblivious people. Very street wise as well and then also like just the
> diversity and different cultures and different animals and things" (white girl, grade 10,
> focus group).

Students seem to explain that an understanding of diversity will come just by being surrounded

by other people whether or not they actually have any interactions with them. Of course, it is true

that growing in South Africa will make you aware of certain things, but it is problematic to think

that just by growing up in this place one gains some special understanding of diversity in the

rainbow nation.

Mrs. S., the Zulu teacher, also reflected on the close-mindedness of students and people

living in KZN.

> "I used to get mad when I worked at [a different private religious school] when people
> said 'oh we didn't know.' I said, I mean you live in Durban, I live in Durban. Don't tell
> me you didn't know—you didn't want to know—it was comfortable for you not to know.
> I think it's just fear" (Mrs. S., Zulu teacher).

The issue of being "comfortable" and "safe" seems to be at the center of this discussion.

As Richard Ballard (2004) explains, it is natural for humans to attempt to find comfort zones

within which it is possible for us to "be ourselves." Specifically Ballard examines white peoples'

continued attempts to find places in which they can feel comfortable in the new South Africa. He

argues that white people deal with the new state of South Africa in a variety of ways:

assimilation, emigration, semigration (creation of self-contained, segregated communities within

the country), and integration. He argues that it is in any of these ways that white people come to

feel comfortable and safe within South Africa. Ballard also discusses the effects of creating a Europe in Africa, a specific place in which white people could feel secure being themselves. He argues that while racism is no longer as explicit as it once was, "defensive identity-making processes have continued " (55). He notes that historically acceptance of other races was based on their conformance to the cultural norms and standards established by the "host" white population. This led to a situation where blacks at the privileged end of society could be deemed as acceptable by whites while those at the bottom would be racially segregated. This type of assimilation may appear to be a move away from apartheid segregation but really only gives more power and weight to white control. He points out that the fear of mixing that was once a part of the governmental agenda has now been privatized.

For girls at South African Girls' School there is a sense of being separated from the outside country. This comes at least in part form a belief that SAGS is a world-class, first-world institution existing within a third-world country. This will obviously create dissonance in the way that girls are able to form identities and understand the world around them. Though girls are able to have a secure sense of self within the institution of SAGS, many are not sure whether they want to have a future in South Africa. They sometimes attribute this to high crime rates or lack of opportunity. These problems threaten the individual's ability to continue to have a secure sense of self. The U.K., Australia and the U.S. (the latter two being former British colonies that no longer have a majority indigenous population) were the most popular destinations if the student did not want to remain in South Africa. Though this is not surprising it is indicative of how the identity and understanding of self that they have developed within SAGS only exists within the institution. They do not feel comfortable or as if they belong in their country.

> "I think we're saying that we want to leave now for now because we've seen too much. So many things have been exposed to us from such a young age that we see a different side to maybe what you see. And although our place looks so beautiful, and we have the best stadium and landmarks and an amazing president—well, ex-president—who's done amazing things for us and he's world-renowned. But for us now, because we've seen so much, we don't know how to handle it anymore" (white girl, grace 11, focus group).

What Will the Future Look Like?

Though racism is no longer an explicit issue at SAGS, race is still the elephant in the room. Assumptions of racial difference continue to pervade identity formation and cross-cultural understanding. This remaining salience of racialized understandings seemed especially noticeable when students would talk about the future of SAGS. In answering a question of whether the kind of racial groupings that exist now would continue to exist in the future, one student explained:

> "It's getting less and less but I think that element might always be there, naturally, subconsciously even if you don't mean it to be there" (Indian female, grade 10, focus group).

The existence of inherent racial differences would also come up when talking about interracial dating:

> "I don't think I would date a black guy, I think I would be friends, I don't know like maybe I would. Like I'll say like if they're good looking or not but like I don't see them in that way sort of thing. I don't think my parents would be happy with it to be very honest" (white female, grade 10, focus group).

> "I wouldn't date someone that's... I wouldn't date a white or a coloured or a Chinese, or a black person or anything. I mean I just wouldn't. I don't know I just wouldn't. I would be friends though" (Indian female, grade 10).

The fact that these understandings of difference exist so fundamentally unquestioned is indicative of the future of SAGS and of South Africa on a whole. Integration and social transformation are obviously slow processes and change cannot be expected to happen within

one generation, but true interracial and intercultural understanding will not happen until individuals begin to accept that the differences are not "natural" and that they are reflective of certain societal inequalities. The inability of girls to articulate why exactly they would not personally date someone of another race indicates some level of remaining racial stereotyping. Further, there were black Zulu girls with whom I spoke who explained that they would be open to the idea of dating a white guy; two even told me that they had older siblings who were married to white men or women. Of course my experience talking to this handful of girls can not be generalized to come to any larger conclusions but it is interesting to note and may be taken as indicative of the remaining "white is right" mentality.

When it came to discussions of the political context of South Africa and feelings as citizens of this country, almost all of the girls were proud to be from their country. They saw growing up in a country as diverse as South Africa to be an advantage for them in the future. Many would complain about the stereotypes of being from Africa that exist in other parts of the world (for example, that they aren't civilized or that they live in huts), but they are proud to be from where they are from. Simultaneously most girls expressed the desire to study or work abroad at some point in their future.

SAGS students were not afraid to criticize the government. Many would complain about the policies and corruption of the ANC. Some were proud to pledge their support to the DA, others saw reasons to remain loyal to the ANC. Most though were fed up with the inadequacies of the government. Hope and belief persists that the future will be different. Most girls blame the fact that the current government grew up under apartheid for the sustained inequalities of the system. They do not see the infrastructure entrenched in their society and the world that will systematically privilege the white and the wealthy. They tend to believe that their generation, on

a whole, is different and will not make the same mistakes of the past. When I asked if they thought SAGS would largely be the same in the future, for example if they were to send their children there one day, most girls thought there would be no major changes to the school.

Poised and Articulate Young Ladies

Though it was only a marginal observation in my study, it is valuable to look at the gender normative expectations of SAGS learners. SAGS prides itself on producing respectful, intelligent and poised young ladies. Beyond the fact that their school uniform is a dress and that they are not allowed to eat or drink while standing up in their uniform, the hidden curriculum shapes the girls so that they have a certain understanding of how they should act as young ladies. On the day of giving out the invitations to the matric dance, for example, all seniors brought in high heels to wear with their uniforms instead of their usual shoes. Though this idea did not seem to be explicitly supported by the staff, it still represented a certain way of acting that is accepted among the students. There is a push towards creating women who will be wives and mothers. Though girls do not think that having a boyfriend or dating is part of being a successful or popular student at SAGS, it appears that there is certain social capital that comes from being a traditionally attractive female. Being invited to many matric dances, for example, can be a major status symbol. There remains an expectation that learners will succeed in a particularly feminine way.

Conclusion

SAGS, as an institution, is successful. It shapes articulate and respectful young women with a love of learning. Though the nature of the institution does create certain racialized divisions, it is not ultimately the fault of the individuals working within the school. SAGS must exist within a larger context of society. Schools are a useful place for social change to occur, but the environment within the classroom and within the school cannot by itself fix the inequalities that exist in the nation outside of the classroom. Change can happen inside of schools, but it cannot only happen in the schools. The responsibility for shaping a young and cohesive population cannot be left squarely on the shoulders of schools, especially when it is only the schools at the top that see even superficial integration.

It is especially interesting to look at how SAGS, as an integrated school, creates space for many different types of learners. There are a variety of ways to succeed and feel at home within the institution, but this feeling of belonging within the SAGS population does not necessarily relate to feeling secure and at home within South Africa as a country. This is reflected in the fact that many students wish to leave the country.

That the girls who graduate from South African Girls' School and stay in South Africa may be the future leaders of this country is a reason to be hopeful. This does not mean that there are not problematic aspects of the school, because the battle against racism and racial divisions is an ongoing one that will never be definitively won or lost.

Battersby (2004) argues that acceptance of nonwhites into formerly whites-only institutions happens only because the nonwhites accept and adhere to the elite cultural practice of the whites. He sees two possible futures from this point: in one this assimilation will lead to

segregation by class rather than by race, while in the other possible scenario the current

generation of code switchers attending former white-only schools will serve as a "pioneer

generation" and will eventually create a world where enough nonwhites will gain enough status

to alter the current accepted (white) cultural norms. "Code-switching" refers to students who are

able to act in different ways in different environments. Most commonly it is used to describe

students who switch languages or dialects depending on their surroundings (McKinney &

Soudien, 2010).

In one of our last meetings, the head of the high school at SAGS explained to me that she

didn't think that SAGS had many of the kind of girls who were going to change South Africa.

She explained that one would be able to find more of that type of girl in government schools.

This statement may be true in many ways, but the young women at SAGS maintain the ability to

change their country. While I do not think that Mrs. Anderson was intentionally taking agency

away from her girls, she was belittling the importance of the code-switching that the black

African girls at her school must perform, even if they are from the upper class.

Though the school may appear to be racially integrated, representative of the different

perspectives and cultures that exist in South Africa, there really only exists one culture within the

school. The dominant culture is one of South African privilege and the only girls who must

stretch to fit that definition are those that don't already come from privileged families. The girls

who are part of the dominant culture are rarely pushed outside of their comfort zone or

challenged to understand what it really means to live in a country where there are 11 official

languages and many different cultures. Unity is created based on certain shared experiences and

expectations in the classroom but this unity is only superficial and it does not appear to last after

the bell rings.

SAGS is still in the process of transition. There is a threat that they will forget that the job is not over and accept the state of the school as it is. All institutions within South Africa, but especially integrated educational institutions, must actively work to come to terms with a history of racial oppression in order to address the race elephant in the room. It seems that the students are willing and ready to talk about and break down the barriers, but it is the lasting fears and realities of the world outside of their school that make the girls' experiences within the school less meaningful. If a student wants to be successful at SAGS, she must abide by existing rules, regulations and expectations even if these subtly discriminate against learners who are not from the dominant culture.

Recommendations for Further Study

A more thorough examination of private schools should be undertaken, especially through a comparison study of similar institutions to see which qualities are specific and which are universal. It would also be interesting to conduct research at an all boys' school. Because of the gendered differences that exist within South Africa, a comparison of the ways that the hidden curriculum of elite schools shapes boys and girls to act in different (or similar) ways in society would be enlightening.

There were many holes within this research. It would be helpful to interview more teachers. It would also be informative to spend a more extensive amount of time interacting with the girls outside of the classroom. A year-long study at a private school would be able to shed more light on the ways in which the integrated school is able to create a cohesive atmosphere. It would be interesting to spend more time observing after school activities and to have the time to talk with more teachers. The idea of finding a place within the school institution where one feels at home is particularly interesting and it would be valuable to undertake more research on how exactly this happens and how this process interacts with the process of feeling comfortable and secure within the larger community of South Africa.

There is a notable lack of discussion of the experiences of coloured students in this study. The population of coloured students at SAGS is very small, and there are no coloured teachers; however, it would be interesting to look at their process of identity formation within the school institution.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Sample observation schedule:

Monday, April 22, 2013

7h30	Arrive at SAGS
7h40 – 8h10	Observe all-school assembly in Hall
8h10 – 9h10	Observe grade 11 English class
9h10 – 10h10	Observe grade 10 History class
10h10-10h30	Observe students during break time/chat with teachers in the Teachers' Lounge
10h35-11h35	Observe grade 11 Life Orientation class
11h35-12h35	Gather notes and sit in Library/Observe grade 10 English class
12h35-13h30	Wander around the campus during lunch, chat with various groups of students
13h30-14h30	Observe grade 11 Zulu class

Appendix B

Focus group and interview schedule (for anonymity's sake the racial breakdown of the groups is not exact, but it is realistic):

	Grade	*Date*	*Time & Location*	*Number of Students*	*Racial Breakdown*
Focus Group #1	Grade 11	April 23, 2013	Lunch break (empty classroom)	6	2 white girls, 1 Korean girl, 3 black African girls
Focus Group #2	Grade 10	April 23, 2013	After dinner (foyer of boarding facility)	5	3 white girls, 2 black African girls
Focus Group #3	Grade 11	April 24, 2013	Morning break (empty classroom)	10	8 black African girls, 2 white girls
Focus Group #4	Grade 11	April 24, 2013	Miss Smith's English class	12	5 white girls, 6 black African girls, 1 Indian girl
Focus Group #5	Grade 10	April 24, 2013	Lunch break (empty classroom)	5	4 white girls, 1 Indian girl

	Interviewee Title	*Date*
Interview with Mrs. S.	Zulu teacher	April 24, 2013
Interview with Mrs. Anderson	Head of High School	April 24, 2013
Interview with Mr.Smith	Headmaster of SAGS	April 26, 2013

Appendix C

Interview and focus group guides

Topics to be explored with student focus groups:

- What would be the key words to describe your school to someone who doesn't know anything about Durban Girls' College? Is there a stereotype or a stigma attached to having gone to this school?
- What do you like/dislike about your school? If you could change anything, what would you change? Are you happy that you go to DGC? Would you send your daughter here?
- What's your favorite class and why? Least favorite?
- Are you friends with any people from other schools? How do you know them? What's your relationship like?

- After finishing at DGC what would a "successful life" look like?
- Do you think your school is inclusive? If yes example, if no, example and what could be done to make it more inclusive?
- What do you think about cliques at this school? How are they divided?
- Do you ever feel excluded? Do you think there are any groups that are particularly excluded? Examples?
- How do you become cool? Who is cool? How can you tell who is cool?
- When/where at DGC do you feel most comfortable?
- Are you happy to be at a girls only school? How do you meet boys? Interracial dating?
- Who sits where at lunch?

- Are you proud to be from South Africa?
- How united is your nation? Do you think your generation is more unified than your parents' generation? What do you think is standing in the way of a unified country? Do you think this country has a positive future?
- What do you think of the government? How do you think it should change? How do you think it will change?
- What does it mean for South Africa to be a democracy? Is it a good thing? Why?
- What do you think are some of the key challenges facing young South Africans?

Topics to be explored with teachers and administrators:

- Tell me a little bit about yourself/your background/how and why you ended up working at DGC
- What do you think makes DGC different from other similar schools? Why did you want to come work here?

- What do you think are the highlights of an education at DGC?
- What is the place of private schooling in South Africa?
- What qualities make a student particularly successful at DGC?

- How has the school changed over the time you have worked here? How do you think the school will change in the coming years?
- What changes do you think need to be made?
- How do you feel about the role of schools in promoting integration and social transformation? Do you think your school is successful at promoting this?

- What do you think are some of the key challenges facing young South Africans?
- In what ways do you think that your school is inclusive? / what do you think could be done to make it more inclusive?/what do you think about the role of schools in promoting a unified society?
- Are there any groups that you feel are particularly excluded? Where can you see the divisions?