

Playing the Field

The responses of elite, girls-only secondary schools to
the shifting landscape of an increasingly globalised,
post-apartheid South Africa

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Declaration

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Abstract

This study investigates the responses of elite, girls-only secondary schools in Cape Town to the shifting landscape of an increasingly globalised, post-apartheid South Africa, from the perspective of their principals. It sketches the shifts due to neoliberal globalisation and the socio-political changes of the post-apartheid dispensation, and argues that South African schools face the enormously complex task of navigating the impact of these forces from these two, often contradictory, fields on a daily basis.

The study draws extensively upon Pierre Bourdieu's notions of habitus, field and capital for the analysis of the qualitative research data gathered by means of semi-structured interviews. The dissertation firstly examines what the field looks and feels like for the six elite schools included in this study from the perspectives of their principals, with a specific focus on the impact of the dual forces identified above as experienced by these schools. Because of the particular position that these privileged, well-resourced schools occupy within the field, they are potentially well-placed to play the field in powerful ways, and thus possibly influence the field in their own right, as well as produce students with the appropriate symbolic and cultural capital to be effective future players in this increasingly globalised, post-apartheid world.

This concept of being effective players (for both schools and individuals) draws upon Bourdieu's analogy of the field as a game. If the field, as a structural social space, is compared to a game, those who embody the habitus of the field and possess the appropriate symbolic and cultural capital for that field are best placed to be effective players. They possess, as it were, a seemingly instinctive 'feel for the game' (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 62). This study examines the nature of the habitus of the schools in this study and the advantages that those who enter these schools already possessing this habitus have by being able to embody the regularities of the game.

From an analysis of the research data it is clear that the primary concern of all of the interviewees is their students. Collectively the principals viewed many aspects of the changes upon the field as presenting exciting opportunities for their students. These opportunities included the formation of new types of networks as a form of social capital, as well as the ability both to imagine and experience a world beyond South Africa's borders as a result of the ascendancy in technology and the emergence of the knowledge economy. However, there are clear pressures on both schools and students that need to be carefully managed and contained. The common themes that emerged were: market-related issues of financial sustainability; various challenges presented by the number and nature of the curricula implemented since 1994; heightened parental expectations; a general disintegration of the traditional, stabilising role played by families; and a significant rise in stress levels amongst teenagers, resulting in an increase in phenomena such as cyber-bullying and teenage depression.

This study found that the common strategies adopted by these schools to equip their students with the appropriate symbolic and cultural capital to maximise the opportunities and manage these and other pressures included: having high expectations of students; the instilling of a strong work ethic; the development of inter- and intra-personal social skills; an emphasis on the growth of leaders and leadership skills; a focus on traditional values in a changing world; and the encouragement of 'giving back' to society by means of involvement in community partnerships. There was also strong agreement that the girls-only feature of these schools could work to the benefit of their students in terms of instilling capital. These, then, are the ways in which these elite schools are 'playing the field'.

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Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

South Africa has undergone enormous changes over the course of the past 20 years – changes that have affected schools within the field of education in fundamental ways. School leaders have to manage these changes on a daily basis in order to ensure the success and sustainability of their schools and their students. The inception of democracy, with all of its subsequent opportunities and challenges, took place at the same time that neoliberal globalisation was, and still is, on the ascendance. Neoliberal globalisation has seen the rise of the knowledge economy and the emergence of the concept of the ‘global citizen’, along with the rise of marketisation, competition and choice with a particular focus on efficiency and profits, and the resultant preoccupation with the ‘I’ instead of the ‘we’. On the other hand, the shifting socio-political landscape of post-apartheid South Africa, with its move away from race-based divisions, is characterised by the Constitution and its creation of a rights-based society, with a strong emphasis on redressing the inequalities and social injustices of the past. The recognition of the need for technologically savvy, networked citizens equipped with the appropriate capital to participate successfully in the knowledge economy of the globalised world is both countered, and occasionally complimented, by the pressure to contribute towards a rights-based, more equal South African society, to varying degrees. This study takes as its focus a selection of elite, girls-only secondary schools in Cape Town, and looks at how these schools are responding to this constantly shifting landscape.

The works of the French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu, provide a useful theoretical framework to analyse these responses. This is because his notions of habitus, field and capital allow for an understanding of society and social institutions, and more specifically, the relationship between people’s practices and the contexts in which those practices occur. These contexts (the ‘discourses, institutions, values, rules and regulations’ of society) which produce and transform attitudes and behaviours are defined as ‘cultural fields’ by Bourdieu (Webb, Schirato, & Danaher, 2002, p. 21). In Bourdieu’s (1998) words:

A field is a structural social space, a field of forces, a force field. It contains people who dominate and people who are dominated. Constant, permanent relationships of inequality operate inside this space, which at the same time becomes a space in which the various actors struggle for the transformation or preservation of the field. All the individuals in this universe bring to the competition all the (relative) power at their disposal. It is that power that defines their position in the field and, as a result, their strategies (pp. 40-41).

The field is thus the social space within which relations, transactions and events occur at a specific time and location. These relations within the field are closely linked to Bourdieu’s (1990b) notion of habitus - a system of acquired dispositions that determines how an individual behaves, and what that person regards as normal or civilised human nature. The close link between field and habitus was explained by Bourdieu & Wacquant (1992) as follows:

Habitus realises itself, and becomes active, only in the relation to a field, and the same habitus can lead to very different practices and stances depending on the state of the field (p. 116).

As much as a field itself is a force field and has an impact upon habitus in relation to the field, it is by no means autonomous or uninfluenced by other fields. Fields are fluid and dynamic, and can be changed both by internal practices and politics, as well as by their convergence with other fields (Webb et al., 2002).

In order to explain these concepts Bourdieu (1990b) compares the field to a game, albeit cautiously as ...:

... although, unlike the latter [a game], a field is not the product of a deliberate act of creation, and it follows rules, or, better, regularities, that are not explicit or codified (p. 98).

Within this game, what determines the extent to which an agent is able to master the regularities (as opposed to the rules) of a particular field, is their habitus:

Habitus as the feel for the game is the social game embodied and turned into a second nature. Nothing is simultaneously freer and more constrained than the action of the good player (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 63).

A good player who has a feel for the game is the agent who possesses the cultural capital that is appropriate in order to dominate the field, as opposed to being dominated (the power struggle referred to earlier in Bourdieu's definition of the field). In Bourdieu and Wacquant's (1992) words:

The good player, who is so to speak, the game incarnate, does at every moment what the game requires. That presupposes a permanent capacity for invention, indispensable if one is to be able to adapt to indefinitely varied and never completely identical situations. This is not ensured by mechanical obedience to the explicit, codified rule (when it exists) (p. 63).

Thus, within the complex set of relations between field and habitus, fields have their own regularities, or ways of 'playing the game' (Lingard, Hayes, Mills, & Christie, 2003, p. 65). In each field different internal laws and logics apply, as determined by the distribution of power and capital within the field. Those who know and obey the certain regularities, and are thus able to play the game successfully, do so in a manner that seems to come as almost second nature to them:

Social reality exists, so to speak, twice, in things and in minds, in fields and in habitus, outside and inside of agents. And when habitus encounters a social world of which it is a product, it is like a 'fish in water': it does not feel the weight of the water, and it takes the world about itself for granted (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 127).

The field of education was of particular importance to Bourdieu, as it is this field that provides the 'mechanism through which the values and relations which make up the social space are passed on from one generation to the next' (Webb et al., 2002, p. 105). To continue the analogy of the game, education has the potential both to determine the nature of its regularities, as well as equip students with the appropriate knowledge and skills (capital) to be able to play the game successfully. An important part of determining and interpreting the regularities of the game is to understand the external forces that are impacting upon the field which have a large influence on the internal practices (such as the organisational cultures of schools within the field).

This study applies these notions and Bourdieu's analogy of the game to elite South African schools.¹ These schools, from their particular position within the field of education, are potentially well-placed to navigate the complex landscape of constant changes, and produce students with the appropriate capital to have a feel for the game and thus be able to play the game successfully. This is because these schools tend to have a concentration of the type of capital that is of high symbolic value, such as access to skilled academic staff, effective management structures, and excellent facilities and resources amongst other advantages. In many respects these schools are exposed in certain ways, as people look to them with heightened expectations - as well as with a mixture of envy and awe - to see what it is that they are doing. It could be argued that these schools have some kind of responsibility, in light of their privileged position in the South African field of education, to play an active role in 'leading the way' into the 21st Century. But what is it like for these schools to occupy this position within the field? How are these schools responding to the economic and socio-political forces of change upon the field in order to produce students with the appropriate capital to have a 'feel for the game'? And what form of capital do these schools view as being appropriate?

This study contributes some answers to these questions by focussing on six elite, girls-only secondary schools within the Cape Town area. For the purpose of this study, this focus will be further narrowed to the perspective of the principals of these schools. As such, the core research question of this study is as follows: from the perspective of the principals, what are the responses of elite, girls-only secondary schools in Cape Town to the shifting landscape of an increasingly globalised, post-apartheid South Africa?

The emergence of the study

After graduating from the University of Cape Town in 1995 I started teaching at an elite, independent girls-only secondary school in Cape Town, where I now serve as the Deputy Principal and a History Teacher. Over the past 18 years I have both witnessed and been party to many changes in the field of education as a result of significant national and global shifts that have taken place during this period of time. These external shifts have had a direct impact upon the organisational culture of schools (the internal practices), and the people in leadership and management positions within these schools have had to manage this impact. Specific examples of the shifts that I have personally observed include, amongst others: increased parental demands and expectations of schools and their offer; changes in leadership discourses from a welfarist approach to one that is more closely aligned to new managerialism; an increased emphasis placed on benchmarking and national matriculation results, and coupled with this a heightened awareness of the increasingly stiff competition for university entrance; and the need for the more traditional schools to balance their traditions with the need to be relevant and innovative in order for these schools to prepare their students for the 21st Century.

In 2011 I enrolled for my Masters in Education at the University of Cape Town, with the intention of furthering my knowledge and understanding of the impact of the shifting external context on the organisational culture of schools, with a particular focus on the leadership and management of schools. This Minor Dissertation has emerged from this interest.

¹ In this study the term 'elite' refers to a sociological, as opposed to an ideological, position. 'Elite' is thus not defined in the hierarchical sense of exclusivity and impenetrability, but rather as a term used to describe the top 3-5% performers, or potential social, political, economic or administrative influencers, in any given field. For the purposes of this study this refers to the high-functioning schools in the field of South African education. The students who attend these schools are undoubtedly privileged to have access to the standard of education offered to them in one of the most unequal countries in the world, and thus are the members of the elite in the field of South African education (Christie, 2008).

The research sub-questions

Why I specifically chose this set of elite, girls-only secondary schools in Cape Town for this study will be outlined in greater detail in Chapter 4. There are six such schools in Cape Town - three independent schools (two Anglican and one Catholic), and three state schools. I managed to secure interviews with all six of the principals. In the semi-structured interviews that were conducted the following sub-questions were used to provide a framework for the discussion:

Given that the field of South African education is influenced by the dual forces of neoliberal globalisation and a post-apartheid, rights-based society:

- 1. How do the principals see these dual contextual forces at play within their schools?*
- 2. In what ways are these principals responding to the challenges and opportunities presented by these forces?*
- 3. Is there any evidence of changes in the school's organisational culture as a result of, or in response to, the dual forces? (Can the principals identify any examples of shifts in the organisational culture of their respective schools?)*
- 4. How do these principals view the notion of 'responsibility'? Responsibility to whom, and for what?*
- 5. What values, knowledge and skills do they, as the principals of the schools, see as important for their students to have upon leaving school?*
- 6. What, if any, is the significance of girls-only secondary schools in this discussion?*

A Bourdieuan analysis of the responses provided a suitable theoretical framework for this investigation.

An outline of the chapters

This research study can be divided into two sections and a conclusion - the literature review and theoretical grounding of the research (Chapters 2 and 3) and the methodology and findings (Chapters 4 and 5). Chapter 2 outlines the works of Pierre Bourdieu with a focus on his notions of habitus, field and capital, while Chapter 3 explores the nature of the dominant dual forces impacting upon the South African schools within the field of education. The study's methodology is outlined in Chapter 4, with a description of the research design, process and analysis of the findings, and Chapter 5 provides the findings of the study by means of an analysis of the interview data. The first section of this chapter outlines what the changing field looks and feels like for the elite schools included in this study from the perspectives of their principals, whilst the second section explores logics of practice within these schools – what these schools' responses are to the changes in the field, with a specific focus on what capital the principals of these schools regard as being important in order to provide their students not only with a feel for the game, but the strategies required to play the game successfully. This Minor Dissertation concludes (Chapter 6) with a summary of the main findings of the study, as well as the implications for theory and practice.

Chapter 2: THE FIELD OF SCHOOLS: BOURDIEU'S NOTIONS OF HABITUS, FIELD AND CAPITAL

As stated in the Introduction, the works of Pierre Bourdieu provide a useful analytical framework for an investigation of the impact of the dual dominant economic and socio-political forces of neoliberal globalisation and post-apartheid South Africa upon the field of education in general, and the sub-field of Cape Town elite, girls-only schools in particular, and these schools' responses to this impact. It is thus the purpose of this chapter to provide a fuller account of Bourdieu's notions of habitus, field and capital that underpin this study.

The concept of habitus

Individuals tend to regard the choices that they make in life as 'common sense' or 'inevitable' routes to follow. However, as stated in Chapter 1, from a Bourdieuan perspective how an individual behaves, and what that person regards as 'normal' or 'civilised human nature', is determined by their habitus (Webb et al., 2002, p. 39). Habitus, in its simplest form, is 'history turned into nature' (Bourdieu, 1990b, p. 54). As Bourdieu & Wacquant (1992) explained:

It is because this world has produced me, because it has produced the categories of thought that I apply to it, that it appears to me as self-evident (pp. 127-8).

Although there are some adjustments made during a person's life, the primary conditioning from early childhood that determines the way a person walks, their facial expressions, and the manner in which they physically present themselves to the world (embodied in their posture and stance) remain largely dominant within them. Added to this physical conditioning are social perceptions passed on by families, along with belief systems, tastes and preferences, values and other forms of conditioned behaviour and attitudes. The sum total of all of these forms, and continues to form, a person's habitus (Reay, Crozier, & Clayton, 2009). Bourdieu & Wacquant (1992) explained this as follows:

The habitus, which is the generative principle of responses more or less well adapted to the demands of a certain field, is the product of an individual history, but also, through the formative experiences of earliest infancy, of the whole collective history of family and class ... (p. 91).

Thus habitus 'as a system of acquired dispositions' is at least partly unconscious because of the 'common sense, natural or inevitable' nature of the possibilities chosen by individuals to follow or to which they adhere (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 13).

Whilst habitus can be largely influenced by early childhood experiences, it is important to note that it is not fixed. Rather, it is '... a work in progress, formed and reformed over time, shaped by the impact of competing fields, just as much as it is by an individual's social and cultural capital' (Addison, 2007, p. 78). As such:

Habitus is not ... fate. ... It is an open system of dispositions that is constantly subjected to experiences, and therefore constantly affected by them in a way that either reinforces or modifies its structures. It is durable but not eternal! (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 133)

It is thus possible to shift, through some conscious or unconscious effort, the habitus of individuals. Returning to Bourdieu's analogy of the game, it is possible to learn its regularities and obtain the capital needed to play the game successfully.

Habitus and fields

As discussed in Chapter 1, in Bourdieuan terms 'society' and 'social institutions' are embodied by the notion of the field, and the field is very closely linked to habitus. As individuals move through and across different fields, 'they tend to incorporate into their habitus the values and imperatives of this field' (Webb et al., 2002, p. 37). This can be seen in what Bourdieu (1990b) refers to as the bodily hexis of the agent – their way of dressing, of presenting themselves, their body language and appearance, amongst other such things. This does not, however, dictate any sense of preordained behaviour. As Addison (2007) points out:

The strength of Bourdieu's work is the way in which it identifies a body of experiences (or habitus) unique to each individual that is open to infiltration and influence by a number of disparate forces (fields) of varying influence and power. How people react to these forces will be as individual as their own experiences but will also be shaped by these fields of forces (p. 81).

Addison continues by quoting Reay (2004) who asserts that, 'when habitus encounters a field with which it is not familiar, the resulting disjunctures can generate change and transformation' (p. 436). However, those who enter the field with the regularities of the game already a part of their habitus are clearly at an enormous advantage with regards to their position within the field and their knowledge of these regularities, an issue that will be explored in more detail later in this chapter in the discussion of logics of practice.

In addition, fields are by no means uninfluenced by other fields. They are constantly subject to forces of change, both from within as well as from forces exerted by other fields. Bourdieu identifies these shifting external and internal pressures as the transformation from an autonomous field into a heteronomous one. The autonomous pole is that which is isolated, or removed from society. For example, in the field of education the autonomous discourse includes attitudes such as 'learning for the sake of learning', and the belief that school is a space for nurturing the spiritual and intellectual growth of a child within a supportive environment. As will be evident in the analysis of the interview data of this research study, the articulation of autonomous (traditional, liberal) values are still seen as having an important place in education for the interviewees.

The heteronomous pole, on the other hand, is closely bound with the relations of the rest of society, and is increasingly shaping the nature of the field of education. As Webb et al. (2002) explain,

... the articulation of autonomous values still has a place in schooling, and that these values work to give schools a special and particular place and role within the social field. But while it is acceptable and indeed valuable to articulate a commitment to nurturing the child's whole growth as an individual, the 'real work' of schools largely takes place elsewhere, producing a 'student commodity' amenable to the interests of government, business and other heteronomous influences (pp. 108-9).

Issues around '...schools fees, the cost value of certain subjects, discipline, and the increasing marketisation of education (with its emphasis on business models, benchmarking, national tables, and children being viewed as commodities) ...' all fall within the heteronomous pole (Webb et al., 2002, pp. 107-8). This, coupled with the shifting South African context, creates a complex landscape that needs to be navigated by schools within the field.

Capital

Bourdieu's concept of capital takes many shapes and may be symbolic or material in form. Bourdieu focuses on three key forms of capital: economic, social and cultural. Economic capital refers to command over money and financial assets (for example, knowledge of how the stock market works, or access to funding for the start of a new business venture). Social capital is derived from social interactions, networks and relationships (such as alumni networks). And cultural capital exists in the embodied state (the 'long-lasting dispositions of the mind and the body' such as style and taste) and in the objectified state, referring to material possessions such as the choice of artworks to display on a wall (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 242). The third form of cultural capital is the institutionalised state, and refers to institutional recognition, such as academic qualifications or credentials, of the cultural capital held by an individual (Bourdieu, 1986). Bourdieu (1976) says that schools are based on the cultural and linguistic capital of the middle class, and that students without this capital may acquire a form of academic capital through schools which may partially compensate. This makes the field of education particularly important for the conference of cultural capital, to the extent that education can be referred to as a kind of academic market.

Common to all of the varieties of capital is the notion that each is representative of some kind of investment, and is capable of securing a return on that investment (Moore, 2004). Capital is thus a social resource which has value within a particular social space or field. Bourdieu (1986) uses the term 'symbolic capital' to refer to a particular capital that acquires additional power of importance because of its high worth in its social field. An individual's power within a field is determined firstly by the person's position within the field, and secondly by the amount of capital that he/she possesses - in other words, to 'feel like a fish in water' by embodying the regularities of the field (or game).² In addition, individuals within a field are constantly working to safeguard and/or maximise their positions and command of the capital valued by the field to increase their power within the field. Those with more power occupy dominant positions, and those with less power (or capital) occupy subordinate positions within that field (Reay et al., 2009).

Logics of practice

Bourdieu's concept of 'logics of practice' brings together the notions of habitus, field and capital into dynamic engagement. This relates specifically to the way in which individuals are able to interact in relation to fields, with greater or lesser skill. If, for example, an individual's cultural capital and habitus are well-matched to the field, they are at a distinct advantage as they will have a 'feel for the game' that will appear to be almost second nature to them (Lingard et al., 2003). These agents have the ability to act innovatively and spontaneously, as they are able to draw on their internal resources to navigate successfully their external circumstances (Addison, 2007). The same can be said for students leaving the school: if their habitus, incorporating cultural, social and economic capital, matches the habitus of the hegemony, they are ideally placed to 'have a feel for the game' with its 'certain regularities' that must be obeyed in order to be successful in the eyes of the hegemony (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 64).

² It should be noted that for Bourdieu, the dominant cultural capital is arbitrary, in that it is the cultural capital of the powerful classes or social groups. In other words, there is nothing inherent within a particular cultural capital that makes it intrinsically better or worse – it's a matter of who has the power to determine what is of value (see, for example, Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990.)

Explaining this, Bourdieu (1990a) stated:

Action guided by a 'feel for the game' has all the appearances of the rational action that an impartial observer, endowed with all the necessary information and capable of mastering it rationally, would deduce. And yet it is not based on reason. You need only to think of the impulsive decision made by the tennis player who runs up to the net, to understand that it has nothing in common with the learned construction that the coach, after analysis, draws up in order to explain it and deduce communicable lessons from it (p. 11).

These actions or practices, and the decisions that produce them, are at the same time both conscious and unconscious. This is because people think and act in strategic ways, and try to use the regularities of the game to their advantage (consciousness). However, they are also unconsciously influenced (driven) by their values and expectations. This fusion of conscious and unconscious is, essentially, habitus (see, for example, Bourdieu, 1990a). Relating this concept to this research study, girls may choose to adopt a strong work ethic as a conscious decision in order to gain entrance into the university of their choice; but the fact that university is seen as the path towards success and fulfilment is a part of their habitus.

Bourdieu (1976) argues that the field of education is dominated by middle class values, attitudes and dispositions. As such, the middle class student enters school armed with all sorts of cultural resources that gives them an advantage at school - a feel for the game (Reay, 2005). These resources include what he calls 'crude' privileges: 'having the right contacts, help with studies, extra teaching, information on the education system and job outlets' (Bourdieu, 1976, p. 110). In addition, they possess as part of their habitus a particular 'cultural capital' that Christie explains as, 'particular values, attitudes and tastes, an ethos of social mobility, and a range of cultural artefacts such as books, musical instruments and so on' (2008, p. 173). Webb et al. (2002) summarise these advantages outlined by Bourdieu in his chapter, 'The school as a conservative force: scholastic and cultural inequalities' (1976) as follows:

A child from a background similar to that of that of her teachers will not have to make a big adjustment to school; she will tend to find the attitudes of teachers (their emphasis on 'good' manners, their tendency to encourage quiet reading) almost exactly the same as her parents at home. So when a child feels at home at school, this is likely to be because the school bears sufficient resemblance to home to provide that sense of security (pp. 113-4).

The result of this continuity between home and school is that, 'these students are able to turn their social advantage into educational advantage, as their social heritage becomes scholastic achievement' (Christie, 2008, p. 173). Bourdieu (1976) describes this as the 'social gift' of cultural heritage appearing to be the 'natural gift' of ability or intelligence (p. 100). As a direct consequence, the more capital that an individual possesses, the more likely they are to have the confidence to put themselves out there, and succeed.³

³ Just as these external forces influence the field of education, in turn this field produces the adults who will impact upon the context of this, and other, fields in the future. Thus the students who are best placed to be effective players in this increasingly globalised, post-apartheid South African context will be those who emerge from the field of education possessing both the habitus and the capital to have an apparently instinctive 'feel for the game' - to feel, in Bourdieu's words, like 'fish in water'. And these adults, in turn, will determine the capital (albeit arbitrary) that will continue to have high value - creating, in Bourdieu's terms, the social reproduction of symbolic violence whereby agents accept situations, such as the reproduction of social hierarchies, as the natural order of things, or 'suitable, legitimate, approved' (Bourdieu, 1990a, pp. 84-5).

However, a student whose habitus does not match that of the school's values, attitudes and dispositions will more than likely find school to be 'a very alien and hostile environment' (Webb et al., 2002, p. 114). Their failure to achieve as a result of this 'mismatch' is often interpreted as a lack of ability – they do not possess an instinctive feel for the game, and are thus judged by the hegemony as being inferior.

Having said this, Bourdieu does argue that the field of education, and schools in particular, 'provide the possibility that these students may, with effort, acquire what others are given by their home backgrounds' (Christie, 2008, p. 173). This is partly because, as stated earlier in this chapter, once people enter a field their habitus begins to take on the norms and values of that field, and to generate dispositions to act and think in ways that are approved by that field. But the emphasis needs to be on the words, 'with effort'. As cited by Webb et al., (2002, p. 24), Bourdieu (2000) points out, the game is not a fair one:

Those who talk of equal opportunity forget that social games ... are not 'fair games'. Without being, strictly speaking, rigged, the competition resembles a handicap race that has lasted for generations (pp. 214-15).

Those who don't, or can't, learn to 'play the new game' run the risk of being increasingly marginalised and left behind (Webb et al., 2002).

A final point to note is that schools within the field can be both very similar and very different at the same time. As Lingard et al. (2003) point out:

Schools are at the same time both public places and places of unique individual experiences. They are public places in that they are created and known through common interest and intention, and have common symbols and meanings (see Relph 1976). All schools have the same overall task of teaching and learning; they tend to have a 'sameness' in terms of designated places of work and play, structured activities, and specific boundaries with the world outside. In Bourdieu's terms, these may be viewed as the 'invariant properties' of the field of schools. But alongside this sameness, schools are simultaneously highly particular, and they are places of powerful individual experiences. Each school has its own 'feel', its own particular ways of doing things, its own 'thisness' (pp. 8-9).

Most, if not all, schools in the field of education claim to have the common purpose of 'preparing their students for the future'. But how the principals of these schools envisage this future, and what capital they think will be useful for this future, may prove to differ considerably. As Lingard et al. (2003) explain, each school 'bears the traces of its particular history and its place, and the skill of leadership is to exercise influence through the many moves required by the field towards achieving the goals of the school' (p. 11). This demonstrates the 'thisness' and 'sameness' of schools.

Chapter 3: THE DUAL CONTEXTUAL FORCES IMPACTING UPON THE FIELD

As stated in the Introduction of this research study, there are two clear contextual forces that are currently being navigated by schools within the field of South African education: the neoliberal, globalised world, and the socio-political shifts of post-apartheid South Africa. These two, often contradictory, forces create an enormously complex and challenging environment of change that schools and their principals are facing, and have to respond to, on a daily basis. In this chapter the nature of these two forces that are of relevance to this study will be outlined in some detail.

The forces of neoliberal globalisation

At its most simplistic level, globalisation explains why the world is as it is today. The globe has shrunk, with events or decisions made on one side of the world having an instant impact on lives thousands of kilometres away. Drawing upon the writing of two key authors in the globalisation debate, Giddens and Harvey, Anthony McGrew (1992) states:

Globalisation refers to the multiplicity of linkages and interconnections that transcend the nation states (and by implication the societies) which make up the modern world system. It defines a process through which events, decisions, and activities in one part of the world can come to have significant consequences for individuals and communities in quite distant parts of the globe (pp. 65-66).

Giddens (1990) refers to this as, 'a stretching of social relations across national boundaries' (p. 14, cited in McGrew, 1992, p. 66), and Harvey (1989) uses the term 'time-space compression' to describe the instant and potentially all-encompassing nature of events anywhere in the world (p. 240, cited in McGrew, 1992, p. 67).

A significant feature of globalisation as currently experienced is its neoliberal capitalist form. As Castells (1998) points out, globalisation has resulted in a single world economy, and that economy is a capitalist one, enabled by informational technology. He defines the global economy as, 'an economy whose core activities work as a unit in real time on a planetary scale' (p. 4).

An important aspect of this fast-paced, instant and inter-connected global world is the emergence of neoliberalism.⁴ Gilbert (2013) defines neoliberalism as follows:

Put simply, neoliberalism, from the moment of its inception, advocates a programme of deliberate intervention by government in order to encourage particular types of entrepreneurial, competitive and commercial behaviour in its citizens, ultimately arguing for the management of populations with the aim of cultivating the type of individualistic, competitive, acquisitive and entrepreneurial behaviour which the liberal tradition has historically assumed to be the natural condition of civilised humanity, undistorted by government intervention (p. 9).

Neoliberal globalisation has thus seen the rise of marketisation, an emphasis on the importance of both the knowledge economy as well as of networks, and an increase in competition and choice, resulting in a preoccupation with the 'I' instead of the 'we' for the common good. As a result of the forces of neoliberalism, the 'market' is becoming all important, resulting in intense competition in

⁴ For an insightful overview of the debate and nature of neoliberalism see Jeremy Gilbert's (2013) article, "What Kind of Thing is 'Neoliberalism'?"

the quest for maximising profits and returns, as well as the elevated importance of technological and scientific knowledge above all other forms of knowledge in order to maximise the opportunities presented by the global market (Stromquist & Monkman, 2000). Moloji, Gravett & Petersen (2009) point to the emergence of the concept of 'world class', which has resulted in competition on a scale never before experienced: "Ascending to 'world-class' status implies evolving competitively with other business organizations in a global rather than just a national arena; and that, by implication, means benchmarking one's performance against theirs" (p. 281).

The shifts in the workplace as a result of this increasingly intense competition are presenting enormous social and economic challenges for workers. It is no longer so much about what job you have, but about what knowledge and/or skills you possess (Carnoy, 2001). As will be evident from the analysis of the interviews in Chapter 5 of this study, the principals are mindful of the need to uphold the schools' customs and instil traditional liberal values partly in order to provide a stable foundation for their students. But at the same time, the majority of the principals interviewed are acutely aware of the need to instil in their students the cultural capital of *flexibility* and *resilience* to be able to cope with the uncertain and competitive market place that they will be entering.

Two of the results of all of global interconnectedness are the emergence of the concept of the 'global citizen', and the notion of the 'knowledge economy'. A global citizen is someone who is networked (social capital), technologically savvy, is able to move easily from the local to the global and back again, and has an awareness of, and concern for, global issues. The knowledge economy is 'a global capitalist economy, linked by technologies, operating in a single time unit, and ... changing the nature of production and consumption' (Christie, 2008, p. 55). Within this neoliberal economy ideas and information are seen as having high value: 'A knowledge-based economy relies primarily on the use of ideas rather than physical abilities and on the application of technology rather than the transformation of raw materials or the exploitation of cheap labor' (World Bank, 2003, p. 1).

Directly linked to this neoliberal global economy is the increasing importance of networks, and the vast dilemmas presented by those left out of the loop. Networks are, essentially, interconnected organisational relationships. They do not have a centre, nor are they necessarily hierarchical in nature. Networks have always existed, but they have taken on a dominant role as a result of the all-important information and communication technology. Critically, Castells (1998) argues that networks are highly flexible, but people aren't. Those who cannot adapt fast enough to the rapidly changing world, (and thus remain within the network), or those who have no chance of joining the networks in the first place due to a lack of market-appropriate knowledge and skills, or access to technology, find themselves excluded from globalisation.

The impact that this has on the field of education is profound. Some of the more immediate effects have been a reduction in state spending on education, the favouring of the operation of markets in education (with the shift to private funding and fees, and an emphasis on individual choice), and adherence to market principles that are more concerned with efficiency than equity (Christie, 2008). In addition, traditional notions of education such as the teacher as the sole source of knowledge, are being challenged; life-long learning is being seen as 'the new model of education and training' within a framework that 'encompasses learning throughout the lifecycle, from early childhood to retirement' (World Bank, 2003, pp. 3-4). Schools, especially those that charge high fees, are under pressure to be seen to be both *relevant* and *innovative* in light of all of this – as this research shows. The notion of '21st Century Thinking Skills' is being implemented, thus impacting upon pedagogy, and actively marketed by schools.

Another area that shows the impact of neoliberal globalisation upon schools is a shift in leadership and management discourses. Many researchers have focused on the move from 'welfarism' to 'new

managerialism' that is evident in school leadership across the world, with school principals increasingly having to adopt the role of a CEO in order to ensure financial viability and other forms of sustainability of their schools (see, for example, Grace, 2000; Christie & Lingard, 2001; Bottery, 2006; Biesta, 2004; Blackmore, 2004; and Gerwitz & Ball, 2000).

The final area of significance to this study is the impact of the fast-paced, competitive and uncertain nature of the neoliberal, globalised world on the students in schools, and in particular on their psychological and emotional well-being, and how schools are having to cope with this impact. Alain Touraine (2000) argues that while schools are trying to adapt to the needs of the global economy, 'schoolchildren and students want to give meaning to their lives' in light of the uncertainties and conflicting demands of the globalised world (p. 151).

It is important to recognise that South Africa's liberation from apartheid took place in the context of neoliberal globalisation, and the influences of these global forces can be traced on the landscape of possibilities for the post-1994 government.

The shifting landscape of post-apartheid South Africa

The first democratically elected government of 1994 inherited a myriad of challenges as a result of decades of formal, state-sanctioned discrimination. Massive inequalities in the distribution of the country's wealth were compounded by vast social injustices and a legacy of human rights abuses. On every possible level this was a nation deeply divided.

Historically, the new ruling party was firmly committed to racial equality and economic redistribution, as expressly stated in the 1955 Freedom Charter. This commitment is enshrined in the Constitution adopted in 1996 that envisages a South Africa that is built upon 'democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights' (Statutes of the Republic of South Africa - Constitutional Law, 1996, p. 1243). Although these rights may appear to focus predominantly on the individual, a closer examination reveals a strong emphasis on the creation of a society that is based upon the notion of the 'common good'. But as any glance at the current South African context will reveal, the growth, reconstruction and development needed to create a more equitable society has largely been elusive. South Africa is still rated as one of the most unequal societies in the world, as measured by the Gini Index (The World Bank, 2013). The 'vision of equity' has largely been replaced by the 'reality of inequality', although the principles and ideals of the Constitution remain (Christie, 2008, p. 134). This is largely as a result of the timing of the transition to democracy. As Christie (2008) explains:

South Africa's political transition to democracy took place at a time when the world's economies were almost all capitalist, and neoliberal ideology was paramount. The global agenda was not sympathetic to an agenda of redistribution (p. 90).

In addition to the economic, neoliberal pressures exerted on the South African policy makers and implementers, the government had come to power on the back of a negotiated settlement, and thus had to include compromises in its actions with a view to reconciliation. Within two years of the first democratic elections the government's 'people-centred' Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) was replaced by the market-led Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy – a 'neoliberal macroeconomic programme of deregulation, privatisation and fiscal restraint' (Christie, 2008, p. 91).

The impact of this contradictory landscape on the South African field of education has been both profound and complex. On the one hand, the government views the field of education as having a

critical role to play in realising the principles and values outlined in the Constitution. This role is by: instilling and developing appropriate knowledge and skills to help redress the inequalities of the past and to ensure economic development; promoting nation-building by means of active participation in national and global affairs; and encouraging the development of the individual in a way that ensures that these individuals uphold the principles of the Constitution and act in an ethical manner within society (Christie, 2008).⁵

On the other hand, the field of education is no more immune to the inequalities that still exist in this country than any other sector. As early as 1998 then President Thabo Mbeki spoke of 'two nations' existing side-by-side in this country. Within these 'two nations' there exists two systems of education, with a gap between them that is being widened partly by the implementation of neoliberal policies. Before 1994 the wealthier state schools were predominantly (if not exclusively) white, with all of the benefits of apartheid that were afforded to them in terms of school buildings, infrastructure and access to a supportive, educated community. These advantages have ensured that most of these schools are continuing to enjoy a position of privilege in the new South Africa, and form a minority group of functioning schools in this country. One reason for this is because under the South African Schools Act passed in 1996, and in line with the decentralisation approach of neoliberalism and a move towards marketisation, the power was granted to School Governing Bodies to manage the state schools' finances, including determining the level of school fees. The schools based in the more affluent (i.e. former white) areas have largely been able to charge higher fees. The result is that these schools are able to supplement government funding and hire additional teachers in School Governing Body posts, thus allowing for a smaller teacher-to-student ratio, amongst other advantages. In Bourdieuan terms, the field of schools is structured around profound inequalities, with the unequal distribution of resources and cultural capital.

The elite schools in this study all fall firmly into the upper echelons of the smaller, well-resourced sector of the dual education systems that exists in this country. They have skilled academic staff, effective management structures, excellent facilities and resources, and high expectations of learner engagement and achievement amongst other things. The students who attend these schools are undoubtedly privileged to have access to the standard of education offered to them in one of the most unequal countries in the world, and thus form the elite within the field of South African education.

A second area in which the impact of the ideology of neoliberalism is evident in education is in the differing experiences of globalisation of individual schools and students. This differing experience is predominantly determined by their positioning in the market and their subsequent access to resource and networks (Christie, 2008, p. 49). At the heart of these differing experiences is technological infrastructure, and more specifically, access to information technologies. As discussed earlier in the chapter, computers and telecommunications have created a global community in which national boundaries are increasingly insignificant (Slabbert, 2003, p. 9). However, those who will be in a position to succeed in this world are those who are both connected and technologically savvy. As Moloi et al. (2009) point out:

Undoubtedly, globalization is changing the distribution of economic wealth and power and thus creating winners and losers. The winners will be those with the

⁵ This strong link between schooling and values is outlined in the 2001 'Report of the Working Group on Values in Education': *'In a democracy, public education is one of the major vehicles by which the values of a people are acquired by the children and young adults who make up our school's population. ... In this report, we make an argument for the promotion of the values of equity, tolerance, multilingualism, openness, accountability, and social honour at our schools. We believe that these values are important for the personal development of our school-going population'* (Quoted in Christie, 2008, p. 31).

skills and assets needed to participate in the new knowledge-based global economy
(p. 289).

In Bourdieuan terms, the 'winners' possess the cultural and symbolic capital to participate in the global economy as well as the post-apartheid local dispensations, (while the 'losers', by implication, do not). The manner in which the elite schools of this research study are either introducing or furthering this capital (depending on the individual's experience prior to entering one of the sample secondary schools), and will be highlighted in some detail in Chapter 5 in the analyses of the interviews.

A final, brief mention needs to be made of the extent to which race has been superseded by social class in the socio-political context of post-apartheid South Africa. Although it is still true that the majority of poor people in this country are black, the end of apartheid led to the breaking of the tight link between race and class, and the field of South African education today is racially mixed, albeit to varying degrees depending on location and the ability to afford school fees (Christie, 2008). The children of the emerging black middle class are now attending once-historically advantaged schools, such as the state schools in this study or the independent schools for those who can afford the unsubsidised fees. The result is that social class has replaced race as a determinant for accessing a high standard of education.

The schools in this study need to navigate the dual forces of change outlined in this chapter on a daily basis. The questions that this dual context raises are: in light of all of this, how are the elite schools in this study feeling the impact of these forces upon the field of education, and what is the response of these schools to this impact, from the perspective of the principals? In Bourdieuan terms, what symbolic and cultural capital is regarded as being important by these principals to instil in their students? But before turning to the analysis of the interviews it is necessary to outline the qualitative research design, process and analysis underpinning this study of the responses of elite girls-only, secondary schools in Cape Town to the shifting landscape of an increasingly globalised, post-apartheid South Africa.

Chapter 4: THE RESEARCH DESIGN, PROCESS AND ANALYSIS

This chapter outlines the qualitative research design, process and analysis underpinning this study of the roles and responsibilities of elite girls-only, secondary schools in Cape Town. The choice of qualitative research in the form of the semi-structured interview as the research instrument is explored in the discussion on the research design. Maxwell's (1992) outline of the issues surrounding the validity of data generated in qualitative research, with his identification of descriptive, interpretive and theoretical validity, will inform this discussion. The process of data collection undertaken is then described, followed by a discussion of the analysis process.

The principles of the research design

The study design and qualitative research

This study was designed to gain insight and understanding into the impact that the dual forces of neoliberal globalisation and post-apartheid South Africa are having on elite, girls-only Cape Town schools within the field of education, and how these schools are responding to these forces. The decision was made at the outset of this research design to adopt a qualitative approach as this type of research 'uses a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomena in context-specific settings' (Golafshani, 2003, p. 601). It is this context-specific nature of qualitative research that lends itself to the research question, allowing for a better understanding of the subject matter at hand (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).

For a qualitative approach there are many people's perspectives on the roles and responsibilities of these schools that are relevant to consider, including that of the teaching staff, the parent body, and/or the students themselves. A further decision was made to limit this study to the perspectives of the principals of these schools. The perspective of the principals is significant as previous studies have shown that principals have both a direct, and indirect, influence over the organisational cultures of their schools. Researchers have identified the principal's primary roles as being to shape the school's direction 'through vision, mission and goals' (Southworth, 2002, p. 78, with reference to Hallinger and Heck, 1997, p. 186); to create and manage an organisational culture and environment in which 'teachers can teach and learners can learn' (Taylor, Muller, & Vinjevold, 2003, p. 61); and to act as a 'mediating influence on teachers, curriculum, instruction, community, and school organization' (Levin, 2006, p. 40, with reference to Firestone and Riehl, 2005). In many respects principals are the 'filters' between the 'external environment' (such as government policy, the demands of the community and the expectations of parents), and the 'internal environment' (such as teachers who have the direct influence on student performance).

It should be noted, however, that studies based on *perspective* are, by their very nature, highly subjective, and thus all forms of generalisability should be approached with caution when considering issues pertaining to the validity of a study (Maxwell, 1992). It is right to be cautious, but in this instance it is because the principals are in a position of *influence*, as outlined above, that makes what they *perceive* to be the roles and responsibility of their school both relevant and

interesting as this will more than likely inform their *actions*.⁶ The decision was made to use a qualitative research methodology, with the semi-structured interview as the research tool.

The semi-structured interview as the qualitative research tool

The semi-structured interview is a useful qualitative research tool for two key reasons. The first is that the semi-structured interview allows for the interviewer to be in control of the process of obtaining information from the interviewee, but also to choose to explore in more depth new information if it arises during the course of the interview (Partington, 2001). Questions are designed as a guide to facilitate discussion. The second relates to the context of the interview. The series of carefully formulated open-ended questions, asked within the context of the particular settings of a time-constrained interview, allows for an opportunity to observe the interviewee in their particular setting. Thus what is gained is insight both into what the interviewees *say* and what they do not say (Black, 1994). This allows the researcher to contextualise the responses of the interviewees to the questions as well as their 'considered reflections' (Addison, 2007, p. 90). Both their words and this context were taken into account in the analysis of the data.

It is important that the same key questions provided the scaffolding for all of the interviews in order to ensure a consistent approach in the semi-structured interview.⁷ At the same time, however, the interviewer needs to have the skill and confidence, using a more conversational style, to explore the interviewees' responses in greater detail for deeper insight or clarity. In this way there is an increased chance that the perceptions, attitudes and values of the respondents that provide the context for meaningful data will emerge (Kvale, 1996).

Sampling considerations

The decision to focus on elite schools for this research study was based on two key reasons. The first is to gain some insight into how privilege operates within the field of education. The schools in this study are, by definition, the schools of a socially select group (the elite) that experience a particular set of social pressures as a result of both the expectations of their elite parents and other stakeholders, as well as their exposed position within the field. The point is not to compare these elite schools to other schools within the field, but rather to take a closer look at how these schools experience the field and the forces upon it, and what their responses are to the changes within the field. Returning to the terminology of Bourdieu, what are the regularities of the game from a position of privilege, and how is it being played by these elite schools?

The second reason is because the alumni of these schools are well-placed to play an influential social, political and economic role in society. Not only are they afforded a high standard of education that equips them with sound skills and knowledge (capital), thus giving them a significant advantage above their peers from schools that are less privileged socially and economically, but they also leave school with a strong and easily accessed network of peers and other alumni who are similarly privileged. Using Bourdieu's (1976) descriptors, they will enter the adult world with a 'feel for the game', well-equipped as they will be with the social capital (networks), cultural capital (the 'style, taste and wit'), and the economic capital needed for hegemonic success (p. 114).

⁶ It should be noted, however, that beliefs do not always translate into actions. It needs to be kept in mind when considering the validity of this study that what these principals *say* is happening in their schools, for instance, might not actually be what *is* happening.

⁷ See the Addendum for a copy of the full brief sent to the interviewees before their interview, and used as a basis of the questions during each interview.

The decision to narrow the research question to Cape Town-based, girls-only secondary schools was informed partly by convenience and partly by the fact that it was possible to include all of the schools that met the criteria outlined below, thus making this a complete set for the study.

A snapshot of these schools reveals a number of similarities amongst them. Within the Cape Town region they all enjoy a certain status as schools with a proud history and accompanying traditions. Many of their past and present students refer to where they attend, or attended, school as part of their personal identity. The 'youngest' school is over 50 years old, and the two 'oldest' were established in 1871. All but one of the schools are located on the same side of Table Mountain and within a 15km radius of one another, in areas known locally as 'the leafy suburbs'. The exception is the school located on the slopes of Table Mountain in an area above the central city of Cape Town. The size of the schools range from 340 girls to just over 800 – although the strong focus on pastoral care at all of these schools ensures that few of their students will feel 'lost' in the system. Five out of six of the schools have a primary feeder school into their Grade 8 year, and four out of six of the schools have boarding facilities (although the numbers of day girls outweigh the number of boarders in all of these schools).

The key difference in these schools is that three are state schools and three are independent. This ensures that the fees charged by these schools differ considerably, although the three state schools still charge higher-than-average school fees when compared to the national average. Of the independent schools, two are Anglican, and one is Catholic. All three of the state schools were 'whites-only' schools under the system of apartheid, although they are now racially mixed.

These schools are identified as elite, or high-functioning, by a set of criteria that includes: the high demand that exists to attend these schools; their consistent achievement of good matriculation results; and the overall reputation of these schools as places of educational excellence.

Random generic coding of the principals as well as their schools was chosen in order to ensure confidentiality as far as possible.⁸

Issues of validity

Research is generally considered to be trustworthy and credible if threats to validity are carefully and rigorously considered and as far as possible, avoided (Golafshani, 2003). Reference has already been made to the validity issues surrounding the use of perspective as the focus of the data collected. In addition to this, there are other considerations that need to be kept in mind when assessing the validity of this study. Of Maxwell's (1992) five broad categories of validity, three are of particular significance to a researcher assessing qualitative data: namely descriptive, theoretical and interpretive validity. These categories are accordingly addressed as they relate to this study.

a) Descriptive validity

Descriptive validity refers to the factual accuracy of the gathering of the research data (Maxwell, 1992). The primary descriptive validity pertains to what the researcher knows she saw or heard during an interview, and the secondary descriptive validity refers to what the researcher infers from the data or knowledge that occurs alongside the data (Addison, 2007). In order to address the potential threat of inaccuracy at either the information or the inference levels the interviews were

⁸ The caveat 'as far as possible' has been stated as anyone familiar with the girls-only Cape Town schools may be able to identify most, if not all, of the schools in this study. The only way to avoid this would be not to reference comments in the analysis of the research data to specific principals. However, this would remove the possibilities of analysing the 'thisness' and the 'sameness' of the schools.

digitally recorded and saved on an external hard drive. Transcripts underwent numerous cross-checks to ensure both the accurate recording of the words spoken, as well as the interpretation of the stress and pitch of the voices to infer meaning.

b) Interpretive validity

Interpretative validity is closely linked to secondary descriptive validity, and refers specifically to the interpretative analysis of the perspectives of the interviewees – including their attitudes, values and worldviews. As such, interpretive validity is unique to qualitative research, as qualitative research is a set of complex interpretive practices (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). In order to achieve interpretive validity a researcher must consciously, and successfully, suspend all of their own preconceived characteristics, perspectives and assumptions in order to allow the meanings and interpretations that the interviewees attach to events, behaviours and objects, as well as their beliefs and evaluations thereof, to shine through (Maxwell, 1992).

This ‘conscious suspension’ involves critical self-reflection of my position as the researcher. I am a Deputy Principal in one of the sample schools of this research study. As such I am inherently subjective as I engage directly with the issues raised by this research study on a daily basis. In every step of the data collection and analysis process I have been aware of this, and have actively tried to be reflexive in monitoring my own beliefs and positions and how these might influence my interpretations. In addition, I chose to approach this study from the perspective of an ‘insider’ (i.e. identifying with the position of the principals in the sense that ‘we are all experiencing similar challenges’), rather than trying to ignore this undeniable reality. One of the unintended outcomes of this approach was the risk that the principals said what they thought I wanted to hear in order to make the study more interesting in order to help me. Another risk might have been that they were more guarded in their responses as a result of the competition (albeit congenial) that exists amongst this small pool of schools. However, my experience ran contrary to these potential risks. By approaching the interviews as an insider with some common experiences, I was warmly welcomed by all of the participants and a rapport was seemingly quickly established. This rapport is a critical aspect of a semi-structured interview in order to elicit open and honest responses (Partington, 2001).⁹

Furthermore, the interviews were meticulously transcribed, and a great deal of care was taken when punctuation and explanatory words in brackets (to indicate gestures or mannerisms) were subsequently added. The speech was also ‘cleaned’ in order to remove confused phrases and linguistics, following Bourdieu’s (1998) suggestion to rid the transcription of such occurrences and increase readability.

All of these steps help to reduce the threats to interpretive validity of this research study.

c) Theoretical validity

Theoretical validity goes beyond mere description and interpretation; it explicitly addresses the importance of the theoretical understandings the researcher applies to a given set of interview data. As such, the interview data is ‘tested’ against the theoretical background of the literature reviews as it ‘refers to an account’s validity as a theory of some phenomenon’ (Maxwell, 1992, p. 291).

This study makes use of the Bourdieu’s concepts of field, habitus and capital, and the relationships between these as manifested in logics of practice. These tools were chosen as the interconnections

⁹ In each of the interviews reference was made, at least once, to the fact that I would ‘know exactly what they are talking about ...’, or words to that effect.

that exist between these concepts allow for a more relational perspective to emerge, resulting in a deeper analysis of the data and what these principals are experiencing and how they are responding to these experiences.

The qualitative research process

The research process took place over a period of four months from the initial contact made with the principals of the sample schools, to the final interview and transcription. In May 2013 I sent an email with an accompanying letter to all six of the principals, outlining my proposed study and asking if they would be prepared to be interviewed for my research project. An email was specifically chosen as the preferred method of initial contact as the subject line and the signature identified me as the Deputy Principal of one of the schools in the sample - a factor which may have contributed to the positive responses that I received to my request.

Prior to the interviews taking place ethical clearance was applied for and was granted by the Faculty of Education at the University of Cape Town. The major ethical considerations associated with this study related to the confidentiality of the material, the anonymity of the interviewees (as far as possible), and the potential conflict of interest that may have arisen given my employment and senior management position in one of the schools in the study.

Before the start of each of the interviews the respondents were informed that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any stage with no repercussions. They were also informed that the interviews would be recorded and transcribed, that the latest available computer software would protect the transcribed material and the CDs would be stored securely, and that as far as possible, their anonymity would be protected.

Five of the six interviews took place in June, and the final interview in August. The interviews ranged from 45 minutes to just over an hour, and all of them took place in the principals' offices (although in each instance in an area away from the desks, in a less formal space).

There were a number of factors that I kept uppermost in my mind during the course of each of the interviews. The first is my 'place' within the hierarchy (that of a Deputy Principal) when interviewing the principals – I am a part of the conversation as an insider, but not an equal as such, and thus I framed my approach and participation in the conversation accordingly. I was also very aware of the fact that these principals were generously giving of their valuable time to me. I did not feel rushed in any of the interviews, but I tried to keep the conversation moving in order not to prolong the interview unnecessarily, or have to cut the interview short before all of the questions had been covered as a result of time constraints.

The responses of the interviewees were, on the whole, remarkably candid. On a few occasions it was evident that an interviewee was aware of the presence of the audio data recorder, and that their comments were going to be analysed as part of a dissertation - thus resulting in some carefully phrased responses. But overall the responses came across as honest, frank and sincere, all of which I believe adds significant weight to the data analysis.

Due to time constraints the task of transcribing the sound recordings of the interviews was outsourced to a transcriber unrelated to this research study. She signed a confidentiality form and returned all of the CDs containing the interviews to me after the transcription processes were complete. All of the interviews were then listened to by the researcher with the transcription notes in hand in order to ensure that the transcription was accurate, as well as to 'clean up' the interviews, as referred to earlier in this chapter.

Analysis process of the research data

A period of a month passed after the final interview and transcription were completed before the data was organised and analysed. During this time I read more widely on Bourdieu and his theories. This proved to be a valuable 'gestation period' as while I was reading, I was starting to relate the interview data to the context of Bourdieuan theory. During this time I also looked at the magazines of the schools in some detail, as well as their websites.

For the analysis of the interview data the content analysis approach was used. This involves the systematic identification and organisation of themes across the interviews (Welman, Kruger, & Mitchell, 2005, pp. 211, 222-4) . This process of finding categories, or themes, across the interviews is essential in order to allow the similarities and differences in the interview material to emerge.

Throughout this process I was mindful of the issues of validity discussed earlier, with a particular consciousness of the need for interpretive validity. Uppermost was to heed the warning that, 'we cannot make the data say what is not there!' (Seale, 2004, pp. 377-378, quoted in Tarling, 2012, p. 42). This involved abandoning preconceptions and allowing the interview material to 'speak' for itself, as opposed to looking for what I thought, or hoped, the data would reveal.

This chapter has explored the research design process, accounting for the methodological choices made regarding the production, management and analysis of the interview data. The semi-structured interview is an important tool of qualitative research that has the potential to present the researcher with valuable insights for analysis. This proved to be the case in this study, and every effort was made to treat the data carefully, ethically and systematically in order to ensure its validity. The next chapter examines the themes that emerged from the research design process, and analyses them within the context of Bourdieu's notions of field, habitus and capital.

Chapter 5: PLAYING THE FIELD

As stated in earlier chapters in this study, the field of schools in South Africa is experiencing considerable change, mainly related to globalisation and post-apartheid shifts, and school leaders have to respond to these changes on a daily basis in order to ensure the school's success and sustainability, as well as to equip their students with the capital required to 'play the game' successfully. The first section of this chapter outlines what the changing field looks and feels like for the elite schools included in this study from the perspectives of their principals. Analysis of interviews with principals paints a complex picture of enormous changes being experienced by these schools – changes that are presenting both a range of exciting opportunities, as well as increased pressures that need to be managed effectively. The second section of this chapter explores logics of practice within these schools – what these schools' responses are to the changes in the field, with a specific focus on what capital the principals of these schools regard as being important in order to provide their students not only with a feel for the game (to continue with Bourdieu's analogy), but the strategies required to play the game successfully.

The changing field

A consistent theme that emerged in all of the interviews was that of change. The principals indicated that from their perspective, the forces of neoliberal globalisation are having a significant impact upon the field of schools, and that one of the key roles of education is to try to prepare their students for this instant, fast-paced, competitive global world. The result of the emergence of the knowledge society, with its accompanying ascendancy of technological and scientific knowledge and skills over other, more traditional, forms of knowledge and its acquisition, is the need to rethink the nature of education. As Principal C explained:

The global economy and the opening up of the global village ... [has resulted in] not only access to exposure of education across the world, but also an understanding that the world that we are preparing the kids for is no longer local. They have to be competitive in a global context, so the kind of parochialism around education has been blown completely apart because what is and was good enough for South Africa ... is not really good enough now ... [for] preparing the kids for the ... opportunities that have been the result of the globalisation.

Principal F made reference to this rethinking by highlighting the fact that the focus of education in the globalised world needs to be based more on thinking and processing skills today than on actual knowledge, as knowledge changes so rapidly in our globalised world: '*It's what you do with the knowledge that for me is a critical thing [Emphasis mine].*'

For School C, what this has translated into was a reconceptualisation of the educational vision of the school:

The concept which was thrown at me often when I first came [to this school six years ago] was that good teachers can teach under a tree. It's actually not real any longer... You can educate to a certain level under a tree with a good and passionate teacher. But the question is: is that sufficient for the world that our kids are going into? So it was about an understanding that if we were to change at the school, any changes that we needed to make needed to be radical and needed to fit into an educational vision, and an education vision needed to be one of the 21st Century to teach new learning. (Principal C)

The result was to examine the facilities and spaces within the school in order to allow technological access such as Wi-Fi throughout the school, as well as areas which facilitated the 21st Century thinking skills, such as collaborative learning, critical thinking, and creativity:

There are a number of social places, science facilities that are exciting and provide for formal learning and also informal experimentation; an art centre that really promotes creativity. [It is about] providing spaces to think and be and do ... [in addition to the] technological resources to bring the kind of You Tube clips and use of digital projectors into classrooms, interactive whiteboards that can engage children in a different kind of learning and a different kind of paradigm, and then just free spaces ... which lend [themselves to] group teaching or to group engagement in project work.

As is evident in the above statement, an integral part of the resulting shifts in pedagogy as well as the overall organisational cultures of these schools that are required to manage these changes is recognised by all of the principals as the need for their schools to embrace the technological revolution. It was clear in the interviews that they regarded a denial of this access to technology as not fulfilling their role as educators. As Principal A stated:

I saw it as a story like a ballpoint pen - when I was at school we had to use ink and then ballpoint pens came in and we were told not to use ballpoint pens. [This] was ridiculous. If there's technology around and people are using it, it makes no sense to me that it's not incorporated into what you're doing

But at the same time there is a strong awareness of the need for schools to teach their students to use technology wisely - part of what these schools see as building appropriate cultural capital to allow their students to operate in changing circumstances. In the words of Principal E, by means of illustration:

You allow technology, you do your best to make sure that the children are exposed and use it. But you need also to counteract it with information about the dangers. So always in life, in everything we do, it's a pro and con and tension between the two ... with technology comes responsibility, all the time.

Principal B concurred, indicating that there needs to be some kind of accountability to help students learn what responsible use means:

You either have to police it [the student's use of devices], which I think never works, or you have got to teach youngsters to make the right choices around those different things and when they don't, well then fine, you must have a procedure in place and you follow it.

Interestingly, one consequence of the technological revolution that emerged in the interviews is that the nature of the new forms of networks as social capital that are being formed through the use of technology are different to the traditional networks that have long been associated with elite schools. Although three of the principals referred directly to the advantages of being part of the alumni network for reasons of 'support and collegiality' (as described by Principal F), the types of networks that are regarded to be of value (as social capital) are being formed by the students themselves through their digital connections:

It's interesting - I almost think ten, fifteen years ago, that [the 'old girls' network] was more important. In essence ... it was who you knew, and how you got into new environments. I think the world's become too small too quickly ... at university people's networks expand so quickly now, and I don't know if it's as critical. I would say twenty, thirty years ago it was almost the key thing and you could probably get somewhere because you are a [School F] girl. I think it's less so now ... but it's a lovely greater family that is there, I think more as a support, and a kind of a friendship network rather than influencing you going forward. (Principal F)

Inasmuch as technology has the potential to divide society into those who are within the network and those who are marginalised (as discussed in Chapter 3), it also has a flattening effect in the sense that those who are connected are able to form networks of their own accord, thus relying less on the so-called 'old girl/boy network' traditionally provided by elite schools of years past.

A heightened awareness of global issues such as environmentalism and issues of social justice on the part of the respective student bodies was also evident in all of the interviews. However, the extent to which students engage with these issues is, as Principal B pointed out, still largely dependent on the interests of individual students. But there is no denying that these elite schools, with their access to technology and their ethos of student engagement in current affairs, are in a position to provide the cultural capital that strongly encourages these students to be aware of, and actively involved in, global affairs. In addition, a further consequence of students' access to the globalised world, as commented upon by three of the principals, is the ability of these students to imagine completing tertiary studies at institutions overseas.

The issues raised by the principals reflect some of the themes in the literature on globalisation and the shifting context of post-apartheid South Africa, as discussed in my literature review. The students attending the schools in this study are not bound, either in their imaginations or by their experiences, by South Africa's borders. The impact of the forces of globalisation upon the field, especially in terms of both the ease of access, as well as the intensity, of global networks by means of technological connections ensures that they are presented with a myriad of opportunities to participate in a '*global playing field*', to use Principal C's words.¹⁰ As is evident from the interviews, this is having a significant, positive impact upon the thinking around education, pedagogy, and the role of schools upon those schools that have the resources to engage their students at this level.

However, even for these schools, alongside these positive experiences and exciting opportunities presented is the strong theme that emerged in all of the interviews was the need to manage constant change and its accompanying pressures and related stresses. Pressures are being experienced by various stakeholders of these schools, including the leadership and management teams of schools, teachers, the parent bodies, and the students. The common agreement amongst the principals is that these pressures cannot simply be ignored – they need to be carefully managed for the sake of their students, their staff, and the sustainability of their schools. Some of these pressures are specific to the South African context, and more specifically to the elite South African schools within the field that are managing the dual trends of marketisation and post-apartheid desegregation and related issues, while others are being experienced by similar schools across the globe.

¹⁰ This is not to say that students who do not attend an elite school are not able to imagine or experience a world beyond South Africa's borders. In fact, far from it – the technological revolution has put the means to engage in global networks literally in the hands of even those with limited access to the appropriate capital to do so. However, undoubtedly what these elite schools do is to place their students at an enormous advantage by providing them with the ease of access to the 'right' networks, as well as the capital required, to play the game successfully.

During the course of the interviews it emerged that the first of these stakeholders, the leadership and management teams of these schools in this study, are increasing under pressure to manage budgets effectively and remain financially sound. For the independent schools in this study this has always been the case. But this need, or pressure, is being felt more acutely now more than ever, largely as a result of the current global financial crisis and the related scarcity of resources:

The school [has] had to become a business in order to survive because there is no subsidy, there is no money coming in from anywhere else. One has to have a business model that is viable in the first instance, and sustainable in the second. ... The first thing is the school has to survive before you can educate; you have to have money to attract teachers, and you have to have money to establish and keep buildings and things going. ... if you have a school falling apart, and you don't have the resources that talk to a serious academic institution, you are not going to attract the market to come into the school, which is required to then keep the academic paradigm going. (Principal C)

For the state schools in this study the picture is admittedly slightly different as they receive some funding from the government for salaries and the maintenance of facilities. But in order to maintain a level of excellence in both their teaching offerings as well as their facilities, these state schools charge higher-than-average fees, with the money used to supplement their staffing by means of Governing Body posts, and to maintain their fairly extensive grounds and facilities. Thus the pressures of marketisation are experienced by both the independent and state schools included in this study, albeit differently. The high fees charged by these schools provide an income that needs to be carefully and appropriately managed by the school leadership. The use of terms like '*business model*', '*sustainability*' and '*market*' that were used by two-thirds of the principals interviewed provide insight into the extent to which the job profile of the principal has expanded to be that of a CEO able to apply sound business principles, as referred to in Chapter 4.

Another pressure placed on the leadership and management teams of these schools, as well as their teachers, emerges from the implementation of various changes to the curriculum that have taken place since 1994 within the field of South African education – starting with the introduction of Outcomes Based Education, to the most recent adoption of the national Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS). The schools in this study are admittedly far better placed to cope with the implementation of OBE and subsequent changes to the curriculum than less privileged schools. This is as a result of their greater access to highly trained academic staff, as well as adequate resources. But there is an acute awareness of, and concern for, the challenges that the changes have raised for South Africa education amongst the principals interviewed, as well as a degree of frustration expressed over the negative impact of these changes on the students as a result of this '*South African experiment*', to use the words of Principal F.

Principal C summarised her views on the introduction of OBE specifically, and its impact on South African education, as follows:

I despair for South Africa because I think where we [are] going: the start with the OBE conversation in the late 1990s, where the whole Rolls Royce kind of theoretical approach to education went exceptionally well for the privileged schools and the educated teachers and had huge impact on the [privileged] students of that era, but all it managed to do was widen the divide between the 'normal' schools and those who were privileged enough to have the academic capital [to implement OBE successfully].

This clear identification of the divide that exists within the post-apartheid field of education confirms the existence of the two systems of education within this country, as discussed in the literature review.

For Principal D, the frustrations around the curriculum being experienced are as a result of two, related, factors: the number of times the curriculum has changed, and the fact that in her opinion, the students coming up from the primary schools are increasingly less well-prepared academically for High School as a direct result of these changes:

Every time you're changing the goal posts, and that's impacting on the children We're finding that your ... numeracy and literacy levels are not as good as they use to be and it comes up from the primary school. It's because they've been handling all the changes and what's been expected of them, and so the thought that rote teaching is not good, I think was one of the biggest mistakes, because you need to do that with reading, the basics. And so I think that is what we're picking up. Certainly on the Grades 8 and 9 levels we're having to work tremendously hard to get numeracy and literacy to an equal level, because we're seeing such vast differences in children who come from different primary schools. Big differences.

This promotion of a more traditional style of pedagogy provides an interesting contrast to the notion of 21st Century thinking skills discussed earlier in this chapter. These schools have to navigate the complexities presented by the changing field, and skilfully balance the best of the 'old' with innovative ideas and approaches in order to best equip their students with the capital required for the world that they will face.

It is not only the leadership and management teams of the schools that are under duress as a result of curriculum-related challenges. What emerged through the interviews was that teachers are under enormous pressure within these schools to manage these curriculum-related challenges well in order to ensure that their students maintain a high level of academic achievement. By way of example, for Principal A a manifestation of this pressure felt by the teachers is the wish to cut so-called 'extras' out of the timetable that 'interfere' with academic face-time. As Principal A explained:

[Teachers] counteract any action that one is doing: 'Why should we go to Holy Mass once a term when we could have extra maths?'

Pressure of this nature is linked to the broader competitive context of marketisation, whereby increasing emphasis is being placed by the media and various other stakeholders from both within and beyond the field of schools on the placement of individual schools on provincial rankings, and the perception that teachers are measured by the number of A-distinctions their students achieve in the National Senior Certificate examinations.

This brings the discussion to the third group of stakeholders – the parents. A common theme that emerged in the interviews was heightened parental expectations of the schools included in this study; expectations that largely, it emerged, were as a result of the forces of change within the field.

Heightened parental expectations of schools are by no means unique to elite schools. However, what emerged through the interviews is that these elite schools are subjected to the perception that because parents are paying more for education than ever before for both independent as well as

state education, these parents have the right to place high demands on these schools as they are looking for value for their money:

Parents in South Africa feel that [because] they're now paying more for education, they feel that they can make more demands. So they very often are saying, 'but we're paying and so therefore we must get it.' (Principal D)

Principal C concurs, and expands upon the nature of this expectation and the impact that this has on the field of schools as follows:

[The expectation of parents is that] if you pay a premium, you are buying an education for your child that is going to result in producing a string of A's at the end of their Matric because you're paying a lot of money for this. And so, if a child is struggling then it's the school's problem to take that child on a one-to-one basis and sort out the struggling and not really bother the parents too much with it because they are paying for this service.... They don't understand that ... you're still here one of twenty five, you are paying for the school experience. You are not paying for one-to-one tuition. If that's what you want, you need to home school; you need to pay a tutor to get that.

Principal E partly explains this phenomenon of higher parental expectations by referring to the financial and work pressures that have emerged as a result of the forces of neoliberal globalisation and the current global economic crisis:

I think they've got very busy. I think jobs that used to be from nine till five are now nine till six, or eight till six. And also, I mean anybody you talk to you, finds that jobs have been down-scaled and so the same jobs are being done by fewer people which means that your job got bigger and bigger I think parents have become very busy; long hours.

Coupled with this expectation of value for money and schools being held accountable for the achievements of their students is the tendency of parents to focus predominantly on their own child's achievements rather than 'the good of the whole'. Principal A pointed out that in her experience, of significance to parents is the progress of their own daughter:

The parents aren't that concerned because the parents look at their own little daughters: all right, so little [Sinalo] is an A student and she will get her A's, because that's what [School A] will do. But they're not really interested in little [Robyn], who's going to struggle to actually even survive in this world.

Principal A extended this argument to include the importance, or rather lack thereof, of symbolic capital such as traditional liberal values to the parents:

... for them they are paying; they are fee-paying parents and they want the best education and when it comes to the bottom line, it is academic results, sporting achievements, cultural achievements. Whether their children have any values or not - it might come out now and again if their child is in a disciplinary hearing and so on – [but] I would say generally the modern parent, particularly now in the Junior School, are about gain - what's in it for them.

This attitude is evident in the nature of the parental involvement in these elite schools. The pattern that became apparent is that most parents involve themselves in these schools when something concerning their own daughters is at stake. Principal E commented that one of the ways to ensure that parents attend meetings is to make them compulsory for their daughters. Principal F appears to counter this by referring to the fact that parents are more invested in their children's futures (and by implication, their school) than ever before. However, upon closer examination it is on the grounds of what is best for *their* child rather than a desire to be involved in education:

They're much clearer about what they want out of a schooling environment. They're not so much prepared to leave it to the professionals and in essence they listen more carefully to what their children are saying, and how they are interpreting the school environment and looking quickly to manage that in some ways. I think much of that is healthy because, I think the old days of dumping your kid at the doorstep and picking them up at the end of the term [are over]. I think the parental/ teacher partnership is absolutely vital, and I think it leads to a rounder education experience.

This complex picture links back to the emergence of the knowledge society in many respects. Increasingly parents regard themselves as 'educational experts' because of the myriad of child-raising and educational articles that are available online and via social media, and they may thus be quicker to 'judge' the decisions and actions of their child's school. This is not, as Principal F pointed out, necessarily a negative thing; however, the fact that this places increasing pressure on schools to perform, as well as justify their actions to the parent body, cannot be denied.

A further pressure linked to parents identified by all of the principals is the need for their schools to provide a stable and nurturing environment in light of a general disintegration of the traditional roles played by families. Principal C equates this disintegration of traditional family life with the increased pace of life brought on by the digital age, with reference also to the heightened parental expectations and financial pressures discussed earlier:

There is no separation anymore between work and home, between work and play, between social and professional. You're there all the time. And I think that that, in itself, is causing ... a lot of pressure on people. So families are also disintegrated and living in opposite ends of the world to a large degree, so we've lost that sense of family and containment. You're on your own. There's constant pressure on everybody and the children, and I think that kind of disintegration from a sense of community is an opportunity for schools to create community.

Principal A also referred to the demise of the nuclear family and its negative impact upon the children that she has witnessed:

I think that the generation that are having the children of today are ... unable to sustain relationships and the divorce and the monetary issues are tearing the families apart. And once that starts and creeps into the lives of children, then they are torn apart by their mother's own reaction to dad leaving, dad having an affair, or vice versa. It causes such tremendous conflict in their minds and in their life that they actually just can't cope with basic living and day-to-day problems.

The impact of these societal shifts, and the resultant increased pressure being placed on the schools within the field, is by no means limited to the independent schools in this study. The principals of Schools D and E, in particular, have experienced major changes in the nature of the families at their

schools since 1994, and these changes are challenging the traditional role of a school as a provider of education alone, blurring the lines between home and school in terms of responsibilities and actions. As Principal D explained:

I think the parents' situation has massively changed the role of the school, because we are now having to be a parent figure, role model, more than ever before. We're having to teach them values and ethics; we're having to teach them good manners and courtesy and consideration, respect. So all those things form a big part of the day and everything that we do.

As a school with boarding facilities, School E finds itself in the situation where, on occasion, the primary responsibility for raising the child falls on the school. When describing the situation of one of her sponsored students, Principal E commented:

That particular child lost her only parent, who was a grandparent (she hasn't got parents) three weeks later [after her corporate sponsors threatened to withdraw their funding due to below par results]. So we actually bring her up. We bring up children; we've [currently] got three orphans in the hostel.

All of these experiences are by no means unique to elite schools within the field. However, their particular position in the field affords them the resources and networks to address some of these issues in a different way to the options open to less privileged schools within the field. That said, such gestures of social responsibility may at times be in tension with high parental expectations and pressure for the schools to provide 'the best' for their individual children.

The fourth and final group of stakeholders identified by the principals to experience pressure as a result of the forces upon the field are the students themselves. This pressure is manifested in a variety of ways, all of which impact upon the schools in some form or another. The most apparent manifestation of this is in the increasingly high levels of stress and anxiety that the majority of the principals reported seeing in their students. For Principal F, the source lies partly with parents and their high expectations not only of the school but also of their daughters, and partly with the realities of living in a country in which it is becoming increasingly difficult to gain access to the tertiary institution of your choice. Although pressure is not always a bad thing, the danger lies ...:

... where pressure hits a tipping point and becomes stressful pressure. You suddenly find the underbelly ... that is hyper-competition: meanness amongst girls and you have an environment that can be very critical, judgemental I think you [are] no longer always seeing a peer as a colleague; you're seeing them as, 'this could be the person who takes my medical place away', and certainly I've been surprised how aggressive it is When I speak to a number of the girls, one of their interesting comments is that they feel like they are being judged all the time, and it's just a subtlety and it can be for insignificant things like what cell phone you use or what car your parents drive, but it's increasingly coming into how you're performing, how you handle situations. So it's no good not coping anymore. To be not coping is a sign of weakness. So even if you're not coping, you can't show it. And so there's not only the stress of not coping, there's the stress of not showing that you are not coping. I think, obviously, it portrays itself in all kinds of disorders and dysfunctional things. That's the underbelly of pressure that worries me.

This feeling of being judged because of what you own, or how you are able to behave or perform in certain situations, was also alluded to by Principal B in the explanation given of the increasing

importance of class over race that she has witnessed in the school. Interestingly, despite race being a key indicator for access to state education historically in this country for so many years, it was dismissed by all of the principals as a factor of any significance in their elite schools. However, what was identified as being significant in determining the extent to which a student would feel at ease within these elite schools (to 'feel like a fish in water', in Bourdieuan terms) in this study was socio-economic class. Principal B explained the meaning of class in this context as follows:

Class isn't class the way we would traditionally think of the word. It's more, 'What do I have? How am I economically stable or affluent?', and that seems to establish your class.

For those who come from a middle class socio-economic background, the transition to one of these elite high schools is a relatively easy one. However, those whose habitus with its related capital does not match that of these schools, face a much more difficult adjustment. Five out of six of the principals interviewed made specific reference to the challenges faced by the sponsored and bursary students that come to their schools who are from a very different socio-economic area to their majority of students. As Principal F stated, *'I think economic class is more difficult to cross [than race], no matter who you are.'*

This combined focus on material possessions, as well as the pressure to perform as a high level in order to be competitive in a globalised world, has resulted in a marked increase in the incidences of teenage depression and/or excessively high anxiety levels that these principals have witnessed, with three making specific reference to their fear that they have of one of their students committing suicide. Not surprisingly, all of the principals see the role of the school counsellor as a critical one, commenting on how busy they are kept providing emotional and psychological support for the girls under their care.

Exacerbating this high-stress lifestyle are the challenges presented by the digital revolution, with a particular focus on the phenomenon of social media. Once again, all six of the principals interviewed expressed their concerns about the potentially negative aspects of social media on the psychological and emotional well-being of their students. In the words of Principal F:

Unfortunately it [technological access] comes with a dark side: it comes with that deep, deep dark side where we can't keep up with the digital world out there and we don't even know what a 13/14 year old girl has to navigate in terms of social media. To me, unfortunately the maturity - no thirteen or fourteen year old boy or girl understands that world yet - and they just don't know the implications of what is out there. ... Schools are dealing more and more with this - having to live twenty-four/seven with others' opinions of them, being paraded not only verbally to them but being paraded around in a whole form or other forms ... in the digital world, and it's a footprint that you can't erase.

Principal D saw the rise in cyber-bullying through social media as part of a global phenomenon of a rise in bullying in general:

I think it's that 'I, me, my' mentality ... so what's important to me in my world? And so I will do whatever I need to do to make myself feel better about me, [and so] I will bully others. So I think bullying is a factor that's being seen more and more.

The above two statements, along with similar comments made by all of the principals, raise a number of issues pertinent to the realities of living in a globalised society, with competition, a lack of

social boundaries, compounded with constant technological access, intensifying and magnifying the pressures that have always existed, but that are now taken to new heights for these students to manage.

Up to this point the discussion has focused predominantly, although not exclusively, on what the field looks and feels like for the elite schools in this study, from the perspective of their principals. A clear correlation between the views expressed by the principals and Bourdieu's notion of the field, as outlined in Chapter 2, is evident: that fields are not autonomous or uninfluenced by other fields. The interviews paint a fascinatingly complex picture of the schools within the field constantly having to manage change as a direct result of the forces relating to globalisation and post-apartheid shifts.

Fielding change

The impact of the nature of the field and the forces upon it described up to this point in the discussion are not necessarily exclusive to the elite schools in this study. However, the resources (both human and physical) that are available at the schools perhaps allows for a greater degree of choice in how to respond to the realities of the pressures that accompany living in an increasingly globalised, post-apartheid South Africa. As the interviews confirmed, the expectation of these schools from various quarters is not that they simply equip their students with the means to exist in the world – these schools are expected to provide their students with the appropriate symbolic and cultural capital not merely to be able to turn up for the game (to continue with Bourdieu's analogy), but to play the game successfully.

When examining how the schools included in this study are responding to the changes in the field through the interviews, some common themes emerge (the 'sameness' of schools) as well as some different approaches (the 'thisness' of schools). For example, all of the principals mentioned the importance of 'promoting a healthy lifestyle' amongst their students as a means to counter the stresses and pressures of their lives, but the emphasis placed on how to achieve healthy lifestyle this differed. The promotion of competitive team sports, a traditional form of cultural capital, was one approach that was evident. Embodied in this are the notions of competitiveness, learning to win and lose, and team spirit, amongst other healthy mind/healthy body ideals - all significant to the traditional forms of cultural capital and habitus formation. Whilst for Principal A, a very different focus was important. Principal A's approach to helping her students and staff adopt a healthy lifestyle to help counter the pressures of the modern world, was to introduce a Wellness Hour (that includes Pilates, yoga, and zumba dancing amongst other things) that is compulsory for all students and staff:

The whole point, the philosophy [of this Wellness Hour] is that there's no competition. You're all equal. Age groups respond to each other, you have fun together. Because one of my biggest issues amongst young people today, particularly from privileged homes, is stress and the need to get into university and to get the points system, and [so they have] nervous breakdowns before they're twenty. So that is a crisis. That is probably part of this neoliberalism idea of having to be the best in the world and having to achieve and get jobs in the competitive market that we live in.

Interestingly, this non-competitive, non-team contrast to traditional sport is still very compatible with the concept of the globalised individual who would be able to participate in these types of activities anywhere in the world.

Whilst examples of the 'thisness' of the schools in this study are interesting to note, of perhaps greater significance (in the interests of validity and generalisability) are the common themes that emerged in the interviews that reveal the 'sameness' of these schools. In the interviews six clear, often inter-related themes emerged on how these schools are equipping their students with the appropriate strategies to play the game successfully, and form the basis of the following discussion. These themes are: high expectations of the students by the school and its teachers; the instilling of a strong work ethic; the development of social skills; an emphasis on the growth of leaders and leadership skills; a focus on traditional values in a changing world; and the encouragement of 'giving back' to society by means of involvement in community partnerships. A further consideration - that of the advantage of being girls-only schools - will also be outlined in the following discussion.

The team talk

First and foremost it was evident, in all of the interviews, that there are high expectations from the principals and the broader school community (including the senior girls within the school and alumni) of these students at these schools, creating a sense of 'this is simply how things are done'. As Principal E explained, *'I think you've always got to expect the best from people, nothing less than their very best.'* In Bourdieuan terms this may be related to habitus-formation – the internalisation of the social world. The nature of these expectations may vary slightly from school to school, but overall the demand on the students is to make the most of each and every opportunity that being at a school of this nature presents to them. Principal D elaborated:

We make the effort to get these children, irrespective of economic background or education background, to aspire. And if they're not aspiring, to give them the push to make them aspire. But you've got to sometimes wake them up. And you're not going to win every single child. But if you can win the majority over to this different way of thinking I think it's important.

Principal B reinforced this message by adding:

I get cross with the kid who arrives at eight o'clock and leaves at three o'clock and does nothing else and doesn't even try to get involved, because that one is just cutting off her feet!

As these two quotes indicate, not all students fulfil the high expectations of these schools. But the fact that the bar is set at this level, and that the message is consistently one of 'make the most of all opportunities available' and 'strive to achieve', seems to bring results in terms of student engagement, with all of the principals lauding their many students who are actively and voluntarily involved in various aspects of the school and the broader community. Part of this lauding involves affirmation for a range of achievements, as well as the promotion of values such as self-discipline as part forming the habitus to suit the field.

An extension of these expectations is that all of the principals interviewed indicated that it could be assumed that the majority of their students would progress to some form of tertiary study, (notwithstanding the increasing competition to gain access to these institutions.) For some it might take them a few years to do so as a result of financial restrictions, but certainly the expectation is there. As Principal E explained: *'It's assumed that you would go; the expectation is that matric is merely a base point on which to build'*

Practise, practise, practise

Closely aligned to the high expectations placed on the students were numerous references made to the second identifiable example of cultural and symbolic capital – the importance of instilling of a strong work ethic coupled with the will to strive to achieve within their students. This was a feature of all of the interviews in the study, but was referred to most often by Principal F:

I certainly think academically they [School F's students] are very well prepared here to go wherever, and I think there's a lovely blend here between a very, very hard work ethic, just knowing that the results come through blood, sweat and tears, and that definitely is present here. The girls have it in their DNA. It's something that I've never seen: the teachers certainly have it, and the teachers impress upon it, but there is something in the girls themselves that they hand over. There's this high productiveness, productivity that is just driven. They drive themselves ... sometimes almost unhealthily in many ways, but it's certainly there, present, which I think in many ways is the greatest skill we give them. So when they hit a UCT or they hit somewhere else, they know what hard work means and they don't shy away from it and they kind of get things done - they do things straight away, they don't let things hang. ... I think academically these girls could probably slip into anywhere in the world and be comfortable from the academic side.

What is interesting is that initially Principal F equates this exceptionally strong work ethic to the students' DNA, as if it is an inherited gift that the girls' possess – a point Bourdieu mentions as a clear example of the naturalness of cultural capital where habitus fits field. In Bourdieu's terms, Principal F is referring to the dynamic interaction between habitus (students' DNA) and capital (the work ethic) within the sub-field of his school, by which a social gift is so ingrained into the ethos of the school that it appears, at first glance, to be a natural gift. But the words that followed in the interview acknowledge that the school plays a significant role, with the principal referring to the teachers, as well as to the fact that this is 'in many ways the greatest skill we give them'. This suggests that the match between what the students bring to the school, and what the school expects of them in terms of cultural capital, ensures an ease of comfort with playing the academic game.

Another point relating specifically to academic capital was raised by Principal E, who stressed the importance of insisting on students making the correct grammatical use of the English language when they speak or write. From the perspective of this principal, it is necessary for this to be a priority of the school because these students are growing up in a world of texting and tweeting which uses abbreviated language, as well as the existence of poor role models through media such as television and pop music. She explains why it is so important that they know how to speak and write correctly as follows:

Because I think they're going into a business world where that still is recognised if they want to go places and so for me part of educating them must be to take your place in the world outside, in the twenty first century and to be able to make your mark there. Unless you can converse on a level that is acceptable by the other party then we have failed you.

There are a number of underlying assumptions in this statement (such as the business world still values the use of 'proper' English, and the 'business world' is a homogenous force). However, merely because these are assumptions does not make them necessarily inaccurate. In fact, Bourdieu would probably argue that for as long elite schools such as the ones in this study see the use of proper English as being important, so will the social world that is at a similar level of power beyond the schools' borders (the 'places' to which this principal refers). The school is specifically building a

form of cultural capital into symbolic capital – that is, capital which has high symbolic value in the social world in which these girls are expected to move with ease.

Developing all-rounders

The third common factor is the symbolic and cultural capital of a variety of social skills, as a consequence of the holistic approach to education adopted by all of the schools in this study. These are developed through engagement in a wide range of activities that include sport, clubs and societies, cultural opportunities and the respective leadership programmes within the schools, and it is striking that all of the principals referred to the importance of these activities in the interviews.

By way of example, one of School B's alumni has recently been accepted to study at Harvard University. Principal B related what this former student ascribed to her success when she visited her old school:

She was saying, she came to [School B] and she got herself involved. She got involved in various things that she may not have got involved in elsewhere. And she said it is that involvement, not just what she's done in the classroom, it is that involvement at a school level that has allowed her acceptance at Harvard.

One of the ways that School D actively strives to encourage this involvement is by making the learning of a musical instrument, one-on-one with a music teacher, compulsory for incoming students. Up to this point in their lives, Principal D estimates, only one percent of the girls have played a musical instrument. Principal D further explains how students who come from other schools (elsewhere in the field of schools) are enriched in this manner by the opportunities presented by School D, and the lessons that they learn become a part of their cultural capital with which they leave as young women:

I think in these five years [of High School], these are probably the most important five years of a person's life. ... They come here as a child and they leave as a young woman. ... We're building their self-esteem; we're growing them to play an important role [in today's society].

Growing captains

And so, what are the skills that are regarded as having high symbolic and cultural capital gained from this all-round involvement, from the perspective of these principals? A key focus mentioned by all of the principals interviewed was their respective leadership programmes (in their various forms). This emphasis reveals an explicit way of preparing 'their girls' for a particular social position after school. And the values and skills learnt from the girls' involvement in these programmes that are perceived to be of value (capital) for their adult lives, provides a window into what this (privileged) social position entails. The core values and skills referred to include: accountability; self-knowledge and self-management; the ability to make informed decisions; collaboration to get the job done; measured risk-taking ('*risk-taking, but with common sense*', in the words of Principal B); open-mindedness; resilience and self-regulation; confidence; an enquiring mind; and the ability to stand up and be counted by having the courage of their convictions.

The leadership programmes that exist at most of these schools are not, however, predominantly the 'traditional' form of habitus/field formation - that of the prefect system - that is commonly associated with middle and upper class schooling. For instance, School E replaced their traditional

system with a more portfolio-based approach eight years ago, allowing for increasing student involvement as well as accountability. This concept of 'portfolio-based' is an excellent example of a new global discourse – a different world in which these girls should excel and lead. It is no longer about traditional hierarchical structures, but rather flatter, more networked structures that are often associated with changing forms of work organisation in current times.

Principals commented that this wasn't an easy transition as many of the students initially resisted the change. They felt that the school, and by implications themselves, were 'losing' something. As Principal E explained:

They [the senior students] were allowed to come in here and talk, and it was more about what they felt they were losing because a prefect has status, and my approach was: a prefect, in my opinion, no longer has status because you get employed by the person who never had a prefect at their school, prefects are 'old school'. So why do you want to be a prefect, because generally speaking you are going into a company where there are a lot of Africans and Coloured people that didn't grow up in a white elite school that this was and they had SLC's [Student Leadership Councils]? Those were 'important' people, not prefects.

What is evident here is a way of showing people how to succeed play the game, and in this instance specifically in the racially changed new South Africa. Furthermore, what is interesting to note is that while the field is constantly being influenced by various forces impacting upon it, these schools appear able to adapt in order to navigate these forces successfully, such as changing the nature of a leadership programme. In effect, these schools (as possessors of powerful cultural capital) are able to shift with the changing field so that the capital and habitus that they are attuned to, and pass on to their students, continue to give them social advantage. This is not to say, however, that all forms of traditional symbolic capital are seen by these principals as being out-of-date, as the following discussion on values, the fourth common theme, will reveal.

Marrying old-school coaching with new techniques

Inasmuch as the schools in this study reveal the capacity to shift and play the new game with skill and improvisation, they are still able to maintain their capacity to play the traditional game, as is evident from the emphasis placed on the need to instil traditional liberal values within their students stressed by all of the principals. This need was seen as part of their schools' responsibilities towards individual students (the instilling of cultural capital), as well as fulfilling their responsibility to South African society by 'producing' ethical, values-driven citizens (i.e. leaders in this changed context.) As Principal D explained:

These girls are going to go on and do engineering and medicine and all kinds of things. So they're going to do their professions and they're going to take with them values that they learn, so that's going to impact on the way they do their job, and it's hopefully going to improve the economy of our country. So I think it's in every way it's going to feed in to the country and to the economy of the country, and from there globally if we can get these kids to do things in a better way, and become more caring, and if government and business ... can run with better ethics and values, we can be more.

The extent to which these values are expressly articulated differs from school to school. For one of the schools, for example, the core value of truth (*Veritas*) is the school's motto, and is central to the school's vision of what its student should have been internalised by the time they leave school:

The ideal is our motto [Veritas], which has to be practised ... Children learn how important the truth is in absolutely everything that they do, from plagiarism to whatever. I think that is something that they will leave this school with: that no matter how difficult life is, if you tell the truth you'll actually be relieved in the long run. (Principal A)

In another school, the Anglican principles of faith, hope and love, as well as the traditional values of respect, integrity, compassion and accountability (RICA) form the foundation upon which the school's codes of behaviour (for students and staff alike) are based, and are on display in the school and referred to on regular occasions. In yet another school the values were less explicit more implicit, and include a particular approach to work:

In terms of values, I think the interesting thing about [this school] which I've discovered is, if I had to say to any [school name] girl, 'What are the values of [school name]?', I don't think they can articulate them, and we haven't got them knocked on the school building or a wall It's a more implied set of values. You know - it's just honesty, integrity, respect for everything, hard work I think there's a joy of learning, there's a discovery of the learning experience, the girls really celebrate learning here and as I said.... I think they have very clear underlying values such as respect, such as integrity and those kind of values.

The values of the three state schools in the study were less definitely articulated by their principals, but were no less apparent in the interviews. Instilling the values of respect, integrity, kindness and compassion for the needs of others, to name a few, were clearly of importance to these principals. In all of the principal interviews, references were made to similar concerns, with the common themes of values such as respect, integrity, and a willingness to serve others underlying what it is hoped these schools will help to instil in their students. What is interesting to note is that regardless of whether or not these traditional values are explicit or implicit, their incorporation into different types of activities, from the schools' approaches to academic matters, (such as issues around plagiarism) to the expectations of the manner in which the girls conduct themselves in extra curricula activities is a feature of these elite schools, and exist alongside the values of success, competition (to varying degrees) and striving for excellence that are clearly present in these schools, and are more commonly associated with neoliberalism. In effect, the girls are being prepared to occupy a specific place in the world – a place of privilege where the ideal put forward is that the best of the old and the new can co-exist to maximise an individual's ability to play the game successfully.

Passing forward

A prominent manifestation of the embodiment of the sorts of traditional liberal values lauded by the interviewed principals is to be found in the schools' community service programmes. Significantly, all of the principals interviewed in this study indicated that their students' involvement in some form of community service was an important part of their education. The common themes that emerged were around an expectation that the girls must contribute to society in a way that involves not just raising money, but also their time, energy and the application of their skills. The motivation behind this community involvement appears to be twofold: for their schools to contribute to South African society in a meaningful manner, and for their students to acquire the skills and values (cultural capital) that will help make them good future leaders and principled, ethical citizens of this democracy – both an indication of their position of privilege and how to live well with this privilege.

Two broad themes emerged in the interviews that explain these positions. The first can be summarised as a sense of responsibility that the principals feel to the broader society, and their

response to this responsibility: the need, from the perspective of the principals, to instil in their students an awareness of their privileged position in this country and the world (by means of 'exposure, exposure, exposure' as stated by Principal C). And closely aligned to this awareness is the second theme – to instil in their student a desire to make a meaningful difference to the lives of others or their environment and possessing the appropriate skills (capital) to do so.

Principal C referred to the need for awareness of the inequalities in this country in the following way:

As a human being, I only am because you are, and the fact that I'm coming from a privileged school or perhaps an economic reality that's more privileged than yours doesn't make me a better person than you, and you consistently have to recognise this.

Principal A saw this active awareness of the inequalities in this country as being an essential part of her girls' education and development:

The struggle for the middle class and the struggle for the rich is not to ignore the bottom. And the reason I say that, is that you cannot live in a world where the majority around you are crumbling and going on strike, throwing faeces into the street because there's no service delivery. Basic rights of people effects everybody, and if you go round blinkered that you could live in a world where there's just niceties ... the global world is not like that.

For Principal F involvement in community service is a part of the way in which students increase their awareness that they are a part of this country, and the need to be responsible citizens as such:

I would say our job is [to] produce good citizens, with an ethical fibre in their bodies to go and make a difference and change the world one day at a time. So if we are sending a girl, if we can have the process in which that's part of the education they get here in the sense that they feel, they know, what it is to be a citizen of a country and they know what democracy means and they know how to play a responsible role in democracy, and they're feeling a compulsion to go out to make a difference and lead a good life, even if they become an ethical business woman, then that's making a difference.

For Principal B it is about teaching the students to stand up and make a positive difference in their own lives and environment, and by doing so contributing to this notion of the good of the whole:

So you must make a stand for what you can do now. It could be something small like obeying the traffic rules or saying to somebody if you throw that down, and everybody had to throw down just one piece of paper, then we're going to have a rubbish tip. It's taking responsibility for those little things that you can control and if you do that, you make the bigger better. ... I will then be giving back and if we are all doing that in some small measure, the whole becomes better.

The skills required, from the principals' perspective, are both about attitude as well as an individual's ability to deliver on their beliefs and ideas. Three of the six principals interviewed used the term 'partnership' rather than 'service', as this risks being patronising. For example, Principal C stated that there is:

... a high expectation of the school that this is not service, that this is a partnership, that ... it's not about what you are getting, it's about what you are giving, and it's about getting to know people and having an equal partnership.

These approaches provide insight into the formation of habitus and cultural capital of a social elite in South Africa in these global times. The discourse that is evident emphasises social cohesion (not radical change), mutuality in conditions of inequality, and being ethical when one is in a leadership position in business world that is capitalist and unequal. In effect, these are the moral rules of the game for the students who will be the leaders of the future – to be democratic, treat people equally within the new South Africa, and be ethical in your privilege and power.

Sporting an all-girls team

Mention needs to be made of the fact that the particular position that these schools occupy within the field is not only defined by their privilege; it is also significant that they are single-sex schools. Consideration of the extensive debates on single-sex schooling – and indeed on gender and education more broadly - lies beyond the scope of this thesis. Suffice it to say that it was evident that all of the principals were proponents of girls-only education, seeing it as a great advantage on the whole for their students. The most common theme that emerged in the interviews was that of choice, and coupled with this, empowerment – that the girls are immersed in an organisational culture that tells them that they can be whatever they want to be in terms of their choice of profession, and that their voice matters. As Principal B explained:

They [girls' schools] give girls an edge, and the edge is because when they're in a girl's school they have to do everything. They are the ones who will be the audio visual team, not the boys. They will move the desk if they have to; that isn't an issue. There's nothing there that will prevent them from doing what they need to do. They don't have to stand back or pretend or do whatever.

To Principal F this 'edge' of 'not having to stand back or pretend' is linked to the fact that a girls' only school provides an environment that is 'risk-free from the value judgement of boys'. Principal C made reference to the fact that girls-only schools provide, 'a safe space [in which girls] are allowed to become the woman that they can become without the distraction of the competition of scarce resources like boys and boy approval.' It is clear from these comments that the absence of boys, from the principals' perspectives, is advantageous for the girls, providing them with additional opportunities for accessing cultural and other forms of capital and ensuring that they are well-placed to play the game with ease. Further exploration of gender issues in the cultural capital and habitus of boys only and co-educational schools would be a worthwhile further study.

Fielding the curve balls

Having stated all of this, there are three caveats that emerged through the interviews that need to be outlined. The first is that not all students who enter these schools emerge as competent, academically and financially successful, emotionally stable and resilient young adults. Although schools are exceptionally important because of their ability to influence habitus and instil capital (as outlined in Chapter 2), there are limits to the extent that this can take place. As Principal B stated in response to the concept that schools are the panacea for all of society's ills:

I think one has to be very careful, it's an easy, almost a ...political excuse: 'If there's something wrong, schools must teach the following!' As soon as there's something

new in society, the schools must! Over and above everything we have them here for six hours of the day. There are 24 hours in the day. We actually have them here for six or seven hours in a day, and the rest of the time...?

Principal E expressed some disappointment with modern parents in pointing out that:

We were taught resilience; I don't think kids these days are taught resilience. We try and teach it at school, but at home you just give up and try something else.

In addition, two of the interviewed principals indicated that they believed that some parents made things too easy for their daughter by 'fighting their battles' for them (and as a consequence, denying them the lessons of how to stand up for themselves). For example, Principal F stated the following:

Obviously where it becomes interfering, where schools begin having to simply meet the expectations of parents at every turn, and it comes down to ... 'I don't want my kid to be taught by this teacher or by that teacher; I don't want my child to do this but to do that', and almost it's as if it's a 'smorgasbord' of opportunity and they want to be able to select what's best for their child. To me it takes away a bit of the resilience of the child. I think ... it's good for a child to be in a teacher's class where they don't get on with the teacher and they don't quite know how to interpret what the teacher's saying. It develops resilience: you know the old adage is, 'you don't prepare the path for the child, you prepare the child for the path', and the path is never easy and smooth.

Principal C also referred to the path that students have to learn to travel, expressing some frustration with parents trying to get the school to adapt the academic programme to suit *their* child's needs. The danger of this, in Principal C's opinion, is that if you adopt this approach:

...they get to the other end [Grade 12] and they cannot cope - they have no coping skills, they have no sense of worth, they have no independence, they have no resilience, they have no ability to cope with challenge. The path has been cleared for them completely.

The second caveat relates to habitus. Chapter 2 made reference to the fact that most schools, and in particular elite schools, are bastions of middle and upper class values and practices. What this means is that those who enter these schools already familiar with these values and practices will find the atmosphere a welcoming one, almost immediately feeling like 'a fish in water'. They will thus be at a huge advantage when it comes to playing the game. However, those who have a different habitus, and thus cultural capital, to that of the school will almost certainly encounter an environment that will appear alien, and as such possibly confusing and deeply intimidating. As Bourdieu points out, right from the word go they are at a social disadvantage, and have to work extra hard in order to acquire the 'style, taste and wit' that seems to come 'naturally' to their peers.

By way of example, take the presentation of the schools (who they are and what they stand for) that is conveyed on their respective websites, as well as the experience of entering these schools for a newcomer. In their self-presentation, these schools display the cultural and symbolic capital that they draw on and, in Bourdieu's terms, reproduce. Of course there are different forms of these (each school has its 'thisness'), but the symbols and artefacts they present are remarkably similar and thus familiar to those who come from a particular social background. Almost without exception, the websites of the schools in this study provide the browser with: a summary of the history of the respective school (indicating long-standing and proud traditions within the field); a description of the

values and principles upon which the schools are based (the symbolic capital that can be instilled in students by these schools); a wide range of academic, sporting, and cultural offers (the cultural capital that can be gained), references to the schools' achievements (legitimisation of place within the field); and information on the respective alumni associations (the social capital via networks that the schools have to offer). All of these factors are accompanied by photographs that convey a sense of community (once again, social capital), achievements (cultural capital), and general well-being and happiness (creating the sense of desirable capital to aspire to experiencing).

There are also clear similarities in the experience of physically entering these schools for newcomers. All of the schools in this study had guards stationed at their front entrance (providing a sense of security for some, or intimidation for others), a driveway of sorts with plants and/or trees lining it, (providing a sense of grandeur), and a reception/waiting area containing for the most part, amongst other things, the schools' magazines, photographs of the school buildings through the ages, and certificates/articles lauding the schools' achievements (the achievements and symbolic capital of the school). All of these 'first impressions' can, either consciously or subconsciously, be warm and welcoming or austere and intimidating, depending on the match (or mismatch) between the cultural capital of the school and the individual that provides for ease of fit, or not.

As Bourdieu points out, it is possible for individuals whose cultural capital does not match the school to compensate for this, particularly through building academic capital. And for those whose cultural capital matches the school's, the atmosphere feels like an extension of home, where their habitus is reinforced and their capital extended, and where their social gifts are affirmed as natural gifts.

The third and final caveat is an extension of the above discussion, and relates specifically to the lack of economic diversity (and as result, racial diversity due to the prevailing economic population distribution of Cape Town) that exists at these schools. In the words of Principal F:

I think the greatest sadness is as a private school you're captive to an economic bracket. And so the wonderful thing is no matter what race comes here, they succeed. Somehow the [School F] 'brand/ ethos', manages to energise all the races. Unfortunately it hasn't been tested extensively, and that's the sadness. Being evidently still white-dominated ... you wish you could be more aggressively diversified, and certainly in Johannesburg the diversification happens much quicker because of the economic brackets.

This can be seen as a deficiency of these schools. Although all of the schools in this study counter this scenario to some extent by having scholarship and bursary programmes, this still does not provide true diversity as the sponsored students coming into one of these schools are expected to acquire the habitus of the school and its organisational culture, rather than the school adjusting its habitus and capitals to suit these students – in other words, to be assimilated. In a sense this ties back to the programmes of community service of these schools – as a way of engaging students in the world beyond the school, when the world within the school is a comparatively limited one.

This chapter, by means of an analysis of the interview data, has provided some insight into what the field looks like from the perspective of the principals of this group of elite Cape Town girls' schools, and how they and their schools navigate this complex terrain on a daily basis. The discussion then focussed on the reinforcement and shifts in habitus and the acquisition of capital within the field by examining what the players need, from the perspective of the principals, in order strategically to play the game successfully. The final chapter of this study, as the conclusion, will draw together the dynamic engagement of the field, habitus and capital of the schools by closely examining logics of practice, as well as the limitations of a study of this nature.

Chapter 6: CONCLUSION - LOGICS OF PRACTICE

From the inception of this minor dissertation my aim was to present and explain the impact of external forces upon elite, girls-only schools in Cape Town, and to examine how the leadership of these schools are responding to this impact. Early on I identified two dominant forces, namely neoliberal globalisation and the socio-political context of post-apartheid South Africa. I was also fortuitously pointed in the direction of the works of the sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu, by my supervisor. Bourdieu's theories had a profound impact upon the analytical approach underlying my research, as well as the study's structure. His notions of field, habitus and capital provided the theoretical and analytical tools I needed in order to make sense of the research data. Two concepts were of particular use: firstly, viewing the social world as a series of fields, and the elite schools as occupiers of a particular position specifically within the field of education; and secondly, his analogy of a game, and the habitus and strategies required to have a feel for this game and be successful players, both for now and in the future. Together these concepts allowed for a deeper understanding of the experiences of these particular schools, and the responses to these experiences by means of what capital these schools regard as being of value for their students to possess, from the perspective of their principals. This, in turn, informed the overall question of the study – what the principals of these elite, girls-only schools view as the role of their schools within the shifting context of an increasingly globalised, post-apartheid South Africa.

Discussion: reflections on the findings of the study

My readings on this topic led me to conclude that, in Bourdieuan terms, the sub-field of schools within the field of education is subject to significant forces of change. This locus of change creates a vastly complex context that needs to be navigated successfully by schools on a daily basis. These complexities are deepened by the fact that these forces can be both contradictory and overlapping at the same time. The interview data generated by the semi-structured interviews with the principals of the six schools included in this study, more than adequately confirmed this contention. The principals interviewed provided an array of responses that provided insight into the range of opportunities and challenges that presented by globalisation and post-apartheid shifts that these schools have to navigate successfully on a daily basis.

Amongst the opportunities presented by the changing field identified by the principals are the possibilities offered by the emergence of the knowledge economy and the resultant rethinking of education and pedagogy, the concept of a global citizen unrestricted by South Africa's borders, and the accompanying ascendancy of technology with its myriad of exciting prospects that instant, unlimited connectivity has to offer. The new ways of forming networks as social capital, as well as the ability to imagine and engage with the global world were two particular, positive consequences of the forces of change upon the field that emerged as themes within the interviews.

However, alongside these opportunities are accompanying pressures and related stresses presented by the realities of living in an increasingly globalised, post-apartheid South Africa. According to the principals, these pressures are experienced at every level within schools, including the leadership and management of their schools, teachers, parents, and students. A complex, multi-layered picture emerges through an analysis of the interviews of schools having to grapple with: market-related issues of financial sustainability; various challenges presented by the number and nature of the curricula implemented since 1994; heightened parental expectations, oft-times to unrealistic levels; a general disintegration of the traditional, stabilising role played by families; and the reported rise in stress levels amongst teenagers, resulting in phenomena such as teenage depression and/or intense competition and new forms and levels of bullying.

These pressures brought about by the forces of change are not necessarily unique to these specific schools within the field. However, the elite position of these schools puts them under the spotlight, so to speak, as others within the field look to them to see how they are responding to these pressures. As the interviews confirmed, the implied expectation of these schools from various quarters is that not only do they as schools 'play the game', but that as part of their response to the forces upon the field they equip their students with the appropriate strategies (capital) to be successful players of the future, (and by implication, to retain their position of privilege by means of the promulgation of symbolic capital.)

It was apparent through an analysis of the schools' responses to the forces upon the field, and what the principals viewed as significant capital for their students to acquire, that across the board the primary focus of these principals is the well-being and education of the students under their care, despite all of the 'white noise' created by the added pressures discussed above upon these schools. Although there were some differences in the approaches of the principals to certain aspects of the forces of change, (the 'thisness of schools'), there were some clear common themes (the 'sameness') that emerged from which certain generalisations can be made, albeit it very cautiously.

These themes were: high expectations of the students from the school and its teachers; the instilling of a strong work ethic; the development of inter- and intra-personal social skills; an emphasis on the growth of leaders and leadership skills; a focus on traditional values in a changing world; and the encouragement of 'giving back' to society by means of involvement in community partnerships. In addition, the principals agreed that the girls-only feature of these schools was to their students' benefit.

Three caveats that emerged through the course of the interviews were also outlined in Chapter 5. The first relates to the limits of schools in influencing habitus and instilling capital, the second to habitus and the extent to which students enter the schools feeling 'like fish in water', thus placing them either at an advantage or a disadvantage from the word go, and the third relates to the cultural capital deficits of these schools despite, or rather because of, their positions of privilege.

Implications for theory and practice

What then are the implications of this research for understanding the context in which schools in similar situations to the ones included in this study have to operate, as well as how these schools are responding to this context? The clear implication is that schools need first and foremost to recognise that they are not operating in a vacuum. It is my contention that part of the reason why the schools in this study have retained their elite status is because, as schools within the field, they are playing the game successfully. In addition, they have a strong sense of the cultural, social, academic, and economic capital required by their students in order to be effective strategists and players of the future. At the core is a realistic sense of balance – they are not entirely focussed on meeting the demands of the neoliberal globalised world at the expense of more traditional approaches, nor are they solely focussed on local issues in terms of the challenges and opportunities presented by the socio-political context of post-apartheid South Africa. They wear their privilege with a certain sense of ease, while at the same time challenging their students not simply to accept this world of gross inequalities simply as it is. This balance is critical for schools to continue to address the needs of their students and ensure that these schools, as well as their students, are equipped to play the game successfully.

There are, naturally, limitations to this study. As stated in Chapter 1, there are issues of validity that arise in any research study that relies predominantly on the perspectives, and furthermore the perspectives of only one (albeit significant) set of role players within the field. Further studies along

similar lines could, for example, take into account the perspectives of parents, the teachers, representatives of the working world, and of course, the students themselves. A further study could focus on schools that occupy a different position within the field of education, and for whom the experiences of the various forces could be felt in very different ways. As mentioned earlier, a study focusing on gender in elite schools would also be likely to provide further insights into habitus and capitals.

This does not detract, however, from the contention of this dissertation that the marrying of Bourdieuan theory to an understanding of the forces of change impacting upon the field of education in general, and the sub-field of elite, girls-only Cape Town schools in particular, provides a rich understanding of, and insight into, some of the dynamics at play within the field. Bourdieu's notions of habitus, field and capital provide a way of talking about social power and its unequal distribution, as well as its reproduction. These are enormously relevant concepts in the face of the shifting landscape of an increasingly globalised, post-apartheid South Africa. How these particular elite schools are responding to these shifts from the perspective of their principals, as well as the capital that these principals regard as being of value to instil in their students to allow them to play the game successfully, offers some insight into the manner in which these particular schools are playing the field.

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Appendix

RESEARCH FOR A MINOR DISSERTATION: SCHOOL OF EDUCATION, UCT

RESEARCHER: JENNIFER WALLACE

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

a) Contextual Statement:

There are two clear contextual agendas that are currently being navigated by schools within the field of South African education: that of the *neoliberal, globalised world*, and that of the landscape of *post-apartheid South Africa*.

- Globalisation has resulted in a fast-paced, instant and inter-connected world, and the emergence of neoliberalism has seen the rise of marketisation, competition and choice, an emphasis on the importance of the knowledge economy, and a preoccupation with the 'I' instead of the 'we'.
- The landscape of post-apartheid South Africa is shaped (in principle) by the Constitution and its creation of a rights-based society, with a strong emphasis on redressing the inequalities and social injustices of the past. What has emerged is a greater focus on the notion of the 'common good', along with rights protected by the Constitution.

These two, often contradictory, forces create an enormously complex and challenging environment that schools and their principals are facing on a daily basis.

In light of this challenge, I am interested in two key areas for my research:

- What impact is this complex context of an increasingly globalised, post-apartheid South Africa having on your school; and
- how, and to what extent, is your school responding to this impact?

b) Interview Questions:

1. What do you see as the major forces of change impacting upon schools in the world?
2. If you were asked to identify the main forces of change that you have seen or experienced impacting upon your school, what would these be and what impact have these forces had on the organisational culture of your school?
3. How is your school responding to the opportunities and threats presented by these forces of change? Can you provide some specific examples of these responses?
4. It can be argued that schools, and high-functioning, privileged South African schools such as our schools in particular, have certain responsibilities to play an active role in 'leading the way' into the 21st Century. How would you respond to this point of view, and if you agree with it, to whom (or what) does your school have responsibilities, and what is the nature of these responsibilities?
5. At the recent WAGS meeting Dr Mamphela Ramphele stated that our schools are ideally placed to help our students realise their competitive advantage in the world that they are going to be facing once they leave school. But in order to do so we *must* prepare them for the 21st century. In light of this challenge, what would you identify as the essential values, knowledge and skills that your school strives to instil in your girls?
6. Could you comment on the significance of being a girls-only school in particular, within the context of an increasingly globalised, post-apartheid South Africa?