



Disadvantaged Black- African learners’ experiences of social inclusion and exclusion in former model-C schools in Pretoria: A socio-economic perspective

By

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DECLARATION

I, **Philani Lloyd Shezi**, student number; **217018008** declare that:

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STATEMENT BY THE SUPERVISOR

As the candidate’s supervisor, this dissertation is submitted with my approval.

.....

Dr Antoinette D’Amant

.....

Date

DEDICATION

*“Those we love don’t go away,
They walk beside us every day.
Unseen, unheard but always near.
Still loved, still missed and very dear.”*
-Unknown

I dedicate this study to my late brothers, Sakhile Lionel Shezi (17 June 1993 – 01 May 2022) and Sanele Lincoln Shezi (15 May 1991 – 15 May 2022), whom I lost soon after I began this Master of Education journey.

Life is no longer the same without you. Some days are better than others. On better days, I cherish all the memories we shared and the much-needed strength that you gave me to complete this study, and on sad days, I always remember that you walk beside me every day.

YOUR SOULS CONTINUE TO LIVE ON!



ABSTRACT

The reimagining of Inclusive Education in modern society moves beyond the static positioning of understanding inclusion as the integration of learners with learning barriers but as inclusion and integration of disadvantaged, marginalised, and vulnerable learners. Research reveals that the lived experiences of disadvantaged Black-African learners enrolled in former white-only (ex-Model C) schools in South Africa do not mirror the robust legislative and transformative policy frameworks that guide Inclusive Education. The learners' experiences have been met with hesitation, ignorance, and reluctance, resulting in exclusion, marginalisation, and stigmatisation. Using the concept of Inclusive Education and Crenshaw's Theory of Intersectionality as a framework lens, this qualitative study takes a new turn to Inclusive Education and seeks to establish how disadvantaged Black-African learners experience social inclusion and exclusion in ex-Model C schools in Pretoria and further explore how such experiences (social inclusion and exclusion) inform their overall schooling journey.

Seeing the world as being shaped by political, cultural, and socio-economic context, this study used a critical paradigm to engage seventeen grades 10 and 11 black-African learners who were selected using the purposive sampling technique from two ex-Model C schools in Pretoria chosen as research sites. Using three data collection methods: Photo elicitation, focus group discussions, and individual semi-structured interviews, the study gained firsthand data that allowed access to participants insights for responses to the two critical research questions. The data was analysed using the six steps of thematic analysis, which yielded three broad themes. Each theme delves into how race and low socio-economic status form an intricate interplay of social inclusionary and exclusionary experiences and how these experiences inform the schooling journey of Black-African learners in ex-Model C schools.

This study found that in search of quality education, Black-African learners venture into uncharted waters with multifaceted experiences that are both inviting and uninviting. The study reveals that Black-African learners acknowledge the quality of teaching, wider extra-curricular options, and social services as contributing to their social inclusionary experiences. However, the interconnected complexities of race, language, and cultural differences continue unabated. Class and racial disparities continue to provide a platform for politics of the school uniform and increased incidents of classism and class-related stereotypes resulting in perceived vulnerability and

psychosocial challenges. Despite these unwelcoming experiences, the study reveals how the participants demonstrate an agency to navigate the space and resist their marginalised identities. This included developing a network of friends with a shared struggle for affirmation and (Re)constructing identity and voice to increase one's sense of belonging.

Based on these findings, the study concludes with implications that pave the way for more inclusive and informed support systems that are culturally responsive - enacting school-based Continuous Professional Teacher Development (CPTD) programs that allow flexibility to respond to individual learners' abilities, needs, and interests while honouring inclusive policies. As part of continuous curriculum transformation and development, researchers can explore more ways of enacting inclusive pedagogy and cultivating professional and authentic relationships that strategically leverage power, learner voices, and efficacy needed to meet the educational needs of all learners.

KEYWORDS: Inclusion, Exclusion, ex-Model C schools, Black-African, intersectionality, Inclusive Education, race, class.

ISIFINGQO

Ukucatshangelwa kabusha Kwemfundo Ebandakanyayo (i-IE) emphakathini wanamuhla kudlulela ngale kokuma kokuqonda ukufakwa njengokuhlanganiswa kwabafundi abanezithiyo zokufunda kodwa njengokufakwa nokuhlanganiswa kwabafundi ababencishwe amathuba, ababukelwa phansi, nabasengozini. Izincwadi ezitholakalayo ziveza ukuthi izipiliyoni zabafundi abamnyama base-Afrika abavela ekilasini eliphansi lezenhlalo-mnotho ababhalise ezikoleni ezazinabamhlophe bodwa (ababeyimodeli C) eNingizimu Afrika azifani nemithetho eqinile nezinhlaka zenqubomgomo eziguqulayo eziqondisa i-IE. Okuhlangenwe nakho kwabafundi kuhlangatshezwe nokungabaza, ukungazi, kanye nokungabaza, okuholele ekukhipheni inyumbazane, ukucwaswa, kanye nokucwaswa. Kusetshenziswa umqondo we-Inclusive Education (IE) kanye nethiyori ye-Intersectionality kaCrenshaw njengelensi yohlaka, lolu cwaningo lwekhwalthethivu luthatha ithuba elisha ku-IE futhi lufuna ukuthola ukuthi abafundi abamnyama base-Afrika abangathathi ntweni bakuthola kanjani ukufakwa emphakathini kanye nokungafakwa ezikoleni ezaziyi-Model C ePitoli futhi lihlale ukuthi ulwazi olunjalo (ukufakwa komphakathi nohambo lwabo lokukhishwa esikoleni lulonke lukwazisa kanjani.

Ngokubona umhlaba ulolongwa umongo wezepolitiki, amasiko, kanye nenhlalo-mnotho, lolu cwaningo lusebenzise ipharadaymu ebucayi ukuze kubandakanye abafundi abansundu base-Afrika bebanga le-10 nele-11 abaqokwe kusetshenziswa indlela yesampula eyinhloso ezikoleni ezimbili ezaziyimodeli C ePitoli ezikhethwe njengezizinda zocwaningo. Kusetshenziswa izindlela ezintathu zokuqoqa idatha: Ukunxenxa izithombe, izingxoxo zamaqembu okugxilwe kuwo, kanye nezingxoxo ezingahleliwe, ucwaningo luzitholele mathupha idatha evumela ukufinyelela emibonweni yabahlanganyeli ukuze uthole izimpendulo zemibuzo emibili yocwaningo olubucayi. Idatha yahlaziywa kusetshenziswa izinyathelo eziyisithupha zokuhlaziywa kwetimu, okuveze izindikimba ezintathu ezibanzi. Indikimba ngayinye idingida ukuthi ubuhlanga nesimo senhlalo-mnotho esiphansi kwakha kanjani ukusebenzisana okuyinkimbinkimbi kokuhlangenwe nakho okubandakanya umphakathi kanye nokungabandakanywa nokuthi lezi zipiliyoni zilwazisa kanjani uhambo lwesikole lwabafundi abamnyama base-Afrika ezikoleni ezaziyimodeli C.

Kuyathakazelisa ukuthi lolu cwaningo luthole ukuthi ekufuneni imfundo esezingeni eliphezulu, abafundi abamnyama base-Afrika bangena emanzini angaziwa anolwazi oluningi olukhangayo

futhi olungamemi. Lolu cwaningo luveza ukuthi abafundi bama-Afrika abamnyama bayalivuma ikhwalithi yokufundisa, izinketho ezibanzi ze-extra-curricular, kanye nezinsizakalo zezenhlalakahle njengokunikela ekuhlengenwe nakho kwabo okubandakanya umphakathi. Nokho, ubunkimbinkimbi bokwehluka kohlanga, ulimi, namasiko buyaqhubeka ngokunganqamuki. Ukwehlukana kwezigaba nezinhlanga kuyaqhubeka nokuhlinzeka ngenkundla yepolitiki yomfaniswano wesikole kanye nezigameko ezandayo zokuhlukana ngokwezigaba kanye nezinkolelo-ze ezihlobene nekilasi okuholela ekubonakaleni sengozini kanye nezinseselele ezingokwengqondo nezenhlalo. Ngaphandle kwalokhu kuzizwisa okungamukelekile, ucwaningo luveza ukuthi ababambiqhaza babonisa kanjani i-ejensi ukuze bazulazule esikhaleni futhi bamelane nobunikazi babo obucwaswayo. Lokhu kwakuhlanganisa ukwakha inethiwekhi yabangane ngomzabalazo owabiwe wokuqinisekisa kanye (Re) nokwakha ubuwena nezwi ukuze kwandiswe umuzwa womuntu wokuba ngowabanye.

Ngokusekelwe kulokhu okutholakele, ucwaningo luphetha ngemithelela evula indlela yezinhlelo zokusekela ezibandakanya wonke umuntu nezinolwazi ezisabela ngokwesiko - ezisungula izinhlelo ezisekelwe esikoleni ezithi Continuous Professional Teacher Development (CPTD) ezivumela ukuguquguquka kokuphendula emakhonweni, izidingo, kanye nezithakazelo zomfundi ngamunye kuyilapho kuhlonishwa izinqubomgomo ezibandakanya wonke umuntu. Njengengxenye yoguquko oluqhubekayo nokuthuthukiswa kwekharikhulamu, abacwaningi bangahlola izindlela eziningi zokwenza izifundo zokufundisa ezibandakanya bonke abantu kanye nokuhlakulela ubudlelwano bomsebenzi nobuqiniso obuthuthukisa amandla ngamasu, amazwi abafundi, kanye nempumelelo edingekayo ukuze kuhlangekanywe nezidingo zemfundo zabo bonke abafundi.

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Now faith is the assurance of things we hope for and being certain of what we don't see

Hebrews 11:1

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

B-BBEE	Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment
CPTD	Continuous Professional Teacher Development
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DoE	Department of Education
Ex	Former
FET	Further Education and Training
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GDE	Gauteng Department of Education
HSSREC	Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
IE	Inclusive Education
NEPA	National Education Policy Act
NSSF	National Norms and Standards for School Funding
NSC	National Senior Certificate
NSNP	National School Nutrition Programme
POA	Plan of Action
RCL	Representative Council of Learners
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SASA	South African Schools Act 84 of 1996
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SEN	Special Education Needs
SGB	School Governing Body
SMT	School Management Team
SSC	Sandstone College
StatsSA	Statistics South Africa
TPSA	The Pebble Stone Academy
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation
US	United States of America
WP6	White Paper 6

Chapter One

Experiences of social inclusion and exclusion of disadvantaged Black-African learners in former model-c schools: Introduction to the study

1.1 Introduction

“We don’t have to engage in grand, heroic actions to participate in the process of change. Small acts, multiplied by millions of people, can transform the world”

-Howard Zinn

Driven by the desire to explore the experiences (inclusionary and exclusionary) of Black-African learners in ex-Model C schools, this chapter begins with the above quote from the late famous American historian and philosopher, Howard Zinn. Poverty and inequality reports from the World Bank (2018) found South Africa to be one of the most unequal countries in the world in relation to race and class. This is supported by a considerable amount of literature that has shown that income inequality in South Africa is racialised. Black-African people are primarily marginalised in all aspects of life, which has resulted in most Black-Africans being stratified in the lower socio-economic class due to limited opportunities and participation afforded to them (Mahlatji, 2023). The Black-African race and low socio-economic class are marginalised social identities have a detrimental impact on the lives and schooling journey of Black-African learners, especially those that are enrolled in resourceful and high fee-paying schools (known as ex-Model C schools). These learners are considered ‘other’ since they do not form part of the majority group (Cross-Barnet & McDonald, 2015). Recently, studies (Qwabe, 2020; Amzat & Maigari, 2021; Cote, 2022; Cavallieri & Chwalisz, 2020) have shown that due to their vulnerability, these learners are mostly likely to face exclusion, discrimination, bullying, or victimisation, which could result in drug use to cope with the trauma, poor performance, unruly behaviour or even dating older males/females for economic benefits, which may also result in sexual assaults.

This chapter begins by including the (above) quote in connection to Adam and Bell (1997, p3-4), who believe that “social justice education is both a process and a goal.” This study is approached with the understanding that it serves as a process and a goal of change. Hopefully, this ‘small act’ (my study), offers the opportunity to re-imagine inclusion in education and possibly provide insights that will encourage thousands of other people within and outside the education sector to

continue or begin with ‘small acts’. These small acts will be multiplied to transform South African education, and then to the rest of the world, so that ALL learners, particularly disadvantaged black-African learners, receive quality education and thoroughly enjoy their schooling journey free from any form of discrimination, marginalisation, or exclusion.

This qualitative study offers insights into how to shift ‘power over’ the marginalised from the hands of the privileged to ‘power with’ those who are underprivileged. This chapter begins by first providing a background and context of the study. It then offers a rationale for the need of the study and outlines the focus and purpose of the study. The research questions and objectives of the study will link closely to the aim and purpose of the study. This chapter also discusses the significance of this study, clarifies the fundamental concepts used in the study, and concludes by providing an overall overview of all the chapters.

1.2 Background and context of the study

Apartheid resulted in systemic racial and class segregation (Ellis, 2019). The Bantu Education Act disadvantaged black children ensuring that black children mostly attended township-based schools with overcrowded classrooms, a lack of teaching and learning resources, and poor learning infrastructure (Gallo, 2020 & Kennemer et al., 2019). In contrast, white children attended schools that were primarily based in urban areas with quality infrastructure, sporting facilities, and better teaching and learning resources (Bayat et al., 2014).

The historic event of the first democratic election of 1994 resulted in the transformation and redesigning of the whole education system of South Africa (Christie, 2020; Mouton, Louw & Strydom, 2012), aiming for more significant equity, broader participation, and inclusion of previously disadvantaged groups in South African schools. The former minister of basic education, Angie Motshekga, claimed that the new inclusive policies focused on healing the social injustices of the past and giving all learners an equal opportunity to improve their quality of life while recognising their full potential (Department of Education, 2012). The Access to Free and Quality Education for all (Department of Education, 2003) and White Paper six on Inclusive Education and Training of 2001 have introduced full inclusion and participation of all learners irrespective

of race, social class, sexual orientation, gender, ability, and nationality. These policies aim for equal access to quality education for all learners and strive to leave no one behind regardless of their social stratification.

The right to select a school of choice which came with new educational policies such as the Admission Policy of National Education Policy Act (NEPA) of 1996, resulted in many black learners moving to historically white schools as they believed that this provided quality education with better-qualified teachers, good infrastructure and better teaching and learning resources, compared to under-resourced township schools (Woolman & Fleisch, 2006). These historically “whites only” schools, known now as ex-Model C schools, are fee-paying schools (Motala et al., 2009; Christie & McKinney, 2017). In the wake of the admission policy for ordinary public schools which states that learners should be admitted to a school and may not be denied access to school or any other schooling activities despite the parents/legal guardians inability to pay the required school fees, the number of learners from the lower-socio economic class moving to ex-Model C schools has increased (Van der Merwe, 2011).

Langhout, et al. (2007) describes social class as a combination of economic, social, and cultural capital. With learners from different economic groups now integrated into one schooling space in ex-Model C schools, the schooling environment, being a microcosm of the greater society, inevitably mirrors class differences of unequal economic, social, and cultural capital, among learners and could very well manifest the power relations that go hand in hand with these forms of differences. Cele (2018) argues that classism indeed manifests in numerous ways in South African schools, and this inevitably negatively affects the educational success of learners.

Despite all the policies put in place to protect the rights of all learners in schools to full and equal participation and a quality education, there is still a noticeable gap in protecting these rights of learners in learners from the lower and working socio-economic class.

1.3 Rationale of the Study

This study is motivated by three primary reasons: personal experiences, professional experiences, and scholarly reasons. Below, I discuss all three reasons that will justify the study's research questions, aims, and objectives.

1.3.1 Personal justifications

In my years of schooling, I attended primary and secondary schooling in an ex-Model C school. I will reflect primarily on my secondary school experiences, as the most personal justification emanates from such experiences.

I attended a secondary school in one of the middle-class suburbs of Durban, the third largest city in South Africa. Like most ex-Model C schools, my secondary school was fee-paying with a vibrant, modern urban culture. The school was well-resourced with modern facilities, such as a library and science laboratory. It offered specialised subjects, which included Arts and Design, Hospitality, Drama, and Civil Technology. The school had sporting facilities and offered soccer, tennis, netball, rugby, choir, and athletics as extra-curricular activities conducted after school and on Saturdays. The school catered to all racial categories and had learners from other nearby suburbs and townships. Most learners who lived near the school walked to and from the school, while others were dropped off by parents and used scholar transport, which dropped them and picked them up again at the school gate every morning and afternoon. Learners always looked forward to another school day to continue with the school's exciting activities and competitions. However, my reality was different from the lived experiences of most learners.

While attending school, I travelled to school by train from the township of uMlazi, south of Durban. *Umlazi* is the third largest township in the country, which lies on the periphery of Durban and is occupied by lower-class Black-African people due to the Apartheid agenda and racial segregation policies such as the Group Areas Act of 1950. I had to walk for about 30 minutes to catch the earliest train, around six o'clock in the morning, and then walk again for about an hour from the train station to school. Arriving at school on time was always challenging because trains were unreliable and inevitably late. Without trying to understand my late arrival, I was once asked by the deputy principal at the gate, "Why don't you attend a school that is closer to home because

you're too lazy to wake up early?" and then I was punished with garden work and being given a trash bag to pick up trash in and outside the school grounds. Leaving home early, only to arrive late at school and be punished, would always discourage and disempower me. After dealing with a school management team member (SMT) at the gate, I would shamefully walk to class and then be labelled as a 'latecomer,' which made me feel inferior to most of the learners and took away my interest in any school-related work and activities.

My disadvantaged socio-economic background meant that I would sometimes leave home on an empty stomach and, in fear of being labelled 'poor,' be ashamed to take sandwiches offered to disadvantaged learners at school. From my early grades, I lost interest in sports because I knew that I would not be able to stay in after school for practice due to transport, hunger, lack of energy, and arriving home late, which would potentially expose me to crime. Understanding my background, I knew that I would not give my parents letters for excursions and civvies day, where we had to pay money to wear our home clothes. I knew that my clothes would not meet the quality and standard of the clothes worn by most learners. When we had to fill in forms and choose subjects to enroll in the Further Education and Training (FET) phase, I knew that I was interested in choosing Design as one of the subjects. However, I could not because it required more resources and additional fees to buy working resources, such as paint, overalls, and paintbrushes. I was already on fee remission because my parents could not afford to pay the high school fees, and they were already making ends meet by ensuring that I had a train ticket for each week. I understood that my parents would not be able to attend the evening parents' meetings because they depended on unreliable public transport, which was expensive and mostly unavailable in the evenings.

These traumatic experiences resulted in me being a victim of marginalisation, discrimination, exclusion, and bullying. I began to hate school even more, resulting in my academic performance dropping drastically. My character changed, and I became silent at a very young age. I believed that the teachers and learners would always use my disadvantaged background to bring me down and correct any of my wrongdoings. I had to quickly navigate and adjust to the space that was made to accommodate learners from the middle and upper classes. I had to stop being naughty because teachers and other learners would use my disadvantaged background as a disciplinary measure. I would be asked if my conduct was part of my culture/race or associated with the area

that I came from. My experience was not unique, as I observed similar comments made to learners from similar backgrounds.

As part of trying to minimise such hurtful comments and treatment, I began to isolate myself at school. I put on a fake smile to mask pain and poverty. I started selling cigarettes in grade nine at a local carwash and *shisanyama* (a Zulu term used in the township to describe an area where people meet mainly on Friday afternoons and weekends to enjoy drinks and braaied meat). This practice was risky behaviour and traumatising as I witnessed crime and violence in the evenings and early hours of the morning while conducting business. I remained vulnerable because of my young age in a rough, alcohol-consuming space reserved for adults. However, I could then use the profit to buy a school uniform, buy lunch at school, and top up the train ticket money for a bus. After this, I regained the strength and courage to work on my studies and pursue a teaching career to become an inclusive practitioner who advocates changing the narrative of impoverished learners, particularly those who remain marginalised because they are black. My experience as a Black-African from a poor socio-economic background served as the basis to motivate this study.

1.3.2 Professional justification

After completing my bachelor's degree, I moved to the capital city of Pretoria in 2021 and began working as a high school teacher in an ex-Model C school. Driven by my traumatic childhood experiences, I was committed to creating a safe, inclusive classroom that embraced diversity. However, I was always alarmed by the social intolerance that teachers and learners had towards the minority of learners who travelled from the nearby townships. These learners are mostly considered as 'not serious in their schoolwork' because they are mostly absent from school, arrive late, do not partake in after-school sports practice, and parents do not usually attend the evening parents' meetings. I began to realise that the existence of these learners remains undermined, disregarded, and disrespected by both learners and teachers. Instead, their existence perpetuated the dynamics of unequal power relations and social norms of exclusion of the minority and the previously marginalised groups.

When I had the opportunity to informally engage with some of these learners who were considered 'not serious in their schoolwork,' I began to realise that these learners were racially Black-African,

came from poor socio-economic backgrounds, some were orphaned and others raised by unemployed, single parents. These engagements took a toll on me, as they triggered my unhealed childhood trauma and reminded me that my teachers did not understand my life circumstances. I began to converse with some of my colleagues about the possible circumstances these learners might face. Some teachers believed their non-involvement in extra-curricular activities was a personal choice coupled with laziness and lack of interest. From these conversations, I could see that most of my colleagues lacked understanding and interest, as they could not resonate with these experiences. When I continued conversing with teachers from other schools who teach in schools of similar context, I was concerned and alarmed that ex-Model C schools did not seem to have strict school-level policies on including minority identity groups and those previously marginalised.

My experience as a professional educator prompted me to explore the experiences of disadvantaged Black-African learners in ex-Model C schools through this research endeavour.

1.3.3 Scholarly justification

My personal experience as a learner and professional educator in an ex-Model C school are not unique in the context of South Africa, as there is a fair amount of European and American literature that documents the experiences of minority black learners in a white schooling context (Ainscow, 2020; Chapman, 2018; Chapman & Bhopal, 2019; Ojuala, 2020; Rivera-McCutchen, 2021; Horsford, 2011). Considering the wealth of international research, South Africa is lacking in this area of scholarship. The existing limited empirical research conducted on ex-Model C schools (William, 2020; Kanyopa & Hlalele, 2021, 2024; Christie et al., 2017; Kanyopa et al., 2021; Hamidou, 2023) alludes to learners' integration, transformation, and decolonisation, policy changes and educator experiences. While these studies are critical in providing insights into ex-Model C schools, they fail to explore inclusionary and exclusionary experiences of Black-African learners, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The dialogue on 'diversity and inclusion' continues to expand, and schools continue to include these terms in their vision and mission statements. However, their understanding of the complexity and multi-dimensional intersections of race and class remains skewed. Studies on race and class

continue to be considered and studied as two separate phenomena that operate differently. This gap has sparked my interest and motivated me to conduct this study as it does not narrow down the lived experiences of disadvantaged Black-African learners into a single identity group (race or class) because their experiences are uniquely shaped by social dynamic identity groups that operate together. I explore this further under the Theoretical Framework in chapter three.

As a social justice scholar, I am mindful that this study overlooks the inclusion and exclusion experiences of White, Indian, and Coloured learners, as it focuses deliberately on Black-African learners who form part of the minority at ex-Model C schools and a previously marginalised racial group. The motivation to conduct this study relates to the scarce literature related to the study. This study presents an opportunity to specifically contribute to the body of knowledge on the integration of Black-African learners from deprived contexts in elite ex-Model C schools.

1.4 Purpose of the study

As discussed above, Black-African learners experience exclusion in ex-Model C schools, with minimal to no inclusion. Available literature demonstrates that such experiences are due to these learners belonging to a previously marginalised racial group and still being part of the minority due to their low socio-economic background. This study focuses on two intersecting social identity groups: Black-African (race) and economic disadvantage (class) - both marginalised identity groups. The intention of the study is to explore their vulnerability to social inclusion and exclusion, mainly by assessing their experiences. The study focuses specifically on the metropolitan city of Pretoria as a geographical location with a high population due to urbanisation and internal migration in search of jobs and a better standard of living (StatsSA, 2023). The capital city of Tshwane faces multiple complexities such as service delivery issues that are plaguing the city due to the high level of inequality and the variety of cultures that co-exist in the same space. Regardless, Afrikaans still dominates in most of the ex-Model C schools as a medium of instruction and a first additional language. This is problematic in such a context where learners are immigrants with no background of the language.

The purpose of this study is to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences of Black-African learners in ex-Model C schools. Focus group discussions, photo elicitation, and individual semi-structured interviews are used as data collection methods to foreground participants voices in order to understand their experiences of social inclusion and exclusion. This study will shed some light on re-imagining inclusive education, particularly the full social inclusion of black-African learners enrolled in ex-Model C schools. The study will be of benefit to teachers, the Department of Basic Education (DBE) officials and all other interested parties, who may be inspired to reflect on their inclusive and exclusive practices. Furthermore, this study aims to contribute nationally and internationally to the ongoing work of inclusive education.

1.5 Aim of the study

This study aims to establish how disadvantaged Black-African learners experience social inclusion and exclusion in ex-Model C schools in Pretoria. The study further aims to understand how such experiences (social inclusion and exclusion) inform learners' schooling experiences.

1.6 Research Questions

To reach the aims of the study, data generation is guided by the following two critical research questions:

1. What are Black-African learners' from lower socio-economic background experiences of social inclusion and exclusion at ex-Model C schools?
2. How do such experiences inform learners' schooling experiences?

1.7 Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are:

- To explore Black-African learners', from lower socio-economic backgrounds, experiences of social inclusion and exclusion at school.
- To understand how experiences of social inclusion and exclusion inform learners' schooling experiences.

1.8 The significance of the study

“If you join the fight for social justice, you may win or lose but just by being part of the struggle you win, and your life will be better for it”

-Howard Zinn.

There is a fair amount of literature that studies ex-Model C schools in the contemporary context of South Africa but most of the research has been on the integration and inclusion of disabled learners, issues of racism, desegregation processes, and comparative studies between rural, township, and ex-Model C schools. The misconception that all learners attending ex-Model C schools are from the middle and upper class has resulted in a dearth of research on learners from the lower class. Most of the available research tends to study the experiences of black learners in ex-Model C schools as a coherent, homogenous group of 'non-whites', with little research that focuses exclusively on Black-African learners, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Findings from such studies tend to unify all black learners' experiences. However, the reality is that the experiences of disadvantaged Black-African learners differ as a result of their intersecting race and social class categories, which has been neglected in studies that focus on previously marginalised groups and those that form the minority identity in South African ex-Model C schools as an educational sector. Understanding such complex intersections, the study has the potential to enable a broader understanding of the vulnerability to exclusion of Black-African learners in the schooling context.

This study is significant as it attempts to fill the knowledge gap by using an inclusive and intersectional approach to study the unique lived experiences of Black-African learners from disadvantaged backgrounds, thus contributing significantly to the scholarship and debate on race and class within the field of social justice education. Furthermore, this study contributes to local and international literature from related fields such as sociology, anthropology, psychology, and social science studies that focus on the lived experiences of Black-African learners. These learners are mostly silenced, but this study foregrounds their voices by using direct quotes to narrate the long-neglected stories of disadvantaged Black-African learners in ex-Model C schools and the impact thereof.

1.9 Clarification of key concepts

In this sub-section, the fundamental concepts are briefly defined as they bear background to the study. I am mindful that some of the concepts below remain controversial, ambiguous, and highly contested. However, throughout this study, I use the following concepts interchangeably, as clarified in this sub-section, to fulfill the aim of the study.

1.9.1 Ex-Model C schools

According to Christie and Mckinney (2017), ex-Model C schools are state-owned schools commonly known as ‘semi-private’ schools as the School Governing Body (SGB) play a crucial role in the running and upkeep of the school. Ex-Model C schools are mainly classified as quantile four and five, which means that they are fee-paying, as determined by the SGB (School quantile system discussed thoroughly in chapter two). The school fees preserve the advantageous conditions of the school (Draga, 2023). Olivier (2017) states that ex-Model C schools are fully functional due to greater parental involvement and proactive SGB.

During Apartheid, ex-Model C schools served the majority of white learners located within specific geographical locations in urban areas (Draga, 2023). English and Afrikaans are still used primarily as a medium of instruction. These schools are well known as being equipped for providing quality education due to having highly experienced teachers, small classroom sizes, sporting facilities such as tennis courts and swimming pools, and other helpful teaching resources that also play a crucial role in equipping learners with skills used chiefly in specialised subjects such as Consumer Studies, Arts and Computer Applications Technology (CAT). The SMT and SGB remain responsible for the everyday upkeep and maintenance of the school facilities (Christie & McKinney, 2017). Furthermore, the SGB uses school funds to employ additional staff, which includes an Information Technology (IT) specialist, disciplinary officers, school librarian, social worker and psychologist that offers psychosocial support to both staff and learners (Olivier, 2017).

1.9.2 Black

In this study, the term ‘black’ is used as a socially constructed racial category that denotes all ‘people of colour’ better known as ‘non-white’ individuals during Apartheid (Collis-Buthelezi, 2017). While the term is socially recognised and a historically lasting concept, the study, however,

uses the term 'black' with caution as it is political, potentially offensive, and unreliable as it covers a range of racial categories with different backgrounds (Agyemang, 2005). This term includes all black Africans whose ancestry is from Africa, Indians/Asians who descended from South Asia, and coloured people who are of mixed racial categories. Despite much debate, the broad term 'black' is still used to include Indians and Coloured people as they are black when compared to white South Africans (Shozi, 2024).

1.9.3 Black- African

In the context of this study, the term 'Black-African' has a geographical meaning to it. It refers to all native black South Africans that are of African ancestral origin, particularly those from the Sub-Saharan region (Agyemang, 2005). This study exclusively uses the term to refer to indigenous black South Africans who are of similar ethnicity and share a common cultural background. This broad term includes Sotho, Xhosa, Venda, Tsonga, Zulu, Pedi, and Ndebele people (Shozi, 2024).

1.9.4 Social Inclusion

In this study, the term 'Social Inclusion' is used within the social justice education scholarship to refer to "belonging and participation due to its association with values such as respect and equality" (Koutsouris et al., 2020, p3). This concept acknowledges diversity and individual preferences, resulting in an integrated schooling community that has shared values and expectations irrespective of race, class, sexual orientation, gender, age, socioeconomic background, (dis)ability, and religion (Oxoby, 2009; Koutsouris et al., 2020). Social inclusion forms part of a broad-based commitment to social justice based on strong inclusionary policies such as the South African Schools Acts (SASA), Language in Education Policy, and WP6 (DoE, 1996; 1997; 2006). Successful implementation of social inclusion in education promotes social cohesion and minimises the extent to which learners perceive themselves as excluded (Oxoby, 2009).

1.9.5 Social Exclusion

An opposite to social inclusion is 'social exclusion,' which Antulia and Divodeli (2022) define as a multidimensional concept that deprives learners or puts them at a disadvantage in schooling activities. The multifaceted concept of social exclusion could be because of learners' social, economic, or cultural identity. Available scholarship annotates those learners of minority and marginalised social groups; vulnerable and disadvantaged learners are at high risk of experiencing

social exclusion (Bouillet & Majcan, 2022). This term could include but is not limited to exclusion from social activities such as excursions and sporting activities/events. Furthermore, it includes a lack of care and support within the schooling environment (Antulia & Divodeli, 2022). Throughout this study, the term 'social exclusion' will be used to showcase limited access to resources, opportunities, participation, and development of Black-African learners from disadvantaged backgrounds. As cautioned by Meral et al. (2022) argument that social exclusion has a negative impact on learners' psychological and social well-being as it results in psychological distress, social adjustment, and depression during later childhood or later in life. This study will use the term 'social exclusion' to showcase how disadvantaged learners withdraw from school activities leading to undesirable outcomes such as engagement in adult criminality, substance abuse, or even dropping out of school (Oxoby, 2009; Antulia & Divodeli, 2022; Bouillet & Majcan, 2022).

1.9.6 Socio-economic perspective

Throughout this study, I look at the experiences of disadvantaged Black-African learners in ex-Model C schools in connection to social and economic factors. According to Avvisati (2020), race and racial categories have nurtured the growing socio-economic phenomenon. Therefore, this study will showcase how socio-economic hierarchy assigns and deprives access, power, privilege, and status from an angle of Black-African learners attending ex-Model C schools (Sheehy-Skeffington, 2020; Avvisati, 2020). It is worth noting that learners are not responsible for their socio-economic category; however, I use the term 'disadvantaged' to coincidentally refer to black African learners from lower socio-economic backgrounds, which, in the context of this study, is influenced by their parents' lower level of education, unemployment or income (Avvisati, 2020). Available literature indicates that such learners form the minority group in ex-Model C schools experience exclusion. As a result of the mental pressure of poverty, these learners perform poorly in their academics, eat unhealthy food, and have shown a high prevalence of drug use. Furthermore, they occupy a lower social status at school (Sheehy-Skeffington, 2020; Gerra et al., 2020). According to Gerra et al. (2020), learners from disadvantaged lower socio-economic backgrounds usually stay in unsafe, substandard housing, resulting in psychological and developmental consequences that hinder their development in many ways. These learners are usually criticised in and outside the school for making decisions that harm their long-term life outcomes (Sheehy-Skeffington, 2020).

1.10 Overview of the chapters

This dissertation has a total of six chapters. An overview of each chapter is presented below.

Chapter One

This chapter is titled *Experiences of Social Inclusion and Exclusion of Disadvantaged Black-African learners in Former model-c Schools: Introduction to the Study*; and it presents a comprehensive introduction, background, and context to the study. The chapters further outline the three justifications (personal, professional, and scholarly) as a rationale for the study and a brief discussion on the focus and purpose of the study is presented. The aim of the study, the two critical research questions, and the study's objectives are also presented. Finally, the significance of the study and the fundamental concepts used in the study are presented.

Chapter Two

This chapter is titled *Exploring Published Knowledge: A Review of Literature*, and it provides a critical review of literature drawn from three contexts (global, continental (sub-Saharan), and local). Throughout the literature review, I offer extensive discussions on debates, knowledge, and critique from all three contexts to portray existing gaps in the literature. Furthermore, I use sub-topics such as class, classism, race, racism quintile versus access to schools, and desegregation and integration in 'white' schools to guide the discussions provided in this chapter, as they are all related to the study phenomenon.

Chapter Three

This chapter is titled *Understanding inclusion and exclusion in South African schools: Towards a Conceptual and Theoretical Framework*. In this chapter, I use the concept of Inclusive Education and Kimberlé Crenshaw's (1989) Theory of Intersectionality as a lens and road map to the study. The chapter commences with a detailed insight into the concept of Inclusive Education, followed by its challenges and limitations. Thereafter, a critical discussion on the intersectionality theory concerning education scholarship is provided. A critique on this theory is then provided. The chapter concludes by discussing the link and value added by both frameworks to strengthen the study. This is done to provide a means of thinking through the two critical research questions within a former model-c schooling context.

Chapter Four

This chapter presents the research methodological approaches employed in this study. This chapter commences with the exploration of the research paradigm and approach. Furthermore, the participants recruitment process and selection within the research setting is presented. This chapter further provides the three detailed data collection methods employed in the study, followed by the data analysis approach and issues of trustworthiness and rigour. Finally, this chapter outlines the ethical considerations considered throughout the data collection process, data storage, and limitations of the study.

Chapter Five

This chapter is titled *Experiences of Social Inclusion and Exclusion of Disadvantaged Black-African learners in Ex-Model C Schools in Pretoria: Data Analysis (Findings and Discussion)*. This chapter presents the findings from the study in response to the two critical questions that guided the study. The data presented in this chapter emanates from photo elicitation, focus group discussions, and individual semi-structured interviews. Using the six phases of Thematic Analysis, as presented in chapter four, three main themes emerged, followed by a discussion of eight subthemes. The findings presented in this chapter are reviewed concerning the conceptual and theoretical framework as an analytical lens.

Chapter Six

This chapter presents an overview of the entire study with a summary of key findings and a methodological reflection. Within this chapter, I also present implications for policy, school practice, and future research.

1.11 Conclusion

From my experiences, observations, and wide reading on social justice scholarship, I have conceptualised this research study, which is premised on 'equity' and 'distributive justice' as essential goals and principles of social justice in education (Pijanowski & Brady, 2021). This chapter provided an overview of the dissertation. It first presented the introduction of the study

which laid the foundation. The background and context of the study followed this. It then provided the rationale to justify the study's personal, professional and theoretical reasons. The aim, focus, and purpose of the study followed the rationale. It also presented research questions and objectives that guide the whole study. A discussion of the significance of the study on both the theoretical and practical levels followed this. It then clarified critical concepts as key concepts used in the research study. It concluded by providing an overall overview of all the chapters. In the overview of chapters, it mentioned how each chapter is structured and the brief details of its content so that the reader knows what to expect when they get to that specific chapter.

The next chapter, *Exploring Published Knowledge: A Review of Literature*, reviews and critically discusses literature from various societies, cultures, and disciplines (both local and global contexts) related to the study to identify gaps and address missing aspects of social justice in the education field.

Chapter Two

Exploring Published Knowledge: A review of Literature

2.1 Introduction of Literature Review

This chapter critically engages with relevant literature to demonstrate prior and current knowledge related to the study. According to Bertram and Christiansen (2014), a literature review puts a study into the context of previous work conducted in a particular field.

This chapter begins by exploring how race and class as constructed social identities are used in society to form hierarchical relationships of oppression that divide and relegate social groups into either agents (dominant social group members) or targets (subordinate social group members). Relevant literature from the global, sub-Saharan, and local contexts is used to show how race and class identities manifest, particularly in education. This chapter further presents apartheid and post-apartheid policies that have shaped the education sector. Emphasis is placed on ex-Model C schools as the focus of this research and as an educational sector grappling with complex and multiple forms of identity due to inclusive policies that aim to address past injustices. This is done by looking at the post-1994 desegregation of the entire schooling system, the location and accessibility of schools using the government funding system of quintiles, and the extent of learner integration in multi-class and racial schools. Throughout this engagement with literature, gaps are shown to portray a pressing need for this study.

It must be noted that issues of inclusion and exclusion based on racial identity are prominent in some contexts compared to others. This is due to the differing historical geography of racial discrimination. For example, countries like Australia, the United States of America (USA), the United Kingdom (UK), and the Southern African region have a history of racially discriminatory policies that inform today's socio-economic patterns. This review of literature draws largely from contexts with a legacy of race-based discrimination. Although it seeks to explore Black-African learners and the discourse of inclusionary and exclusionary experiences in the schooling sector widely, it is noted that there is a strong appearance of literature from the USA context. This is due to the fact that, much like South Africa, the USA has a long history and scholarly enquiry into issues related to inequality and equality, segregation and desegregation, racial injustice, and

justice. By no means does this USA dominance mean prioritisation or uncritical consideration of their knowledge; it is co-incidental.

2.2 Race and Racism in South Africa

2.2.1 Race in South Africa

History and definition of Race

Race is a complex concept. It has been a contentious subject since day immemorial. Over the last few decades, the concept has grown exponentially, with an increasing debate around race as a form of biology versus race being recognised as a social construct (Atkin, 2017a & Hochman, 2022). Drawing from recent bodies of literature (global and local), this study aligns itself with the notion that race is a social construct rather than a form of biology.

Andrews (2012) and Gannon (2016) argue that race has no biological meaning; instead, knowledge of the concept and its understanding is created through social interaction. The definition of race differs according to geographical landscape and context. Gannon (2016) argues that social and cultural differences between different populations power race. Recent research findings on the origin of human ancestry by Bergström et al. (2021) show that phenotypic differences between people of diverse races result from different climatic conditions that ancestors lived in, and genetic material was then passed on to the following number of generations.

Many climate change researchers such as Nangombe et al. (2019) maintain that the Sub-Saharan African continent has a history of extremely high temperatures. Therefore, ancestors who were geographically located in Africa during ancient times lived under extremely high temperatures, and parts of their bodies, like skin and hair, secreted a dark skin pigmentation melanin, to protect them from the effect of the heat of the sun which includes skin cancer and sunburn (Fors et al., 2020; Panda et al., 2022; Jablonski et al., 2017). The dark skin pigmentation resulted in tanned skin after exposure to the sun (MacEachern, 2012). Conversely, ancestors located in regions above sub-Saharan Africa, like Asia and Europe, remained lighter in skin colour due to cold temperatures that resulted in their bodies secreting less melanin (Lin et al., 2007; MacEachern, 2012; Maddodi et al., 2012). Lin et al. (2007) further argue that the degree of pigmentation that each individual

has resulted in their phototype – a classification of skin colour according to individual skin pigmentation (Fors et al., 2020).

In light of the above revelations that climate and weather have mostly influenced the phenotypic features that people have, it may be established that the social construction of race differs with landscape and context.

Racial classifications

Globally, the phototype of an individual is used to classify people into race categories based on their physical traits, like skin colour (Fors et al., 2020; Lin et al., 2007; Relethford, 2009). Leboeuf (2020) asserts that race classification remains an ambiguous struggle. People's race classification differs according to geographical location and context (Telles et al., 2014). Prewitt (2005) argues that the USA shared a history of complex and highly debated racial classification that can be traced back to as early as 1790. Racial classification remains fluid, as racial categories change every time a census is conducted (Prewitt, 2005; Telles et al., 2014) – a census being an official population count that notes self-identified racial categories (Baffour, 2012). Prewitt (2005) points out that the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Standards in the USA allowed individuals to select one or more racial categories during census count. Surprisingly, many people identified themselves with more than one racial category, resulting in an intricate analysis. The complexity of race classification results from the social constructs and ambiguity of the concept, which has no definite definition. However, its knowledge is built on perceptions and experiences of the general society (Atkin, 2017; Hochman, 2022; Leboeuf, 2020 & Prewitt, 2005). Telles et al. (2014) contend that racial classification in Latin American countries such as Colombia, Mexico, and Venezuela look at physical appearance rather than the origin of a person. People whose skin colour looked very dark were racially categorised as black, while those individuals with fair skin colour were racially categorised as white (Feliciano, 2016). According to Atkin (2017b), the race one is categorised as, will impact their lived experience. Whites are most likely to have a higher social status. At the same time, people of colour, particularly blacks, are ranked at the bottom in society (Kincaid, 2018). "Dark-skinned persons who did not identify as black, generally identified as mixed-race and in the Dominican Republic, as Indio or mestizo" (Telles et al., 2014, p.4). While racial classification is complex and multi-dimensional, the white colour remains distinct., Contrary,

black has different shades of colour, making it easier for black people who are not very dark to categorise themselves as mixed-race for social benefits (Monk, 2016; Telles et al., 2014). Atkin (2017b) uses the concept of racial passing to refer to members of one race classifying themselves as another race because they own phenotypic features like skin colour and hair texture of that race. In the United States context, both Atkin (2017b) and Piper (2022) concur that light-skinned black-Americans often received some form of education as compared to their counterparts. This analogy shows light-skinned black-Americans passing as white for educational benefits (Monk, 2016).

Renowned first-world countries like the USA, Australia, the UK, and New Zealand have their narrative of complex and highly debated racial classification history (Prewitt, 2005). Historically, the USA had a binary racial division. People were classified as black or white with no other racial categories in between (Feliciano, 2016). The ‘one-drop rule’ was implemented to categorise people as either black or white. Any person who had a history of African ancestry, was classified as black (Glasgow et al., 2009; Sharfstein, 2002). However, studies by Feliciano (2016) and Davenport (2020) have shown an abrupt shift from the binary division to a more complex racial division. The complexity of race classification comes in as a result of two factors, the first being the population increase and secondly, as more immigrants coming in from as early as the year 2000 (Dinçer, 2022; Feliciano, 2016; Prewitt, 2005).

The growing population in the USA resulted in a new racial category known as ‘Hispanic/ Latino’, which is an umbrella term used to racially classify Spanish-speaking people who descended from Latin-American countries like Mexico, Costa Rica, and Venezuela (Peruch, 2022). The USA government defines Latinos as people who are composed of different races, and society classifies them between black and white (Feliciano, 2016). Contrary to expectations, this study did not find scholarship on the significance of racial classification in France. Instead, McAvay and Safi (2023) found that the growing number of African immigrants in France has led to France being known as a ‘colourblind’ society that rejects racial classification when awarding opportunities to its citizens. The combination of the two factors (increase in population and immigrants) offered by Dinçer (2022), Feliciano (2016), and Prewitt (2005) provides some support for the conceptual premise of racial classification fluidity. People are flexible in classifying themselves with one or more race categories, while others do not classify themselves with any racial categories (Davenport, 2020; Feliciano, 2016).

The fluidity of racial classification allows people to change their racial categories across situations and/or contexts (Davenport, 2020; Telles et al., 2014). For instance, a dark skin coloured person with long silky hair will classify themselves as black-American in the USA context but when they travel to South Africa, they will classify themselves as mixed-race (coloured) because they carry phenotypic characteristics that represent two races. A dark skin colour which represents black and long silky hair that represents white (Kincaid, 2018). A study conducted by Baldwin (2016) carefully analyses the correlation of race and privilege and finds whites to be more privileged over blacks. Therefore, this traveller will not be privileged in the USA context but will maintain some benefits with limited power and privilege when they get to South Africa because they hold a middle social status (Hochman, 2022).

Similarly, in the context of South Africa, racial classification has much to do with privilege and oppression (Hochman, 2022; Shezi, 2021). With the advent of Apartheid in 1948, many politically driven policies were introduced (Ellis, 2019). Christian National Education (CNE) came hand in hand with Apartheid policies, the agenda of which was to ensure continued support for the ruling party and the supremacy of the Afrikaner nation. The 1948 policy statement spelled out the view that Afrikaners were entrusted with the responsibility of leading people of colour into Christianity and educating them for their role in South African society (which was under the control of the Afrikaner National party). The CNE principle of no equality between whites and blacks emerged, thus giving rise to the entrenchment of a Separate Development policy for people of different races. The agenda was glaringly obvious in the different methods of financing education for the different race groups: education was free and compulsory for all white children, but blacks had to finance their own education. Compulsory education was later introduced for Indian and coloured children, but not for black-Africans. The government's priorities clearly lay in privileging, developing, and educating white children as opposed to any other race. The agenda behind these policies was an apartheid policy designed to confine and isolate blacks from the mainstream of South Africa's socio-economic life and to create a workforce which would provide the needs of an expanding economy, one which clearly privileged whites and marginalised and disadvantaged blacks. The education of blacks was of inferior quality, resulting in black people being the most economically and educationally disadvantaged race group. The classification of racial groups in South Africa clearly had a strong economic agenda.

The Population Registration Act of 1950 required all South African citizens to be assigned and registered to one racial category. The act classified people as ‘white’ and ‘non-white’ or ‘Blacks’. Black is a generic term that incorporates black Africans, Coloureds (mixed race) and Indians (April 2021; Pellicer et al., 2023). Black-Africans are those individuals who are indigenous Africans with an African ancestry and Indians are individuals with an Asian ancestry (Moodley, 2015). This study adopts Posel’s (2001) description of coloured as a socially constructed racial category that does not constitute native Black-African, Whites, or Indians. Atkin’s (2017b) study on *Critical Philosophy of Race*, asserts that racial categories that people were classified into, conferred their daily lived experiences. During Apartheid, whites were constructed as superior to other races, carrying characteristics of people who are smart, beautiful, and better developed when compared to blacks who were constructed as inferior, and mostly victims of marginalisation and oppression (Mills, 2020). There was a clear subjugation of blacks through colonisation, apartheid, genocide and as part of this colonial project, those of black skin were pushed to the peripheries of mainstream society and were made servants of those with light skin, as racially categorised. This era of South African history constructed whiteness as supreme and socialised all races to ‘over-value whiteness’ and ‘devalue blackness’ (hooks, 1992, p.12), in turn, causing whites and blacks to experience vastly different histories, and causing blacks to endure a history of violence, disadvantage, oppression and white power.

The recent statistics from Census SA projects black-African people as the majority of the overall population, constituting 81,4% and a decrease of the white population from 8,9% in 2011 to 7,3% in 2022 (Stats SA, 2023). While the population of white people decreases for every census count, they still hold power and are more privileged when compared to other races (Musavengane & Leonard, 2019). South Africa is three decades post-apartheid and is regarded as a ‘new country’ based on equity, inclusion, and human rights for all. However, black-Africans are still regarded as inferior and classified at the bottom of all the other races, with limited power, and income distribution that does not favour them (Kincaid, 2018). The findings of Kincaid (2018) and Mills (2020) seem to be consistent with other research which find that black-Africans remain inferior.

2.2.2 Racism in South Africa

The terms race and racism are closely linked and used interchangeably in discussions on power and privilege, economic status, and resource distribution (Kincaid, 2018; Baldwin, 2016). Nkosi (2016) bears the same understanding as Kincaid (2018) and Baldwin (2016) and concedes that every time race is discussed, the concept of racism will come up. While this study explores the experiences of black-African (race) learners, it is imperative to further explore the concept of racism as it remains salient in the contemporary South African context.

The definition of racism is challenging to narrow down as it is a comprehensive concept that emanates from a complex network of interactive bodies of knowledge (Urquidez, 2022). Bowser (2017) defines racism as a form of conflict between two different racial parties, whereas Qwabe (2020) describes racism as a form of inequality that stems from social, economic, or political dynamics that arise from racial differences. The conflict and inequality pointed out by both Bowser (2017) and Qwabe (2020) emanate from the existing racial hierarchy where whites are viewed as a superior race in relation to blacks who are considered as inferior. The racism origin and theory study of Bowser (2017) traces racial hierarchy to ancient times of slavery, where blacks were under white authority. However, Maistry (2023) contends that the existence of racism in South African history was certified when the Apartheid government introduced the Population Registration Act of 1950. The Act displayed overt racism that continuously oppressed people who were considered as non-whites. The Population Registration Act resulted in non-whites being allowed to only use inferior resources and inhabit sub-standard spaces strictly reserved for their race. Subsequently, this resulted in a complex system of beliefs that whites were more deserving of what was better (education, infrastructure, standard of living). At the same time, blacks were considered as the *others* who were not deserving and, as a result, were offered crumbs while whites feasted on bread (Posel, 2001). Variava (2020) maintains that racial attitudes and behaviours are not just mere theories and ideologies but are a form of practice because they begin to unfold through discrimination and marginalisation of blacks who are inferior and ranked at the bottom of the racial hierarchy (Atkin, 2017b).

While South Africa has its share of racism, other countries across the globe are faced with similar forms of oppression as a result of racial diaspora. Findings from Fekete (2020) and Goodfellow and McFarlane (2018) suggest that blacks in the UK experience challenges of emotional and

psychological wellbeing as a result of severe structural racism and institutional failure. Fekete (2020) further notes that less work has been done to combat racism that resulted from poor government policies and non-accommodative culture of organisations. The social construction phenomenon of race has resulted in dehumanisation, persecution, and the oppression of blacks. Research findings from McCarthy's (2018) data analysis on racism against blacks in the European countries, points out that Luxembourg, Finland, and Ireland have a high proportion of reported cases with over 50% of blacks experiencing prejudice and exclusion. These three countries were followed by Germany, Italy, and Denmark, respectively experiencing widespread racism. It must be noted that blacks are considered as the minority in all European countries in comparison to the majority of superior whites (Riyadh & Abdullah, 2022). Racial attitudes and behaviours mentioned by Atkin (2017b) have formed obstacles for blacks to maintain their dignity and be seen as equal to other racial groups (Riyadh & Abdullah, 2022).

Racism in the USA inspired black and Latino attorneys and activists to develop the Critical Race Theory (CRT). Ladson-Billings (2021) describes the CRT as a movement that emerged to engage in race as the cause and context for desperate and inequitable educational outcomes. However, a study by Qwabe (2020) on institutional racism in higher education deplors that CRT has shifted from just a movement to a framework used to understand the racial hierarchy and controversy over historical movements. While the CRT was developed in the USA, it is very much applicable in the South African context as the reality of racism operates in the same way for both contexts. This study concurs with both Ladson-Billings (2021) and Qwabe (2020) that the CRT can be used in the South African context as both a movement and framework to understand the racial phenomenon and to bring positive change that will better the community (Qwabe, 2020).

The formation of the CRT was followed by many other inclusive policies that aimed towards racial justice and combating oppression. However, Bell (2019) argues that racism still exists in a new form and has shifted from the old ways of slavery, as earlier concurred by Murthree (2023). As stated by Bowser (2017), racism is now more covert as it is not openly displayed, and its behaviour is not easily observable. Racist behaviours and attitudes are still evident despite worldwide campaigns such as 'Black Lives Matter,' Civil rights movement, and other progressive movements formed by anti-racism activists (Riyadh & Abdullah, 2022). While the USA is known to be a democratic country, it still has an ongoing legacy of racism. The 47th president of the United States

of America, Donald Trump, has publicly made appalling racist remarks, referring to blacks as "shitholes" and people who have nothing to lose but their "ghettos and gangs" (Bell, 2019, p.6). Trump's anti-blackness stance potentially strips the value of blacks and could further create a distance between African Americans and White-Americans (Variava, 2020).

Similarly, in the new democratic SA, Merolla and Jackson (2019) concur with Variava (2020) by asserting that racial disparities still exist despite introducing more inclusive policies that aim toward justice and broader participation of disadvantaged groups. Whites still aim to maintain their unearned privilege and find affirmative action policies such as the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) Acts 46 of 2013 to be discriminative (Baldwin, 2016). In the process of whites maintaining their sense of pride and entitlement, systems and structures were created to marginalise black people in the contemporary context (Bell, 2019; Urquidez, 2022).

Bowser (2017) uses three levels to discuss how modern racism operates and these include structural, institutional, and individual. For Qwabe (2020), institutional racism refers to policies and practices that operate within an individual institution to disadvantage, oppress, and marginalise blacks, particularly black-Africans. For example, Goodfellow and McFarlane (2018) argue that institutional racism manifests itself in the UK context through economic, social and political structures, whereas scholars like Merolla and Jackson (2019) concede that structural racism is a hierarchical system that sorts individuals into relative advantage or disadvantage based on their race. While the fluidity of racism changes, the hierarchy remains the same with privileged whites and disadvantaged blacks. Discussions by both Merolla and Jackson (2019) and Qwabe (2020) on institutional and structural racism imply that both operate at a macro level because they function at a large scale with long-term issues (Amzat & Maigari, 2021). The study *Racism: Origin and Theory* by Bowser (2017) looks at racism at an individual level, which Fourie and Moore-Berg (2022) define as a negative attitude and discrimination by individuals towards members of any specific group, which primarily negatively affects blacks. While Bowser (2017) only speaks of three levels, scholars like David et al. (2019) note internalised racism as another level of racism that operates psychologically. It occurs when an individual has self-doubt and disrespect for their own identified race because it is primarily disadvantaged and oppressed. Interpersonal and internalised racism functions at a micro-scale level because it takes place within an individual/s

through face-to-face interactions. The interactions are more intimate and shaped by personal views and experiences (Amzat & Maigari, 2021).

2.3 Social Class and Classism

2.3.1 Social Class

Race and racial classification have nurtured the growing social class and socioeconomic phenomenon. Globally, both social class and socioeconomic concepts are used interchangeably as they represent a form of inequality (Williamson et al., 2023). This study recognises the complexity, debates, and perspectives centered around social class and socio-economic status as socially constructed. However, the study adopts the understanding of social class as posited by Brändle and Kuckertz (2023), who denote the broad concept as a stratified system of hierarchy that assigns, and also deprives, power and privilege to societal members based on the three elements – education, occupation, and income (Avvisati, 2020). Interestingly, Coe and Pauli (2020) concur with Kuckertz (2023) and Avvisati (2020) and maintain that people hold or lose power in society as a result of finances, resources, and affiliations that people differently associate themselves with. Disparities of social class seem to be widening across the globe as "the richest 10% of the world's population having an income ten times higher than the poorest 10%" (Williamson et al., 2023, p2). As the social class is both a conceptual and operational system, it directly and indirectly shapes the daily lived experiences of members of society. Conceived perspectives and knowledge are deeply rooted in history, which shapes the development processes that society experiences (Bjornsdottir & Rule, 2017; Ragodoo, 2022).

"Inequalities are stark and obvious in post-apartheid South Africa" (Seekings, 2014, p2). The argument made by Seekings (2014) blatantly shows that South Africa has an existing legacy of social inequality and still categorises people into social class groups based on the three elements (education, occupation, and income) assessed by Avvisati (2020). A recent study on social class and experience presented by Ragodoo (2022) further uses three broader categories – upper, middle, and lower classes –to describe how power and status is distributed and used in society to position its members hierarchically. The social class that one belongs to mainly shapes one's social circle and the people one interacts with (Carey & Markus, 2017).

The upper class comprises those members of society who are entirely independent as they inherit wealth and mostly occupy higher leadership positions and are, therefore, assumed to have power and influence (Carey & Markus, 2017). Owing to earliest accumulation through violent colonisation and racist policies globally, this class is mainly occupied by white individuals and families. For example, in South Africa, the majority of white citizens remain highly privileged, nestled in the upper class, as a result of their colonial and apartheid privilege, which allows them access to social and economic growth opportunities on the back of black and indigenous South Africans who were pushed to the margins of the society (Venter et al., 2020). This historical privilege further affords them a more comprehensive range of networks promoting easy access to occupational positions and resources (Carey & Markus, 2017; Thabethe, 2016). The upper class is mainly characterised by what Carey and Markus (2017) view as bridging social capital, where connections are linked to people with complex identities (race, social orientation, and gender) that typically divide society. Whereas weak ties form relationships are formed by people with shared interests and goals, thus promoting individuality and independence (Carey & Markus, 2017; Claridge, 2018). These members are perceived to be the happiest (linked to wealth) in society, have some form of agency, hold autonomy as they are able to question authority, and seem eager to understand the logic behind social rules (Bjornsdottir & Rule, 2017; Williamson et al., 2017).

In the post-apartheid era, there was a shift in who occupies the middle class., There has been an increasing number of black-Africans who occupy this rank. This increase has, in part, been credited to widened access to occupational professions (StatsSA, 2023). Regardless of this increase, black-Africans remain underrepresented within this middle-class category (Visagie & Posel, 2013). The concept of the middle class remains complex. Internationally, the middle class refers to people who are in the middle of income distributions in developed countries such as New Zealand and Norway; however, in developing countries like South Africa, the middle class refers to the average citizens who, despite access to a better income, are still precariously vulnerable to poverty (Visagie & Posel, 2013; Zizzumia et al., 2016). With the slightest glitch in their weekly or monthly income from employment salaries, many people who fall under the middle class in South Africa would easily devolve to the lower class.

The lower class is considered as a class category that has not deracialised and is occupied mostly by black South Africans (Thabethe, 2016). Limited resources are available to foster

interdependence among the small, tight, and dense network of community members (Carey & Markus, 2017). The lower class is embedded by bonding social capital, which allows for connection within a group that knows each other and is frequently in contact (Claridge, 2018). Members of the lower class are seen as people with values that are adopted from the *ubuntu* principles, which are normative ethical systems among people of South Africa, particularly those in villages (Ewuoso, 2019). Furthermore, *ubuntu* provides guidelines on the way of life that proclaims togetherness, unity, and love (Omodan & Makena, 2022). As part of *ubuntu*, authority and hierarchy is valued, resulting in the unquestioning of adults and leaders (Williamson et al., 2017). Carey and Markus (2017) use the concept of "class ceiling" to describe how lower class people, particularly black people, are prevented from attaining leadership positions as they are seen as less competent (Williamson et al., 2017). Their empathy, constant engagement with community members, and importance for group goals are mostly viewed as the potential inability to be decisive once they occupy higher positions, where they would be expected to make decisions (Bjornsdottir & Rule, 2017; Carey & Markus, 2017).

While most global and local literature looks at the broader three social categories, scholars like Peterson (2016) and Seekings (2014) speculate on the existence of the 'underclass' as another social class category. People who are characterised as underclass are those members of the community who live in extreme poverty and cannot take care of themselves and their families because of being unemployed or underemployed, which may be the result of the lack of skills and education (Peterson, 2016; Ragodoo, 2022). While issues of inequality, oppression, and disadvantage remain acutely explored, the 'underclass' phenomenon remains neglected and underexplored in the contemporary South African context.

It can be argued that the underclass category is slowly diminishing in the 'new' South Africa. The country has observed a decrease in people with no schooling or limited primary school experience. Conversely, statistics have shown an increased numbers of people completing secondary and post-secondary education from 1996 to 2022 (StatsSA, 2023). People have, therefore, been able to acquire the skills and knowledge needed at least to acquire upward economic mobility (Cote, 2022). While the underclass remains under-explored, it has shifted chiefly from rural areas to urban central areas (Peterson, 2016). The Census 2022 report shows that the majority of poverty-stricken people who are homeless are based in Gauteng, which is primarily urbanised. Furthermore, the

Census Report declares that almost three out of every four homeless people live in metropolitan areas, such as the city of Tshwane (leading), Johannesburg, Cape Town, and eThekweni (StatsSA, 2023).

Social class origins remain central to one's identity (Carey & Markus, 2017). During economic mobility, social values and characteristics enacted from one social group can be carried over to the next class group (Cote, 2022). While there is a possibility of shifting social classes, upward economic mobility is difficult for those who are classified as lower class due to invisible barriers.

Similarly, in South Africa, intersectionality comes into play in economic mobility. While it is complicated for black-Africans to achieve upward class mobility, men stand a better chance than females. Females remain marginalised due to gender roles and patriarchy (Cote, 2022). Members of the upper class are understood to be wanting to maintain their power and privilege, while those in the lower class would strive to move to the next class (Baldwin, 2016). Interestingly, Williamson et al. (2017) have observed that individuals who transition from poverty to the upper class, without the historical accumulation and privilege, are likely to fall back to the lower class as they experience difficulty in adjusting to the new environment and mainly lack financial education (Williamson et al., 2017).

Available literature has shown a close interrelation between class and race globally and locally. Debates on social class have shown that the upper class has been deracialised while the lower class has not, with the middle class being contemplated by those who are considered to be at risk of falling into poverty (Thabethe, 2016; Zizzuamia et al., 2016). Brandle and Kuckertz (2023) use Bourdieu's theory of capital to describe how social class, belonging, and environment shape one's patterns of thoughts, feelings, and actions. Perceptions of social class inform several judgements that people make, including warmth and competence (Cote, 2022). These perceptions also shape interracial relationships. Middle and upper-class blacks (Indians/Asians and Coloureds-) are likely to have a positive racial attitude and relationship with people of different races as they share common spaces, live in the same neighbourhood, and have the resources to maintain the relationship (Carey & Markus, 2017; Thabethe, 2016). The lack of resources for lower-class members fuels the negative attitude and antagonism toward the out-group members, whom they do not identify themselves with (Bjornsdotter & Rule, 2017).

2.3.2 Classism

South African inclusive policies such as the chapter 2: The Bill of Rights that aim to embrace diversity, inclusion and democracy, cases and experiences that are rooted from the many forms of oppression such as classism are constantly increasing despite these inclusive policies. (Cele, 2018). Classism refers to prejudice, discrimination and oppression that is based on socio-economic status. It is practiced by members of one social class group towards members of a different social class group (Omodan & Makena, 2022; Thompson & Subich, 2013). People classify people, consciously or unconsciously, into social class groups and begin to interact with them based on set stereotypes and perspectives of that social group (Cavaliheri & Chwalisz, 2020). Thompson (2013) argues that classism operates similarly to racism as it's practices and experiences occur daily. It is also associated with lower social adjustments, psychological distress and feelings of inferiority with those that are targeted while giving power and privilege to its agents (Cavaliheri & Chwalisz, 2020). A study by Thompson and Subich (2013) shows that Non-European Americans to have reported more experiences of classism as compared to their counterparts. Similarly, in South Africa, due to being historically of a lower-class in society, Black-Africans encounter more experiences of classism as compared to other races.

Available studies show that little research has been conducted on classism. Thompson and Subich (2013) speak of the inadequate measurement tools available to widely explore the concepts from different contexts hence available literature mostly zooms in on experiences of classism in college and university students, with little attention given to experiences of learners attending primary and secondary education. The persisting social class divisions evident in South African schools enacts and reproduces what is happening in larger societies. Learners are members of a more miniature school society with different social class origins transferred from parents or guardians (Cote, 2022). The financial position of parents shapes their social class dimension, which influences the capabilities and confidence of learners. It has been argued that "success in the education system is facilitated by possessing cultural capital and higher-class habitus" (Sullivan, 2002, p2). Learners from the upper class benefit and obtain better outcomes than their counterparts. Sullivan's (2002) argument is justified when looking at the evidenced massive low educational outcomes and failure of lower class learners (Cote, 2022). For example, in a school excursion, learners from the lower class do not usually partake due to financial constraints, while middle and upper-class learners attend. On return from the excursion, learners who attended are likely to have an expanded

knowledge and experience that fosters more significant learning outcomes. Conversely, learners from the lower class will have limited knowledge and experience compared to their peers in the middle and upper class. This experience reduces the feeling of belonging and increases the isolation of lower class learners as they find themselves in spaces populated by middle and higher class learners (Williamson et al., 2023).

In a school community, learners who hold power and resources are identified based on class-related stereotypes and through self-representation, which includes the school uniform (Bjornsdottir & Rule, 2017; Williamson et al., 2023). The implementation and advocacy of school uniform policy is believed to minimise dress-related problems and increase the safety and security of the school as guided by the South African Schools Acts no. 84 of 1996 (Mahlangu, 2017). This act aims to provide a standard system for the organisation and governance of the school (DoE, 1996). However, the school uniform policy is unveiled and questioned when learners are insulted or victimised when they are "not dressed in a way that meets the teacher's interpretation of school dress rules" (Gaillard-Thurston, 2017, p. 248). Does the school uniform policy promote unity and pride, as questioned by Mahlangu (2017), or does it invite troubled waters, where learners of origins from middle and upper classes gain a feeling of entitlement and acquire a greater sense of belonging at the expense of impoverished learners? (Cote, 2022).

Learners from the lower class often navigate through a classist environment with institutional structures that aim to exclude them, resulting in feelings of subjugation and social intimidation by learners of different social groups that are perceived to be above them (Cavallieri & Chwalisz 2020; Omodan & Makena, 2022). If the schooling environment is not conducive to outplaying the social class dimensions in a manner that promotes inclusivity, it advertently results in disadvantaged learners detaining their thoughts and capabilities, which could, in turn, result in them being pushed to the periphery and being seen as incompetent (Williamson et al., 2023).

2.4 Desegregation of schools

In the apartheid era, the South African schooling system was mainly segregated and shaped by race classification (Teeger, 2015). Different educational outcomes were set for different races, and it mostly favoured the more outstanding outcomes of white learners while disadvantaging the blacks, in particular black-Africans. According to Boyd (2019), the segregated schooling system made it easier to point out racial inequalities and their intended outcomes. The intended broader discrimination and exclusion of blacks resulted in unequal distribution of resources and different learning curricula (Boys, 2019; Teeger, 2015). Various schooling acts such as the Bantu Education Act of 1953, the Indian Person's Education Act of 1965, the NEPA of 1967, and the Coloured Person's Act of 1963, were implemented to shape the education of blacks who were mostly considered to be better with their hands rather than their brains (Alexander, 2016; Hunter, 2016). These Acts, especially the Bantu Education Act of 1953, were supported by the apartheid minister of native affairs, Hendrik Verwoerd, to provide substandard education for Black-African learners so that they acquire the necessary skills needed for vocational work such as construction and woodwork (Khumalo, 2022). Conversely, white learners received an education that would prepare them for leadership and managerial positions within the social, economic, and political spheres (Alexander, 2016). Scholars like Ndimande (2016) further assert that the Bantu Education Act of 1953 was well-framed to socialise blacks-Africans to normalise apartheid and concede their inferiority whilst simultaneously accepting white superiority. The Group Areas Act of 1950 promulgated the spatial positioning of schools and kept everyone within the racially aligned neighbourhood to safeguard white hegemony (Boyd, 2019; Ntshoe, 2017).

The first step of racial integration began as early as 1990 when the number of learners in white schools was declining with school assets that were left unused (Ntshoe, 2017). The then minister of education, Louis Pienaar, gave parents of each school the liberty to vote on racial desegregation and get permission from the DoE before starting the process of racial integration (Lemon, 1994). Educators generally supported the desegregation process (Hunter, 2016). Schools that were granted permission to enroll black learners were advised to keep white learners as the majority, with over 51 percent of the total enrollment being white (Teeger, 2015). While schools were allowed to desegregate, they were still expected to fully comply with the NEPA of 1967, which stated that white learners should be given preference; the school maintains the Christian culture

with English or Afrikaans as the mother-tongue language for white learners, which ought to be used at school as the language of learning and teaching (Lemon, 1999). Schools were then faced with the pressure of admitting black learners and had to admit what, according to Hunter (2016), was the “cream of black society,” which included learners from the middle class, those with a white tone, and were fluent in English (Hunter, 2016, p32). By 1992, these racially desegregated schools were referred to as ‘Model C’ schools (Teeger, 2015). Arguments raised by Hunter (2016) and Teeger (2015) point out the preservation of four distinct categories of whiteness, namely, white hegemony, white normativity, white privilege, and white supremacy, as mentioned by Boyd (2019). While parents and teachers were willing to desegregate schools, they had high standards for who should be admitted, as they did not accept learners who were not the “cream of black society” such as those with limited English proficiency and those from the lower socio-economic class (Hunter, 2016, p32).

In the past two decades, the educational sector has witnessed a global attempt to desegregate racially pinned schools. From a worldwide educational context, *desegregation* refers to ending racially segregating policies while advocating for school integration that will bring equitable access for all learners to the resources and experiences for full and equal education in school (Braddock & Eitle, 2004). In the US, residential neighbourhoods in modern society are still racially aligned, with the majority of Black Americans residing in neighbourhoods that are essentially exclusively black, ultimately resulting in school segregation. Owens (2020) argues that the United States of America’s long-standing school and neighbourhood segregation can be linked as it shapes and reshapes one another in the 21st century. The segregation of learners at schools based on racial category has resulted in expanded opportunities for the white race while disadvantaging and perpetuating unequal opportunities for black American learners. Black American learners from poor neighbourhoods get trapped in intergenerational poverty, which reduces educational and social success, resulting in a few black Americans attaining educational success (Owens, 2020). Prejudice and social injustices caused by racial segregation led to the Civil Rights Movement, which signified a turning point in the history of the United States of America. Foster et al. (2015) concur that the CRM aimed towards school integration. The movement resulted in the US government introducing the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, which declared racial segregation unconstitutional (Milner, 2018). Despite the introduction of *Brown Education*, racial segregation in large urban areas remains high (Massey & Denton, 2019). McPherson (2011)

concedes with Massey et al. (2019) and argues that the successful implementation of the desegregation policies has been a challenge due to the influence of social and political factors.

The South African democratic government introduced a new education system to bridge existing educational gaps through a non-racial and desegregated education system (Alexander, 2019). Racially aligned policies, such as the NEPA and the Bantu Education Act of 1953, were replaced with new acts and policies that aimed toward desegregation (Chapman, 2018). The 1996 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa was introduced under the new democratic government. It aimed to protect the rights and responsibilities of all people in the country (Africa, 2020). The classification of 'Model C' schools was revoked over the introduction of SASA 84 of 1996, which aimed to provide a uniform system for the organisation and governance of schools (Teeger, 2015). All South African schools were desegregated, and all race groups were allowed admission (Alexander, 2016). Schools were obliged by the SASA Acts not to consider a class category, language use, and proficiency mentioned by Hunter (2016) as a prerequisite for admission. According to Thompson (2022), schooling desegregation is the integration of learners from all races, particularly black learners who were previously marginalised. Through racial desegregation, all learners are integrated into a well-rounded schooling system that does not consider skin colour in the functionality of the school (Thompson, 2022). The SASA was welcomed by an increasing number of black learners moving to former white-only schools (Alexander, 2016; Boyd, 2019). In 1991, the Group Areas Act of 1950 was abolished, allowing many middle-class blacks to move to suburban areas for safety, easy access to resources, and better education opportunities. Those who did not move were able to travel from the peripheral townships to suburban schools (Hunter, 2016). The abolishment of racially aligned acts supported the implementation and success of the SASA.

Alexander (2016) uses the concept of multicultural education to critically reflect on historically white schools. According to Alexander (2016), multicultural education is a reform philosophy that aims to change the entire education system by accommodating learners from different backgrounds with various social identities such as race, social class, dis/ability, gender, and sexual orientation. Parkhouse et al. (2019) concur with Alexander (2016) and argue that multicultural education forms a crucial part of the social justice goals through the implementation of inclusive and equitable practices for all children. This further promotes social change and nation-building (Alexander,

2016). However, much like the US context, the South African desegregation policies and successful implementation of multicultural education has not been entirely welcomed and has been faced with challenges due to social and political factors (Massey et al. 2019). Schooling desegregation meant that learners could attend any school of their choice, and this decision was greatly appreciated by black parents who moved their children to former white-only schools. However, township schools that were meant to serve black-Africans remained with no white learners (Boyd, 2019). This monology reveals the unevenness of schooling segregation. White learners did not move to any township schools because the standard of the schools did not serve their needs, especially with poor infrastructure, lack of resources, and no access to sporting facilities (Teeger, 2015). According to Chapman (2018), desegregation remains multifaceted and has been met with white flight due to the negative stereotyping of blacks. Many white learners moved to private schools, with others moving to expensive monolingual schools where teaching and learning occurred only in Afrikaans. In certain schools, white flight was prevented by limiting the number of black learners as white parents still preferred to send their children to schools that had a higher percentage of white learners (Chapman, 2018). Therefore, admitting only a smaller percentage of black learners portrays an image to parents that the school population is still relatively white and has maintained white hegemony (Boyd, 2019; Chapman, 2018). Ex-Model C schools that welcomed and implemented desegregation were left with almost 90% to 100% black-African learners due to white flight (Ntshoe, 2017). Moreover, white teachers who remained in these desegregated schools were confronted with the complexities of racial diversity as they were not prepared and fully equipped for multicultural education (Alexander, 2016).

2.5 Quintile versus Access to schools

The segregated residential policy locked out underprivileged black-Africans from accessing affluent Model C schools that were outside their feeder zones (Ntshoe, 2017). Since post 1994, the South African democratic government has taken commendable steps in developing policies that aim to increase access to education and bridge gaps that were formed during the Apartheid era (White & Van Dyk, 2019). Existing research indicates that the number of learners attending school has increased rapidly in Sub-Saharan Africa since the implementation of Inclusive Education policies (Zuilkowski et al., 2018). I In South Africa, policies such as the 1996 Admission policy

for ordinary public schools and the 2003 Plan of Action (POA) on improving access to free and quality basic education for all, were introduced to increase access to education (Ndimande, 2016). Research findings of the recent census report support the idea of Zuilkowski et al. (2018) by demonstrating a constant increase in the number of learners attending school from the first census count in 1996 (StatsSA, 2023). The increase can be accounted for by the implementation of Chapter Two of the Constitution of the RSA which states that everyone has a right to primary education (Goldstone, 1997). The 1996 South African Constitution is supported by new Inclusive Education policies such as the 2003 POA on improving access to free and quality basic education for all. To support these, General Education and Training (GET) attendance was made compulsory throughout primary school (grade/s 1-7) and junior high school (grade/s 8 and 9) (Motala et al., 2009).

During apartheid, resource distribution remained unequal and distorted (Alexander, 2016). The geographical location of a school determined its affluence (Christie, 2020). Schools that were geographically located at the peripheral townships lacked development and were impoverished, lacking the necessary resources while schools located in suburban areas were affluent and resourceful (Ntshoe, 2017). The former minister of the DBE, Angelina Motshekga, published the Amended National Norms and Standards for School Funding (NNSSF) guided by SASA, 84 of 1996 that aims towards equitable wealth of schools (DoE, 2014). Furthermore, the NNSSF aims to close the visible disparities through a school funding system so that schools are able to provide impactful and quality education that will give all learners skills and knowledge needed to obtain jobs, thus fostering a better life (Møller et al., 2024). As a result, the funding system ranked schools using the quantiles, from quintile one being the poorest schools to quintile five being the most affluent schools (Ntshoe, 2017; White & Van Dyk, 2019). Schools classified as quantiles 1, 2 and 3 are 'no fee paying' schools, therefore, function on funding received from the government. Quintile 4 and 5 schools are fee-paying schools and learners pay the monthly/yearly schooling fees determined by the SGB, thus receiving less funding from the government (Motala et al., 2009; Ogbonnaya, & Awuah, 2019). Quintile 4 and 5 schools supplement funds received from the government with school fees (Teeger, 2015). The NNSSF uses geographical location of a school to classify it into any of the five quantiles and then fund the school on equitable basis (White & Van Dyk, 2019). The national poverty distribution table used by the minister of DBE to classify

schools, shows that over 60% of South African schools serve impoverished communities and are no fee-paying schools (DoE, 2014; White & Van Dyk, 2019). The Eastern Cape and Limpopo provinces have a higher percentage of quintile one schools, both with over 27% each, while the Gauteng and Western Cape provinces have the lowest percentages of quintile one schools, each owning to less than 15%. Conversely, both provinces have slightly above 31% (each) of quintile five schools (DoE, 2014).

Christie (2020) asserts that poorly functioning schools are attended mostly by black learners (Quantile 1-3) while desegregated affluent schools (quantile 4 and 5) are Ex-Model C schools in wealthier communities that still serve the white minority. Ntshoe (2017) concurs with Christie (2020) and maintains that quintile 1 and 2 schools still serve education to African rural and township schools that are mirrored within a context of poverty, poor service delivery and drug and substance abuse. Therefore, despite the funding policy that aims to make all South African schools' function above the poverty line, there is still a maintained gap between the richest and poorest schools due to "the strong legacy of apartheid" that was founded on inequities (Christie, 2020; Hunter, 2016; Spaul, 2015, p1). Such inequities are noted in Ntshoe's (2017) study that cites township schools as spaces that have not transformed or been empowered as centres of excellence. Race still determines life (im)possibilities through education. In white communities, educational success is a norm while in African communities, it is an exception (Ntshoe, 2017). The admission policy for ordinary public schools (1998) clearly states that learners should be admitted at the school even if the parents are unable to pay the school fees. The admission policy (1998) further stipulates the preference order of admission, implying that schools should give preference to learners who are situated within the school feeder zone. The policy further states that a learner should be given preference when their parents place of work is within the feeder zone, despite the learner staying away from the school feeder zone. As a result, there has been an increase in diversity of different socio-economic groups. For example, learners of domestic workers can access higher quintile public schools situated in higher and expensive suburbs (Teeger, 2015). However, the quintile system covertly locks out and discourages the disadvantaged black-Africans from accessing the better resourced ex-Model C schools. Apart from the high school fees and readily available fee remission, there are other costs incurred from daily transport to school, excursions, sports, and expensive fundraising programmes such as civvies day and market days

(Ntshoe, 2017; Teeger, 2015). The cost aligned school programmes discourages the majority of black-Africans from gaining access to ex-Model C schools, while conversely promoting access to the elite minority of blacks in the middle and upper class as they can afford the higher school fees (Alexander, 2016; Teeger, 2015).

A recent study on quintile ranking of schools in South Africa and learners' achievement in probability by Ogbonnaya and Awuah (2019) noted a wide achievement gap between no fee paying (quantile 1-3) and fee-paying schools (quantile 4 and 5). The study finds that learners from affluent upper quantile schools perform better in sports and academics when compared to learners attending less affluent quantile schools. This is despite that quantile 4 and 5 schools receive less funding and support from the government (Ogbonnaya & Awuah, 2019). The performance and high academic standards are owed to good facilities that promote learning and small classroom sizes with trained and motivated teachers (Hunter, 2016). The high school fees paid at ex-Model-C schools, helps to maintain their historical privilege and upkeep resources and facilities needed for educational access (Christie, 2020; Teeger, 2015). Furthermore, the SGB of the school is able to use the school funds to employ more additional staff members to maintain quality results and keep the school affluent with learners that will grow their network society for future benefit (Hunter, 2016; Ogbonnaya & Awuah, 2019). Christie (2020) concludes that the patterns of performance between the poorest and more affluent schools has remained the same despite the more inclusive post-apartheid policies.

2.6 Does desegregation of 'white' schools mean integration?

Integration is grounded on Inclusive Education that strives for a socially just society and an integrated society that eliminates social exclusion by supporting all learners and welcoming diversity (Ainscow, 2020). Studies have demonstrated a need for more research on the integration and functionality of Model-C schools in contemporary South Africa (Hamidou, 2023). However, available studies in this field have consistently showcased Model-C schools as colonised educational spaces with minimal to no transformation and decoloniality (Christie et al., 2017; Kanyopa et al., 2021; Hamidou, 2023). Despite the inclusive education policies that are founded on the Bill of Rights, such as SASA, No. 84 of 1996, and the NEPA year? that aim to shift from the apartheid agenda, ex Model-C schools remain monoculturalist and lack transformation as

learners, particularly racially black-African learners, are not provided with opportunities to have a voice and negotiate their issues (Alexander, 2016; Ntshoe, 2017; Williams, 2020). Instead, learners are integrated into a eurocentric culture as a way of preserving the former white schooling norms. Christie (2020) argues that educators still believe that quality results and school excellence can only be achieved when the school preserves the western culture through curriculum implementation and language policies. Therefore, admitting black learners into a desegregated schooling system means that learners are orientated and acculturated into a European culture (Alexander, 2016). This sanctioned ideology is seen as the only way to acquire knowledge and critical learning skills (Christie, 2020).

Analysis of prior research suggests that schooling desegregation has seemingly not improved racial relations among learners and between staff and learners (Kanyopa et al., 2021). The main findings from Johnston-Goodstar and Roholt's (2020) recent study suggest that racial microaggression is a common occurrence that prevents positive racial relations in multiracial schools. Microaggression is intentional or unintentional behaviour based on "subtle statements and insults directed against people in marginalised groups representing a subtle form of bias or discrimination" (Steketee et al., 2021, p.2). Black-African learners experience discrimination in sporting events and tend to face disciplinary actions, which is more frequent and severe than white learners on similar behaviour (Johnston-Goodstar & Roholt, 2020). As survival methods, black-African learners are invited into a white culture, where they are expected to aspire and enact whiteness to minimise disciplinary actions taken against them (Hamidou, 2023; Kanyopa et al., 2021). Learners who embrace their racial heritage are likely to experience microinsults (as a category of microaggression) from learners or teachers who convey rudeness with the aim to demean their racial heritage (Johnston-Goodstar & Roholt, 2020).

Racial relations have been approached with ignorance. In ex-Model C schools, white teachers and learners lack imperative information about the language and culture of blacks. As a result, they do not promote code-switching and multilingualism in classrooms (Steketee et al., 2021). Despite South Africa having 12 official languages, with Isizulu and IsiXhosa being the most spoken household languages, English and Afrikaans still dominate the public domain and remain the only two languages of curriculum implementation in the majority of ex-Model C schools (Mkhize & Balfour, 2017; StatsSA, 2023). While the Language in Education Policy under the SASA (DoE,

1996) encourages schools to promote multilingualism, schools have failed to comply with the policy, which has further created issues of language barriers for particularly black-African learners who do not use English or Afrikaans as their home language (Christie, 2020; DoE, 1997).

Global and local media has played a role in portraying acts of racism, racial abuse, and demeaning behaviour in South African schools (Alexander, 2016). A newspaper article by Abdelaziz (2016) reported cases of racism based on language use at Pretoria High School for Girls. Learners were given demerits and faced other disciplinary actions for communicating amongst themselves in an African language. According to the article, a black-African learner was told to stop making funny noises when she spoke using her mother-tongue language. While this case was in the spotlight, it encouraged members of the public to use the power of social media platforms to boycott racism at the school and share their experiences of racism taking place in formerly white schools around the country. The school's actions undermine the value of cultural knowledge and show no intentions of linguistic diversity by not supporting the use of African languages (Christie, 2020). Alexander (2016) argues that such issues delimit attempts of transformation for diversity and inclusion.

A study by Moagi (2016) confronts the intersectionality of race and gender in multiracial schools. From the study, it is worth noting that black-African girls face overlapping forms of discrimination from their identified black race and the texture of their hair. Mbilishaka and Apugo (2020) concur with Moagi (2016) and find that black women around the globe have to navigate school "policies that police their hair" (Mbilishaka & Apugo, 2020, p2). A girl in Pretoria High School for Girls was told that her afro hair was like a bird's nest because it was not considered to be neat as per the school's code of conduct (Abdelaziz, 2016). The teacher's hurtful and racist comment demeans the identity of the black race and further invalidates the thoughts and feelings of black-African girls (Johnston-Goodstar & Roholt, 2020). The behaviour and attitudes of the white learners and teachers toward black-African learners show a lack of cultural tolerance as they still reinforce and reproduce racial hierarchies by painting the Western culture as the norm. As a result, they want all learners to adopt it or face dire consequences, which include but is not limited to racial slurs, detention, and demerits (Teeger, 2015). Hunter (2016) contends that these schools assimilate black learners into an elite school culture, and those learners who are proficient in English hold a dominant position in the school community. They are usually selected as candidates for Representative Council of Learners (RCL) and are applauded for good behaviour (Hunter, 2016).

Preference is given to the white minority to further uphold the structure of white supremacy and racial domination (Alexander, 2016; Pica, 2022). Racially black learners are expected to be grateful and submissive towards the racist school norms and values, as they are made to believe that they are getting an education that is of excellent quality that they would not get if they were taught by black teachers (Lembani et al., 2020; Venketsamy et al., 2021). Learners are conditioned to think that black teachers are not good enough with poor education, which results in learners failing (Hamidou, 2023).

The SASA stipulates that the SGB must adopt a constitution and develop a school's code of conduct that is in the best interest of all learners (DoE, 1996), thus allocating extensive powers to the SGB. Sometimes, the school policy approved by the SGB, aims to exclude blacks and perpetuate institutional racism through its operational systems (Hamidou, 2023; Ntshoe, 2017). White parents who form part of the SGB develop school policies that prevent poor black parents from enrolling their learners from these schools through school language use policy and the high school fees that persist white privilege associated with the social class (Christie et al., 2017). These policies are made to be seen as inclusive to all learners. For example, learners are not allowed to have afro hair as it blocks the view of learners behind. The use of African languages is not allowed at school as it reduces the English language competency of learners (Makanda, 2016). The managerial autonomy of ex-Model C schools reproduces white supremacy and makes the black learner feel inferior and inadequate (Hamidou, 2023; Kanyopa et al., 2021). Notably, the SGB determines the feeder zone for public schools to control the number of learners entering the school. Ex-Model C schools will mostly admit white learners situated closer to the school and the few middle class blacks situated in suburbs closer to the school. This admission policy primarily excludes racially black learners from peripheral townships who belong to the lower class (Ntshoe, 2017). Ntshoe (2017) uses the concept of *resegregation* as an emerging term in the current education system. Resegregation is an overlap of race and class elements, where white learners from the upper-class move from public schooling that has an increasing number of blacks to a more affluent private school with very few blacks (Ntshoe, 2017). This has put pressure on former Model-C school management teams to divide learners into different classes according to race, especially in bilingual schools with English and Afrikaans as a medium of instruction (Alexander, 2016). However, Chapman (2018) states that white flight still exists in schools unless race is met

with visible financial constraints that will cause the few remaining white learners to stay in desegregated schools.

2.7 Conclusion

Chapter two shows detailed engagements of relevant literature that support the study. Engagements were critiqued from a broader range of international, sub-Saharan, and local literature to portray existing gaps. Diverse theories and policies were used to show contributing factors of inclusionary and exclusionary experiences of disadvantaged learners in former Model-C schools. Drawing from social justice education related policies, gaps in policy implementation on both national and school level were shown.

From the above review of literature, it is clear that some form of desegregation has occurred in the South African schooling system. However, integration has been met with resistance, and learners, particularly black-African learners, still need to be fully integrated. The aims of the SASA of 1996 have not been met (DoE, 1996). The ex-Model C schools remain the same despite integration policies due to poor leadership, which does not give voice to the previously marginalised group (Hamidou, 2023). The body of research on learners' integration suggests that educators, especially older white teachers, demonstrate a lack of commitment and do not partake in practices that promote integration and multicultural education because their teacher-education programmes focus more on curriculum development with little to no training on inclusive and multicultural education from the education authorities (Alexander, 2016). This gap points out a pressing need for the study to investigate the extent to which black-African learners are integrated into a multiracial schooling system.

The next chapter presents the conceptual and theoretical framework used in the study.

Chapter Three

Understanding inclusion and exclusion in South African schools: Towards a Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

“Through this lens we can build a renewed sense of personal self-worth and ultimately recalibrate our responses to circumstances, situations, and relationships. It is, in other words, the key to reshaping our very lives.” —Oprah Winfrey

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented a critical review of literature by global, sub-Saharan, and local scholars. Literature was discussed in relation to the key research question: *What are learners from lower socio-economic backgrounds experiences of social inclusion and exclusion at school?* With a clear focus on desegregated ex-Model C schools, chapter two looked at issues of race, class, and classism and how they shape the experiences of disadvantaged black-African learners. Furthermore, chapter two looked at how the socially targeted disadvantaged black-African learners navigate the so-called 'desegregated' geographical spaces and the impact on their educational success thereof. The second research question on *How do such experiences inform learners' schooling experiences?* Further guided these earlier discussions. A review of the literature pointed out a pressing need to further explore why and how inclusion and exclusion occurs in ex-Model C schools within a context of race and class vulnerability.

This chapter presents the conceptual and theoretical framework that underpins this study. As cautioned by Bertram and Christiansen (2014), both the concept and theory are closely linked to the objectives and research questions of a study. This chapter begins with exploring the concept of inclusive education and providing a detailed discussion of the understanding of inclusive education from the global to local perspective. This chapter further engages in the debate, challenges, and prospects of successful implementation of inclusive education in the South African schooling system. Kimberle Crenshaw's Theory of Intersectionality will be presented. This theory was selected to create a framework to support the research questions and then direct the data analysis approach (Varpio et al., 2020). A broad overview of the intersectionality concept, followed by the history and nature of the theory will be discussed. The theory concerning

education scholarship will be presented and finally, the chapter will conclude with a summary and brief discussion of the relevance of both frameworks to the study.

3.2 Inclusive Education

“Inclusion isn’t just inviting someone to sit at your table. It’s believing they belong there”

-Mia Carella

3.2.1 Perceptions of inclusive education

A large and growing body of literature has been published on the global countries' attempts to meet the 2030 agenda goals for sustainable development. Globally, scholars such as Walton & Engelbrecht, 2022; Van Mieghem et al., 2020; Azorin & Ainscow, 2020, have noted newly developed policy frameworks that are driving toward educational reform by putting inclusive education (IE) at the forefront of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 of the agenda 2030. The goal aims to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" (United Nations, 2015, p14). Van Mieghem et al. (2020) and Rapp and Corral- Granados (2024) acknowledge the importance of IE while arguing that the concept remains broad, ambiguous and complex. The contentious term of IE has, therefore, resulted in different complex perspectives and definitions that affect research and implementation of IE by different countries (Rapp & Corral- Granados, 2024; Azorin & Ainscow, 2020). In the same vein, Azorin and Ainscow (2020) posit that such complexity has slowed down the progress of achieving the SDG 4 (UN, 2015). The Global Education Monitoring Report presented by UNESCO (2020) highlighted that of the 68% of countries that understand the meaning of IE, only a shocking 57% acknowledge the multiple marginalised groups that must be accommodated under the IE goal. The revelation by UNESCO (2020) shows that over 40% of the 68% of the countries that claim to understand the meaning of IE have limited understanding of the concept as they do not acknowledge the involvement of marginalised groups other than those learners who are disabled. McConkey and McKenzie (2023) identify disabled learners with physical, sensorial, social, and intellectual impairments. For example, these are learners who have difficulty in hearing, are blind/ partially sighted, physically handicapped, and epileptic (Walton & Engelbrecht, 2022). Therefore, IE seeks to provide a certain level of support (ranging from intermittent to pervasive) required by

disabled learners to reach their full potential, as they cannot participate at the same level as those considered not disabled (Olamide, 2021).

According to Walton and Engelbrecht (2022), IE should meet the needs of all marginalised groups, which includes but is not limited to learners with a disability, blacks, those from the lower class, females, and other members of traditionally marginalised groups. However, Ainscow and Messiou (2018) argue that the US and European countries that lie in the global north have approached IE as accommodating learners who are disabled and those learners with special education needs (SEN). Penny et al. (2018) concur with Ainscow and Messiou (2018) and posit that IE traditionally involved a clear focus on integrating mainstream learners with special needs and learning barriers who have been mostly excluded from mainstream education. It must be noted that South Africa has a shared history of exclusively excluding disabled learners. Apart from racial differentiation and inequality in mainstream schools, a clear distinction was set between mainstream learners and those who experienced barriers to learning, development and participation. Schools were built to accommodate each group separately. As a result, the advent of democracy meant that education policies had to be revisited and reconstructed to integrate both groups (Walton & Engelbrecht, 2022).

Therefore, the concept of inclusion has been looked at in creating an educational setting that fully includes learners with disabilities and those who require special attention (Penny et al., 2018). The target focus of SDG 4, as mentioned by UNESCO (2020) and the UN (2015), makes it clear that inclusion of all learning in education means all learners. However, the target focus of the goal is drawn closely to the inclusion of females and learners with disability, with the attention shifting slightly away from members of other marginalised and minority groups. The lack of correlation between the goal and target focus results in further complexity and contentious debate of the concept and results in the concept of IE being brought into scrutiny by scholars and a "messy compromise between policy and contradictory practices" on the ground level (Azorin & Ainscow, 2020, p2). The contradictory term resulted in new perspectives from Barton (2003), who claims the urgency of re-imagining IE as a continuous process of providing access to the previously excluded groups, removing exclusionary practices, and increasing the active participation of all learners.

3.2.2 Re-Imagining inclusion in education

The post-apartheid era introduced the South African Constitution, aiming to “heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice, and fundamental human rights” (Constitution of the RSA, Act No. 108 of 1996, p1). Part of the South African Constitution is the introduction of Chapter 2, the Bill of Rights, which declares that everyone has the right to basic education. This fundamental right appeared as a beacon of hope for many South Africans previously marginalised and excluded from the education system, giving birth to new possibilities in the new SA (D’amant, 2010). The South African Constitution (1996) led to the implementation of a robust legislative and policy framework that guides IE. As discussed earlier, Barbon (2003) posits that the complex and contentious concept of IE has been shaped by historical and contextual factors, resulting in controversy and misinterpretation of the White Paper six (WP6) policy (DBE, 2001) that aims exclusively at full inclusion in education. The misunderstanding of IE and its policy has resulted in scholars like Duke et al. (2016), Messiou (2017), and McConkey and McKenzie (2023) further contributing to the world of knowledge by calling for the re-imagining and re-thinking of the rhetoric and praxis that includes every learner in the contemporary South African context (Rapp & Corral-Granados, 2024).

According to Walton and Engelbrecht (as cited by UNESCO, 1994), WP6 draws on the Salamanca statement framework, which focuses on increasing equitable rights and access to education. Walton and Engelbrecht (2022), who study the emergence of IE in South Africa, acknowledge teachers as crucial role players in implementing IE in educational settings. For successful implementation of IE, Van Mieghem et al. (2020) suggest that educators who are at the forefront of IE must create an environment that embraces differences and begin to acknowledge that all learners have the ability to learn. Their differences (class, race, disability, gender, age, and language) should be acknowledged and respected (DoE, 2001). Acknowledgement of the vulnerability of the marginalised groups empowers the provision of socio-emotional support, making them feel accepted and valued by their teachers and peers, who must learn to “live with the difference and learn how to learn from the difference” (Azorin & Ainscow, 2020, p2; Ainscow & Messiou, 2018). Disadvantaged learners must not simply be assimilated in spaces where they were previously excluded and be expected to fit in and adapt to existing classroom practices but should be socially included with individual support provided to meet the educational needs of all learners (DoE, 2001; Van Mieghem et al., 2020).

A considerable amount of literature has been published on IE. These studies by Van Mieghem et al., 2020; Azorin & Ainscow, 2020; Ainscow & Messiou, 2018; Penny et al., 2018; Walton & Engelbrecht, 2022 suggest that emphasis must be on the inclusion of disadvantaged, marginalised and vulnerable learners. On the contrary, the recent study by Rapp and Corral-Grondados (2024) shies away from understanding IE as the inclusion of particular groups. However, it views IE as a transformative goal of reducing all forms of social exclusion and providing excellent and competitive education for all learners. In the same vein, Engelbrecht, 2020; Muthukrishna and Engelbrecht's (2018) study on decolonising IE in poorer Southern African countries like Botswana, Namibia, and South Africa, suggests shifting from the Western discourse of understanding IE and acknowledging the significance of culturally shaped values and beliefs. Both scholars suggest that developing an African understanding and expression of *Ubuntu*, is significant in transforming and decolonising IE. Drawing from earlier discussions in chapter two, *Ubuntu* provides guidelines on the way of life that proclaims togetherness, unity, and love (Omodan & Makena, 2022). Therefore, it will encourage humanity and mutual respect (amongst learners/teachers and between teachers and learners). Moreover, it facilitates sharing space and resources at schools, reducing disparities and benefitting all learners regardless of their challenges (Muthukrishna & Engelbrecht, 2018; Olamine, 2021).

While teachers are considered as key role players in enacting IE (Walton & Engelbrecht, 2022), it is worth noting that *it takes a village to raise a child* (an African proverb). Therefore, for the successful implementation of IE, Walton and Engelbrecht (2022) argue for the imperativeness of collaborative partnerships between parents, schools, organisations, and larger communities. This notion of Walton and Engelbrecht (2022) has been greatly supported by various studies within the Social Sciences, Education, and Psychology field. Examples include Anderson et al., 2014; Olamine, 2021; Manzi, 2016 and Wekulo, 2015 who use Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model to showcase the interconnectedness of various stakeholders and environments that play a fundamental role in learner development and support. Rapp and Corral-Granados (2024) concede that all stakeholders must acknowledge societal factors as barriers to learning and then develop support plans that foster IE, other than just policies developed to counteract discrimination and exclusion. They must continuously search for ways to respond to diversity (Ainscow & Messiou, 2018). To disrupt exclusion and structural disadvantage, inclusive practices must be framed within

the social justice field and *Ubuntu* must be reclaimed and re-imagined in order to interrupt and challenge the status quo (Muthukrishna & Engelbrecht, 2018; Ainscow & Messiou, 2018).

3.2.3. Challenges and limitations of inclusive education

Much of the literature published on IE has shown an ongoing effort by researchers, educational practitioners, and politicians to develop inclusive schools. However, recent studies have shown a massive gap between the idea of IE and the realisation of the idea. Understanding IE and its practices remains problematic, troubled, and contested (Qvortrup & Qvortrup, 2020). Despite international commitments and interventions for IE, exclusion in education remains pervasive (Walton & Engelbrecht, 2022). Implementation strategies from higher-income countries that lie in the global north are increasingly proving to be irrelevant to lower-income countries still battling with issues of power, dominance, and social inequality (Pather, 2019; Walton & Engelbrecht, 2022). For example, the South African education system still relies on the visible scars that were inherited from apartheid, and as a result, its education remains steadfastly unequal (Knaus & Brown II, 2015).

While implementation strategies for IE remain questionable and still needs to be revised, it is worth acknowledging that South Africa has taken commendable steps in increasing access to primary education for all (StatsSA, 2023; Engelbrecht, 2022). In a recent study that confronts IE in Africa, Pather (2019) views it as a social and political project that addresses exclusionary practices and ensures quality education for all. However, Walton and Engelbrecht (2022) raise a concern that the focus of IE continues to grow on learners with physical or intellectual impairments while excluding minority and previously marginalised groups. Such pervasive exclusion is due to that the IE system in Africa is layered on existing conditions of poverty, underdevelopment, legacies of colonialism, and global inequity (Walton & Engelbrecht, 2022).

Rapp and Corral-Granados (2024) contend that translating IE policy into practice is complicated on both the micro and macro and micro societal levels. Available research annotates that inclusive practices are caught up with resistance and negative attitudes from the members of society which include teachers, parents and even learners themselves. According to Van Mieghem et al. (2020), teachers lack adequate training on inclusive education practices. As a result, they are not

sufficiently knowledgeable and remain ambivalent in their beliefs and inclusive practices. This is problematic because the revised policy on the minimum requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (DHET, 2015) points out that “All Bachelor of Education graduates must be knowledgeable about inclusive education and skilled in identifying and addressing barriers to learning, as well as in curriculum differentiation to address the needs of individual learners within a grade.” (DHET, 2015, p25). This requirement assumes that BEd and Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) graduates know about IE. However, the available scholarship shows that BEd and PGCE qualifications alone cannot offer training and skills for implementing IE in schools, implying an urgency for more teacher development programs.

Furthermore, Walton and Englebrecht (2022) argue that poor quality education serves as persistent prejudice and discrimination to inclusion. The study by Van Mienhem et al. (2020) further supports this notion and argues that teaching experience alone is not enough to guide teachers on their day-to-day inclusive practices. For example, educational practitioners may have less teaching experience but more training in IE and special needs education, resulting in a positive attitude towards IE. An experienced teacher who has not received much training on IE may be reluctant to reconsider their teaching practices and continue relying on traditional methods of IE that do not meet the needs of previously marginalised learners and those of minority identity groups (Englebrecht, 2022).

Englebrecht (2022) further denotes that teachers’ personal attitude and understanding of IE determines the way inclusion is enacted in their classrooms. It is worth noting that IE requires courtesy, care, and high perceived competence. Therefore, a positive attitude to IE is related to the female gender (Van Mienhem et al., 2020). As posited by Msiza (2022), care is socially constructed as a responsibility for women and, in order to maintain high masculinity levels, male educators distance themselves from practices that require care as they are considered feminine. Inadequate IE training results in teachers not feeling competent, and as a result, they become reluctant to accept learners whom they regard as different in their classrooms (Walton & Englebrecht, 2022). Such reluctance is coupled with fear of the potential dangers of stigmatisation and damage when learners are labelled as ‘vulnerable’ due to their marginalisation. They are

potentially neglecting other learners who might equally experience marginalisation but do not fall into any predetermined category (Messiou, 2017).

3.3 Theory of Intersectionality

3.3.1 Understanding Intersectionality

According to Bhopal (2020), intersectionality is a popular word commonly used in academia and other popular discourse. Intersectionality refers to “a concept, theory, lens, analytical strategy, framework and approach to tackle social injustice” (Truth, 2020, p1). This theory acknowledges and takes into account the multiple social identities that people have and how they impact one another. These social identity groups include race, class, (dis)ability, religion, sexual orientation, age, and other social groups that people belong to.

As intersectionality has gained popularity, it has been interpreted and discussed in various ways. For the benefit of this study, the term ‘intersectionality’ is used as a theory to show how multiple identities (that learners identify with) interact within a context of connected systems and structures of power (Hankivsky, 2014), and how the various systems of power and oppression, such as racism and classism, shape their daily experiences of privilege and disadvantage (Truth, 2022). Theoretically, scholars use intersectionality to show how overlapping or competing social identities (see Figure 4.1) shape the daily lived experiences of an individual in society (Bhopal, 2020). As discourses of inequality cannot be studied as one single factor, intersectionality helps to better understand human beings through their interactions with different social locations (e.g. race, class, sex, and age) that are competing to produce various outcomes of power relations (Bhopal, 2020; Hankivsky, 2014).

Figure 3.1 below shows the different social identities as complex factors and processes that interact to shape human lives:

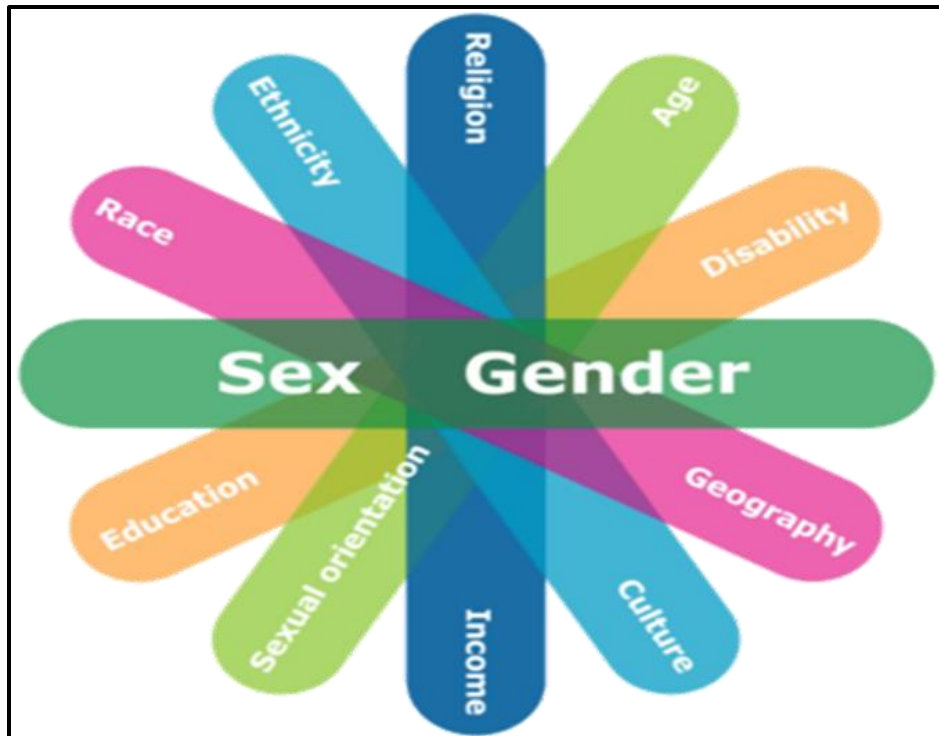


Figure 3.1: Intersecting identity groups

3.3.2 Crenshaw's Theory of Intersectionality

History of the Intersectionality Theory

This study employs as part of its theoretical framework, the theory of intersectionality, first coined in 1989 by a black American civil rights advocate, feminist, and scholar of critical race theory, Professor Kimberlé Crenshaw. For Crenshaw, the anti-discrimination law model developed by the US, failed to cater to low-income black women's experiences (Cho et al., 2013). Crenshaw (1989) was of the view that "black female narratives were rendered partial, unrecognisable, something apart from standard claims of racial discrimination or gender discrimination" (Cho et al., 2013, p8). Based on this practice, Crenshaw (1989) developed the intersectionality theory as part of the legal and policy advocacy to remedy racial and gender discrimination in the US.

In 1991, Crenshaw advanced the intersectional analysis theory to study domestic violence against black women, particularly immigrants in Los Angeles (USA). Crenshaw (1991) uses the theory as a magnifying glass to identify the violence and gender discrimination that American women experience in their employment and further details the experiences of black-American women

who, because of the intersection of race, gender, and class, are exposed to interlocking forms of marginalisation and oppression (Runyan, 2021; Mitchell et al., 2019). However, apart from just sexism, Crenshaw (1989, 1991) denotes that the dimensions of different identities, such as race or class, particularly shape American women's experiences. Consequently, she uses the intersectionality theory to unveil how gender and race interact to shape multiple dimensions of unique experiences for black women. Other than a unidimensional approach (that operates as separate segments) which fails to capture the unique experiences of black-American women, Crenshaw (1989) uses a multidimensional approach to show how multiple forms of oppression (race, gender, sex, and other identity groups) jointly intersect to capture women's holistic lived experience (Crenshaw 1989, 1991; Homan et al., 2021).

According to Crenshaw (1991), intersectionality is a multi-layered phenomenon that operates in three forms – structural, political, and representational intersectionality. These three forms of intersectionality exhibit inequalities within and between groups of different or similar identities (Homan et al., 2021; Charness & Chen, 2020). The structural form of intersectionality points to societal structures that are used to facilitate and conceptualise the psychical (through violence) and cultural (through patriarchy) marginalisation of American women (Homan et al., 2021; Crenshaw, 1991). The pushing of American women to the margins called for the development of 'political intersectionality' (Runyan, 2021), where Crenshaw (1991) argues that feminist and anti-racist politics often help to combat the issues of violence against black women as they continue to study these intersections (race or gender) as separate segments of marginalisation. Within the realm of feminism and anti-racism politics, there must be a recognition that black women are members of at least two subordinated groups – black (race) and women (gender) - unlike black men who may be members of one subordinate group (black -race), as their gender puts them in a privileged position when compared to women (Runyan, 2021; Msiza, 2022). As cautioned by Runyan (2021), recognising the struggles of black women, equates to equally vouching for the critical development of social movement agendas. Lastly, Crenshaw (1991) invites people to consider the cultural construction of black women as part of representational intersectionality. The racist and cultural construction of black women has become another source of intersectional disempowerment and marginalisation of black women (Anders et.al, 2024; Crenshaw, 1991).

Nature of Intersectionality Theory

Since Crenshaw (1989) coined the intersectionality theory, it has been taken up in various academic disciplines in the US and beyond (Runyan, 2018). The theory has travelled beyond legal studies into being used widely in other scholarship fields such as feminist, gender, and sexuality studies (Ntombela, 2020; Banguant, 2020; Ngidi, 2019; Msiza, 2022; Mazibuko, 2022 and Phiri, 2013). Some scholars have extended the theory to religion, culture, and African studies (Nganga, 2023; Waiganjo, 2017). According to Perumal (2005), Malies (2012), Singh (2002) and Hortop (2001), social studies related disciplines have used the intersectionality theory to counter unidimensional and exclusionary analysis in education, psychology, and other anti-discriminatory fields that aim for social justice (Runyan, 2018). Crenshaw's (1989, 1991) work has further promoted coalition building into the multidimensional understanding of identity and expression of how power structures produce and reproduce subordinated location of intersectional identities (Anders et al., 2024).

To further elaborate on Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality, this study draws on the work of Olena Hankivsky, a scholar of public policy and political theory. Hankivsky (2014) uses seven principles of intersectionality (see Figure 3.2 below) to provide a clear language guideline for the use of Crenshaw's (1989) intersectionality theory. As mentioned earlier, the intersectionality theory allows people to challenge social inequalities and promote social justice. Therefore, the seven distinct principles by Hankivsky (2014) seek to provide direction to apply and guide intersectionality work. The tenets of intersectionality are pointed out in the discussions below.



Figure 3.2: A diagram showing the principles of intersectionality (source: Hankivsky, 2014).

Various intersectionality scholars (Hankivsky, 2014; Runyan, 2018; Anders et al., 2024; Homan et al., 2021; Charness & Chen, 2020; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991) have argued that human lives cannot be reduced to a single identity category (race, class, religion, age, gender, gender, sexuality or nationality or nationality). In studying or understanding people's needs and experiences, Bhopal (2020) maintains that no one factor can explain social inequality because human experiences result from intersecting social factors. Therefore, Hankivsky (2014) postulates that the intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1989) allows the researcher to conceptualise intersecting and co-constituting categories to study individuals' unique lived experiences as they vary according to time and space. In the same vein, Wyatt et al. (2022) contend that one identity is added to another identity to provide a deeper understanding of the multiple layers of oppression. This practice-informed theory exposes how a single thinking axis undermines the struggle for social justice. This study aims to understand disadvantaged black-African learners' social inclusionary and exclusionary experiences in ex-Model C schools. Separately studying their disadvantaged (class) or black-African (race) experiences will not give a holistic understanding of their lived experiences but exploring the (various) sites of intersectional production in relation to one another, allows for a multi-level analysis of black-African learners' experiences (Cho et al., 2013).

According to Hankivsky (2014), intersectionality theory allows for a broader understanding of the phenomenon studied between and across the three levels of society: macro, meso, and micro. The macro level operates at global and national institutional level (for example, schools and neighbourhoods) whilst the meso level operates at provincial or regional level and the micro level operates at an individual level in relation to teachers, learners and families. Therefore, the intersectionality theory is a suitable approach to enhance analytical skills as it allows for a multi-level analysis of social contexts. It moves beyond the micro-level to examine how one's multiple identities intersect with other micro, meso, and macro levels of analysis (Nunez, 2014). For Winker and Degele (2011), intersectionality is a system of interactions between inequality-created social structures. As a result, the multi-level analysis allows people to address the processes of inequity and differentiation across levels of structure, identity, and representation (Hankivsky, 2014). As noted earlier, intersectionality theory has travelled across disciplines. Therefore, a recognition of the three levels of society allows for a cross-discipline analysis as it identifies any potential shared needs, values, and goals for building coalitions across identity categories as essential means to ending oppressive systems and the fight for social justice (Runyan, 2021; Wyatt et al., 2022). The studies of Nunez (2014) and Cho et al. (2013) both argue that the theory allows people to identify political and institutional inequalities and societal power dynamics perpetuating marginalisation. With power and oppression being the center of intersectionality research work (Wyatt et al., 2022), this theory will allow for multi-level analysis of the overlapping structures of subordinations for disadvantaged black-African learners in ex-Model C schools.

Nunez (2014) argues that the concept of power has been undertheorised in educational research. Nonetheless, a selected number of scholars use the wheel of power/privilege (see Figure 3.3 below) to center intersectionality work around the differences of power and other categories of inequality (Wenker & Degele, 2011). At the center of the wheel lies privileged social identity groups that hold power (e.g. citizens, cisgender men, whites, the able-bodied, the wealthy, and heterosexual people), and as you move outwards from the core to the periphery of the wheel, lies marginalised identity groups that have limited to no power s (e.g. non-citizens, the disabled, the poor, blacks, and non-English speaking people). The one major issue in Wyatt et al.'s (2022) recent study concerns how intersectionality researchers sideline how structures of oppression create inequality, resulting in what scholars refer to as *oppression olympiads* – where social identity groups compete for being the most oppressed identity. Thuo (2021) posits that this competition is a threat to

democracy because it does not promote solidarity between marginalised groups, instead, results in a precluding progress of the unchanged stratification system. To counteract this, Wyatt et al. (2022) and Hankivsky (2014) urge that intersectionality work should be nurtured along the production and reproduction of power and equity within a societal structure and its institutions. Hankivsky (2014) cautions that paying attention to power and equity is through reflexively positioning oneself in relation to all three levels of society. This study engages with positionality (reflexivity) in the methodology section (chapter four).

Crenshaw's (1989,1991) intersectional perspective recognises that one individual can simultaneously hold both a marginalised and privileged identity. Both types of identity could be salient in experiencing contexts and systems of interlocking power and oppression, such as institutionalised racism and classism (Nunez, 2014). The intersection of multiple identities (shown in Figure 4.1) produces multiple experiences of privilege and marginalisation. As posited by Hankivsky (2014), the intersectionality perspective allows for a better annotation of the outplay of inequality as Crenshaw (1989,1991) believes that inequality is a result of many intersections of different social locations, power relations, and experiences rather than a single distinct factor. For Cooke and Few-Demo (2021), intersectionality displays how power relations create variability in privileges and oppression when people of different social identities interact. Concerning Figure 3.3 (shown below), a person with multiple privileged identities (that lie at the wheel's core) will most likely hold more power and be at an advantage in more than one way. In contrast, a person with multiple oppressive identities (that lie on the outer core of the wheel) will most likely face marginalisation with limited to no power at all. Mazibuko (2022) complements Cooke and Few-Demo (2021) by maintaining that when people of different social identities interact within space and time, they negotiate systems of privilege and oppression.

According to Crenshaw (as cited in Saxe, 2017), the intersectionality theory argues that an individual with several oppressive identities will live and have a completely different experience than someone who shares only one or some of those oppressed identities. According to Crenshaw (1989), the theory argues that social identities interact. One form of oppression overlaps other forms, with the effects closely linked to other forms. The interaction of two or more social identities results in one qualitatively unique experience of oppression. Through Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality, we can understand the differences and similarities of individual experiences

3.3.3 Intersectionality in Education

A recent study by Anders et al. (2024) amplifies calls for collective work against oppression, discrimination, and marginalisation in education. Through intersectionality work, one builds a collective action to understand social inequalities and complexities of identity better (Anders et al., 2024; Rogers & Syed, 2021). People can pay attention to the intersection of privilege and oppression and how they counter the lives of multiple marginalised individuals (Rogers & Syed, 2021). Crenshaw's (1989,1991) ideas provide logic and analytical skills to apply equity and social justice work in the education sector (Anders et al., 2022). To this point, the steadfastly unequal education in South Africa reflects the unabated legacies of historical structural processes that were implemented during the educational apartheid (Homan et al., 2021; Knaus & Brown II, 2015).

The theory allows scholars to examine how large and complex systems of power embedded in social structures (socio-economic backgrounds) and educational institutions intersect with individuals' various identities and work in ways that influence their lives (Wyatt et al., 2022). Scholars can interrogate the systems of power to understand how multiple identities interact to cause oppression, domination, and discrimination for some learners (Crenshaw, 1989; Elemam & Saide, 2023). This form of interrogation is empirical within the social justice education field as it allows researchers and policymakers to sensitise the vulnerable learners considered as the 'outgroup' and further expose all forms of discrimination in the education sector – allowing for inclusive policies and strategies that address these intersecting identities in order to reduce systematic oppression and discrimination in the education sector, fostering diversity and inclusion (Elemam & Saide, 2023).

Though intersectionality operates in multiple societal domains, in the context of this study, it looks at intersectionality in the education domain (Homan et al., 2021). This study moves beyond the static location where identities meet. It examines power relations, identifies and challenges dynamics that perpetuate the social reproduction of educational inequalities (Nunez, 2014). Homan et al. (2021) claim that much literature has thus far remained siloed with studies looking at a single dimension of oppression (for example, structural racism or classism). However, intersectionality in education provides new structural approaches to conceptualise and interrogate the intersection of both dimensions.

3.3.4 Critiques on the theory of intersectionality

Intersectionality scholarship has been critiqued across a variety of disciplines (for example, Msiza 2016, 2022; Ntombela, 2020; Mazibuko, 2022; Cho et al., 2013; Nunez, 2014; Runyan, 2021; Winker & Degele, 2011 and Bhopal, 2020). According to Nunez (2014), the intersectionality theory emphasises individual experiences (due to their intersecting identities) more than systems of power and oppression that shape these individual experiences. In the same vein, Cho et al. (2013) argues that intersectionality risks being merely a 'buzzword' that fails to understand power dynamics and its structures and fails to develop associated strategies needed for structural social change. Some of the critique has observed the meanings of the theory as being diluted and even misinterpreted as scholars fail to provide an adequate framework that specifies how intersecting dimensions shape life opportunities (Runyan, 2021). Lastly, the study of Ntombela (2020) critiques how Crenshaw's (1989) intersectionality theory divides societal members into victims and villains due to their privileged or marginalised social identity groups. Credibility is bestowed on people with multiple marginalised identities, which ultimately turn marginalised people against each other, delaying the fight for social justice. However, the study by Msiza (2016, 2022) and Wyatt et al. (2022) counteracts this observation, arguing that some researchers have a limited understanding of the theory, resulting in the uncritical marvel of their intersectional research work that does not respond to what is not entailed in intersectionality theory.

While aware of the critiques levelled against Crenshaw's (1989) intersectionality theory, this study is committed to employing the theory in the analysis of the findings. In this commitment, this study advances the use of intersectionality theory in education research to move it beyond this potential status as a 'buzzword' (Nunez, 2014). The commitment is to strategically use the theory as a lens to explore the inclusionary and exclusionary experiences of black-African learners in ex-Model C schools. This study details the value and suitability of the theory in the following sub-section of this chapter.

3.4 Establishing a link and value added by both frameworks to the study

The theory of intersectionality and IE complement each other as a framework for this study. According to Hankivsky (2014), the intersectionality theory posits that forms of oppression do not occur in isolation but are interlinked. Therefore, applying the theory as a lens provides a more advanced way of analysing human differences and their similarities. This analysis allowed the

research project to be part of the ongoing struggle for IE as it simultaneously attempts to identify and recognise interlinked forms of oppression (Cho et al., 2013; Nunez, 2014). The theory informs the practices of social inclusion and the exclusion that disadvantaged learners' experiences in ex-Model C schools. To avoid generalising the experiences of all learners, the intersectionality theory adequately uncovers the personal and unique experiences of inclusion and exclusion that occur in a given space and time. The theory is, therefore, crucial for contributing to social change, as it enables more effective and efficient ways of responding to IE rather than a 'one size fits all' approach to solving persistent social inequalities (Hankivsky, 2014; Azmitta & Thomas, 2015).

It is noteworthy that the post-1994 era introduced the South African Constitution, aiming to "heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice, and fundamental human rights" (Constitution of the RSA, Act No. 108 of 1996, p1). Three decades later, various studies maintain that the South African education system remains unequal, with gaps between populations worsening (Myatt et al., 2022). Therefore, the multidimensional lens of intersectionality assists this study in exploring the connections between social structures that shape diverse locations (Hankivsky, 2014). The multidimensional lens afforded by intersectionality and its focus on power dynamics makes it an up-and-coming conceptual framework to address educational equity, especially among black-African learners in ex-Model C schools (Nunez, 2014).

Anders et al. (2024) argue that the complexity of intersectional identities and experiences is always connected to structures. Those structures include laws, institutions, and organisational policies. Since intersectionality assists in exploring and interrogating the relationships of inequality that exist in the presence of IE policies such as SASA and WP6 (DoE, 2001), they complement each other as part of the theoretical framework employed in this research endeavour. It is only through merging the two that a comprehensive exploration of black-African learners' inclusionary and exclusionary experiences can be developed. Using an intersectional framework allows for an examination of the relationship between socio-economic disadvantage (class) and race (black-African), and it establishes an understanding of the continuing domination of racially white learners from the upper class and the subordination of black-African learners from the lower class. Learners' different identity markers in ex-Model C schools determine their position and power within the school environment. It is worthwhile to note that while disadvantaged black-African learners may share the same racial identities as their black-African peers, their class identity

positions them at lower levels of the school hierarchy and makes them vulnerable to subordination by black-Africans from the middle and upper classes. The power relations of dominance and subordination allow other white and black learners from the upper and middle class to enforce racial and class inequality on the school premises and police their marginalised identities.

Combining these theories into one theoretical framework allows the study to better understand the intersections of sexual identity, gender, culture, geographical location, cultural traditions, and religious beliefs and how these intersections shape the construction of race and class identities in various geographical and social spaces. These are complex intersections, and they do not exist in the same order in all spaces, which is why disadvantaged black-African learners have to adjust and twist the order of their identities so that they can be in alignment with the class and racial requirements of the space that they are in at a particular time. Goode (2022) argues that intersectionality is centered around power, privilege, oppression, and justice. Therefore, applying the theory of intersectionality in this study allows the researcher to better understand how privilege and oppression influence the social inclusionary and exclusionary experiences of black-African learners.

This study engages in an often-silenced matter in social justice scholarship within the context of South Africa. Issues of race and class are often studied as a separate phenomenon; therefore, their intersection remains unrecognised mainly as an essential area of scholarship due to the misconception that learners enrolled in ex-Model C schools are stratified within the middle and upper socio-economic class. The intersectionality theory offers a unique framework for analysing problems that exist within diversity and inequity (Hankivsky, 2014). The lens of the theory is used to analyse how disadvantaged (class), black (race), and other social identities interact to shape individual learner experiences within the context of ex-Model C schools. Crenshaw's intersectionality provides additional compelling layers of engagement with existing intersectional scholarship and scholarship in the education domain, invites structural change through intersectional policies and inclusive practices, and promotes coalition building toward intersectional racial justice in ex-Model C (Anders et al., 2024). Where the concept of IE may not explain the experiences of disadvantaged learners in ex-Model C schools, the theory of intersectionality is employed to understand such experiences so that IE can be used to counteract such experiences with an intention for broader active participation of all parties.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter presented the conceptual and theoretical framework used as the lens through which this study explores the inclusionary and exclusionary experiences of disadvantaged black-African learners enrolled in ex-Model C schools in Pretoria. This chapter began by exploring the concept of inclusive education as a framework developed from the reviewed literature presented in chapter two. This chapter provided a detailed discussion of the understanding of inclusive education from a global to a local perspective. This chapter further engaged in the debate, challenges, and prospects of successful implementation of inclusive education in the South African schooling system. A presentation of Kimberle Crenshaw's Theory of Intersectionality (1989) was then presented. Moreover, this chapter provided a broad overview of the intersectionality concept, followed by the history and nature of the theory. Before engaging in the critiques offered on the theory, this chapter discussed the theory concerning education scholarship. Finally, this chapter concluded with a summary and brief discussion of the relevance of both theoretical contributions to the overall theoretical framework of the study.

The next chapter presents the research design and methodology employed to generate data which responds to the research questions in this study.

Chapter Four

Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided a detailed discussion on the concept of Inclusive Education and Crenshaw's (1989) Intersectionality Theory that informs this study and concluded with a discussion of the link and value added by the chosen framework for the study. This chapter aims to present the methodological research approaches employed in this study. According to Sreekumar (2023), a research methodology is a structured approach implemented to collect, analyse, and interpret data to respond to the study's research questions. This study's main critical research question is: *What are black-African learners from lower socio-economic backgrounds' experiences of social inclusion and exclusion at school?* This chapter describes the different methodological choices selected as the most appropriate means of responding to the critical questions of the study. This chapter begins by exploring the research paradigm and approach chosen. Furthermore, the participants recruitment process and selection within the research setting is presented. This chapter further provides a discussion on the three data collection methods employed in the study, followed by the data analysis approach and issues of trustworthiness and rigour. Finally, this chapter outlines the ethical considerations considered throughout the data generation process, data storage, and limitations of the study.

4.2 Research Paradigm

According to Khatri (2020), a research paradigm refers to the theoretical and philosophical grounds that shape a researcher's work. A paradigm seeks to describe the researcher's beliefs and school/s of thought that inform data meanings and its interpretation. Similarly, Kivunja and Kayini (2017) argue that a research paradigm reflects a researcher's 'worldview' and their beliefs about the world that they live in and want to live in.

Khatri (2020) further cautions us on the importance of being aware and informed about our positionality with regard to how we see the world. This study uses the critical paradigm to portray

the researcher's worldview. Bertram and Christiansen (2014) and Fazlıoğulları (2012) argue that the critical paradigm sees the world as being shaped by the political, cultural, social, and economic context. Similarly, Asghar (2013) concurs that the critical paradigm concerns societal power issues and their interaction with identity groups such as race, class, gender, religion, sexuality, and other social institutions that contribute to a social system. This paradigm aims to empower the oppressed, give them a voice, and make them conscious of the oppression that they are experiencing so that they can act to transform the world (Asghar, 2013).

Kivunja and Kayini (2017) posit that the critical paradigm is concerned with addressing issues of unequal power relations and oppression of participants concerning gender, class, race, and other social identities that exist within the social domain. Informed by this understanding, this study is aligned with the emancipation of the oppressed human lives and is committed to bringing about social change that will give a voice to the previously marginalised racial group of disadvantaged black-African learners who form the minority group in former Model-C schools in Pretoria. This study's beliefs is informed by the unequal world that people inhabit, and the ideal world that one wants to live in, which is driven by equity and justice (Kivunja & Kayini, 2017). This study aims to understand the phenomenon of inequality that mostly discriminates against learners who are racially considered black-African, and in particular those from poor socio-economic backgrounds, within a mindset of promoting human rights and increasing social justice and inclusion in education (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014; Kivunja et al., 2017). Adopting a critical paradigm inevitably positions the researcher to challenge the status quo while striving for an inclusive and democratic school community (Asghar, 2013). Therefore, this study has at its heart, the commitment to emancipate the lives of disadvantaged black-African learners (Fazlıoğulları, 2012).

4.3 Research Approach

Research approaches are categorised into three groups: the qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method approach. The significant difference between quantitative and qualitative research approaches lies in the distinction between 'causal mechanism' and 'describing subjective experiences' (Trafimow, 2014). Quantitative research is a scientific search for cause and effect by collecting numerical data, while qualitative research explores the depth and richness of experiences

and perceptions. Quantitative data is collected through structured surveys, questionnaires, and experiments, while qualitative data uses observation, discussions, and interviews (D'amant, 2010; Bertram & Christianse, 2014). According to Roger et al. (2018), unlike quantitative study, qualitative study believes that knowledge is constructed through observing and interpreting subjective human experiences. A broader degree of flexibility allows for findings to be negotiated between the researcher and participant in qualitative research (D'amant, 2010; Roger et al., 2018).

This study adopted a qualitative research approach. According to Teherani et al. (2015), qualitative research is the systematic enquiry into a social phenomenon that occurs within a natural setting. The study aims to investigate how disadvantaged black-African learners experience social inclusion and exclusion in ex-Model C schools in Pretoria, and how such experiences informed learners' schooling experiences. For Bertram and Christians (2014), a qualitative approach generates and analyses data that cannot be easily quantified but involves textual, verbal, and visual content. This qualitative research focused on the inclusionary and exclusionary events that transpired at selected ex-Model C schools in Pretoria and the outcomes of those events from the socio-economic perspectives of disadvantaged black-African learners (Teherani et al., 2015).

A qualitative study believes that there is no single truth and accepts each participant's unique experience (D'amant, 2010). Therefore, the adopted qualitative approach allows the study to build meaning using these learners' unique experiences (Cohen et al., 2002). Informed partly by the critical paradigm, the chosen data generation methods (focus-group discussion, photo elicitation, and individual semi-structured interviews) allow learners involved in this study to speak for themselves so that their experiences can be studied as a whole in connection with the ex-Model C school context that shaped these experiences (Morton, 2004). Generated data is used to analyse learners' personal experiences describing their social inclusion and exclusion at ex-Model C schools (Aspers & Corte, 2019).

4.4 Research Setting

4.4.1 Geographical location of the study

Pretoria was selected as the geographical location of the present study. Known as the city of Jacaranda, Pretoria is an administrative capital city in the Tshwane metropolitan municipality under the Gauteng province of South Africa. The recent census report shows Gauteng as the smallest province with the largest population of approximately 15.1 million, indicating an increase of 2.8 million from 2011 (StatsSA, 2023). This drastic increase can be accounted for by the increasing number of foreign nationals and people from other provinces (mostly KZN, Limpopo, and Mpumalanga) migrating to Gauteng for jobs and a better life. Unlike the other provinces, Gauteng has no dominant language or culture due to the high urbanisation and migration levels, resulting in multicultural and multilingual diversity (StatsSA, 2023). Despite the high population, the Gauteng province was the third highest in the country in terms of academic results, with an 85.4% matric pass rate in 2023, indicating a slight increase from 84.4% matric pass rate in 2022 (DBE, 2024a).

The high population in Gauteng province has resulted in a great demand for learner placement at schools. Since 2016, the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) has adopted the online school application and placement system, particularly for grade one and eight learners. As part of the Admission Policy for ordinary public schools, the GDE uses a criterion for placements starting with learners who stay within the feeder zone of the school, followed by learners with sibling/s in the school, parent's work address within the feeder zone and lastly, learners who stay within and beyond a 30km radius from the school (Westerdale, 2024; NEPA, 1996). Surprisingly, recent media reports point out parents' dissatisfaction with the system, claiming that the GDE school placement is problematic as it does not cater to their children's educational needs as the department sometimes fails to place learners according to their (parents) preferences, instead, it places learners away from home (Dube, 2024).

The city of Pretoria is no different, as many learners remain unplaced in schools closer to home, resulting in the GDE placing them in schools outside their feeder zone. This includes township learners placed in ex-Model C schools further away from home (see Figure 4.1 below), which means that they must travel daily to previously classified White-only areas for their education

(Langa, 2020). This school placement could be more problematic for disadvantaged learners in the townships who have to encounter waking up early (to get to school punctually), longer travelling times, and high schooling fees associated with the ex-Model C schools in more affluent areas. Getting to school is a significant obstacle for these learners (Parker et al., 2021).

It is interesting to note that Pretoria was selected as a geographical location for this study because of its linear history of pre- and post-apartheid urban settings (Horn, 2015). During the Apartheid era, low substandard townships reserved for black-Africans were located in the peripheries of Pretoria due to racial segregation policies such as the Group Areas Acts of 1950 (Smith, 2023). Surprisingly, Pretoria still resembles the Apartheid urban setting. Figure 4.1 below shows that the elite ex-Model C schools are located within and just outside the Pretoria CBD. In contrast, townships such as Mamelodi, Ga Rankuwa, Mabopane, and Soshanguve are located on the greater outskirts (periphery), with underdeveloped lower quintile schools. Therefore, limiting the study to a complex single setting with different demographic characteristics allows the study to investigate the inclusionary and exclusionary experiences of black-African learners in ex-Model C schools within a defined setting (Horn, 2015).

4.4.2 Research sites

Two ex-Model C schools have been selected as research sites. Both schools fall under the Tshwane West district in Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality. The Tshwane West district achieved an 88.9% matric pass rate in the 2024 National Senior Certificate (NSC) results, which is an improvement of 4% compared to the 2023 matric pass rate of 84.9% (DBE, 2024a). The district of both research sites is the least performing district compared to the other districts in the Tshwane Region. The district has a total of 58 secondary schools, with over 53% of fee-paying schools, as 31 of the 58 secondary schools in Tshwane West are categorised as quintile four or five (DBE, 2024b). Given the population size and relative wealth, Gauteng has the highest quintile five schools than any other province (DBE, 2023).

-This study selected The Pebble Stone Academy (*pseudonym*) and Sandstone College (*pseudonym*) as data generation sites. Both schools are English medium secondary schools that offer English at a Home Language Level. The schools are racially diverse, with teachers and learners from all four

racial categories – Black-Africans, Whites, Indians, and Coloureds. Both schools do not formally subscribe to any religion but practice Christian prayers during assembly and school events. The schools are situated in a predominantly white middle-class suburb. Both schools were strictly reserved for white learners during the Apartheid regime. However, the school demographics have since changed due to white flight, and high rate of urbanisation and migration in the Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality. Interestingly, the number of black learners in both schools has constantly increased and has surpassed that of white learners (Horn, 2015).

This study strategically selected both schools, which are racially diverse and considered ex-Model C schools in Pretoria, as they accommodate learners from various socio-economic backgrounds. Moreover, both schools are closer to where I stay; therefore, gaining access to the participants was not a challenge. Furthermore, I selected The Pebble Stone Academy because I work as a teacher in the same school; therefore, facilitating meeting with participants and collecting data would be easier. The subsection below provides a brief description of each research site.

A – The Pebble Stone Academy

The Pebble Stone Academy (TPSA hereafter) is a secondary school located approximately 6.7km from the Pretoria Central Business District (CBD). The school offers Afrikaans as the only First Additional Language (FAL) subject. It has 1655 learners and 61 teachers (DBE, 2023). The school achieved a matric pass rate of 88.6 % in the NSC exams in 2024, which is a decline of 3.7% compared to the 2023 matric pass rate of 84.9 % (DBE, 2025). TPSA offers a wide range of extracurricular activities, including soccer, rugby, basketball, swimming, choir, chess, and athletics. Interestingly, the school provides transport to learners as part of the 2015 National Learner Transport Policy. However, the school buses remain limited only to learners staying within the school feeder zone and do not cater to learners based outside of the feeder zone and nearby townships (see Figure 4.1 below). Like most ex-Model C schools, TPSA offers a wide range of subjects in the Further Education and Training (FET) phase, including specialised subjects such as Hospitality and Computer Applications Technology (CAT).

B – Sandstone College

Sandstone College (SSC hereafter) is located in Pretoria North, approximately 18.1km from the Pretoria CBD. The school offers two FAL subjects; one being Afrikaans and Setswana being a newly introduced African language. SSC has 1254 learners and 55 teachers (DBE, 2023). The school achieved a matric pass rate of 95.0 % in the NSC exams in 2024, which is a slight increase of 0.3% compared to the 2023 matric pass rate of 94.7 % (DBE, 2025). SCC offers a wide range of extracurricular activities, including arts, public speaking, golf, tennis, soccer, rugby, basketball, swimming, choir, chess, and athletics. Shockingly, the school does not provide scholar transport to learners. Similar to most ex-Model C schools, SSC offers a wide range of subjects in the FET phase, including specialised subjects such as Hospitality, Engineering Graphics and Design (EGD), Civil Technology, CAT, Visual and Dramatic Arts.

Figure 4.1 below is an official city of Tshwane map showing the location of ex-Model C schools in Pretoria (Horn, 2024).



Figure 4.1: Official map showing the location of ex-Model C schools in Pretoria (Horn, 2024).

4.5 Participant Recruitment and Selection

This study used purposive sampling to select grade 10 and 11 black-African learners from lower socio-economic backgrounds enrolled at ex-Model C schools in Pretoria. According to Bertram

and Christiansen (2014), purposive sampling is used mainly within qualitative research to purposively select specific learners with rich data for a particular purpose.

According to Rai and Thapa (2015), purposive sampling is a non-probability selection of participants and selects a smaller group of participants based on the researcher's discretion. This study initially planned to recruit a total of eight learners comprised of both grade 10 and 11 that would be willing to share their experiences of inclusion and exclusion at the school. Four learners were to be recruited from each of the two schools. However, this was not possible at Sandstone College as the school principal refused to label learners as 'disadvantaged' and made a general call to any learners interested in being part of the research project. This general call was made to interested grade 10 and 11 learners staying in the nearby townships. As a result, SSC ended up with 11 participants who met the selection criteria (see Table 4.1 below). I could not cut the number to four since all 11 learners showed a strong interest and wanted to share their experiences at the school. Grade 10 and 11 learners were specifically targeted because these learners were seemingly mature enough to narrate their experiences. Moreover, they would have at least spent three or four years at the same school, making it easier to recall and narrate their experiences within the same research setting. Grade 12 learners were not targeted as the data collection process took place after school during August and September when they had afternoon revision classes to prepare for upcoming preliminary and final examinations.

Black-African learners were purposively selected as participants for this study as they share similar characteristics and experiences needed to enrich the research findings (Etikan et al., 2016). For equal gender representation, both male and female learners were recruited. Other forms of social identity such as sexual orientation, religion, home language, and physical ability, were not considered in the recruitment process as these would not directly respond to the phenomenon which this research focused on. As discussed earlier, Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality was employed to explore individual learner experiences of inclusion and exclusion based on their race and class categories and in connection with other social identity groups.

As cautioned by Bertram and Christiansen (2014), a purposive sampling technique allows the researcher to choose learners who meet particular criteria. The following criteria were considered when selecting participants:

- Learners who racially identify themselves as black-Africans.
- Learners in grade 10 or 11 of their schooling year.
- Learners who are fee-exempted from school fees.

Pietilä *et al.*, (2020) draw our attention to an integral part of ethics that must be maintained throughout the research process. The researcher reached out to all research participants through the research gatekeepers and school principals (Goff, 2020). A meeting was scheduled with each principal to explain the purpose of the study and obtain their approval (see Appendix 2). The aims and objectives of the study were explained before issuing information and consent letters for both the learners and parents (see Appendix 2 and 3). The parents of all recruited learners were called to explain the purpose of the study and offer any clarifications to concerns before signing the letters of consent that served as a mutual agreement for both parties (see ethical considerations under subsection 4.9 below).

At TPSA, the school principal, together with selected administrative staff members, worked together and identified six grade 10 and 11 learners who are fee-exempted. Learner profiles were then requested from the list of learners who consented to access their files. Each learner file was carefully examined to better understand the participants before beginning the data gathering process. Even though most learners at Sandstone College gave consent for their files to be accessed, the school principal did not approve the request for learner profiles to be accessed. The reason for this is unknown. Therefore, this study relied on the background provided by the learners in order to understand them better.

4.5 Participant Recruitment and Selection

4.5.1 Knowing the participants

Participants profile

Table 4.1 below represents the characteristics of learners who participated in the focus group discussion.

No.	Participant's name (Pseudonym)	Age	Gender	Grade	School
1.	Anna	16	Female	10	Sandstone College
2.	Ava	15	Female	10	Sandstone College
3.	Luna	15	Female	10	Sandstone College
4.	Jack	16	Female	10	Sandstone College
5.	Kylie	15	Female	10	Sandstone College
6.	Oasis	15	Female	10	Sandstone College
7.	Hazel	15	Female	10	Sandstone College
8.	Diva	16	Female	10	Sandstone College
9.	Onthatile	17	Female	11	Sandstone College
10.	Naomi	16	Female	11	Sandstone College
11.	Aurella	16	Female	11	Sandstone College
12.	Lisi	17	Female	11	The Pebble Stone Academy
13.	Kevin	19	Male	11	The Pebble Stone Academy
14.	Jeremiah	17	Male	11	The Pebble Stone Academy
15.	Thato	18	Male	11	The Pebble Stone Academy
16.	Karabo	17	Male	10	The Pebble Stone Academy
17.	Junior	18	Male	11	The Pebble Stone Academy

Table 4.1 shows a total of 17 learners that participated in the focus group discussions. The distribution of learners that participated in this study based of their gender was found to be 29.4% male and 70.6 % female-. Fourteen learners were minors between 15 and 17 years old, while only three learners were considered adults between 18 and 19.

Characteristics of Respondents Who Participated in the Semi-Structured Interviews

This subsection presents a brief biography of the ten participants who participated in the individual semi-structured interviews. These biographies aim to introduce the participants as humans in an imaginary form and not just as objects of study. For ethical reasons, pseudonyms (as presented in Table 4.1 above) are used to protect all participants from being easily identified. Knowing the

biographies of all participants will assist the reader to engage with their social inclusionary and exclusionary experiences meaningfully. It is worth noting that all the participants racially identify as black-Africans in grade 10 or 11 of their schooling year. The ten biographies are presented as follows.

Anna

Anna is a 16-year-old female from *** who is in grade 10 at SSC. Anna actively participates in the school choir and other activities outside school due to her performance limitations in sports. She feels that her needs are generally met, except for the lack of karate, and noted that some teachers are more accommodating than others. Anna experienced minor bullying in the year 2023 which the school addressed. She is proud of her academic achievements and feels supported by the school's social worker.

Lisa

Lisa is a 17-year-old female currently in Grade 11 at TPSA. She currently lives in *** with her self-employed single mom. Over the four years of Lisa's experience as a learner at TPSA, she has participated in girls' soccer and the English Olympiad, finding these experiences enjoyable and educational. She highlighted positive aspects of the school, like good teachers and activities but expressed concerns about safety and discipline at the school. Lisa mentioned the lack of first aid during an injury and distrust in teachers due to potential misuse of personal information. Despite positive personal interactions, Lisa feels that her needs are not fully accommodated, and she hesitates to share specific issues with teachers.

Kevin

Kevin is a 19-year-old male from ***. He is in grade 11 and has been at the school for five years. He admitted to failing a grade due to peer pressure and skipping classes. He stays with his grandmother and his mother, a packer at a retail shop. Kevin chose the school for its less strict environment. He feels that his needs at the school are not accommodated, and that the school does not offer financial assistance. Kevin is secretive and fears judgement, so he has not shared his life circumstances with teachers. He has not experienced bullying but is proud of passing his mid-year exams. Kevin suggests that teachers should approach quiet students to reach out to them better.

Jack

Jack is a 16-year-old female from ***. She is currently repeating grade 10 at SSC. She expresses interest in the corporate world and enjoys singing in the choir at church. Jack shared her experience of being discouraged in the school choir due to her deep voice. She stays with both parents, with her dad hardly at home, while her mom is an unemployed housewife. Jack shared her struggles with racism, bullying, and personal challenges, including being sexually abused by a church teacher and dealing with depression. She highlighted issues with school discipline, teacher understanding, and socio-economic discrimination. Jack mentioned feeling isolated and not accommodated by the school despite her academic pride in English and Business Studies.

Junior

Junior is a 17-year-old male currently in grade 11 at TPSA. He considers himself an athlete who excels in sports and is working on obtaining a running license. Junior stays in *** with his younger brother and unemployed single mom. He chose the school for its free transport but would not re-enroll due to problems like fighting and smoking. Junior feels partially understood by teachers regarding his personal life but struggles to open up to them. Junior faces challenges related to his mother's new relationship and his absent father.

Eva

Eva is a 15-year-old female from ***. She is currently in grade 10 at SSC. Eva has attended the school for three years and finds it great, mainly due to her friends and teachers. She chose the school because of its proximity to home and the bonds that she has formed there. Eva appreciates her teachers even though she feels that they do not know her personally. Eva observes both supportive and unsupportive behaviours amongst her peers and teachers. She feels proud of her participation in a sketch competition and is open about her nervousness when it comes to public speaking.

Jeremiah

Jeremiah is a 17-year-old male who is currently enrolled in grade 11 at TPSA. He revealed that his biological parents are deceased, and that he stays with his unemployed grandparents at ***. He was placed by the department at TPSA and would still choose the school despite the option to

change as he finds the school beneficial for his future. Jeremiah faces social anxiety and prefers privacy, making it difficult to share personal issues with teachers. He has been subjected to negative stereotypes about his background. The school offers some assistance to the less privileged students, but Jeremiah has not received direct help.

Aurella

Aurella is a 16-year-old female who is enrolled in grade 11 at SSC. She currently stays with her single mom in ***. Aurella describes herself as “naturally introverted, but selectively extroverted.” She shared her struggles with bullying, including cyberbullying, teacher favouritism, and the lack of accommodative learning environments. She highlighted the impact of her father's passing on her academic progress and the financial constraints it imposed. She also mentioned her coping mechanisms to bullying, including reading, writing, and therapy, and expressed pride in her achievements despite the challenges.

Kylie

Kylie is a 15-year-old female from ***. She is currently in grade 10 at SSC. Kylie chose the school due to her older brother's positive experience there. She highlighted her personal decision to change schools for better university prospects. Kylie, who has epilepsy, praised the school's support and accommodation but noted inconsistencies among teachers in understanding and assisting students. She also mentioned experiencing victimisation due to her background and feeling proud of her academic and extracurricular achievements.

Hazel

Hazel is a 16-year-old female from ***. She is currently enrolled in grade 10 at SSC. She is a lover of music and singing and also enjoys sports. Hazel admitted to having self-esteem problems, self-harm and depression due to facing bullying because of her dental issues. Her love for Accounting subject has inspired her to be an Accountant one day. Hazel's parents chose the school, but she would not select it again. She highlighted the lack of adequate support for the less privileged students and the need to accommodate their personal needs better. Positively, Hazel felt proud to participate in a public speaking competition in grade 8.

4.6 Data collection method

According to Taherdoost (2021), different data generation methods allow the researcher to gain responses to research questions. There are two critical questions that guided this study: *What are black-African learners from lower socio-economic backgrounds experiences of social inclusion and exclusion at school?* and *how do such experiences inform learner's schooling experiences?* This study used photo elicitation, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions to gain appropriate data that is sufficient and accurate to respond to the two critical research questions. Due to ethical considerations and the sensitivity of the research topic, all participants were referred to using pseudonyms for all data collection methods. Participants were constantly reminded that confidentiality and anonymity would be maintained throughout the research process (Heaton, 2022). The following subsection provides a detailed description of each method used in this study

4.6.1 Photo elicitation

According to Zhang and Hennebry-Leung (2023), understanding personal stories and life experiences is central for qualitative researchers. This study used photo-elicitation with participants during a focus group discussion to make sense of their lived experiences at ex-Model C schools in Pretoria. Photo-elicitation is a visual method used to draw out feelings, thoughts, and understandings of research participants (Richard & Lahman, 2015). While photos are not commonly used as a data collection method, they are frequently shared on media platforms and used to construct meaning. A chart with printed photos was made (see Appendix 9) to encourage participants to respond to the study's 'what' and 'why' (Torre & Murphy, 2015). Photos allowed the researcher to gain access to the participants' beliefs and values that shape their subjectivity to social life. Through photo elicitation, the researcher could better understand the thoughts and actions of social situations through shared experiences (Richard & Lahman, 2015). Participants' experiences over time and spaces were used to convey their aspects of social identity (Cooper, 2017).

Instead of the photographs that the participants took themselves, a chart with several photos found online was produced. The photos displayed different socio-economic lifestyles and life experiences (see Appendix 6). Photo elicitation allows the researcher to engage with the

participants' thoughts about their inclusionary and exclusionary experiences at school. The researcher began the open-ended discussion by asking the participants to "*look at the photos on the chart and share your thoughts on what is portrayed in them.*" This first prompt on gathering participants thoughts about the photos was aimed at assuring them that they have a voice and that their views and opinions do matter (Shaw, 2021). The photos in the chart were used as prompts to initiate and facilitate a focus-group discussion among the participants about their views, perspectives, and experiences of their vulnerability to race and socio-economic differences in the context of ex-model C schools. The researcher probed participants to give deeper explanations by referring to particular photos (Torro & Murphy, 2015). The prompt questions often began with, "*What do you think...*" throughout the session. This method allowed for a paradigm shift, giving learners the tools to take charge of the task, feel included and visible, and, consequently, identify themselves as the best source of advice for matters affecting them, allowing for more meaningful and deeper engagements (Shaw, 2021). As a researcher, I could better understand the ex-Model C school communities as participants shared unobservable experiences, thoughts, and feelings that I had no direct access to (Zhang & Hennebry-Leung, 2023).

Due to the sensitivity of the research topic and confidentiality issues, photo-elicitation was employed as a tool to investigate participants' thoughts and feelings at the school. Zhang and Hennebry-Leung (2023) posit that photos evoke more profound elements of human consciousness than words. Therefore, this study incorporated photos into the focus group discussion to trigger deeper individual consciousness and latent memories. Participants could draw on their knowledge, thoughts, and emotional responses through this. Unlike a traditional form of an interview, photo-elicitation actively evokes emotions and feelings (Shaw, 2021). It offers visual dimensions for deeper engagements that address complex educational issues and generate meaningful results that could highlight exclusive and inclusive practices in educational contexts (Zhang & Hennebry-Leung, 2023).

4.6.2 Focus group discussions

Focus group discussions was the second data generation method used to glean data which responded to the study's two critical research questions. Akyildiz (2020) argues that a focus group discussion is an informal setting that allows social interaction among participants. This study

conducted a total of three focus group discussions. The first group was at TPSA and consisted of six participants. Due to the number of learners at SCC, the 11 participants were divided into two groups. Each focus group discussion took approximately 60-90 minutes. All three groups had shared characteristics such as sex, age, grade, and socio-economic status, allowing for a better mutual understanding and an in-depth discussion of related issues (Taherdoost, 2021). Learners could think aloud and debate about issues with their peers while generating ideas and learning from each other. In both schools, the focus group discussion took place after school in one of the classrooms (venue) offered by the gatekeeper Karunarathna et al. (2024b) argue that a well-prepared setting helps ensure that the interview proceeds smoothly. The focus group discussion setting was well-prepared to accommodate the participants' needs, as it included having all necessary materials ready, such as identification badges with the participants' names (*pseudonyms*) and notebooks for them to capture their thoughts. The desks were joined and formed a U-shaped with the desks facing the board where the chart was pasted. The photos were used in conjunction with semi-structured questions (see Appendix 7) as an initial prompt to determine disadvantaged black-African learners' perceptions or understanding of social inclusion and exclusion at their ex-Model C schools (Shaw, 2021). A series of follow-up questions were also asked based on how the participants responded to the initial questions. This allowed space for learners to look at the pictures on the chart and share their thoughts and beliefs.

Before beginning the focus group discussion, there was noticeable tension among the learners. The discussion began with an icebreaker activity. Learners were asked to introduce themselves and "*Give me one word that describes how you are feeling now?*". As learners shared their feelings, many acknowledged that they were nervous, but after the activity, they began to warm up. The icebreaker activity allowed for a relaxed and friendly atmosphere, which helped the participants trust the researcher and respond honestly. This method was mainly learner centered as it enabled learners to construct their individual meanings from the photos on the chart and respond to questions that were used as prompts to facilitate the group discussion (Shaw, 2021). The discussion allowed learners to engage with their thoughts and understanding of race and social class from a socio-economic perspective. The discussion had follow-up questions such as "*Which lifestyle do you prefer?*", "*Why do you prefer such a lifestyle?*" and "*What have you observed about people that belong to this social class?*" with more follow-up questions that probed more

responses from the participants which spoke more directly to the aims of the research (Williams & Whitehouse, 2015).

According to Sim and Waterfield (2019), the focus group discussion has ethical challenges such as consideration of possible harm to participants. Learners may share many personal issues during the interaction, and other learners may use them to cause harm in the future. Learners may want to refrain from participating fully in the study as they might be scared that other learners will share their experiences with others at school. The researcher was aware that such ethical issues could compromise the overall success of the study, and this was addressed by establishing a culturally safe research space. Ground rules were established to set the tone and expectations of the room (Carter et al., 2021). The first and most important rule was what is referred to as the '*Vegas rule*' - "What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas," to encapsulate the understanding that information shared within the room is held in strict confidence and will not be discussed outside the room or shared with anyone who was not part of the group discussion. The other rules included raising a hand before contributing and not interjecting when one person speaks to maintain respect for all participants. It was further requested that learners should not share their personal experiences and how those experiences inform their schooling experiences, as that could raise ethical confidentiality issues. Conversations and prompt questions were aimed at broader, widely held responses, perspectives, and beliefs about class and race differences.

4.6.3 Semi-structured individual interviews

The third data generation method employed in this study was semi-structured interviews. According to Ruslin et al. (2022), a semi-structured interview is an interaction between two or more people to unfold the meaning of their life experiences and uncover their lived world. For the benefit of this study, the semi-structured interviews were conducted individually with only nine participants selected from the focus group discussion. As the researcher, I played the role of the interviewer and the participants as the interviewees. All interviews were conducted in a formal classroom setting as a follow-up after the focus group discussion. A set of pre-determined questions (see Appendix 8) were used to obtain rich data. Participants were asked confidential information that they were requested to withhold during the focus group discussion. The individual interviews had a high response rate, allowing the researcher to clarify some of the responses and

ask for details on the participants lived experiences of social inclusion and exclusion at school and the effects of such experiences (Taherdoost, 2021).

The semi-structured interviews began with brief feedback and a summary of the focus-group discussions. Understanding that an open discussion can sometimes prevent participants from sharing their thoughts, before the interview began, each participant was asked if, “*During our focus group discussion, were there any thoughts/ideas you forgot to mention or withheld because of fear or were you just uncomfortable with sharing?*” This space allowed for an opportunity to explore more complex and sensitive issues further using open-ended questions such as “*How easy/difficult can you open up about your life circumstances to your teachers/ school? Explain*”, “*what is your experience of...*” and “*how did it happen?*” These questions allowed the participants to give more personally detailed responses that provided the researcher with an in-depth understanding of the phenomena (Ahlin, 2019). I reserved my reactions and remained non-judgmental throughout the semi-structured interviews so that the data would not be tainted by my own biases and positionality (Taherdoost, 2021).

Below is a table that summarises the data generation methods that were used to address the two research questions.

Table 4.2: Summary of data generation methods.

Data Generation Method	Participants	Data Sources
Focus Group Discussion	Seventeen participants	Rich photos (photo elicitation), audio recordings and transcripts from discussions
Photo Elicitation	Seventeen participants	Rich Photos, group discussions, recordings and transcripts from discussions
Semi-Structured Interviews	Ten participants	Audio recorded interviews and transcripts from interviews

As shown in **Table 4.2**, the study engaged with the participants in a series of data generation methods to generate rich data. In addition to the focus group discussion, where photos (photo-elicitation) were used as visual methods to generate data with 17 participants, individual semi-

structured interviews were also conducted with 10 participants selected from the focus group discussion.

4.7 Data analysis

The data generated in this study was qualitative. Therefore, knowledge was constructed through interpreting subjective human experiences. This broader flexibility allowed for findings to be negotiated between the researcher and participants (D'amant, 2010; Roger et al., 2018). The main critical question of the study was, *what are black-African learners from lower socio-economic backgrounds' experiences of social inclusion and exclusion at school?* To generate responses to the main question, photo elicitation, focus group discussions, and semi-structured interviews were used to draw more significant meaning and details needed to investigate and analyse the studied phenomena (Graue, 2015). The study used an inductive reasoning approach to organise the generated raw data into categories and then identify patterns among the categories. In this process, themes emerged from the raw data. A thematic analysis approach was used to draw themes from the generated data. In using thematic analysis for this study, the guidelines outlined in the 2006 paper as a structured approach to coding and theme development by Braun and Clarke (2006) were considered as depicted in figure 4.3 below. Braun and Clarke (2006) state that thematic analysis is a flexible method widely used to identify, analyse, and report patterns (themes) within data. Both scholars delineate a straightforward, step-by-step approach to conducting thematic analysis.

Figure 4.3. Below is the back-and-forth process of the six stages of thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006).

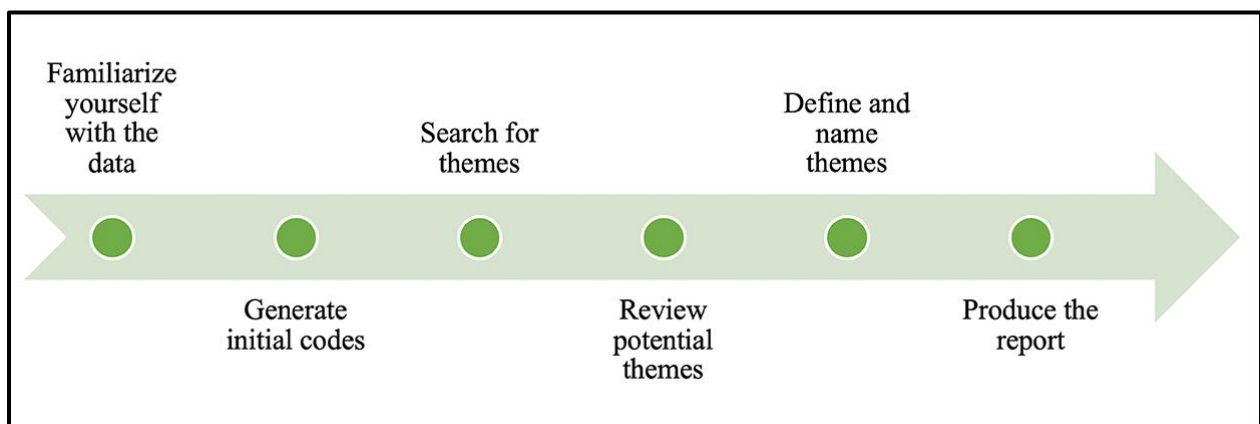


Figure 4.3 The six stages of Thematic Analysis

The following provides the six-phase guide to thematic analysis and how each phase was used in this study to gain rich data.

Phase 1: Familiarising yourself with data

In the first phase of thematic analysis, all the verbal data from semi-structured interviews and focus group discussion recordings was transcribed (see appendix 8). This step allowed for the familiarisation with every word exchanged between the researcher and participants (Xu & Zammit, 2020). Since data was generated through interactive methods, the analysis stage was approached with prior knowledge and some initial analytic thoughts. Braun and Clarke (2006) stress the importance of immersing oneself in the data to the extent that one is familiar with the depth and breadth of the content. The audio recordings were played and examined against all the transcriptions repeatedly and searched for meanings and patterns while doing so. During this phase, a journal was used to note down ideas while familiarising the data that would be used to mark ideas for coding.

Phase 2: Generating initial codes

Xu and Zammit (2020) contend that the second phase of the thematic analysis approach requires the researcher to capture the richness of the data and describe the bulk of the data related to the study phenomenon. In the same vein, Braun and Clarke (2006) posit that this coding stage identifies an interesting feature of raw data that can be assessed meaningfully regarding the research phenomenon. The second thematic analysis phase commenced after gaining an in-depth understanding of the raw data from listening to the audio recordings and reading all transcriptions in detail. In this phase, all essential data features relevant to the research study's critical questions were labelled and marked (Peel, 2020). This process made it easier to generate an initial list of ideas and note what was interesting about each idea. While doing so, the researcher was mindful of the two critical questions of the study.

Phase 3: Searching for themes

The third phase began after the data was coded and collated. In this phase, the researcher aimed to search for themes. Xu and Zammit (2006) suggest that the researcher must begin by identifying broader patterns of shared meanings across the data set and further emphasise that good themes

must work together and form a coherent analytical story. At this stage, there was a long list of the codes identified across the data set. All the codes were analysed and combined closely to related ones. Thereafter, a mind map was developed, and all the codes were sorted into potential themes and sub-themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), this phase was concluded by beginning to make sense of the significance of each theme, sub-themes and analyse' sense of the relationship between them. At this stage, the initial codes were not discarded as it was still uncertain if there would be a need to later have to refine, separate, combine, or abandon some of the themes and sub-themes.

Phase 4: Review potential themes

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), phase four of thematic analysis begins when one starts checking and refining themes that were developed in phase three. In this phase, Xu and Zammit (2020, p3) comment on the two levels of reviewing themes: "checking whether the themes capture the essence of the coded data concerning the research question and checking whether the themes work in the whole data set." During the interrogation of the data, it was clear that some themes were too broad and had insufficient data to support them. Therefore, some other themes were joined to themes that were closely related. After that, it was clear to distinguish between themes that coherently supported each other (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Phase 5: Define and name themes

In the fifth phase of thematic analysis, Braun and Clarke (2006) state that the researcher must identify the essence of each theme and determine the data aspect that each theme captures. Here, the researcher refined and defined all the themes that would be presented in the analysis chapter. The researcher went back to the collated data to identify the narratives of each data concerning the themes and the two critical questions of the study.

Phase 6: Produce the report

The last phase of thematic analysis is to provide a concise, coherent, and logical report within and across themes that respond directly to the study's critical questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The report on the findings will be presented in chapter five.

4.8 Ensuring Trustworthiness and rigour

According to Cypress (2017), trustworthiness refers to the quality, authenticity, and truthfulness of findings in a qualitative study. It relates to the degree of trust or confidence that the readers have in the study's findings. Stahl and King (2020) highlight that most qualitative studies construct reality. Therefore, ensuring that the study meets the goal of trustworthiness means that the reader will interpret the written work (reality) with high confidence. This notion is concurred by Suri (2020) who brings to our attention that all educational researchers are expected to adhere to the highest standards of quality and rigour. Previous studies have alluded to the impossibility of research being 100% trustworthy. Taking this into account, Bertram and Christiansen (2014) assert that researchers must constantly pay attention to improving the trustworthiness and rigour of their study and continuously ask themselves, '*To what extent is this research valid or reliable?*' Therefore, this qualitative study relied on four general approaches to trustworthiness and rigour and these include Credibility, Transferability, Justice, Dependability and Confirmability

4.8.1 Credibility

According to Bertram and Christiansen (2014), creditability refers to the extent to which the study's findings reflect the participants lived experiences. Credibility asks, 'How congruent are the findings with reality?' (Stahl & King, 2021). This study practiced the highest level of credibility to ensure that the research findings and conclusions were believed and on par with reality. Data interpretations are inclusive, and the participants' understanding, context, and research processes are transparent, accurate, and complete (Nassaji, 2020). Stahl and King (2020) note the importance of promoting credibility through the various triangulation processes. This study relied on three data generation methods (photo elicitation, focus group discussions, and semi-structured interviews) to repeatedly establish identifiable patterns and to help achieve a more accurate and complete understanding of the inclusionary and exclusionary experiences of disadvantaged black-African learners in ex-Model C schools (Nassaji, 2020). To ensure confidence in the research findings, all recordings (data) were transcribed and presented to all participants to see and agree if the transcripts reflected their original views and lived experiences (Nassaji, 2020; Cresswell, 2014). Access to the study's findings will remain open to other education researchers and those in related fields to independently analyse the data and verify the accuracy of reported analysis (Fleming et al., 2021).

4.8.2 Transferability

This study remains cognisant of Drisko's (2024) recent understanding of transferability as the process of extracting findings from specific participants in one context and transfer to others that have not been directly studied. This qualitative study used a small number of participants which was not representative of the entire population of disadvantaged black-African learners enrolled in ex-Model C schools. While the findings of this study cannot be generalised in the sense that they are used in quantitative studies, the findings do provide sufficient details that make transfer possible in case readers or other scholars wish to do so (Nassaji, 2020). The study enhanced its transferability by using a purposive sampling method to provide thick description and robust data with a wide possible range of information through the detailed and accurate descriptions of the disadvantaged black-African learner's experiences of ex-Model C schools in Pretoria (Cypress, 2017).

4.8.3 Dependability and Confirmability

While quantitative studies rely on reliability, this present qualitative study relied on dependability. According to Anney (2014), dependability refers to the stability of the findings over time. It involves the research participants evaluating the findings and interpretation of the data to make sure that they are all supported by what was received from them. In the same vein, Nassaji (2020) argues that dependability allows findings to be reported in such a way that if others review the data, they will also arrive at similar interpretations. The dependability of this study was established using triangulation and peer examination. As earlier discussed, this study used triangulation by employing three different data generation methods to obtain corresponding evidence and enhance the quality of the data from various sources.

Furthermore, the dependability of the study was enhanced by keeping a journal throughout the research process to document all research activities that occurred before and after the data collection. All the conclusions and any changes that occurred as the research evolved were noted. Nassaji (2020) concludes that an outside researcher can then review such documentation to examine their accuracy and the extent to which the conclusions are grounded in the data.

Anney (2014) posits that confirmability is concerned with establishing that the analysis of the research findings is not a figment of the researcher's imagination but that other researchers could confirm the findings. As cautioned by Nassaji (2020), a qualitative study emphasises the active role and engagement of the researcher throughout. Keeping a reflexive journal during the research process ensured an active role and engagement and helped meet the demands of confirmability (Cypress, 2017). In the researchers' journal, all the events, steps, and decisions taken regarding the data analysis and presentations were recorded. The journal allowed for a reflection on background, perceptions, and interests concerning the study (Anney, 2014). This helped maintain self-awareness and introspection (Cypress, 2017). Nassaji (2020) points out that all the records in the journal must be made available if any further evaluation and confirmation is requested. (I detail my positionality and reflexivity under subsection 4.8.5 provided below).

4.8.4 Justice

This qualitative study was conducted under the banner of social justice education to strategically develop a unified progressive vision of what education can and should be (Hyttén & Bettez, 2011). The study by Lynch and Baker (2005) calls for equality as a central criterion of justice in education. Both scholars argue that one must look for equality in dimensions, including respect and recognition, love, care, solidarity, power, and working and learning. Therefore, for quality data collection, as a researcher, it was ensured that these dimensions were adhered to for all participants. I remained reflective of my position while engaging in a discussion of power, privilege, and oppression with all participants. The data collection tools used promoted participants' critical thinking and dispositions of believing that change towards social justice is possible (Bettez, 2008). The discussions in this study are primarily philosophical and rely heavily on providing valuable insights for thinking about justice within the context of ex-Model C schools. For example, how do one most equitably allocate resources and rewards, how does one create conditions in which all cultural ways of being are valued, and how does one make sure that successes (outcomes) are fairly distributed concerning the different races and socio-economic populations that coexist in ex-Model C schools (Hyttén & Bettez, 2011).

4.8.5 Positionality and Reflexivity: Locating myself in the research

This qualitative study involved a dialectic process of uncovering the inclusionary and exclusionary experiences of 17 disadvantaged black-African learners enrolled in ex-Model C schools in Pretoria. Throughout the data generation and analysis, I remained reflexive and questioned myself as to where I stood in relation to my participants. While doing so, I remained conscious of Yip's assumption that the data collection and analysis methods can shape the reliability and trustworthiness of the study. Therefore, by disclosing one's identity, standpoints, and positions as essential elements of research, the researcher can work towards maintaining trustworthiness and presenting valid findings that are unbiased (Yip, 2024). According to Holmes (2020, p1), positionality "describes an individual's worldview and the position they adopt about a research task and its social and political context." In this subsection, I turn the research lens from my participants inward toward myself. I reflect on my worldview concerning my ontological and epistemological assumptions, and consequently, how I interact and relate to these assumptions to the research process and endeavour I am involved in (Holmes, 2020).

I am a 26-year-old black-African male who works as an educator in one of the research sites (TPSA). I would classify myself as middle class and live in a suburban area of Pretoria. However, as detailed in chapter one, my experiences of growing up in a disadvantaged township and attending an ex-Model C school with learners of different races that belonged to the middle and upper class, ultimately led to my interest in conducting a qualitative research study to explore more about the inclusionary and exclusionary experiences of disadvantaged black-African learners that attend ex-Model schools. In this sense, my research interests directly reflect my earlier life experiences (Bourke, 2014). My childhood experience as a disadvantaged learner enrolled in an ex-Model C school provided the background that enabled me to listen empathetically to my participants' stories. I imagined that, just like me, my participants would have suffered some setbacks in their day-to-day interactions with the school culture and encounters with learners and teachers of different races and classes. They each had their unique experiences and stories to tell. These beliefs influenced my decision to draw on the intersectionality theory as a framework allowing participants to tell their unique stories.

While my race (black-African) and gender (male) are culturally ascribed and fixed, I am mindful that my personal life history and experiences are more fluid, subjective, and contextual. It is worth noting that I began the research process with my preconceived ideas and assumptions about the social inclusion and exclusion experiences of disadvantaged black-African learners enrolled in ex-Model C schools, which I had to constantly be aware of throughout the study. These fixed aspects predisposed me towards a particular point of view on the lived experiences of my participants (Holmes, 2020). Therefore, I began the reflexive process by identifying the preconceptions that I brought to this research endeavour. I further acknowledged that my understanding of social inclusion and exclusion and that of my participants based on the intersecting identities of class and race may differ. I did my best to always be aware of the biases, preconceptions, and assumptions that I might bring to this study. I strived to be as neutral as possible during data collection, analysis, and presentation. I employed bracketing to separate my assumptions and avoid biases, therefore, achieving an understanding of the phenomenon as experienced by the study participants (Cypress, 2017). In doing so, I remained cognisant of Holmes's (2020) argument on the impossibility of aspiring to the goal of being completely neutral as the researcher influences all research.

During this study, I considered the fluidity of my insider/outsider position when gaining access to my research participants, understanding my participants' contexts, and managing the researcher-participant relationship (Yip, 2020). In seeking to uncover the lived experiences of my participants, I first needed to acknowledge my positionality as a researcher and its influence on my methodology. Having shared a similar schooling experience with the participants somewhat positioned me as an insider due to our shared background as disadvantaged black-Africans who are enrolled at an ex-Model C school. As cautioned by Berger (2015), the researcher's position can affect their access to the participants, as many participants are more open and willing to share their experiences with a researcher that they perceive as being one of them as they are most likely to be sympathetic to their situation. Understanding this, I had assumed that the background I share with the participants would offer certain advantages in the research, such as an early familiarity with the phenomenon, easier access to participants, and a better understanding of my participant's experiences, as they may be in many ways like mine (Yip, 2020). I expected my research to be relatively uncomplicated as I was an insider researching people with similar experiences.

Therefore, I did not anticipate the challenges and undercurrents that became increasingly evident in the research process.

I had to constantly position myself simultaneously as an insider and an outsider. Although I shared the race and similar childhood background as my participants, which qualified me as an insider, there were apparent differences in terms of age group, level of education, and openness about my childhood background. At the same time, I attended an ex-Model C school as my participants, but their context was not familiar to me as I am an immigrant from another province. That was sufficient to position me as an outsider. Also, while the data collection process was more like conversations, I had to constantly remind myself of my position as a researcher rather than becoming too intimate. I made sure that the research was professional, and that I was careful about what I said to the participants so that I did not influence their responses. I found it helpful to be self-reflective and critical of myself and the role that I was playing in the research process. I ensured that the relationships were not too personal and that the conversations were centered on the phenomenon being studied (Maake, 2019).

4.9 Ethical consideration

This qualitative research studied humans and their experiences, and it was essential to consider all research ethics to protect participants' rights. According to Pietilä et al. (2020), research ethics are integral to a research project and should extend throughout the entire process. A research proposal was submitted, and the study was presented to the UKZN Higher Degrees Committee. After approval, a letter was written to the central gatekeeper for the GDE schools -The office of the Director for Education Research and Knowledge Management. The request to conduct research was approved (see Appendix 1). Prior to commencing with data collection ethical clearance was sought from the UKZN research ethics committee -Protocol number: HSSREC/00006822/2024 (see Appendix 5).

Understanding that access to schools is an essential component of the study (Goff, 2020), the researcher emailed over ten ex-Model C school principals (second gatekeeper) around the Tshwane region to request access to their schools (see Appendix 2). Due to the sensitive nature of the research, most schools did not approve the request as they were not comfortable with the

research topic, given each school's unique culture and belief system. While this posed a challenge to gain access to the participants, meetings were arranged with the principals from TPSA and SSC to explain the nature of the study and how the study might benefit the school in creating a diverse and inclusive environment for all learners. Both the school principals were assured that the research study would not bring the school's name into disrepute and that the participants would not be harmed. When both principals were satisfied, the gatekeeper's access was granted. They signed and stamped the consent form (see Appendix 2) as a mutual agreement between the parties.

After participants were recruited from each of the two schools, the purpose of the study was verbally communicated and all of its processes. Each participant was given a letter outlining the study (see Appendix 4). In the letter, the purpose and objectives of the study were explained clearly and transparently. In the letter, the participants were informed in the language that they best understood about the data collection methods to be used, data confidentiality, and the voluntary nature of participation. If participants were to be part of the study, they had to sign an informed consent letter. Pietilä et al. (2020) state that an informed consent process respects the participant's right to decide whether they want to participate in the study. Participants were informed that participation was voluntary, that they would not be compensated, and that they had a right to withdraw their consent at any time. Permission to audio record the focus group discussion and semi-structured interviews was also obtained from the participants.

Since over 82% of the participants were minors under the age of 18 years, it was imperative to obtain parental consent from all parents/ guardians. All the relevant information and consent forms for parents/ guardians to sign were given to the participants (see Appendix 3). Considering the education level of some of the parents, the researcher individually called all parents to explain the research information sheet verbally. Parents were assured of the privacy and confidentiality of data as critical aspects of research. The participants and their parents/ guardians were given 14 days to enquire about the study before submitting their consent forms on the 15th day.

4.10 Data storage

As part of ethical considerations, the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) advises that data must be stored safely in the discipline/ department office for five

years. Therefore, all interview and group discussion recordings will be transferred to a USB stick and stored in a locked cupboard in the supervisor's office for five years, after which will be destroyed. Only the researcher and the supervisor will have access to this until such time as this is destroyed. Securing data will prevent misuse, filtering, and improper access to the lives of all participants and their stories. Moreover, ensuring the safety of data will maintain the confidentiality of the research sites and the identity of all research participants (Amo et al., 2021).

4.11 Limitations of the study

The result of this study may have been affected by the following three limitations:

- The study used two research sites (TPSA and SSC) for data collection. Therefore, the study cannot claim to present the social inclusionary and exclusionary experiences of *all* disadvantaged black-African learners enrolled at *all* ex-Model C schools in Pretoria. Consequently, the findings of this study can only be generalised within the context of the two research sites. On the premise of being a qualitative study, the emphasis of this study was more on quality than quantity. Therefore, the selected two research sites and the small number of participants were based on the depth of analysis that was needed in this study.
- Being a teacher at TPSA may have led to a challenge of data collection. Some of the participants were learners that I taught, while others were learners that I had taught in previous years. Therefore, during data generation, learners may have seen me as a teacher rather than a researcher. The 'teacher-learner relationship' might have resulted in Hawthorne effect as participants gave biased responses due to pressure and feeling uncomfortable. The fear of judgement may have resulted in participants responding in a manner that they believed would be accepted by me as a teacher rather than a researcher. The school setting might have resulted in learners withholding their genuine opinions due to fear of repercussions from the school staff. I attempted to mitigate this issue by creating a neutral and comfortable research environment where all participants would feel free to express themselves without fear of judgement or consequences. I frequently assured all the participants that I would uphold confidentiality and use pseudonyms to protect their identity (Karunaratna et al., 2024b), that there were no right or wrong responses and that their honest thoughts and individual experiences were what the research process needed.

- The nature of the study is sensitive as it looks at previously marginalised and minority groups of disadvantaged learners in ex-Model C schools. The study further dives into their disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds and their personal experiences of inclusion and/ or exclusion at school. Therefore, the participants may have felt uncomfortable or embarrassed to share stories of their life circumstances and exclusionary experiences at school, leading them to be dishonest or hesitate to be honest with their responses. Karunaratna et al. (2024b) caution researchers to make participants feel at ease when collecting sensitive data. Therefore, for more accurate and meaningful findings, I constantly reminded participants that I would adhere to all ethical considerations (as discussed in subsection 4.9 above). I requested participants not to respond to any questions they were uncomfortable answering. By doing so, I ensured the reliability and validity of the data collected.

4.12 Conclusion

This chapter presented and reflected on the research design and methodology employed in the study. This qualitative research, located within the critical paradigm, addressed the two critical questions of the study. The purposive sampling technique was used to recruit 17 black-African learners from low socio-economic backgrounds from two research sites to explore their inclusionary and exclusionary experiences at selected two ex-Model C schools in Pretoria. This chapter further detailed the six phases of thematic analysis used to analyse the data collected through photo elicitation, focus group discussions, and semi-structured individual interviews. Issues of trustworthiness and rigour were then presented. The positionality of the researcher and reflexive process throughout the study was detailed in this chapter. The ethical considerations and the storage of data were discussed and finally, this chapter concluded by outlining the three limitations that may have affected the research findings.

CHAPTER FIVE

Experiences of Social Inclusion and Exclusion of disadvantaged black-African learners in Ex-Model C schools in Pretoria: Data Analysis (Findings and Discussion)

“For these innocent people have no other hope. They are, in effect, still trapped in a history which they do not understand; and until they understand it, they cannot be released from it.”

—James Baldwin

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed and reflected on this study’s research design and methodology. This chapter presents and analyses the data generated through data collection methods, which include photo elicitation, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions. According to Cohen et al. (2011, p.461), this chapter is presented "to make sense of data in terms of the participants' definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories, and regularities." Using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis approach, themes were developed and then discussed to respond to this study’s two critical research questions:

1. *What are black-African learners from lower socio-economic backgrounds experiences of social inclusion and exclusion at school?*
2. *How do such experiences inform learners' schooling experiences?*

The above two research questions played a crucial role in generating three main themes. The main themes are as follows: *Being a disadvantaged black-African learner in an ex-Model C school, the lived experiences of social inclusion and exclusion, and lastly, responding to and resisting marginalised identities.* Under each main theme, there are subthemes that are followed by the findings, and discussions presented below.

5.2 Being a disadvantaged black-African learner in an ex-Model C school

This subsection presents and discusses the first main theme that emerged which is *being a disadvantaged black-African learner in an ex-Model C school*. Two subthemes emerged in connection to this first main theme. As earlier discussed, disadvantaged black-African learners enrolled at ex-Model C schools are considered as the ‘other’ as they form part of the minority and carry two marginalised identity groups (Cross-Barnet & McDonald, 2015). The study of Mahlaji (2023) asserts that these learners are marginalised in all aspects of their life due to their race and low socio-economic backgrounds, therefore, their realities will be different to the majority of the learners at school. The following subthemes further unpack their realities.

5.2.1 In search of quality education: School choice and learner mobility

After the democratic government overturned all racially aligned educational policies, such as the National Education Policy Acts (NEPA) of 1967 and the Bantu Education Act (BEA) of 1953, new acts and policies that aim towards IE, such as the WP6 and SASA 84 of 1996, were introduced to provide a uniform system for the organisation and governance of schools (Chapman, 2018; Teeger, 2015). These acts and policies allowed all SA schools to be desegregated, and all race groups were allowed admission (Alexander, 2016). Schools were obliged by these Acts not to consider a class category, language use, and proficiency as a prerequisite for admission (Hunter, 2016). The findings from this study suggest that this fundamental right appeared as a beacon of hope for many South Africans previously marginalised and excluded from the education system, giving birth to new possibilities in the new SA (D’amant, 2010). During the semi-structured interviews, participants were asked what influenced their choice to enroll at their selected schools, whether personal, parental, or departmental, and the reason behind their choice. The participants responded as follows:

“It was my personal choice, because some schools are very strict. Things in these schools are okay; you can do whatever you want.” (Kevin, TPSA)

*“It was a personal choice. I’ve heard that TPSA is a nice school. Sir, they are kind... I had options which are *** high school, ***secondary (names of schools omitted) and this school too. So, I had to choose which school I wanted. [Researcher: Okay, in which sense*

is the school nice?] Well, transport is for free because I am using the white bus and, yeah, that was the main thing.” (Junior, TPSA)

“I didn't know the schools my parents applied to, but I knew that this school was like an option, and then I ended up coming to this school. I am actually really happy because of like the difference I have and the environment I'm in right now.” (Eva, SSC)

“I would definitely say it was a personal and parental choice, because my mother and I had always decided that I was going to come to the school, and it made sense, because she definitely felt like this was going to be the right school for me. Because at some point, when I got here my school was in its former glory, it was very high, top tier.” (Aurella, SSC)

“It was a personal choice. It also the parents a little bit, because my older brother was in this school. When I was in grade seven applying for high school. He was in grade 11, so when he was doing his matric, yeah, I was doing grade eight, and he said, it's not a bad school. I enjoyed it. You know, when I was passing by with my transport, I really wanted to come to the school. Yes, it was a personal choice.” (Kylie, SSC)

“Well, Mmmmh! parents because ever since we moved here, like when we moved here, like nine years ago, this school was considered like the best around here, and they've always wanted me to be in this school, ever since I was in grade one.” (Hazel, SSC)

These responses from participants highlight the welcoming and the effectiveness of IE policies that aim to increase access and participation in education. These include policies such as NEPA, 1996 (Act No. 27 Of 1996) and the POA on improving access to free Education for all (DoE, 2003) which are both adopted from the SASA (1996) and the Constitution of RSA No. 108 of 1996. The above findings are supported by the study of Hunter (2015) on school choice in South Africa, arguing that racial desegregation allowed many learners, disadvantaged black-African learners in particular, to attend better resourced schools (ex-Model C) that are away from home. Notably, there is evidence from the findings that parents have a high influence in choosing schools that are away from the domicile of their children to schools that are located in the suburbs.

The findings of the current study are consistent with those of Msila (2005, 2009) who suggests that the deterioration of the quality of teaching and learning of most township schools is the main reason for the movement away from the township schools. Again, the participants' choice of

words such “best”, “kind”, “happy” and “I wanted” when describing their reason for their school choice suggests that ex-Model C schools have attracted disadvantaged black-African learners from townships as they are well-known for providing quality education due to having highly experienced teachers, small classroom sizes, sporting facilities and other helpful teaching resources (Christie & McKinney, 2017). These schools are known not only for providing high quality education but also for symbolic and social capital, especially social networks (Hunter, 2015).

Noting the flexibility in school choice and its implications, the results of this study show that the participants were not in any way unfairly discriminated against for school admission due to their race or disadvantaged backgrounds (DoE, 1998). However, they were included at a high fee-paying ex-Model C school as part of the POA on improving access to free and quality basic education for all which stipulate that:

“Even though Government will continue to make a significant investment of public resources in schools catering for the non-poor, it is these stark inequalities that make it imperative for Government to spend more on poor schools than rich schools, and to bring about cross-subsidisation of poor learners by parents of rich learners, through the fee exemptions mechanism, where both poor and rich attend the same school. This occurs within the broader framework of Government’s transfer of resources towards the historically disadvantaged. We seek to do this while maintaining a unified public schooling system in which the overwhelming majority of learners in the country participate, and that is inclusive of the middle class. This is a necessary condition for nation building and social cohesion” (DoE, 2005, p.3).

Taking into cognisance the different experiences of schooling choice for all learners, these results, therefore, need to be interpreted with caution because most of the participants were able to take advantage of their personal or parental choice to select a school that is best for their individual and educational needs. Anna, Lisa and Jeremiah responded differently from other participants. The following was noted:

“I was placed by the department, and also it was the best choice in the area, apart from Lavender secondary school (pseudonym), since it's a private school, but since it's a government school, so Sandstone college is the best e school in the area.” (Anna, SSC)

“Placed by the department. I did not have any choice, so I just had to come.” (Lisa, TPSA)

“I was placed by the department.” (Jeremiah, TPSA)

From the findings above, it is worth noting that a few participants did not have the privilege to go to the school of their (parental) choice, as they claimed to have been placed by the department (GDE). As discussed earlier, since 2016, the GDE adopted the online school application and placement system, particularly for grade one and eight learners. The learners are then placed using the feeder zone criterion. Even though Anna felt like it was the best choice since her school (SSC) is the best in the area, the response from Lisa was concerning, as she claimed that she had no choice but to be at TPSA since she was placed by the department. Furthermore, Jeremiah argued that he was placed at TPSA even though he had applied only to schools closer to home. This is problematic because the admission policy stipulates that:

“If a feeder zone is created, a learner who lives within the feeder zone of school A must be referred to the neighbouring school B, if school A is oversubscribed. If school B is oversubscribed, an alternative school within a reasonable distance must be found by the Head of Department. If that is not possible, school A must admit the learner.” (DoE, 1996, p.6).

The basis on which the GDE placed some learners (including Lisa and Jeremiah) in schools away from their feeder zone remains unclear. These findings are rather disappointing as some of these participants were placed in schools that are not at a ‘reasonable distance’ from home. Previous research has found that a significant number of children commute daily to schools that are relatively far from home (Karlsson, 2007; De Kadt et al., 2014). For the benefit of this study, the movement of children to and from school is termed ‘learner mobility’. As part of photo elicitation, learners were asked to refer to the different modes of transport shown on the chart, and then a focus group discussion was employed to discuss the various types of transport that learners use in their respective schools and the challenges thereof. The participants noted:

“I think the problem that we usually face with taxis is like getting stuck. You know when they are, like driving and then, like, traffic congestion, and they get stuck, like...” (Diva, SSC)

“I honestly feel like learners don't choose their mode of transport; I feel like it's the parents. learners from less privileged homes, whereby there are some of them who are forced to walk to school, some of them are given transport money to catch a taxi, while other learners, it's how they grew up. They grew up with income running in their homes whereby they have to be dropped personally by their parents.” (Naomi, SSC)

“The drivers! Eeeish sir, I can say they date schoolgirls.” (Thato, TPSA) [Junior further adding to Thato's statement] “and promoting alcohol.” (Junior)

“I think safety with the amount of gender-based violence, mainly to women and girl children, I feel like the challenge could be safety because you don't know what drives in the taxi drivers mind, and even someone can get killed by an Uber driver. It's an issue of safety.” (Naomi, SSC)

“Another issue with using a taxi in our area, you are not going to find a taxi easily. Taxis don't pass on our roads. They don't use our routes. They don't use this side of the city. So, to find a taxi, you have to walk quite a distance, I think, to your nearest shopping center, So yeah.” (Jack, SSC)

“Sometimes we hear gore (that) there's strikes going on in the area and places like Soshanguve and Mabopane when there are these taxi strikes, nobody's allowed to go back and forth, back and forth, so which disadvantages learners, because they can't come to school”. (Onthatile, SSC)

The reviewed literature and findings from this study suggests that the GDE online school placement is more problematic for disadvantaged black-African learners from the townships who have to wake up very early to prepare for school and they endure taxi strikes, longer travelling times, and experience unfriendly taxi conditions in the process. Getting to school remains a significant obstacle for these learners (Parker et al., 2021). Interestingly, the study by De Kadt et al. (2014) reports that South African IE policies were not designed to encourage school choice but to create an environment in which school choice is possible and often desirable. What then happens when IE policies have instead encouraged an increase in school choice, as shown in the findings of this study? At this stage, questions about school choice's geographical and mobility implications become more pertinent (De Kadt et al., 2014).

On the contrary, Jack responded differently from most of the participants. She noted:

“A lot of our learners also walk to and from school, mainly because they live close to the school. The school is not very far from housings.” (Jack, SSC)

Jack acknowledges an increased number of learners who walk on foot to school. This finding is in agreement with González’s et al. (2020) findings which show that walking and cycling to school is recommended in the global north countries such as the US and Finland as it represents regular daily physical activity. In both international and local contexts, it seems possible that these results are due to learners travelling to schools closer to home and increased safety in areas where they live. In the case of disadvantaged black-African learners from underdeveloped peripheral townships such as Soshanguve and Mabopane, the issue of distance and safety was pertinent in the participants responses. Eva and Luna responded:

“Taxi must be full before it leaves, and time is ticking. It's like 04h30 you don't see any taxis in the morning. You don't see anything. I need to get to school. So, you're stressed, you don't know what to do. You can't even walk to school at that point because it's too far. So, I think that's like one of my stresses.” (Eva, SSC)

“Most learners now at school are transported by their parents. But I also think it's quite a disadvantage for the learners, because a lot of learners in the school that live at Soshanguve and Mabopane and stuff like that, which sometimes they wake up really early, like you get a learner who wakes up at 03h30 just to arrive at school at 7h20 which already when they get to school, they're already tired and they want to go home. So, it's quite a disadvantage for us, as well as because some can't even focus in class because they're already tired” (Luna, SSC)

While majority of the learners at SSC are “transported by their parents”, the response from Eva and Luna highlighted issues of waking up as early as 03h30 and leaving home as early as 04h30 to catch the earliest taxi to arrive at school on time (07h20) and the massive distance from home to school. Despite the department's POA that “believes that no poor learner should be further than one hour away from the closest school offering the grade he or she must attend ” (DoE, 1998, p.22), the results from this study find that disadvantaged black-African learners travel more than

an hour to school, therefore, walking or cycling to school is feasibly not possible for these learners due to the distance and safety concerns raised by the participants. These learners travel approximately 70-80km (return trip) to school every day. With buses not being available, taxis provide a better option despite their challenges and reduced safety (Walters, 2013). From the findings, the school or department does not accommodate these learners in transport programs that aim to increase school accessibility for all learners. Furthermore, reports from the DBE (1998) in conjunction with the Department of Transport suggest having formulated a way forward to making schools accessible for all learners by embarking on various transport options, including school buses, subsidies for learners using the general public transport system, and bicycles. However, the findings from this study portray the daily struggles of disadvantaged black-African learners when traveling to school (DoE, 2003).

In accordance with the present results, previous studies have highlighted challenges of a gendered journey to school in Sub-Saharan countries like Ghana, South Africa, and Malawi where young disadvantaged black girls narrate their stories on how they have to negotiate their female gender and safety while on learner mobility (Porter et al., 2011). Participants in this study raised issues related to safety that mainly affect female learners. What emerged from the findings is that female learners face additional stressors. Naomi earlier noted the issues of '*Gender Based Violence*' (GBV hereafter), with Thato and Junior further adding on the '*dating of schoolgirls*' and the '*promotion of alcohol*.' Thato and Junior identify as males; however, they were aware of the issues that did not affect them but were experienced by their female peers in the taxi industry. Taxis are identified as one of the most dangerous modes of transport in the country, putting young black-African girls at physical and emotional risk (Shefer et al., 2011). The study by Eagle and Kwela (2021) describes the taxi industry as a misogynistic and patriarchal space that is overwhelmed with older males. Female learners remain vulnerable to unwanted pregnancies, HIV infection, and substance abuse, which may further result in dire consequences in their schooling experiences (Eagle & Kwela, 2021). The Promotion of alcohol and GBV pointed out in the findings of this study, increases the chance of girls experiencing violent and risky situations that may endanger their health and well-being (Shefer et al., 2011).

During the focus group discussion at TPSA, participants were asked about the reasons for not taking *A Re Yeng* (Let's go), *Tshwane* bus, or any other buses provided by the municipality for

learner mobility as a possible means to minimise the challenges experienced in the taxis. Lisa responded:

"I think that learners from the suburbs have access to buses, and then learners from the townships do not have access to buses, so that is why we have to use taxis." (Lisa)

This finding was unexpected because the City of Tshwane (2024) website states, "The *A Re Yeng* rapid transit system is designed, constructed, and operated with universal accessibility as a core value." However, the route, stop, and station map published on their website shows suburban areas such as Groenkloof, Capital Park, Wonderboom, and Arcadia as some of the areas covered by the bus company, with no indication of any of the township areas in Pretoria (City of Tshwane, 2024). Therefore, the current study's findings do not support the company's commitment and core value of 'universal accessibility' as they seemingly exclude township residents. Moreover, this study has been unable to demonstrate the commitment of the DBE and the Provincial Transport Department to getting learners to school on time as per the DBE POA on Accessible Schools for All. (DoE, 2003; Walters, 2013).

Learners at TPSA indicated during the focus group discussion that the school has scholar buses provided for learners. The following communication unfolded:

Researcher: *So those buses accommodate who?*

Lisa: *Mostly they accommodate learners that are from the suburban areas.*

Researcher: *Then why do you think learners from the townships are not accommodated in those buses? What do you think?*

Jeremiah: *I think it's the destination. It's too far!*

Researcher: *Do you think it's fair that buses are provided for some and not others?*

Lisa: *I don't think that it's fair that buses are there for like kids that stay in suburban areas because...Clearly, okay, not clearly, but most of them can afford, in a way, than the ones that come from the townships.*

From the above discussion, it is evident that most participants at TPSA did not have a reason why buses were not provided for them. However, Jeremiah noted the issue of distance, citing that townships are too far for the department to provide scholar buses for them. Noting that the participants have been at the same school for an average of three or four years but still have no

idea on the criteria used to allocate buses to learners staying in the nearby suburban areas and not those from the township, shows an oversight of the school management system and all parties involved. The comment made by Lisa shows society's lack of understanding and consideration for the real-life circumstances experienced by learners from the township areas. Moreover, Lisa seemed to be aware of her perceived low socio-economic class and how it is different from the majority of the learners at school. On these grounds, these issues can be granted as another form of exclusion as many disadvantaged black-African learners have not been accommodated in the departmental transport programs.

5.2.2 Multifaceted schooling experiences: A tale of two journeys

This subtheme *multifaceted schooling experiences: A tale of two journeys* emerged mostly during the individual semi-structured interviews. After gaining an insight into the participants' schooling choice, participants were then asked if they had an opportunity to reconsider whether they would still choose the same schooling choice. It must be noted that the implementation of SASA (DoE, 1996) allowed for freedom of school choice and being able to reconsider your decision if the school no longer met your expectations, with parents and caregivers able to capitalise on that right in transferring their children to different schools in search for quality education (Kanyopa & Hlalele, 2021). To determine the disadvantaged black-African learners inclusionary and exclusionary experiences, participants were then asked to give reasons why they would consider transitioning or not from one school to another. Anna, Eva and Jeremiah gave the following reasons:

"I would choose the same school, because the teachers know how to teach, there are rules, and children are disciplined. It's a good school." (Anna)

"Yeah, I would...It's closer to home, and the bond I have with my friends now, thinking that like if I went to another place, I wouldn't meet these amazing people I met, and the teachers as well." (Ava)

"No, no sir I've learned a lot in this school. Learning another segment of another school will be a long process" (Jeremiah)

The concept of social inclusion in education acknowledges diversity and individual preferences (Koutsouris et al., 2020). Noting the above responses, the study can conclude that a number of disadvantaged black-African learners do experience inclusionary factors that are inviting enough for them to stay in the same school given an opportunity to reconsider. Despite the participants'

overlapping marginalised identities, the study noted their individual preference to stay in the same school due to the manner in which their teachers teach. Jeremiah commends his school for having learnt so much and is also discouraged by that it might be a struggle for him to adjust to a new school; therefore, he does not wish to change. The responses from the three participants about their teachers are consistent with the study of Christie and McKinney (2017) who assert that ex-Model C schools provide quality education due to having highly experienced teachers and small classroom sizes. “*There are rules, and children are disciplined. It’s a good school*”, the choice of words used by Anna also accords with the study’s earlier observations, which showed that an ex-Model C school is an integrated schooling community that has shared values and expectations irrespective of race, gender, age, and socioeconomic background (Oxoby, 2009; Koutsouris et al., 2020).

While three participants preferred to remain in the same school due to their inclusionary experiences, a number of participants opted to change schools if given this option. The participants gave the following reasons:

“...I feel that a lot of our wants, or a lot of the things that we need as students, are not necessarily catered for...” (Jack)

“...I would have come..., but I wouldn't have stayed as long as I would have. I would have switched to a private school, most definitely, because I feel this school doesn't necessarily cater to a lot of different personalities, because you as a learner could be smarter than the teacher, but the teacher could feel threatened by that and not choose to learn from you as a learner. Because remember, learning can be a two-way relationship. I could learn something from you, and you could learn something from me, and that should be okay...” (Aurella)

These results differ from the reasons offered earlier by Anna, Ava and Jeremiah in their inclusionary experiences that have influenced their potential not to change schools. However, the above findings note social exclusionary factors that result in participants opting to change schools, if given a chance. The findings remain broadly consistent with Antulia and Divodeli’s (2022) arguments that social exclusion is a multidimensional concept that deprives learners or puts them at a disadvantage in schooling activities. Both Jack and Aurella expressed concerns about being disadvantaged as they believed that they (their personalities) were not accommodated at school.

Aurella earlier noted that “*at some point, when I got here, my school was in its former glory, it was very high, top tier.*” While Aurella did not dwell much on the reasons that made her no longer consider her school as “*top tier*”, the findings display that teachers feel threatened by her personality and that this exclusionary factor leads her to reconsider a school choice, if given an option. From these findings, the participants showed a reduced sense of belonging which resulted in participants feeling unaccommodated and disconnected from their school (Graham et al., 2019).

Aurella further demonstrates the desire of switching to a “*private school*”, if given a chance. This finding is rather disappointing as it highlights the lack of hope in government schools. Private schools (also known as independent schools) are recognised by SASA as another broad category of schools in SA (DoE, 1996). The findings observed in this study mirror those of the previous studies that have examined the independent schools, acknowledging an increasing number of learners moving from public to independent schools in search of high-quality education and having lost faith in South African public schools (Immelman & Roberts-Lombard, 2015). This desire on the part of many parents to send their children to ‘private’ schools where systems are perceived to be in place, shows that private schools are considered as centers of excellence and high-quality education (Dixon & Dornbrack, 2010). This finding portrays a broader national crisis in the public educational sector affecting both resourceful (ex-Model C) and under resourced schools.

Another unanticipated finding was the issue related to the lack of safety and discipline as some of the reasons that will make them reconsider their school choice, if given an option. The participants stated:

“... I feel that the discipline in the school is very ill. I also feel that there's a lot of bullying and discrimination, so I would opt for another school instead of this school.” (Jack)

“No because of my experiences here and what has been happening lately with the matric and everything. [Researcher: How has your experience been like? If you're saying, “because of my experiences”?] I believe that lack of safety.” (Lisa)

“...The discipline here is very bad, like, children are just so disrespectful. Even when we go to choir competitions, there's always complaints about our school's discipline...” (Hazel)

No! aah No! (while laughing), because of the things that I see. Things like fighting in the school, as well as the issue of smoking, alcohol, those kinds of things.” (Junior)

The above findings were unexpected because literature shows that many parents and learners are attracted to ex-Model C schools due to their reputation for improved discipline and a safe environment. A recent study by Arlt (2024) on privilege and discipline suggests that ex-Model C schools and parents work collaboratively in maintaining an effective disciplinary environment that is progressive and inclusive. The discipline and safe environment are understood to preserve order in school and to avoid the impact of learners that violate the school rules (Arlt, 2024). However, findings from this study suggest that ex-Model C schools lack discipline and are regarded as not safe by the participants of this study.

A growing body of research reveals that the lack of discipline is experienced in schools globally. The lack of discipline is conceptualised as indiscipline. According to Ali et al. (2014), indiscipline is a multifaceted phenomenon displayed as any form of misbehaviour which a learner displays in several ways, including but not limited to disobedience, poor attitude to teaching and learning, drug and substance abuse, intentionally being late, the use of abusive language, rudeness and/or gangsterism. Findings from the study by Simba et al. (2016) on school discipline in Kenya, acknowledges school discipline as essential for creating a positive school climate conducive to sound academic performance. However, the use of drugs and substance abuse, bullying and disrespect that emerge from the findings of this study, is sufficient enough to consider the school as an uncondusive learning environment that will have a negative impact on the performance of disadvantaged black-African learners enrolled at ex-Model C schools. These learners remain vulnerable to bullying, the use of drugs, and involvement in fighting. The unsafe schooling environment is considered as an exclusionary factor that disadvantages black-African learners from schooling activities and further deprives them of an enjoyable schooling experience (Antulia & Divodeli, 2022).

A few participants expressed the belief in unequal power relations that exist in ex-Model C schools. Two participants commented:

“...teachers have this necessity to have power. They're very power hungry, you know, because they know that their future, your future, is determined by them, so you have to bet to their world...” (Aurella)

“A few other challenges are, ...us feeling that teachers are often abusing their powers on us.” (Jack)

From the above findings, the study notes how large and complex systems of power embedded in our social structures and educational institutions intersect with individuals’ various identities and work in ways that influence their lives (Wyatt et al., 2022). The participant’s quarrel about their educators’ exacerbation of unequal power relations is evident when participants quoted their teachers as people who are “*power hungry*” and “*abuse their power*” on them to describe the relationship that they have with their teachers (Mncube, 2008). The study by Reid and Kawash (2017) on the influence of educator powers, suggests that the use of power by teachers affects the whole learning environment. During the Apartheid era, educators used their power to socialise learners into the existing *status quo* of inequalities through conformity to authoritarian structures (Mncube, 2008). Sadly, this finding confirms the authoritarian structures that exist between disadvantaged black-African learners and their teachers. This study finds educators as individuals who deem themselves as experts in the classroom, therefore, learners must “*bet to their world*” to succeed. When interrogating the systems of power to understand how multiple marginalised identities interact to cause discrimination for some learners, it becomes evident that such unequal power relations negatively influence teacher-learner relationships, learning outcomes and learner motivation (Crenshaw, 1989; Elemam & Saide, 2023; Reid & Kawash, 2017).

From the findings of this study, the choice of transitioning from one school to another was mainly influenced by the participants’ expectations and their lived experiences. If the school met the participants’ expectations, they were most likely to remain at the same school, but if the school did not meet their expectations, the participants were most likely to reconsider their schooling choice.

The study by Hunter (2015) argues that schooling in the post-apartheid era is deemed as increasingly necessary for gaining quality education, symbolic capital, and social networks through social capital. Ex-Model C schools were highly praised and acknowledged as a school sector that offers such opportunities, as Hunter (2015) mentions. Surprisingly, some participants expressed the belief that some ex-Model C schools lack opportunities for disadvantaged black-African learners to gain quality education and symbolic, social, and cultural capital. The participants noted:

"I want to improve my chances of getting into certain tertiary institutions. And I know that some that look at the high school that you come from, I would want to go to the school not too far from the University of Pretoria because they accept students a lot from there. It is not really because of the school, like the school I'm attending, is bad or anything. I just think that I would have better opportunities if I was in another school." (Kylie)

"... the opportunities they've dropped. We no longer gain as much opportunities as our parents will be looking for us when they applied to the school for us." (Jack)

It is interesting to note from the above extract that Jack and Kylie portray dismay at the expectations or those of their parents in ex-Model C schools. Disadvantaged black-African learners are of the belief that when they are enrolled in ex-Model C schools, they will acquire values, quality education, and economic mobility due to the nature of the school and the perceived number of opportunities presented to them and, as a result of the social network space that they find themselves in (Arlt, 2024). However, the findings of the current study do not support the initial perceptions of learners (or the parents) nor the previous research that cites ex-Model C schools as spaces where one social class group (middle and upper class) can carry over economic mobility, characteristics, and social values to the next social class group (lower class) (Cote, 2022). Kylie's statement shows a lack of, or no opportunities offered by her school.

Naomi shares a similar point of view and believes that even in class/school, they are not afforded an opportunity by their teachers or the school to *"try as hard"* as they can to perform well in subjects that they initially failed. She highlighted:

"What I have noticed is that if someone is underperforming, they don't give them the opportunity to give all they have. They will be forcing you to change subjects. If I failed Mathematics, I'm automatically going to Mathematical Literacy. I'm not given the opportunity to try as hard as I can." (Naomi)

The point shared by Naomi in the above extract is very discouraging as it does not align with IE practices. Sustainable Development Goal 4 defines inclusion as a process that helps overcome barriers limiting learners' presence, participation, and achievement (UNESCO, 2017). Naomi's

statement indicates a lack of moral responsibility by the teacher/school to closely monitor the 'presence' and 'participation' of learners at risk or those that have failed a particular subject (like Mathematics) to increase their 'achievement' outcomes of the curriculum. The above extract shows the marginalisation and exclusion of a group of learners at high risk of not achieving better outcomes (Ainscow, 2021). From the above findings, disadvantaged black-African learners are not given an opportunity to belong, learn, and maximise their potential (Porter & Richlrm, 2011). Furthermore, ex-Model C schools can be determined as schools that seem not to develop ways of teaching that benefit all learners and respond to their individual differences but rather portray an assumption that learners in the same classroom who do not fully participate or perform like their peers will be excluded from the group (Florian & Beaton, 2018).

5.3 Learners lived experiences of social inclusion and exclusion

The findings from this study affirm that disadvantaged black-African learners experience diverse social inclusionary and exclusionary factors that either hinder or enhance their daily schooling experiences in former Model-C schools in Pretoria. Using thematic analysis as a lens to analyse qualitative data, the above main theme and the following three subthemes emerged:

- The complexities of racial, language and cultural differences.
- Classism and class related stereotypes.
- The politics of the school uniform.

The presentation and discussion of data under each subtheme is provided below.

5.3.1 The complexities of racial, language and cultural differences

The data in this subtheme shows how disadvantaged black-African learners experience the complexities of racial, language, and cultural differences in ex-Model C schools in Pretoria. According to Kanyopa and Hlalele (2021), the introduction of the SASA is meant to encapsulate respect and appreciation for diversity. However, the participants of this study narrate the complexities of racial, language, and cultural differences that participants observed or experienced in their school. The participants noted:

*"They say speak English or don't speak at all. If you don't speak English, just keep quiet."
(Onthatile)*

"She explains everything in Afrikaans, and maybe there's a learner who doesn't properly understand Afrikaans. So, if you try to translate the little bit that you were able to grasp into and understand and translate in Setswana to the learner next to you who didn't understand, then the teacher will say, "This is an Afrikaans class Hoekom praat julle Setswana in hierdie klas" (Why are you speaking Setswana in this class?) Yeah, those little comments, and there are teachers who blatantly say, "I'm Afrikaans, so I don't know the English word for this." (Jack)

From the above data, the study notes that the movement of previously marginalised learners to ex-Model C schools as a step toward an inclusive future for a democratic South Africa, shows that there are still a number of barriers that disadvantaged black-African learners experience due to race and language use (Hiss & Peck, 2020). From the comments made by Jack and Onthatile, ex-model C schools seem to recognise English and Afrikaans as the only language of communication at school. The study by Hiss and Peck (2020) asserts that these two languages (English and Afrikaans) have historically been the languages of power in South Africa. This is problematic in the new South Africa as excluding other languages, especially official African languages, is an example of the reproduction of inequality in schools. SSC offers Setswana as a FAL, together with Afrikaans; however, from the findings, we see black-African learners as wholly excluded from linguistic concessions (Hiss & Peck, 2020). The notion of "*speak English or don't speak at all*" makes allowances for an already empowered group of English Home Language speakers while silencing the voices of learners whose home language is not English. The teacher's action of questioning black-African learners about why they are communicating in Setswana in an Afrikaans class, undermines the value of cultural knowledge. It shows no intentions of linguistic diversity by not supporting the use of African languages (Christie, 2020). Alexander (2016) argues that such issues delimit transformation attempts towards diversity and inclusion. The arguments raised by Jack and Onthatile, respectively, inform this present study that learners who embrace their racial heritage are likely to experience micro-insults (as a category of microaggression) from learners or teachers who convey rudeness and demean their racial heritage (Johnston-Goodstar & Roholt, 2020).

Despite South Africa having 12 official languages, with Isizulu and IsiXhosa being the most spoken household language, English and Afrikaans still dominate the public domain and remain the only two languages of curriculum implementation in the majority of ex-Model C schools (Mkhize & Balfour, 2017; StatsSA, 2023). The Language in Education Policy under the SASA (DoE, 1996) encourages schools to promote multilingualism. The findings from this study show that some ex-Model C schools, such as TPSA, have failed to comply with the policy. A few schools such as SSC have complied with the policy by implementing Setswana as a FAL in support of multilingualism and reducing issues of language barriers for black-African learners who do not use English or Afrikaans as their home language (Christie, 2020; DoE, 1997). However, the above data shows that schools like SSC do not comply with their multilingualism policies, which then impedes on teachers' abilities to relate to black-African learners in important ways, often producing destructive misjudgements of learners and their home cultures (Hambacher & Ginn, 2021). This misjudgement was supported by Jack's response when, during the focus group discussion, participants were asked how educators respond to learners who communicate using a language other than the language used as a medium of instruction. Jack responded as follows:

"If a teacher is White, maybe Afrikaans or English speaking, they don't appreciate it. I'd like to say they feel excluded, or they feel as if we are gossiping about them or not talking about schoolwork." (Jack)

Other participants responded differently from Jack and noted:

"Usually, learners who respond in vernacular languages like Zulu and Tswana like they are speaking to teachers who understand those languages. It is rare for children who speak in vernacular to speak in those languages to, I'll say, to white teachers who don't understand those languages." (Kylie)

"Should you be in a black teacher's class, a teacher who understands our vernacular language, then it's okay. And at times I think our teachers understand that we cannot really understand the work. They do take it into consideration that we're learning in a language that's not our home language. We do not use it on a frequent basis. So, we sometimes have to translate back into our home languages, maybe into Tswana or into Zulu for you to be able to properly grasp into the topic or properly understand what was being explained to you." (Naomi)

The data presented above notes the racial diversity of teachers that exist in ex-Model C schools in Pretoria. Learners commend the flexibility of multilingualism and code-switching (changing between two or more languages in a single conversation) when there are black teachers who understand African languages. This study has been unable to demonstrate such flexibility in white educators' classrooms. The white teachers who remained in these desegregated schools were confronted with the complexities of racial diversity and were not prepared and fully equipped for multicultural education (Alexander, 2016). The responses from participants above imply that racial relations have been approached with ignorance. In ex-Model C schools, white teachers seem to lack imperative information about the language and culture of black-African learners. As a result, they do not promote code-switching and multilingualism in their classrooms (Steketee et al., 2021).

During the focus group discussion, Onthatile did not support the point raised by Naomi and seemed not to promote code-switching during teaching and learning. She noted:

"We have to put it into consideration that not all of us are from Tswana background or Pedi. So, some learners could be saying something in class, and we wouldn't understand them as well. As for myself again, I don't understand other words in Zulu, Xhosa, or Swati in a way." (Onthatile)

The response from Onthatile points out the implications of practicing multilingualism through code-switching during lessons. While teachers may code-switch using Setswana to limit language barriers and accommodate all learners, they may, advertently, exclude learners who are neither English, Afrikaans, or Setswana speaking. In a city like Pretoria, where many languages simultaneously coexist in the same schooling space, (language) disparities are most likely to exist despite introducing more inclusive policies that aim toward justice and broader participation of disadvantaged groups (Merolla & Jackson, 2019; Variava, 2020).

The study of Kanyopa et al. (2021) suggests that schooling desegregation has seemingly not improved racial relations among learners and between staff and learners. The results of this study match those observed earlier by Kanyopa et al. (2021). On three different occasions, Jack further commented on the complexities of race at her school. She noted:

"Mmmmh! the challenges that I'd say I've faced or come across a bit of racism from our Disciplinary Officer and to some other staff members." (Jack)

"An incident that took place was, we had substitution classes as one of our teacher was absent, so we were at a certain teacher's classroom, and she obviously was not familiar with our names and everything. So, instead of trying to call them out properly, she instead blatantly said, "I'm not familiar with you people's names." There have been other incidents where teachers will ask; white teachers will ask us if "this is how we do things in the black race, by trying to reprimand children or our behaviour in class." (Jack)

"I'm not sure about it happening directly to other learners, but I've heard other learners complaining about the treatment that white children get compared to the black children. I know how the majority is black but yeah, the treatment... [Researcher: So how are the blacks treated in comparison to whites?] an example, for example, in the office, the staff members don't really pay attention to us when we're in the office trying to get help from them. They will make us stand there by the window of the reception area for about five to 10 minutes while they are looking at us. But majority of the time should there be a white child, they actually start coming and trying to help them." (Jack)

The above data shows that racial classification has much to do with privilege and oppression in the South African context (Hochman, 2022; Shezi, 2021). Jack argued that black-African learners tend to wait longer when requesting for help at the reception while white learners get to be instantly attended to by the white receptionist. This shows that white people still hold power and are more privileged when compared to other races (Musavengane & Leonard, 2019).-This study notes the type of covert racism that exists in the school, as it is not openly displayed, and its behaviour is not easily observable (Bowser, 2017). The findings of Kincaid (2018) and Mills (2020) seem to be consistent with the findings of this study, which find black-African learners as 'inferior' and ranked at the bottom of the racial hierarchy, with limited power. Racial attitudes and behaviours unfold through discrimination and marginalisation of blacks (Atkin, 2017b).

5.3.1 Classism and class related stereotypes

Much literature has been published on social class and classism in education. These studies argue that social class differences in high schools are large and growing. Schools are microcosms of the larger society and learners are members of a more miniature school society with different social

class origins transferred from parents or guardians (Cote, 2022). Middle and upper class advantages present as privileges in the hidden curriculum of schools, thus reproducing social inequality across generations and ultimately excluding learners who are from the lower class (Goldsmith & Abel, 2022). In this study, participants were asked to comment on the food prices at their school tuck-shop during the focus group discussion. The participants commented:

"The prices are so high. They forget that we are children, we don't work. R20 can't get you anything in the tuck-shop. It can't get you any food besides those small sweets that they sell." (Onthatile)

"I will say that our school tuck-shop is not really at a price rate that is affordable because back in the days whereby R5 can get you an ice block, lollipop and snacks." (Naomi)

"Let's take the burger toast, for example. It's just a slice, and many learners are not happy with that because so much money has just gone to one slice, and one slice is very unfulfilling for most learners in the school. And they also are unhappy with the quality." (Oasis)

"... it's expensive, and the food is not enough." (Karabo)

"The prices are too high, and that's why some learners don't buy from the tuck-shop." (Thato)

"The food is not enough, but the prices are quite high." (Kevin)

"It's way too expensive, and the quality and everything is bad." (Junior)

What stands out in the quotations above for the majority of disadvantaged black-African learners, is that the quantity of the food is not enough, and that they are unable to afford the food sold at their school due to the high prices. Learners from poorer schools are provided with at least one nutritious meal on every school day through the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP hereafter). The NSNP has been implemented to respond to the high prevalence of hunger and poverty among school children (Berejena et al., 2020). Ex-Model C schools are not considered poorer, therefore, not accommodated in the NSNP. While the main objective of the NSNP is to provide nutritious meals to learners to improve their ability to learn (DBE, 2018), the findings of this study point out that disadvantaged black-African learners are excluded from the group of

learners who need nutritious meals in order to improve their ability to learn. The study by Sullivan (2002) asserts that educational success is facilitated by having capital and being a higher-class member. Learners from the upper-class benefit and obtain better educational outcomes than their counterparts. Sullivan's (2002) argument is justified when looking at the evidence of massive low educational outcomes and the failure of lower-class learners due to poverty and hunger (Cote, 2022).

Following complaints raised by the participants about their school tuck-shop, the interviewer raised follow-up questions across the three focus group discussions. The conversations unfolded as follows:

Researcher: *What is the general response from the teachers and the school regarding the tuck-shop issues? Have you raised it with the teachers? Are they aware? How have they responded?*

Lisa: *We do raise it with the teachers, and they will tell us to raise it with the RCLs, but when the RCLs raise it with the principal, nothing is being done.*

Naomi: *So far, I've only seen two teachers complain about how the tuck-shop is so expensive but there is not a lot of action taken by the school.*

Onthatile: *We do complain and complain about the tuck-shop prices, but no action is taken. I remember once they (learners) made us sign a petition about the tuck-shop, but we just signed, and nothing was done. Our grade 11 Business studies teacher did know about this, and she let us sign and all of that and then nothing ever took place.*

From the above responses, participants note that they have been reporting on the issue of high tuck-shop prices at the school, with no success. This study further notes the persistent lack of action taken by the schools, especially the SGB and SMT members, in ensuring that the school tuck-shop is accommodative to all learners, irrespective of their socio-economic background. The above data shows the lack of power and voice that disadvantaged black-African learners are subjected to in ex-Model C schools. These findings are supported by the study from Omodan and Makena (2022) and Thompson (2013), who argue that classism operates and manifests through personal beliefs and institutional policies that aim to limit opportunities and resources for members of the lower class. These learners often navigate through a classist environment with institutional structures

that aim to exclude them, resulting in feelings of subjugation and social intimidation by learners of different social groups that are perceived to be above them (Cavalieri & Chwalisz, 2020; Omodan & Makena, 2022).

The POA on Improving Access and Quality Education for All provides guidelines for schools that have poor learners in schools that are not targeted by the NSNP to "apply for funding to provide lunches for these individual learners. In this case, eligibility for poverty-based welfare grants will be used as a criterion for eligibility for a publicly funded lunch " (DoE, 2003, p20-21). However, from the response provided by the participants, ex-Model C schools seem not to have school-based policies to assist disadvantaged learners in accessing nutritious meals, resulting in disadvantaged learners having to negotiate around hunger and poverty experienced at school. The participants commented:

"We have learners selling snacks, and it's actually more affordable." (Onthatile)

"We end up buying from learners selling their own snacks just so we can eat." (Aurella)

"... right now, we even have to start illegal stuff." (Naomi)

Noting the above responses, some participants expressed their honesty in doing *"illegal stuff"* and buying from other learners at school who are selling at an affordable price. While learners may want to mitigate issues of hunger by buying what they consider as *"affordable"* from their peers, they run the risk of health hazards and experiencing food poisoning. The above responses from the participants are problematic considering the increased media reports later in 2024 on the outburst of foodborne cases/deaths in schools related to food (particularly snacks) bought from vendors selling in or around the school or those bought from their peers. For example, in Katlehong, Gauteng, over 100 learners were rushed to hospital after falling sick from foodborne illnesses (Masilela, 2024). Again, on the 11th of November 2024, the GDE released an immediate media statement about the case of 21 learners from Vuyani Primary School who displayed symptoms of foodborne illness and had to be rushed quickly to the hospital. The learners reported stomach cramps shortly after the school break (GDE, 2024). The food bought from peers or vendors does not offer a guarantee on compliant food sales allowed in the school premises, as per the Food Stuffs, Cosmetics, and Disinfectants Act and the General Hygiene Requirements for Food Premises, Transport of Food, and Related Matters (Regulations No. 638 of 22 June 2018).

Some participants noted that while some learners brought lunch boxes from home, this was a challenge for some of the disadvantaged black-African learners. Kylie, Jack and Aurella note:

“Some learners don’t buy from the school tuck shop but instead bring sandwiches with maybe polony and cheese from home.” (Kylie)

“I know that a lot of learners are usually bullied or made fun of for having brown bread with cheese or whatever, compared to others who would have pizza and nuggets and all of that.” (Jack)

“There was this one boy, who’s a friend of mine. So, he was eating like brown bread and something else while minding his own business and then this group of boys came and starting making comments like he was broke, comes from a bad family and all these sort of comments and I was like to them “just stop” and he was like “I’m fine” he smiles and he put his food somewhere else but I could see he was hungry. He felt ashamed.” (Aurella)

Additionally, what emerges from the data is that ex-Model C schools are failing to protect disadvantaged learners from bullying experienced as a result of the food that they bring from home. Furthermore, the above data and earlier discussion show the failure to meet disadvantaged learners’ right to accessible nutrition in South African public schools. The recent study by Mestry and Du Plessis (2024) on children's inalienable rights of access to basic nutrition suggests that malnutrition and hunger result in problems of learner success and decreased learner performance. Learners from the middle and upper classes experience social class advantages and have the economic power to reproduce the associated class privileges. On the other hand, disadvantaged black-African learners are locked into their position of subordination by failing to capitalise on education and associated (upward) social mobility opportunities., education could mediate social inequalities, rendering the latter a reproduction site of social inequalities rather than meritocracy (Themelis, 2017).

In a school community, learners who hold power and resources are identified based on class-related stereotypes and through self-representation, which includes the school uniform. (Bjornsdottir & Rule, 2017; Williamson et al., 2023). During the focus group discussions, participants observed classism and class-related stereotypes perpetuated at school by upper and middle class learners. The participants highlighted:

"Learners in our school are very privileged. You can get comments like, "ooh, I have the latest iPhone and stuff." That's the idea that they're bringing to us, forgetting that some of us as learners come from a geographical area of picture one (pointing to a picture of an informal settlement on the chart)." (Naomi)

"The majority of the learners in our schools are using labelled school bags." (Jack)

"What I've seen is that whenever they get a chance to wear civvies, it's basically like a fashion show for everybody. That's an opportunity for people to show off their expensive clothing. You know, their Gucci (an expensive clothing brand) and stuff." (Onthatile)

"I would say there is a group of boys in our school who use their own private cars, not mainly for coming to school and all of that they use their cars for, you know, not attention, not popularity, for mischievous activities, they want to feel mischievous." (Jack)

"...They really talk behind people's backs and be like, "No, did you see what she was wearing?" Especially on days we're wearing civvies, that's where everything goes wrong. [Researcher: If you say everything goes wrong, how?] Let's say, for example, just like I can't wear maybe expensive clothes. And then another kid comes wearing clothes with holes or something that they want to talk about it, it's going to be a topic until and until and it might actually be to that student being like, think bad about their situation at home." (Ava)

What emerges from the above data is that civvies day, and the wearing of expensive brands like Gucci, Nike, and Adidas, perpetuated the class differences in ex-Model C schools. Civvies day occurs when learners do not wear their uniform to school but replace them with home clothes. This day is considered a treat, and learners are expected to pay a nominal fee for this 'privilege' (Van Laren, 2012). This is done mainly on Fridays or to celebrate special days like Valentines Day or Arbour Day. This study noted the comment made by Onthatile, *"Whenever they get a chance to wear civvies, it's basically like a fashion show for everybody,"* which shows that privileged learners await this day with anticipation of showing off their latest clothing fashion. For most learners, it

feels like a competition that focuses on 'fitting in' with the crowd (Van Laren, 2012). Unfortunately, for many disadvantaged black-African learners, it is a day of exclusion and a day of bullying. From the above data, participants attest to receiving dehumanising questions or comments based on what they are wearing. This finding accords with earlier observations from Kajee's (2021) study, which showed that disadvantaged black-African learners experience feelings of disconcert and dehumanisation on popular civvies days.

The statement made by Jack, Naomi and the conversation between the interviewer and Jeremiah in the quotations below shows that self-representation and opening up about socioeconomic background exacerbate class-related stereotypes at school. The participants stated:

“Comments such as, such as, if your mother is not working, how are you always this neat, how do you afford school uniform? Do your parents not owe the school, school fees? Such comments.” (Jack)

"With our generation, I noticed that once you expose your weakness, that's what they use to fight you. So once, I was like; Oh, I come from a background where I only eat once a day, and they were like "Oooh, so you're hungry now." (Naomi)

Jeremiah: *The way I walk, I walk like the people from the township.*

Researcher: *Okay, and then what were they saying about that?*

Jeremiah: *In our slang as learners, it's called the 'phara' walk. They think I walk like that because I'm from Mabopane (A residential township located in the north of Pretoria).*

Researcher: *Okay. So, do they assume your walk is linked to the area you're from?*

Jeremiah: *Yes.*

From the above data, Naomi considers her disadvantaged background as her weakness. The comment *"Oooh, so you're hungry now"* shows a disheartening negative stereotype that disadvantaged black-African learners are always hungry. Furthermore, noting from Jack's comment, school uniform is not just a necessity and a prerequisite for attending school, but it is used to view the socio-economic status of a learner by other learners (de Lange, 2012). The school uniform policy is meant to promote unity and pride, as earlier mentioned by Mahlangu (2017), but from Jack's comment, it seems to invite trouble, where learners from middle and upper classes

gain a feeling of entitlement and acquire a greater sense of belonging at the expense of impoverished learners (Cote, 2022). A disadvantaged black-African learner is not expected to be 'neat' in their school uniform.

The questions posed to Jack show an uncomfortable situation that she experienced due to her 'neat' school uniform. From these findings, the study notes that disadvantaged black-African learners are not expected to look clean and neat in their school uniform, possibly due to their lack of affordability to buy a proper school uniform. For Jeremiah, learners at school assume that his "*phara walk*" is associated with him staying at a low-substandard township of *Mabopane*. The study by Hunter (2021) asserts that the term (*ama*)*phara* is possibly derived from the word '*parasite*' to refer to thieves addicted to drugs. Therefore, how Jeremiah walks portray him as a poverty-stricken individual from a low socio-economic background who uses violence and crime as a powerful resource to reclaim masculine power at school (Bhana et al., 2021).

5.3.2 The politics of the school uniform

Literature shows that wearing a school uniform is prevalent across the globe. In South Africa, implementing and advocating school uniform policy is believed to minimise dress-related problems and increase the safety and security of the school as guided by SASA no. 84 of 1996 (Mahlangu, 2017). Furthermore, the POA on Access to Schools for All argues that school uniform makes access to schools easier for disadvantaged learners (DoE, 2003). During the focus group discussions, participants commented on the inclusivity and relevance of school uniform. The participants noted:

"Uniform unifies us as a school; without uniform, people can be bullied because of the clothes they are wearing. It also decreases bullying. We have kids from disadvantaged homes whereby they cannot afford the latest clothes or given clothes that are handed down from my father to my brother to me." (Naomi)

"So if we do not have a uniform in the school, then it means other learners are going to feel belittled, or they might be getting bullied because of the types of clothing that they wear, like this newest fashion that now people like wearing baggy clothes, baggy pants, for example, so other people might not be able to afford baggy pants, and when they come

wearing skinny jeans, they can get like bullied, because now people see skinny jeans as like a bad thing. So, people do get bullied for that. They get criticised.” (Onthatile)

"Yes, it brings equality, mind you some children that cannot afford those expensive stuff, will come wearing Nike, but that other kids would come in like Jet and like pinpointing like "your clothes are so cheap, like your parents can't afford and stuff like that." (Eva)

"I agree with Ava, because if we were wearing clothes from home then, there'd be, perhaps, discrimination against certain learners from what they are wearing, and there wouldn't be equality within the school based off what a person is wearing. When we're all wearing skirts, all wearing our blazers and jerseys we're all the same. There's nothing that's different, because already, with small things like school bags, there's learners who get bullied for using certain school bags, maybe the school bag is too big, they're not using a nice brand. So, if it weren't the same with school uniform, it would be a problem, and I think it would lead to bullying mainly for learners." (Kylie)

Participants note the 'togetherness' and inclusivity and a sense of belonging that comes with school uniform. From the above data, most participants believe that a school uniform reduces bullying in and around the school as all learners look the same. This aligns with Mahlangu's (2017) findings, which showed that school uniforms reduce bullying, prevent discipline issues, and improve school safety. Reidy (2021), who reviews school uniforms globally, maintains that school uniform reduces distractions and increases safety and security around the school. When all learners are wearing school uniform, it is easier to maintain school discipline and identify intruders and crime-related activities.

The majority of the participants appreciated the inclusiveness that comes with wearing a school uniform. Participants like Jack and Luna cited the complexities of accessing a full school uniform due to financial constraints from their low socio-economic backgrounds. The participants mentioned:

"I think when it comes to teachers, some teachers don't understand that there's parents that just can't afford school." (Luna)

"I'd like to say learners from informal settlements, they often are misjudged, or they feel very excluded in school activities, mainly because they may not afford the proper uniform that our school has." (Jack)

According to Reidy (2021), school uniforms are a high-cost burden for some families, particularly those from low socio-economic backgrounds. The lack of affordability remains a constraint for the majority of disadvantaged black-African learners. From the comments raised by Jack and Luna, some learners' uniforms do not meet a particular teacher's representation of a 'proper school uniform' which aligns with Gaillard-Thurston's research (2017). As a result, disadvantaged black-African learners fall victim to exclusion and misjudgment by some teachers at school. Such discriminatory responses from educators are concerning and problematic as the DBE highlights that:

"Uniforms not obligatory for the poor. Schools will be prohibited from taking any action against, or marginalising in any way, a learner who does not comply with the school uniform, where there are grounds to suspect that the reason for non-compliance is economic hardship in the household of the learner concerned." (DoE, 2003, p.27)

Uniforms are not obligatory for people experiencing poverty, and schools are not permitted to exclude or marginalise learners for not wearing a proper school uniform due to the lack of affordability as a result of their low socio-economic background. However, during the focus group discussion, female participants noted discriminatory comments and some form of exclusion experienced by learners due to issues related to the representation of their school uniform. The participants noted that:

"Some of our teachers, we have two in particular, and they are females, they will make nasty comments to the girls. I know there is a teacher who makes comments such as "You look like you are selling something," and "You give off promiscuous vibes." They tell us to think about the male teachers and stuff like that. The teachers do not really respond well. I mean, they are teachers who do not respond at all. They are teachers who just turn a blind eye." (Ava)

*"There was an incident in grade eight or nine where I bought school trousers. So, the pants were, I don't know how to explain it, but they fitted me on my waist, but they were a bit too tight on my thighs and my behind. So, our school principal, actually, if we say it, he confiscated my pants. He took my pants and made me go look for another old pair in the clothing bag. Instead of asking, why are your pants like this? I could have told him that I struggled to find a pair that actually fits me properly. Also, in terms of the skirt, there has been a comment where, when I was wearing a skirt, that "my skirt looks too tight, to a point where it's altered" whereas I have never altered my skirt. I bought it like that at the shop."
(Jack)*

Gaillard-Thurston's research (2017, p.248) questioned the school uniform policy, mainly when learners are insulted or victimised when they are "not dressed in a way that meets the teacher's interpretation of school dress rules." From the data presented above, the comments made by educators reinforce their position (status) and the power they hold on to the school premises.

5.3 Responding to and resisting marginalised identities

This theme brings to the fore a group of disadvantaged black-African learners' voices on how they respond and resist their marginalised identities. Although this minority group of learners face a unique set of challenges in their respective ex-Model C schools in Pretoria, findings which respond to the second research question on how their social inclusionary and exclusionary experiences inform their schooling experiences yielded two subthemes that are central to understanding how disadvantaged African learners respond and resist the multilayered nature of their marginalised identities. The two subthemes were:

- *Perceived vulnerability and psychosocial challenges*
- *Identity (Re)construction*

5.3.1 Perceived vulnerability and psychosocial challenges

Earlier discussions on schooling choice suggested that disadvantaged black-African learners transitioned from rural and township schools, which were perceived to be dysfunctional and lacked safety, to ex-Model C schools due to the proclaimed security and safety measures implemented in

these schools (Kanyopa & Hlalele, 2021). However, narratives from learners in ex-Model C schools suggest that their marginalised racial and socio-economic backgrounds result in perceived vulnerability due to lack of care, humiliation, social harm, and abuse of human rights. Furthermore, psychosocial challenges were evident in their responses. The findings of this study are in line with that of Mayeza and Bhana's (2020) study, which demonstrated how the intersection of economic despair, black-African race, and other marginalised identities produces vulnerability in ex-Model C schools. During the individual semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, intersubjective experiences of vulnerability emerged. The participants noted:

"I think mostly bullying for me personally, was appearance, not because of social background. [Researcher: Was it in the same school?] Yeah, it was, it was last year, but it was more of like teasing and like, I wasn't comfortable, and I felt inferior." (Anna)

"I wanted to say that I used to get bullied a lot, and which led to...mhhhhh, which led to.... (silent and emotional) to where like... I.... like, I got depression, and I started self-harming. So, I even had to get braces because I got bullied about my teeth a lot. So, yeah! it was not good." (Hazel)

"I was put in situations that I was never supposed to be put into. I was bullied for just trying to be a teenager with no matter what background I had..." (Aurella)

"The bullying was mainly about my mother not being employed." (Jack)

What emerged from the above data was participants' experiences of being bullied at school. While such experiences may not directly be related to issues of race or socio-economic background for some participants, it could also be that participants' marginalised identities may have played a large role in their vulnerability to bullying. The study by Mullin (2014) defines vulnerability as an increased risk of harm due to reduced equality and reduced power to protect one's interests. The unique participants' experiences of marginalisation and exclusion made most participants more vulnerable than others. Available literature asserts that bullying is a widespread global issue that affects schools. The report by UNESCO (2019) argues that Africa records the highest percentage of school bullying, with over 48% of children in sub-Saharan Africa being victims of bullying at school. From the participant's responses, their experiences of bullying were not once-off events

but occurred repeatedly due to the power imbalance between the perpetrator(s) and them (the victims).

The responses from Jack and Aurella show that their experiences of bullying were perpetuated through the use of power from those who are in a socio-economically advantaged position. Concerning the above data and earlier discussion, participants experienced bullying in the form of name-calling with an intention to harm, cyberbullying, and exclusion from groups (Halliday et al., 2021). As noted by the participants, these experiences led to feelings of inferiority and psychosocial challenges that compromised their mental well-being as cited by Ava who claims to get nervous and shake a lot around people who do not know her.

The above findings are supported by the UNESCO (2019) report on ending violence and bullying, which reports low quality of health and life satisfaction from learners who are victims (or those who are vulnerable to being victims) of bullying, resulting in poor educational outcomes when compared to learners that are not vulnerable to social harm. For example, Kevin has earlier noted to have repeated a grade due to peer pressure while Jack noted repeating grade nine due to her experiences of falling “*into depression and anxiety...couldn't cope with schoolwork*”. Both incidents are supported by the study from Vilaplana-Pérez et al. (2021), which closely links experiences of social anxiety to low academic achievement and a negative attitude towards school. The participants’ responses to their experiences of depression and social anxiety are characterised by social harm, persistent fear, and avoidance of social situations due to possible scrutiny by others (Halliday et al, 2021; Vilaplana-Pérez et al., 2021).

5.3.2 Identity (Re)construction

The inextricably interwoven complexities of race and class in ex-Model C schools meant that disadvantaged black-African learners have to construct and reconstruct their marginalized identities to navigate the hegemonic Western school practices that contribute to their social exclusionary experiences. The study of Richards (2023) on teacher, learner, and student-teacher identity broadly defines identity as how one understands and expresses who they are, how they position themselves to others, and the parts of oneself that they choose to express in an interaction.

Earlier, findings of the study noted that disadvantaged black-African learners have to navigate through a terrain of using English or Afrikaans in class as a means of communication with their

teachers and classmates. The interviewer asked the participants to share how they navigate this terrain outside the classroom and without teachers. Jack responded:

“Learners prefer using a different language outside the class because we better understand each other. And I know learners like myself, who feel that English is sometimes exhausting. We don’t like speaking English. So, it’s a way for us to communicate and properly understand each other because not every learner is able to speak English the way all four of us are here right now, so yes.” (Jack)

In response to Jack’s response, the interviewer asked participants to elaborate more on the “different language” used outside the classroom. The participants had the following to say:

“Learners speak Sepetori outside the classroom” (Naomi)

“I think it depends on the group, but I’ll say the majority speak Sepetori outside the classroom.” (Aurella)

“I feel like it also has to do with where we come from because we get that in townships, that’s the language (Sepetori) that we use there. So, it might be that they can’t actually speak English, so they just prefer to use that language because they better understand themselves.” (Onthathile)

From the above findings, the current study found that disadvantaged black-African learners enrolled in ex-Model C schools have developed a multilingual identity, where they have to negotiate language use over space and time (Forbes, et al., 2021). From the above responses, participants use English or Afrikaans in class and then transition to *Sepetori* outside the classroom or in the absence of teachers. According to the participants, *Sepetori* is a “slang language” spoken mostly in greater parts of black-African townships in and around Pretoria. One participant, Onthathile further added that “it’s a mixture of languages in a gangsterism way just to give it that thing”. The study finds that disadvantaged black-African learners navigate through the language barriers in ex-Model C schools in Pretoria using *Sepetori*. This finding corroborates the ideas of Kunene and Ntuli (2025), who suggested that *Sepetori* is an unofficial local language comprising local languages. It is spoken mainly in black-African townships in Pretoria such as Soshanguve, Mabopane, and Ga-Rankuwa. Noted by the participants, *Sepetori* is an ‘inclusive’ language used to overcome language barriers as it comprises many different local languages spoken in the area.

It is worth noting that a multilingual identity is beneficial through developing communication skills, broadening mental horizons and enhancing social cohesion through better means of understanding (Forbes, et al., 2021). However, the multilingual identity that participants embody is problematic in this context as they use multiple languages which include *Sepetori* which is not an official language. While the dynamic process of translanguaging (using *Sepetori*) allows fluidity between languages, connects learners easily, and overcomes language barriers, students lose a sense of self. Moreover, disadvantaged black-African learners lose competence in their mother tongue (Botlholo & Makgato, 2025). While the use of *Sepetori* may serve as a marker of urbanisation, being ‘city-wise’ and maintaining one’s coolness, it could potentially cause the extinction of a standard black South African indigenous language such as Setswana, Sesotho, Sepedi, and Isizulu as some of the official local languages used in Pretoria townships (StatsSA, 2023; Botlholo & Makgato, 2025).

As mentioned in the literature review, black-African learners from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds have poor academic outcomes as compared to their peers from high socio-economic backgrounds. However, the study of Yin and Hai (2022) on high achievers from families with low socio-economic status argues that a group of students is beating the odds and achieving academic excellence despite their disadvantaged backgrounds. Against the odds, this study found that a group of disadvantaged black-African learners enrolled in ex-Model C schools in Pretoria are academically thriving and excelling in extra and co-curricular activities. During the individual semi-structured interview, participants were asked to share some of their proud moments at school. The participants note:

“Whenever I think of the fact that I'm in the top ten, I'm always proud when I think of how far I've come from grade eight till now, how much effort I'm able to put into my books, besides my condition or being able to participate In activities like public speaking, being able to express my thoughts, feelings and opinions in front of people whenever I think of such things, I'm always saying. I'm proud of myself. I'm proud of who Kylie is today.”

(Kylie)

“Mainly the public speaking competition. Yeah! That makes me proud of myself.

[Interviewer: Why the public speaking competition?] Because I came third place so...”

(Hazel)

“Mmmmh, ...I'm very proud of the fact that I did a pageant not so long ago for the school, and something I've excelled in, and people were very shocked that I was into that thing, and it's something that actually made me feel good about myself. It gave me a sense of confidence that I am more than just what I look like, and I also did like a writing thing. My English teacher in the previous years had offered it to me, and I actually did very good in it, surprisingly. So yeah, the different accomplishments along the way that I'm definitely proud of, oh and public speaking, because I used to be very shy, so yeah, I'm very proud of that.” (Aurella)

“I am often proud of, you know, when you're speaking English with your classmates, and they like get confused about how you ask questions. They often compliment how you articulate yourself in English, how you speak English properly and so fluently. I am proud of that. I'm proud of my English-speaking skills. I am proud of my accounting skills. I'm also proud of my business study skills. Yeah, those are the things I would say I'm proud of.” (Jack)

“I would say, the one time I entered the speech contest, a competition, because I know myself, I'm not really bubbly when it comes to talking to people. So, me accomplishing that and being able to talk to that amount of people, I'm like, Yeah, I can really do this. I was proud at that moment.” (Ava)

It is worth noting that socio-economic status strongly predicts student academic achievement (Agasisti et al., 2021). As mentioned earlier, learners from disadvantaged economic backgrounds are not expected to thrive academically; however, from the above findings, the study finds a group of disadvantaged black-African learners enrolled in ex-Model C schools in Pretoria, portraying resilience. Responses from the participants show their ability to overcome adversity and display positive adjustments in a schooling environment, coupled with entrenched barriers that the system finds difficult to overcome (Cockerill et al., 2021).

These academic achievements and extra and co-curricular recognition noted by the participants appear as their beacon of hope, as it has allowed black-African learners to relate to the schooling space. The participants can take control of the space and place, as organisational members of the school. (Nordbäck, et al., 2022). During the individual semi-structured interviews, participants

revealed how they exercise their agency to navigate away from more traditional learner-oriented spaces and towards their preferred ones (Samatar et al, 2021). Active learner engagement, self-efficacy, high self-esteem, and a positive attitude toward school appear as key elements to accompany disadvantaged black-African learners to reach greater outcomes and exercise their agency in response to their exclusionary experiences within the schooling space.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter presented and analysed data generated through data collection methods, including photo-elicitation, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions. Using thematic analysis, three main themes emerged and were analysed using the theory of intersectionality and theoretical framework as lens of the study. Despite progressive inclusionary policies that exist, it is evident from the presented data that black-African learners have complex and multidimensional social identities that intersect resulting in intersubjective social inclusionary and exclusionary experiences in ex-Model C schools in Pretoria. While disadvantaged black-African learners share different experiences, similarities were noted in the above data resulting in multiple ways in which these learners respond to and resisting their marginalised identities

The next and the final chapter will present a brief overview of the entire study, implications and conclusion.

CHAPTER SIX

Recommendations, Summary and Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the analysis and findings of this study. This chapter will provide a brief overview of the whole dissertation and discuss a summary of the key findings and implications. Furthermore, this chapter will provide a conclusion for this study. This study aimed to establish how disadvantaged black-African learners experience social inclusion and exclusion in ex-Model C schools in Pretoria, with a view to understanding how such experiences (of social inclusion and exclusion) inform their schooling experiences. The following two critical research questions guided data generation:

1. *What are black-African learners from lower socio-economic backgrounds experiences of social inclusion and exclusion at school?*
2. *How do such experiences inform learner schooling experiences?*

The summary of the key findings will provide a brief discussion that responds directly to the two critical questions of the study. Thereafter, the implications for Policy, School Practice, and Future Research will be provided.

6.2 A brief synopsis of the study

This dissertation had a total of six chapters. Chapter one, titled *Experiences of Social Inclusion and Exclusion of Disadvantaged black-African learners in ex-Model C Schools: Introduction to the Study*, offered a comprehensive introduction, background, and context to the entire study. The study outlined the three justifications (personal, professional, and scholarly) as a rationale for the study. A brief discussion on the focus and purpose of the study was then provided. Thereafter, the aim, the two critical research questions, and the study's objectives were presented. Before the conclusion with a summary of the chapters, the significance of the research was outlined and a clarification of the fundamental concepts used was presented.

Chapter two titled *Exploring Published Knowledge: A Review of Literature*, provided a critical review of literature drawn from three contexts (global, continental (sub-Saharan), and local). Throughout the literature review, this study offered extensive discussions on debates, knowledge,

and critiques from all three contexts to portray existing gaps in the literature. Furthermore, this study used sub-topics such as class, classism, race, racism quintile versus access to schools, and desegregation and integration in 'white' schools to guide the discussions provided in this chapter, as they were all related to the study phenomenon.

Chapter Three titled *Understanding Inclusion and Exclusion in South African Schools: Towards a Conceptual and Theoretical Framework*. used the concept of Inclusive Education and Kimberlé Crenshaw's (1989) Theory of Intersectionality as a lens and road map to the study. The chapter commenced by providing a detailed insight into the concept of Inclusive Education, followed by its challenges and limitations. Following this, a critical discussion on the intersectionality theory concerning education scholarship was provided. Critiques offered to the theory were then presented. The chapter concluded by discussing the link and value added by both frameworks to strengthen the study. This was done to provide a means of thinking through the two critical research questions within a former model-c schooling context.

Chapter Four presented the research methodological approaches employed in this study. This chapter began by exploring the research paradigm and approach chosen. The participant's recruitment process and selection within the research setting followed this. This chapter further provided the three detailed data collection methods employed in the study, followed by the data analysis approach and issues of trustworthiness and rigour. Finally, this chapter outlined the ethical considerations considered throughout the data collection process, data storage, and study limitations.

Chapter Five titled *Experiences of Social Inclusion and Exclusion of Disadvantaged black-African learners in ex-Model C Schools in Pretoria: Data Analysis (Findings and Discussion)* presented findings from the study in response to the two critical research questions that guided the study. The data presented in this chapter emanated from photo elicitation, focus group discussions, and individual semi-structured interviews. Using the six phases of Thematic Analysis, as explained in chapter four, three main themes emerged, followed by a discussion of eight subthemes. The findings presented were then reviewed in this chapter concerning the conceptual and theoretical framework as an analytical lens.

Chapter Six presented an overview of the study with a summary of key findings and a methodological reflection. Within this chapter, I will also present implications for policy, school practice, and future research. A conclusion to close off the chapter and the entire dissertation will follow this.

6.3 Discussion of the main findings

This study aimed to establish how disadvantaged black-African learners experience social inclusion and exclusion in ex-Model C schools in Pretoria and further explore how such experiences (social inclusion and exclusion) inform their overall schooling journey. Therefore, this subsection provides a summary of the key findings to the two critical research questions that guided the study.

Question 1: What are black-African learners from lower socio-economic backgrounds experiences of social inclusion and exclusion at school?

The data collected in this study suggested that IE policies such as the WP6 and SASA promoted fundamental rights that appeared as a beacon of hope for many South Africans previously marginalised and excluded from the education system, giving birth to new possibilities in the new SA (D'amant, 2010). Responses from participants highlighted the welcoming and effectiveness of IE policies that aim to increase access and participation in education. This study has shown that the GDE school placement program has allowed for flexibility in school choice, allowing many black-African learners to transition to ex-Model C schools in search of high-quality education but also for symbolic and social capital, especially social networks (Hunter, 2015). From the findings of this study, the participants were not in any way unfairly discriminated against for school admission due to their race or disadvantaged backgrounds (DoE, 1998). Instead, they were included at a high fee-paying ex-Model C school as part of the POA's effort to improve access to free and quality basic education.

From the study findings, some participants highly praised and acknowledged ex-Model C schools as a school sector that offers opportunities. It was, however, surprising that some participants expressed their belief that their ex-Model C schools lacked opportunities for disadvantaged black-African learners to gain quality education and symbolic, social, and cultural capital. If given a

choice, some participants, like Auriella, would further transition to privately owned schools, and Kylie's statement showed the lack of opportunities offered by her school.

Although the current study revealed increased access of disadvantaged black-African learners to former white-only (ex-Model C) schools, the participants demonstrated challenges of learner mobility as one of the major challenges that invite troubled waters. With buses not being available, participants cited travelling approximately 70-80km (return trip) to school using taxis. Using taxis to school posed major safety issues, particularly for female learners. As discussed in the previous chapter, the taxi industry remains a misogynistic and patriarchal space that is overwhelmed with older males, therefore, female learners remain vulnerable to issues such as GBV. From the findings of the study, some ex-Model C schools like TPSA have scholarly transport that caters to learners who stay in and around the school area, excluding many disadvantaged black-African learners from the peripheral townships like Mabopane, Soshanguve, and Mamelodi. The school or department does not accommodate these learners in transport programs that aim to increase school accessibility for all learners.

This study has found that learners generally commend the flexibility of multilingualism and code-switching when there are black teachers who understand African languages. This language flexibility was cited as one of their social inclusionary experiences. However, this flexibility had limitations as learners were unable to demonstrate such flexibility in white educators' classrooms. The teachers would question black-African learners about why they communicate in Setswana or any other African language instead of using English or Afrikaans as a medium of instruction. From the findings of the study, many racially white educators seem to undermine the value of cultural knowledge and showed no intentions of linguistic diversity by not supporting the use of African languages (Christie, 2020). The educator's action delimits transformation attempts toward diversity and inclusion (Alexander, 2016).

The arguments on classroom language use raised by some participants informed this present study that learners who embraced their racial heritage were more likely to experience micro-insults (as a category of microaggression) from learners or teachers who conveyed rudeness and demeaned their racial heritage (Johnston-Goodstar & Roholt, 2020). The white teachers who remained in

these desegregated schools were confronted with the complexities of racial diversity and were not prepared and fully equipped for multicultural education (Alexander, 2016). The responses from participants implied that racial relations have been approached with ignorance. From the findings of this study, white teachers seem to lack imperative information about the language and culture of black-African learners. As a result, they do not promote code-switching and multilingualism in their classrooms (Steketee et al., 2021).

From the findings of this study, racial classification has much to do with privilege and oppression in the South African schooling context (Hochman, 2022; Shezi, 2021). Jack earlier argued that black-African learners tend to wait longer when requesting for help at the reception, while white learners are instantly attended to by the white receptionist. This finding suggested that, in general, white people still hold power and are more privileged when compared to other races (Musavengane & Leonard, 2019). This study further noted the type of covert racism that exists in the school, as it is not openly displayed, and its behaviour is not easily observable (Bowser, 2017). The findings of this study find black-African learners as 'inferior' and ranked at the bottom of the racial hierarchy, with limited power. Racial attitudes and behaviours unfold through discrimination and marginalisation of blacks (Atkin, 2017b).

The data collected in this study suggests that most participants appreciated the inclusiveness of wearing a school uniform and how it made them feel part of the school community. Participants like Jack and Luna cited the complexities of accessing a full school uniform due to financial constraints from their low socio-economic backgrounds. However, this study has shown that some participants appreciated and applauded the school's "clothing bank," which offered school uniform donated by previous students to underprivileged learners. The school's "clothing bank" was one of the social inclusionary measures taken to curb the financial burden of having to buy 'expensive' school uniforms, particularly for underprivileged learners.

The participants of the study also revealed negative stereotypes and the 'policing' of school uniform by teachers and other privileged learners. Some participants noted that they were not expected to look clean and neat in their school uniform, possibly due to their lack of affordability to buy a proper school uniform. The lack of affordability remains a constraint for the majority of

disadvantaged black-African learners. From the comments raised by Jack and Luna, some learners' uniform does not meet a particular teacher's representation of a 'proper school uniform,' which aligns with Gaillard-Thurston's research (2017). As a result, disadvantaged black-African learners fall victim to exclusion and misjudgment by some teachers at school.

One of the more significant findings that emerged from this study is that classism and class-related stereotypes persistently serve as some of the social exclusionary experiences that disadvantaged black-African learners endure in ex-Model C schools in Pretoria. Participants attested to receiving dehumanising questions or comments based on what they were wearing, especially on civvies day. For many participants, the popular civvies day is a day of exclusion and bullying. This study finds ex-Model C schools to be an unsafe schooling environment for most disadvantaged black-African learners, depriving them of an enjoyable schooling experience (Antulia & Divodeli, 2022).

What emerged from most participants is that the quantity of food at the school tuck-shop was not enough, and that they were unable to afford the food sold at their school due to the high prices. The study earlier noted that learners from poorer schools receive at least one nutritious meal every school day through the NSNP Programme. However, what stood out in the findings of this study is that disadvantaged black-African learners are excluded from the group of learners who need nutritious meals to improve their ability to learn. Additionally, what emerged from the data is that ex-Model C schools in Pretoria are failing to protect disadvantaged learners from bullying because of the food that they bring from home – which was seen as substandard by many privileged learners.

The data collected in this study suggests that if there is a high teacher efficacy for inclusive practices, there are higher chances of disadvantaged black-African learners experiencing social inclusion, resulting in more participation and broader educational outcomes.

Question 2: *How do such experiences inform learner schooling experiences?*

In response to the second research question, the study found that the intersection of economic despair, the black-African race, and other marginalised identities produces vulnerability (Mayeza & Bhana, 2020). From the findings of this study, the vulnerability of disadvantaged black-African

learners emanated due to the lack of care, humiliation, social harm, and abuse of human rights by some of their educators and other privileged learners at school.

Participants revealed their experiences of being bullied at school. While some bullying experiences may not directly be related to issues of race or socio-economic background, the participants' marginalised identities may have played a significant role in their vulnerability to bullying. From the participants' responses, their experiences of bullying were not one-off events but occurred repeatedly due to the power imbalance between the perpetrator(s) and them (the victims). Earlier responses from participants like Jack and Aurella demonstrated that their experiences of bullying were perpetuated through the use of power from those who are in a socio-economically advantaged position. Participants revealed experiencing bullying in the form of name-calling, intending to harm, cyberbullying, and exclusion from social groups, which include sports and other extracurricular cultural activities. As noted by the participants, these experiences led to feelings of inferiority, poor educational outcomes, and psychosocial challenges that compromised their mental well-being. The participants' responses to marginalisation resulted in persistent fear and avoidance of social situations by negotiating space and time to avoid possible scrutiny by others.

Participants note that they have been reporting with no success on the issue of high tuck-shop prices at the school. The study further notes the school's persistent lack of action, especially the SGB and SMT members, to ensure that the school tuck-shop accommodates all learners irrespective of their socio-economic background. The above data shows a lack of power and voice that disadvantaged black-African learners are subjected to in ex-Model C schools, resulting in learners forming forces of supportive networks. Participants expressed their honesty in doing "illegal stuff" and buying from other learners at school who are selling at an affordable price. While learners may want to mitigate issues of hunger by buying what they consider "affordable" from their peers, they run the risk of health hazards and experiencing food poisoning. The response provided by the participants, ex-Model C schools, does not have school-based policies to assist disadvantaged learners in accessing nutritious meals, resulting in disadvantaged learners having to negotiate around hunger and poverty experienced at school through illegal means.

Narratives from students in ex-Model C schools suggest that their marginalised racial and socio-economic backgrounds result in perceived vulnerability due to the lack of care, humiliation, social harm, and abuse of human rights. Furthermore, psychosocial challenges were evident in their

responses. Kevin has earlier noted to have repeated a grade due to peer pressure, while Jack noted repeating grade nine due to her experiences of falling "into depression and anxiety... could not cope with schoolwork". The participants' responses to their experiences of depression and social anxiety are characterised by social harm, persistent fear, and avoidance of social situations due to possible scrutiny by others (Halliday et al., 2021; Vilaplana-Pérez et al., 2021).

The inextricably interwoven complexities of race and class in ex-Model C schools meant that disadvantaged black-African learners had to construct and reconstruct their marginalized identities to navigate the hegemonic system. Findings of the study noted that disadvantaged black-African learners have to navigate through a terrain of using English or Afrikaans in class as a means of communication with their teachers and classmates. The study finds that disadvantaged black-African learners navigate through the language barriers in ex-Model C schools in Pretoria using *Sepetori*.

It is worth noting that the multilingual identity that participants embody is problematic in this context, as they use multiple languages, including *Sepetori*, which is not an official language. While the dynamic process of translanguaging (using *Sepetori*) allows fluidity between languages, connects learners easily, and overcomes language barriers, students lose a sense of self. Moreover, disadvantaged black-African learners lose competence in their mother tongue (Botlholo & Makgato, 2025). The use of *Sepetori* could potentially cause the extinction of a standard black South African indigenous language, such as Setswana, Sesotho, Sepedi, and Isizulu, as some of the official local languages used in Pretoria townships (StatsSA, 2023; Botlholo & Makgato, 2025).

As mentioned in the literature review, black-African learners from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds have poor academic outcomes as compared to their peers from high socio-economic backgrounds. Against the odds, this study found that a group of disadvantaged black-African learners enrolled in ex-Model C schools in Pretoria are academically thriving and excelling in extra and co-curricular activities. From the above findings, the study finds a group of disadvantaged black-African learners enrolled in ex-Model C schools in Pretoria, portraying resilience. Responses from the participants show their ability to overcome adversity and display positive adjustments in a schooling environment, coupled with entrenched barriers that the system finds difficult to overcome (Cockerill et al., 2021).

These academic achievements and extra and co-curricular recognition noted by the participants appear as their beacon of hope, as it has allowed black-African learners to relate to the schooling space. The participants can take control of the space and place, as organisational members of the school. (Nordbäck, et al., 2022). During the individual semi-structured interviews, participants revealed how they exercise their agency to navigate away from more traditional learner-oriented spaces and towards their preferred ones (Samatar et al, 2021). Active learner engagement, self-efficacy, high self-esteem, and a positive attitude toward school appear as key elements to accompany disadvantaged black-African learners to reach greater outcomes and exercise their agency in response to their exclusionary experiences within the schooling space.

6.4 Implications

The findings presented in the previous chapter allude to the social inclusionary and exclusionary experiences of disadvantaged black-African learners in ex-Model C schools and how such experiences inform their schooling experiences. Below, I discuss the implications of the study's findings on policy, school practice, and future research. The implications provided below point to the interventions that can be employed at different levels as means of rethinking and reimagining full social inclusion of all learners, particularly those that are black-African and from disadvantaged backgrounds, as the study's main focus.

6.4.1 Policy

The findings of the study show disadvantaged black-African learners as members of the school community who still experience discrimination, marginalisation, and social exclusion within the spaces of ex-Model C schools in Pretoria. Therefore, these findings suggest several courses of action to improve their social inclusion experiences. Therefore, policymakers need to develop a policy-based relatability course that instills a broader understanding of diversity in schools so that learners and staff can acknowledge differences and appreciate diversity. Another important practical implication is that the government should adopt revised inclusive approaches that speak directly to the challenges experienced by disadvantaged black-African learners in ex-Model C schools in Pretoria to attain the goal of social justice education. These school-based policies must clearly state how disadvantaged black-African learners are protected in their schools. Moreover, these findings imply that school-based policies, such as the school code of conduct, and broader

government policies, such as WP6 and SASA, should be considered when reviewing policy programs to identify implementation gaps leading to social exclusion. School-based policies must leverage power strategically so that all stakeholders, including RCL and SGB members, are seen as agents of change who are able to carefully navigate a challenging context while skillfully leading within the school community.

6.4.2 School practice

This study's findings have several important implications for school practice. Culturally responsive practices must be at the forefront of all school-based programs/events. Therefore, educators need to be more aware of the intersectional nature of diversity so that they can teach all children with an equally empowering ethic. The teaching and learning programs must respond to the needs and experiences of all learners, particularly those of the disadvantaged and minority backgrounds. Such programs/events will cultivate the appreciation of cultural otherness while promoting diversity and inclusion of all groups. These culturally responsive practices will further promote cultural pluralism where disadvantaged black-African learners participate fully within an ex-Model C context while maintaining cultural differences.

The study's findings suggest the ongoing poor working relations across all school-level structures (i.e., SMT, SGB, RCL). Therefore, cultivating professional and authentic relationships will offer practical tools needed to move beyond shifting blame and expressing frustrations to either school-level structure and cultivating relationships marked by love, trust, and investment in the success of all learners. Such authentic relationships will further leverage learner voices, allowing them not to be seen as empty shells but as rich sources of knowledge and experiences that can be used to effect positive social change. Through shared governance, the SMT, SGB, and RCL structures will be able to participate fully in decision-making without losing sight of the school vision that is grounded on social justice principles.

6.4.3 Future Research

This study was concerned with how black-African learners with disadvantaged and minority identities (race and class) within the context of ex-Model C schools in Pretoria experience social inclusion and exclusion and how such experiences inform their schooling experiences. To further

broaden the study, it would be interesting to compare the experiences of individuals within the same marginalised identity groups but enrolled in different educational contexts (i.e., township or rural environments). Broadening the study to other academic contexts within and outside the Gauteng province will provide an in-depth understanding of inclusive education amidst racial and class dilemmas. Future research could further investigate the role of Life Orientation subjects in creating more widely inclusive spaces in ex-Model C schools. Conducting more collaborative research with other related fields under the humanities and social sciences umbrella will further broaden and diversify educational research by assessing the long-term effects of social exclusionary experiences. Lastly, further research in this field would greatly help provide Continuous Professional Teacher Development (CPTD) that allows flexibility to respond to individual learners' abilities, needs, and interests while honouring inclusive policies. As part of continuous curriculum transformation and development, researchers can explore more ways of enacting inclusive pedagogy as a teaching method where learners, teachers, and all other stakeholders work together to create a supportive environment that fosters social justice, allowing each learner to be fully present and feel equally valued. Findings from such studies can be implemented to develop targeted interventions to improve learner experiences at school.

6.5 Conclusion

This study was concerned with how disadvantaged black-African learners experience social inclusion and exclusion in ex-model C schools in Pretoria. This last chapter provided a brief overview of the whole dissertation and offered a summary of the key findings that respond to the two critical questions of the study. A methodological reflection and discussions on implications for policy, school practice, and future research were then provided.

While there were limitations in executing the study, the two objectives of the study were achieved, and the two critical questions that guided the study were answered. Discussions provided in the previous chapters show that disadvantaged black-African learners experience both inviting (social inclusion) and uninviting (social exclusion) experiences in ex-Model C schools in Pretoria. To some extent, inclusive policies such as WP6 and SASA provided a pathway to some form of inviting social inclusionary experiences of black-African learners. However, the work on

disadvantaged black-African learners in and outside the ex-model C parameters remains pivotal and needed as a continuous process to reach the goal of social justice education and further seeing South African society as a rainbow nation that we all desire, especially in schools.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: GDE approval letter



GAUTENG PROVINCE

Department: Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

8/4/4/1/2

GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	11 December 2023
Validity of Research Approval:	08 February 2024– 30 September 2024 2023/510
Name of Researcher:	Shezi PL
Address of Researcher:	[REDACTED]
	Pretoria North
Telephone Number:	[REDACTED]
Email address:	[REDACTED]
Research Topic:	Experiences of Social Inclusion of Disadvantaged Black Learners in Former Model-C schools in Pretoria. A Socio-Economic Perspective.
Name of University:	UKZN
Type of qualification	Masters
Number and type of schools:	5 secondary Schools
District/s/HO	Tshwane North, Tshwane West ,Tshwane South

Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

The following conditions apply to GDE research. The researcher may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:

Making education a societal priority

Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management

7th Floor, 17 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg, 2001

Tel: (011) 355 0488

Email: Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za

Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

1. Letter that would indicate that the said researcher/s has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.
2. The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s must be approached separately, and in writing, for permission to involve District/Head Office Officials in the project.
3. **Because of the relaxation of COVID 19 regulations researchers can collect data online, telephonically, physically access schools or may make arrangements for Zoom with the school Principal. Requests for such arrangements should be submitted to the GDE Education Research and Knowledge Management directorate.**
4. **The Researchers are advised to wear a mask at all times, Social distance at all times, Provide a vaccination certificate or negative COVID-19 test, not older than 72 hours, and Sanitise frequently.**
5. A copy of this letter must be forwarded to the school principal and the chairperson of the School Governing Body (SGB) that would indicate that the researcher/s have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.
6. A letter / document that outline the purpose of the research and the anticipated outcomes of such research must be made available to the principals, SGBs and District/Head Office Senior Managers of the schools and districts/offices concerned, respectively.
7. The Researcher will make every effort obtain the goodwill and co-operation of all the GDE officials, principals, and chairpersons of the SGBs, teachers and learners involved. Persons who offer their co-operation will not receive additional remuneration from the Department while those that opt not to participate will not be penalised in any way.
8. Research may only be conducted after school hours so that the normal school programme is not interrupted. The Principal (if at a school) and/or Director (if at a district/head office) must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher/s may carry out their research at the sites that they manage.
9. Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded before the beginning of the last quarter of the academic year. If incomplete, an amended Research Approval letter may be requested to conduct research in the following year.
10. Items 6 and 7 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and be paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education.
11. It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain written parental consent of all learners that are expected to participate in the study.
12. The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.
13. The names of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers and learners that participate in the study may not appear in the research report without the written consent of each of these individuals and/or organisations.
14. On completion of the study the researcher/s must supply the Director: Knowledge Management & Research with one Hard Cover bound and an electronic copy of the research.
15. The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings and recommendations of his/her research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned.
16. Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Director concerned must also be supplied with a brief summary of the purpose, findings and recommendations of the research study.

The Gauteng Department of Education wishes you well in this important undertaking and looks forward to examining the findings of your research study.

Kind regards



Dr. ~~Uthman~~ Mukatuni
Acting OES: Education Research and Knowledge Management

DATE: 13/12/2023

2

Making education a societal priority

Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management

7th Floor, 17 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg, 2001

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Appendix 2: Letter to school principal



University of KwaZulu Natal

Edgewood campus

121 Marianhill Rd, Pinetown

Durban, 3605

4 June 2024

Dear Principal.

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I am Philani Lloyd Shezi, a Master of Education (MEd) student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood campus. I am currently engaging in a research project titled “Disadvantaged black-African learners’ experiences of social inclusion and exclusion in former model-c schools in Pretoria: A socio-economic perspective.” I seek permission to conduct this research at your school. This project aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences of inclusion and exclusion of impoverished learners enrolled at former model-c schools of Pretoria. I will collect data from four grade 10/11 learners using multiple methods such as focus group discussion, photo-elicitation, and semi-structured interviews. Before collecting data, I would like to request access to the learner profiles of the four selected learners to understand them and their backgrounds better.

Participants will be interviewed for approximately 30-40 minutes at times convenient to them, which will maintain the normal teaching and learning of the school. Each interview will be voice-recorded to ensure the study's trustworthiness. The research findings will not be used for any purpose other than the master's dissertation. Data will be stored safely and disposed of five years after the research ends. Pseudonyms will be used to protect the identity of participants. All information disclosed will be kept confidential. The research participants will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way. They will be reassured that participation in this research is voluntary,

and should participants desire to withdraw or terminate their participation, it may be done without any negative consequences. There are no foreseeable risks in participating in this study.

For further information on this research, please feel free to contact my supervisor **Dr Antoinette D'amant** who is located at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood Campus. Email: damant@ukzn.ac.za [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] I can be contacted via email at 217018008@stu.ukzn.ac.za [REDACTED]

Alternatively, you may contact the UKZN research office situated at Govan Mbeki centre, Westville campus on 031 260 4609 or email: hssrec@ukzn.ac.za

Thank you for your time and I look forward to your positive response.

Yours faithfully,

Philani Lloyd Shezi
Student no: 217018008

INFORMED CONSENT SHEET PRINCIPAL

I, _____ (Full Name/s)

hereby confirm that I understand the content of this document and the nature of this study and do hereby grant permission for the study titled **“Disadvantaged black-African learners’ experiences of social inclusion and exclusion in former model-c schools in Pretoria: A socio-economic perspective”** to be conducted at my school.

Name of principal

Signature of Principal

Date

Name of witness

Signature of Witness

Date

Appendix 3: Parent/ guardian information and consent form



University of KwaZulu Natal
Edgewood campus
121 Marianhill Rd, Pinetown,
Durban, 3605

4 June 2024

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER TO PARENTS

Dear parent/Guardian.

My name is Philani Lloyd Shezi, and I am a Master of Education student enrolled at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood Campus, South Africa. Your child/ward is cordially invited to participate in my study titled “**Disadvantaged black-African learners’ experiences of social inclusion and exclusion in former model-c school in Pretoria: A socio-economic perspective**”. This study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences of inclusion and exclusion of impoverished learners enrolled at former model-c schools of Pretoria.

I will work with learners during the study to obtain helpful information for my research; hence, I selected your child/ward as a participant. To obtain data, I will first request your child’s learner profile from the school to analyse their background and understand them better. Further, I will use the following methods to collect data:

1. Focus group discussion
2. Photo-elicitation
3. Semi-structured interview

Furthermore:

1. Your child’s identity will not be disclosed
2. The information will only be used for the purposes of this study only
3. The data collected will be stored in a safe place and will be destroyed after five years.

4. I believe I fully understand why the study is being conducted and what the intended outcomes will be.
5. I understand that there will be no immediate benefit to me or my child, should I agree to participate, nor will I receive any payment; conversely, participation will not cost my child anything but their time.
6. I understand that, even if I initially consent for my child to take part in the study, I may subsequently withdraw my child's participation at any time and would not be required to give any reasons; if that happened, any data collected about my child for the purposes of the study would immediately be destroyed, unless I give consent for it to be retained.
7. I have been given a range of contact details, listed above. If I require further information or become concerned about any aspect of this study, I am free to speak to any of these contacts.
8. I understand that my child is at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should he/she so desire.

Name of parent

Signature of parent

Date

Name of witness

Signature of witness

Date

Appendix 4: Learner information and consent form



University of KwaZulu Natal
Edgewood campus
121 Marianhill Rd, Pinetown,
Durban, 3605

4 June 2024

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER TO LEARNERS

My name is Philani Lloyd Shezi, and I am a Master of Education student enrolled at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Edgewood Campus, South Africa. You are cordially invited to participate in my study titled **Disadvantaged black-African learners' experiences of social inclusion and exclusion in former model-c schools in Pretoria: A socio-economic perspective**. This study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences of inclusion and exclusion of impoverished learners enrolled at former model-c schools of Pretoria.

To obtain helpful information for my study, I am to work with learners during this study; hence, I selected you. To obtain data, I will first request your learner profile from the school to analyse your background and understand you better. In addition, I will use the following methods to collect information from you:

1. Focus group discussion
2. Photo-elicitation
3. Semi-structured interview

Furthermore:

1. Your identity will not be disclosed
2. The information will only be used for the purposes of this study only

Furthermore;

1. The study was explained to me, and I understand what will happen if I take part.
2. I was made aware that the interview/focus group discussion may be audio recorded, and the researcher may use direct quotations from my interview/focus group discussion in their research report.
3. I was given time to ask any questions I wanted to and was happy with the answers I was given.
4. I understand that I will not benefit from the study if I agree to participate. I also understand that I will not be paid to take part in the study; taking part will not cost me anything either.
5. I have been given a range of contact details should I require further information at a later stage, or have any cause for concern over anything which is done to me during the study
6. I understand that even if I agree to take part in the study, I can change my mind later and stop being a part of the study.
7. My parent(s) or guardian(s) know that I have been invited to take part in the study. They agree that I may do so, but the decision to take part is also mine.

Name of learner

Signature of learner

Date

Name of witness

Signature of witness

Date

Appendix 5: Ethical clearance approval letter



24 June 2024

Philani Lloyd Shezi (217018008)
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear PL Shezi,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00006822/2024

Project title: Disadvantaged black- African learners' experiences of social inclusion and exclusion in former model-c schools in Pretoria: A socio-economic perspective.

Degree: Masters

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 10 April 2024 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

Incidents of adverse events and serious adverse events (AEs and SAEs) should be reported in writing to HSSREC, the study sponsors, and any regulatory authority (where appropriate), within 7 working days of the occurrence for local sites and 14 days for all other South African sites.

This approval is valid until 24 June 2025.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Health Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dipane Hialele (Chair)
/dd

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

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INSPIRING GREATNESS

Appendix 6: Photo elicitation schedule (chart)

Geographical Location





Transportation





School Uniform





Language Use







Extra-mural




Performance




Appendix 7: Focus group discussion schedule

The following questions will be asked in relation to the chart that learners will engage in.

Icebreaker questions

1. What is your name?
2. Which grade are you in?
3. Which subjects are you doing?
4. What's your favorite subject? Why is it your favorite?
5. Give me one word that describes how you're feeling now?

I will put up all pictures on a chart and ask participants to have a look at the pictures and share their thoughts on what is portrayed in them. The open-ended questions below are meant to open up discussion about the images that will be shown to the participants. After the focus-group discuss, I will hold one on one interviews with learners. During the interviews further prompt questions will be used to facilitate further discussion and more in-depth responses, depending on the initial responses of the participants (e.g.: You said.... earlier. Can you tell me more about why you said that? Etc.).

The different socio-economic lifestyles and geographical locations

6. Pick any picture/s from the chart and tell us which lifestyle you think the picture represents?
Why do you think so?
7. Which geographical locations (areas) are learners from the school coming from?
8. What stories do hear about learners that come from these geographical locations?
9. Which different types of houses do you see in the chart?
10. What kind of people do you think stay in these houses?
11. What do you think learners from such location generally experience? Why do you think so?
12. How do other learners and teachers respond to such experiences?

Transportation to/from school

13. Which mode of transport are they using to get to school?
14. Why do think they chose to use that mode of transport?

15. What are some of the challenges associated with the different types of transportation shown in the chart?
16. How does the school assist learners who experience transportation challenges?

School uniform

17. Look at the pictures with learners wearing school uniforms. What is similar between the two pictures?
18. Do you think it's necessary that learners wear uniforms to school? Explain.
19. What differences can you pick up from each photograph?
20. Look at the second picture. Why are some of the learners not wearing the full school uniform? (some not wearing school shoes and school uniform)
21. How does the school respond to learners who are not wearing full uniform?
22. How are learners without the full school uniform treated by other learners?

Language use at school

23. What is the medium of instruction at this school?
24. Are all lessons and school activities conducted using this language?
25. What happens when learners engage in a different language during the lesson or any other school activity?
26. Which language do learners use amongst themselves outside the classroom?
27. Why do you think they use the same/different language outside the classroom?

School tuckshop/ cafeteria

28. Does the school have a tuck shop?
29. What is the price range of the food that is sold at the tuckshop?
30. Do learners complain about the prices at the tuckshop? Why/ why not?
31. What do learners buy mostly from the tuckshop?
32. Why do you think certain learners choose not to buy from the tuckshop?
33. What type of food do learners bring to school if they do not buy from the tuckshop?
34. What is the general reaction to this from teachers and learners?

Extra-Mural activities

35. Does the school offer sport or any other extra-curricular activities?
36. Which sport or activities are learners mostly engaged in?
37. Why do you think learners engage in these activities rather than other that are offered at the school?
38. Why do you think some learners don't actively engage in these sports/activities?
39. How does the school respond to that?

Performance

40. What is the general performance of the results in the school?
41. How are underperforming learners treated at school?
42. How does the school assist learners who are struggling?
43. What background do learners come from if they perform well/poorly at school?
44. How is the result performance judged by other learners and teachers?

Appendix 8: Individual semi-structured interview schedule

Introduction

- Thank you for participating in our focus group discussion. All the views shared will contribute hugely to the success of the research project.
- Personal introduction
- Remind the learner about the purpose of the research.
- Remind the learner about the highest level of confidentiality and anonymity that I will maintain to protect their identity or schools.
- Remind the learner that I will treat their views with respect and that they have a right not to answer any questions they are uncomfortable with.
-

Read out a summary of the focus group discussion.

The conversation revolved around various challenges faced by learners in a multilingual and diverse former model-c school, particularly disadvantaged learners. Our discussion touched on transportation issues, language barriers, and dissatisfaction with the school tuck shop. Learners (participants) shared their experiences and perspectives on the difficulties and strategies for language acquisition; they also debated the relevance of school uniforms, with some arguing they promote equality while others raised concerns about discrimination. They also discussed the challenges and support for the less privileged learners and the need for more accommodation and understanding from teachers and peers. Overall, the conversation highlighted learners' diverse experiences and perspectives in a multilingual school and the importance of addressing their challenges and needs. The speakers emphasized the inequalities and difficulties learners face in South African schools.

The following questions serve as a follow up to our focus group discussion

1. Please tell me more about yourself. (name, age, gender, and where you live)
2. During our focus group discussion, were there any thoughts/ideas you forgot to mention or withheld because of fear, or were you just uncomfortable with sharing?
3. For how many years have you been in the same school? And how has your experience been throughout the years?

4. What influenced your choice to register with this school? (personal, parents, department)
5. If you were to reconsider, would you still choose the same school? Why/ Why not?
6. Are your needs accommodated in the school? Explain.
7. Do you think your teachers/ school understands your life circumstances?
8. How easy/difficult can you open up about your life circumstances to your teachers/ school? Explain.
9. What structures are there in the school to assist less privileged learners?
10. According to the South African School Acts, all schools must have policies to protect all learners. Does the school have any policy to protect less privileged learners?
11. Are teachers able to better accommodate less privileged learners in their classrooms?
12. Have you experienced any victimization or bullying because of your socioeconomic status? If yes, how did you deal with that?
13. Are there any things or circumstances that you feel proud of on a personal level at school?
14. Are there any things or circumstances that you are embarrassed about and that you don't often talk about at school?

Appendix 9: Turnitin similarity report



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PHILANI SHEZI
Chapter One
Experiences of social inclusion and exclusion of disadvantaged black-African learners in former model-c schools: Introduction to the study

1.1. Introduction

"We don't have to engage in grand, heroic actions to participate in the process of change. Small acts, multiplied by millions of people, can transform the world!"
-Howard Zinn

Driven by the desire to explore the experiences (inclusive and exclusive) of black-African learners in ex-Model C schools, I begin this chapter with the above quote from the late Senegalese American historian and philosopher Howard Zinn. Poverty and inequality reports from the World Bank (2018) find South Africa as one of the most unequal countries in the world in relation to race and class. This is supported by a considerable amount of literature that has shown us that income inequality in South Africa is multidimensional. Black-African people are generally marginalized in all aspects of life, which has resulted in most black-Africans being stratified in the lower socio-economic class due to limited opportunities and participation afforded to them (Mkhazi, 2021). Both these marginalized social identities have a detrimental impact on the lives and schooling journey of black-African learners, especially those that are enrolled in resourceful and high fee-paying schools (well known as ex-Model C schools). These learners are considered "other" since they do not form part of the majority group (Cross-Burnet & McPherson, 2015). Recently, studies (Qwabe, 2020; Anzor & Mngeni, 2021; Coen, 2022; Cumbani & Chelule, 2020) have shown that due to their vulnerability, these learners are mostly likely to face exclusion, discrimination, bullying, or victimization which could result in drug use to cope with the trauma, poor performance, unruly behavior or even dating older males/females for economic benefits which may also result in sexual assault.

I begin this chapter by including the quote in connection to Adam and Bell (1997, pp3-4), who believe that "social justice education is both a process and a goal." I am approaching this study with the understanding that my research serves as a process and a goal of change. I am hoping that this "small act" (my study), offers the opportunity to re-ignite inclusion in education and possibly provide insights that will encourage thousands of other people within and outside the

First Shezi

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