Privilege and Discipline: An Exploration into the Role of Social and Cultural Capital in Cape Town ex-Model C Schools

by

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Declaration

This work has not been previously submitted in whole or in part for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in this dissertation from the work(s) of other people has been attributed and has been cited and referenced.

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the disciplinary practices in ex-Model C schools, situated in affluent, white areas under apartheid, in Cape Town, South Africa, focusing on their disciplinary principles and the management of disciplinary processes. The research, grounded in theories of social control, labelling, and social capital, sought to uncover factors driving disciplinary actions and their outcomes specifically in these settings. Typically serving a higher socio-economic student demographic, these schools are recognised for their exceptional education and discipline standards. In contrast to prior South African research that often highlights the negative aspects of school discipline, this study explores the components of an effective and non-detrimental disciplinary system, as well as the contributions of various participants to this system.

Through interviews with heads of discipline and other staff, the research finds characteristics of these schools that support progressive and inclusive disciplinary approaches. It finds a notably low occurrence of serious infractions, which can be attributed to a robust community that results in substantial social control. The study reveals that the disciplinary process in these schools is characterised by a synergistic relationship among schools, parents, and students, leading to the effective deployment of specific social and cultural capital. Overall, this dissertation not only reaffirms existing literature but also deepens the understanding of the elements that constitute a positive disciplinary culture and underscores the central role of parental collaboration in addressing issues of indiscipline.

Nomenclature

RDSE	Regulations on Disciplining, Suspension and Expulsion of Learners
SASA	South African Schools Act 84 of 1996
SGB	School Governing Body
SES	socioeconomic status
STPP	school-to-prison-pipeline
WCED	Western Cape Education Department

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1 Introduction

This dissertation explores the disciplinary practices at ex-Model C schools in Cape Town, South Africa. Interviews with the heads of discipline and other staff members involved in disciplinary procedures were conducted to gain insights into the schools' disciplinary protocols. The study aimed to identify how the characteristics of these schools impact the outcomes of disciplinary actions as well as the general disciplinary environment within these schools. The theoretical framework for this investigation is informed by social control, labelling and social capital theory.

School indiscipline is a widely discussed topic in South African media and academic circles, with reported incidents ranging from relatively minor, such as a student throwing a book at a teacher, to extremely serious acts including heavy assault or homicide (Wolhuter and Van Der Walt, 2020, p. 1). Despite the absence of comprehensive, national-level quantitative data on the prevalence of different types of indiscipline, a study involving a sample of 15 schools indicates that major rule violations are not as rampant as media representations suggest. Most commonly reported severe transgressions include graffiti and substance abuse (Maphosa and Mammen, 2011, p. 191). Nevertheless, high-profile cases continue to provoke public outrage and compel authoritarian responses from official bodies. This is not least exemplified by the Western Cape Education Department's (WCED) issuing a ‘warning to learners’ following a surge of allegedly gang-related violence in schools across the Western Cape (WCED, 2020).

The extent to which these issues affect schools varies considerably. Reflecting the state of the South African society, the educational landscape is characterised by substantial differences. As a result, schools (and their larger community) naturally exhibit differing levels of student-, teacher-, parent-, and society-related factors that South African studies and articles have associated with the occurrence of indiscipline (Wolhuter and Van Der Walt, 2020, p. 4). These variations are not confined to the types and forms of indiscipline; they

extend to the institutions' responses to such behaviours as well. Despite the clear legal and policy framework which seeks to establish a positive disciplinary environment, effectively guarding learners' rights – which will be dealt with in the subsequent sections - the disciplinary experiences encountered by students across South Africa are markedly heterogeneous. For instance, despite its prohibition, corporal punishment is still a routine occurrence for many learners within township schools, as highlighted by Breen, Daniels, and Tomlinson (2015, p. 134). Conversely, in formerly white only institutions, the idea of teachers administering physical punishment as a disciplinary measure is now completely inconceivable (Mahlangu *et al.*, 2021, p. 2) . Overall researchers in the South African education field observe the prevailing of retributive and punitive disciplinary measures instead of more restorative forms of discipline (Pitsoe, 2014, p. 1530; Reyneke, 2015, p. 58), despite an expansive body of international research indicating that the former can have an array of negative consequences for disciplined students (Hirschfield, 2008a, 2008b; Cregor and Hewitt, 2011; Togut, 2011; Cramer, Gonzalez and Pellegrini-Lafont, 2014; Simson, 2014; Skiba, Arredondo and Williams, 2014; Scully, 2016; Marchbanks *et al.*, 2018; Rocque and Snellings, 2018; Dutil, 2020; Hemez, Brent and Mowen, 2020). However, the realisation that punitive discipline often results in the further alienation of disciplined students and that repairing the harm done to the school community through restorative methods is more effective is a view widely expressed and advocated by numerous South African educational scholars (McCluskey and Lephalala, 2010; Pitsoe, 2014; Reyneke, 2015; Teise, 2016; Ally, Beere and Moult, 2021; Baker, MacKenzie and McCormick, 2021; Mokomane, 2021).

The present study took place in so-called „(former) Model C" schools. (Former) Model C schools occupy a unique position in the South African educational landscape. These schools, which were initially exclusive to white students under apartheid, underwent a transformative change post-1991, becoming accessible to students of all racial backgrounds (Battersby, 2004, p. 280). Model C schools are attractive to many parents due to their reputation

for high-quality teaching, improved discipline, and safe(r) environments (2004, p. 281). While this reputation in part originates from the 'discourse of quality and excellence,' a strategic marketing approach adopted by many ex-Model C schools (Soudien and Sayed, 2003, p. 39), merely for the fact that these schools mandate considerable fees they are better resourced than the average public school which allows, for instance, for a more favourable student-teacher ratio. Even though the fee structure of former Model C schools is more favourable in comparison to prestigious private schools, the fees they levy remain significantly beyond the means of the average South African (Hiss and Peck, 2020, pp. 26–27). Moreover, while an increasing number of black families are enrolling their children in ex-Model C schools, the student population of these institutions still predominantly consists of white and Indian students and does not represent the country's actual demographics (Gruijters, Elbers and Reddy, 2022, p. 25). In addition to the fee structure, merely the fact that these schools are mainly located in affluent suburbs suggests that their student body typically comes from middle to high socio-economic backgrounds. Former Model C schools maintain a robust and provincially (and nationally) recognised academic standing. While certain schools in Cape Town might be deemed more 'elite' from a socio-economic standpoint, in academic terms, former Model C schools rank among the nation’s finest (Christiel and McKinney, 2017, p. 11). No two school environments are identical and certainly not all ex-Model C schools are the same in terms of privilege and reputation (Soudien and Sayed, 2003, p. 30). However, the ex-Model C schools in the Southern suburbs of Cape Town, which are the focus of this research, indeed share these distinguishing features.

In the upcoming chapters, this dissertation will show that the ex-Model C schools examined possess distinct characteristics enabling them to employ progressive and inclusive disciplinary methods. The research discovered that these schools maintain an effective disciplinary environment, preserving order within the school community and avoiding long-term negative impacts on

students who violate rules. The problems commonly discussed in the literature regarding school discipline are absent in these schools.

A central protective factor is their low levels of indiscipline, with serious infractions being exceedingly rare. A strong, commonly held ethos and a sense of community engender high levels of social control, which seems to act as an effective deterrent. This environment reduces the need for potentially detrimental disciplinary actions in the first place. The students mostly regulate themselves, making strict actions by teachers or school authorities rare.

In the case that students actually do face disciplinary actions, they rarely commit further infractions and are quickly welcomed back into the school community after their misbehaviour, avoiding the creation of (persisting) negative labels. In the schools examined, the relationship between the school, parents, and students is largely cooperative. Schools and parents activate reciprocal social capital when collaboratively addressing disciplinary matters.

The dissertation is organised as follows:

Chapter 1 serves as an introduction.

Chapter 2 provides a foundational understanding of school discipline in South Africa, outlining the sources of indiscipline as well as the philosophical, legal, and policy context of South African school discipline in general and specifically in the Cape Town schools studied.

Chapter 3 is a literature review addressing trends in school discipline and potential negative outcomes associated with it.

Chapter 4 seeks to provide an understanding of the different outcomes of disciplinary incidents. It employs labelling theory to understand why some students are negatively impacted by disciplinary action and social and cultural capital theory why others are not. The theory of reintegrative shaming serves

as a conceptual framework to understand conditions which prevent adverse disciplinary outcomes.

Chapter 5 outlines the rationale behind this research, explaining the motivations and objectives guiding the study.

Chapter 6 details the research design and methodological choices. It deals with the dissertation’s analytical strategy, limitations, and the ethical implications.

Chapter 7 presents the research findings, linking the collected data with the theoretical underpinnings established in the earlier chapters.

Chapter 8 will discuss and synthesise the findings to reinforce the central argument of this dissertation: that the schools under examination boast high levels of social control and possess a unique type of social capital which results in discipline functioning as a collective process rather than an adversarial one.

Chapter 9 serves as a conclusion and outlook.

2 School Discipline in South Africa

School indiscipline remains a topic of ongoing debate in South Africa. While at the start of the century, researchers described it (only) as a 'major' problem (Oosthuizen, Wolhunter and Du Toit, 2003, p. 458), more recently, the rhetoric has intensified, with claims that indiscipline in South African schools has 'soared to critical levels' (Padayachee and Gcelu, 2022, p. 1). In the following sections, I will sketch the issue of school indiscipline in South Africa: the reasons for it as well as its broader philosophical and regulatory framework.

2.1 Explanations for Indiscipline in South African Schools

2.1.1 Factors Associated with Indiscipline

Indiscipline is a complex phenomenon, and as such, there is no straightforward explanation for why some schools face more significant challenges with indiscipline compared to others (Wolhuter and Van Der Walt, 2020, p. 3). Indiscipline, similar to delinquency, is to some extent a normal aspect of adolescence. In line with international research and psychosocial explanations, indiscipline is most frequent in South African middle schools (Wolhuter, Oosthuizen and van Stadem, 2010, pp. 183–184). However, qualitative research conducted in several South African schools suggests that poverty and family stress have a major negative impact on the behaviour of individual learners (Obadire and Sinthumule, 2021, pp. 4–5).

Considering that school discipline involves both teachers and students, teachers also play an important role in either the presence or absence of discipline. Indiscipline in South African schools has been linked to an insecure demeanour and the difficulty students face in perceiving their teachers as role models (Eloff *et al.*, 2013, p. 4). Other scholars argue that following the abolition of corporal punishment, teachers have not pursued alternative disciplinary methods, and all parties involved in school discipline – including educators, students, and parents – have been unsuccessful in developing new disciplinary strategies (Gcelu, Padayachee and Makhasane, 2020, pp. 142–143).

In addition to factors related to teachers and learners, two institutional characteristics have been identified as contributing to indiscipline in South African schools. Firstly, the dire financial circumstances of some schools lead to a lack of resources, creating an environment conducive to unrest and disobedience (Obadire and Sinthumule, 2021, p. 4). This situation is exemplified by overcrowded classrooms, often lacking sufficient furniture for all students (2021, p. 4). Secondly, the challenging family environments of many South African children, marked by poverty and the frequent absence of

biological parents, result in limited or ineffective parental engagement with schools, negatively impacting student performance and discipline (Munje and Mncube, 2018, pp. 84–85; Wolhuter and Van Der Walt, 2020, pp. 5–6).

2.1.2 Theoretical Perspective on Indiscipline

Social control theory presents a theoretical framework to understand why some schools have an effective disciplinary system and others do not (Hirschi, 2002; Payne, 2004; Cook, Gottfredson and Na, 2010; Fisher, Gardella and Tanner-Smith, 2019). Social control theory suggests that individuals adhere to societal norms primarily due to influences from their personal networks, like family, friends, and community members, rather than solely because of fear for formal punishment (Braithwaite, 1989, p. 70). The avoidance of social disapproval, the desire to maintain positive relationships, and the internalisation of norms are central to deterring deviant behaviour (Hirschi, 2002, pp. 19–20). In the same vein, Sampson & Laub (1997) explore the varying extent of social control experienced by individuals throughout their life, stating that 'precursors to adult crime […] are mediated in developmental pathways' (1997, p. 10). A predisposition towards deviant behaviour does not necessarily result in a criminal lifestyle as changes in behaviour can arise from significant life events like marriage or military service (1997, p. 10), or from other controlling influences. Thus, while recognising varying tendencies towards deviant behaviour, social control theories emphasise the central role of an individual's social connections in influencing their actions.

International research has established a connection between discipline in schools and the presence of characteristics that enhance social control (Fisher, Gardella and Tanner-Smith, 2019, p. 347). Schools with good discipline typically feature close-knit communities where behavioural expectations are clearly defined and consistently enforced (Cook, Gottfredson and Na, 2010, p. 315). Members of such school communities share common goals and values (Payne, 2004, p. 11). Students who are deeply involved and committed to their school are less likely to engage in deviant behaviour (Hirschi, 2002, p. 110), as their dedication to the institution and the potential

risk of being excluded from the community for misconduct act as powerful deterrents (Payne, 2004, pp. 4–5). Furthermore, it has been observed that students are more likely to follow the institution's rules if they view them as appropriate and fair (Cook, Gottfredson and Na, 2010, p. 339). This aligns with Tyler's procedural justice theory (2006), which posits that people's voluntary compliance with the law is primarily influenced by the perceived legitimacy of authorities and the rules they establish (2006, p. 161). It has to be borne in mind though, that, while the aforementioned factors can substantially influence a student's adherence to norms, their impact may be moderated by the student's community, family background, and individual tendencies (Cook, Gottfredson and Na, 2010, p. 340).

In South Africa, the idea of 'social control' seems to carry a negative connotation within the educational sector. It appears to be commonly associated with the ways in which the Apartheid government used schools to exert undemocratic influence on students, shaping their education to conform to the systemic requirements (see, for instance, Dovey and Mason, 1984). To date, there is a lack of research specifically aimed at identifying the factors in South African schools that contribute to the presence of social control, which, in turn, fosters discipline.

2.2 Disciplinary Philosophy in South Africa

The official philosophy behind school discipline in South Africa has evolved significantly over the last few decades, particularly as the country has transitioned from apartheid to a democratic society. Under apartheid, school discipline was highly authoritarian, reflecting the political system of the time (Dawes *et al.*, 2005, p. 3). Discipline was almost synonymous with corporal punishment, which was widely used in the form of caning (Pitsoe, 2014, p. 1529), and aimed at 'mould[ing] characters, maintaining order and stability' (Mathebula and Ndofirepi, 2017, p. 119). Post-apartheid, the South African Schools Act of 1996 (SASA) brought a philosophical shift towards a more inclusive and humane approach to school discipline. This act officially

abolished corporal punishment (Section 10 SASA) and allowed for a path toward disciplinary measures that respect the rights of learners and promote a safe and nurturing school environment.

Accordingly, in recent years, there has been a growing emphasis on positive discipline strategies that are designed to develop self-discipline in learners. In the Western Cape, the WCED encourages schools to adopt a whole-school approach in their codes of conduct that involves creating a supportive school culture, setting clear expectations for behaviour, and involving learners in decision-making processes (WCED, 2007, pp. 2–3). The proposed strategies are informed by the understanding that discipline should be educative and restorative rather than merely punitive (2007, p. 15). These restorative principles that also numerous South African researchers support, as evidenced in works by Oosthuizen, Wolhunter and Du Toit (2003), Pitsoe (2014), Reyneke (2015), and Obadire and Sinthumule (2021), emphasise mending the social harm caused through dialogue and negotiation, potentially engaging the entire school community.

However, while some schools have adopted a whole-school approach based on positive discipline and report its effectiveness (Padayachee and Gcelu, 2022, p. 7), this shift in regulation has yet to manifest in the realities of the majority of South African schools. Despite policy changes, punitive practices, such as additional schoolwork, detention, and even humiliation or corporal punishment, persist in many schools (Reyneke, 2013, pp. 430–431). This may not even surprise as the reliance on retributive discipline is also reflected in the National Department of Education’s example of a code of conduct (2008). In the example code, the list of disciplinary interventions (2008, p. 14) does include measures which follow a positive discipline approach (e.g., attendance of a life skills program), but the majority of interventions fall clearly into the punitive category (e.g., removal from class, homework detention, etc.).

While the 'practical guide to understanding and managing learners' (WCED, 2007) indicates a more progressive stance towards discipline in the Western

Cape, there are indications that the WCED does not consistently adhere to this rationale in practice. For instance, the 'warning to all learners' issued by the department only a few years ago (WCED, 2020) seems at odds with the guide's principles. In this warning, the WCED explicitly stated that it would not hesitate to expel students, and they reported that way over a hundred learners were expelled in the previous year. The disparity between the department's stated policies and real-world practices is further emphasised by a study in Khayelitsha, Cape Town, which found that many children experienced corporal punishment from their teachers on a daily basis (Breen, Daniels and Tomlinson, 2015, p. 136).

The continued application of retributive discipline could be explained with a growing sense of disillusionment and low morale among teachers. They often feel ill-equipped to address the disciplinary deficiencies that students may bring from their home environments, citing a lack of resources to effectively instil morals and values (Segalo and Rambuda, 2018, p. 5). Furthermore, some teachers still express the view that when corporal punishment had been outlawed they were robbed of the disciplinary tool considered to be most effective (Mayisela, 2018, pp. 301–302). Relating increasing indiscipline to prohibition of corporal punishment, teachers interviewed in another study expressed that learners ‘neither fear[ed] nor respect[ed]’ them (Maphosa and Shumba, 2010, p. 395). The belief that obedience induced by violence is the appropriate method of discipline is also a viewpoint held by the wider public. Prompted by an increase in extreme cases of learner transgressions, commentators are advocating for the reinstatement of corporal punishment as a means to address the situation (Sekhonyane, 2018). Another factor contributing to the failure in implementing progressive disciplinary policies reflects the underlying causes of indiscipline: numerous schools encounter scenarios of insufficient resources, resulting in a deficit of commitment and training necessary for implementing new policies (Wyk and Pelser, 2014, p. 838).

2.3 Regulatory Framework

In South Africa, the normative framework for disciplinary action varies across provinces and is contingent upon the nature of the school - whether it is independent or public. The disciplinary process in Cape Town public schools is governed by two tiers of regulation. Firstly, there are Western Cape provincial regulations that address specific types of misconduct and set out the overarching principles of disciplinary proceedings, aligning with national and other provincial school legislation. Secondly, on the individual school level, each institution develops its own code of conduct, establishing a regulatory framework unique to that school.

2.3.1 Provincial Legal Framework

In 2012, the WCED issued a circular introducing new regulations concerning the disciplinary process for serious learner misconduct (WCED, 2012). These new 'Regulations on Disciplining, Suspension and Expulsion of Learners' (RDSE) provide a mainly procedural framework governing the discipline, suspension, and expulsion of learners in public schools within the Western Cape. According to this framework, the disciplinary process commences with an investigation into alleged serious misconduct by a learner, initiated by the school principal or a delegate. The regulations elaborate in detail on what qualifies as serious misconduct (Section 3 RDSE). This includes straightforward cases such as physical assault or drug-related activities, but also extends to more nebulous forms of deviance. For example, a learner who, 'in the opinion of the governing body, conducts himself or herself in a disgraceful, improper, or unbecoming manner' can also be deemed guilty of serious misconduct (Section 3(1)(i) RDSE). Consequently, the definition is rather expansive. Should there be sufficient grounds for a disciplinary hearing, the school's governing body (SGB) may suspend the learner for up to seven school days as a precautionary measure while further investigations are conducted.

The disciplinary process outlined in the regulations, encompassing formal investigations and a disciplinary hearing (Sections 2 and 8 RDSE), bears a close resemblance to legal proceedings in a court of law. The learner accused of serious misconduct is required to appear before a disciplinary committee, which consists of at least five individuals appointed to oversee the hearing. The learner is entitled to representation, not just by their parents, but also by legal counsel . At the onset of the hearing, the reasons for its convening are articulated, the 'charges' are read out, and the learner is asked to enter a 'plea' (Section 7(3)). If the learner ‘pleads guilty’ (Section 7(4)), a sequence of steps is undertaken to ascertain the learner's understanding of the plea and to determine an appropriate sanction. Conversely, if the learner pleads not guilty, an 'investigation report' is presented, followed by the submission of evidence, which may include ‘witnesses’ or ‘cross examination’ (Section 5(e)(iii)).

In these proceedings, as stipulated in Section 3(2) of the RDSE, if a learner is found guilty of serious misconduct, there are only two prescribed outcomes: suspension or expulsion. Although the regulation does not mandate that these sanctions must be imposed, thus allowing for discretion even in cases of serious misconduct, the emphasis on these two sanctions highlights the potential gravity of proceedings managed by the SGB.

An appeal provision exists (Section 9), allowing for recourse to the Provincial Minister. Additionally, Section 8 RDSE stipulates that all suspensions must be reported to the District Director, and that the WCED Head of Department must render a decision on expulsion recommendations within a 14-day period. Should a learner be expelled, alternative educational arrangements must be instituted, reaffirming the legal obligation to provide access to education (Section 10 RDSE).

The entire process is structured to be impartial, fair, and transparent, incorporating multiple checks and balances that echo the principles of legal proceedings. However, its formality is likely to engender a quasi-legal atmosphere that may be divisive rather than unifying. Students involved in

these proceedings are no longer simply children who have misbehaved at school; they become parties to a legal process. Being in such a situation can already create feelings of isolation and exclusion. As will be elaborated in the literature review in greater detail, reactions such as these to disciplinary proceedings are considered a significant contributing factor to the long-term negative effects associated with such processes.

2.3.2 Institutional Policy Framework of the Research Sites

To understand the formal disciplinary environment in the schools being studied, I examined their publicly available codes of conduct/school rules and interviewed participants on the matter.

Section 8 SASA requires every school to adopt a code of conduct. The code of conduct defines the limits of acceptable behaviour. This includes general expectations, such as mutual respect and avoidance of disruptive behaviour, as well as specific prohibitions against activities like alcohol and illegal substance use, and rules governing classroom conduct. They also contain detailed rules about uniforms, personal appearance, and the use of electronic devices. In terms of disciplinary actions, the schools specify the consequences for various offences. In one of the schools, they have exercised their discretion by including sanctions for serious misconduct in their code of conduct that extend beyond suspension and expulsion. In both schools, the sanctions outlined in their codes frequently encompass restorative-oriented measures, such as referrals for counselling or assignments to community service.

The interviews conducted and the review of participating schools' policies revealed that in these institutions various actors within the school organisation are involved with disciplinary matters. Due to a house-based system, Heads of Houses serve as the initial point of contact for disciplinary matters which go beyond routine classroom incidents that are dealt with by the respective teachers. In more severe cases, the Head of Discipline assumes

responsibility, overseeing both individual cases and the broader disciplinary framework of the institution. In addition, some schools have constituted more informal disciplinary panels, which function to address specific issues, such as racism or sexism, and can be seen as a last resort before disciplinary cases have to be escalated to the SGB or ultimately the WCED.

Should a transgression be considered severe misconduct, formal investigations in accordance with the RDSE are initiated by the Head of Discipline, ending in deliberations by the SGB’s disciplinary committee, which is comprised of at least five persons of which at least three are members of the SGB, including parents and teachers. The disciplinary committee holds the responsibility for reviewing cases and ultimately determining consequences that are appropriate for the code violation. Student representatives who are also part of the school governing body are excluded from individual disciplinary hearings as well as the principal, who, while often involved in the informal resolution of disciplinary matters, is barred from taking a formal role in SGB proceedings. As mentioned above, if a SGB decides to push for expulsion, their decision must be sanctioned by the WCED. Generally, outcomes from the SGB can be contested, propelling the matter to the WCED and placing it beyond the school's jurisdiction.

The Head of Discipline also bears the responsibility of ensuring the code of conduct remains current and responsive to evolving behavioural patterns, such as those relating to digital technology (e.g., social media usage) and substance use (e.g., vaping). Given the necessity of SGB approval, amendments to school policies are not undertaken on a day-to-day basis but require careful planning and coordination. In collaboration with the principal and the SGB, the Head of Discipline will also consider broader philosophical questions, such as the adoption of restorative versus punitive disciplinary measures.

3 Trends in School Discipline

For decades, research in the US has indicated that a rise in severely punitive and exclusionary disciplinary practices is fraught with risks and drawbacks, with the most severe being the emergence of the 'school-to-prison pipeline' (STPP). The STPP literature posits that students subjected to exclusionary disciplinary measures are more likely to come into contact with the juvenile justice system and often continue this pattern into adulthood. Therefore, the manner in which institutions respond to students' criminal or disruptive behaviour can significantly shape their future life trajectories. The following literature review aims to investigate the current research landscape regarding the STPP, both in the US and South Africa, as well as the more recent trend of medicalising disciplinary problems.

3.1 Criminalisation of Discipline

In recent years, researchers have directed their attention towards the possible connection between severe disciplinary outcomes and adverse life consequences, specifically contact with the juvenile justice system. The interest in this possible link coincides with the observation in the US that exclusionary disciplinary measures are on the rise (Taylor, Zuber and Shoup, 2023, p. 584; Skiba, Arredondo and Williams, 2014, p. 549). Notwithstanding its severe character, punitive and exclusionary punishments have been administered not only for major infractions but also increasingly for minor offences (Skiba, Arredondo and Williams, 2014, p. 550), following a ‘zero tolerance’ approach in school disciplinary (Mowen, 2017, p. 833; Taylor, Zuber and Shoup, 2023, p. 584). Research suggests that students who were suspended or expelled face a significantly higher risk of juvenile justice contact in the subsequent year (Fabelo *et al.*, 2011, p. 61). Although suspension and expulsion aim to improve individual behaviour, there is reason to believe that this type of punishment may in fact have adverse effects on the overall behaviour and academic success of affected students (Skiba, Arredondo and Williams, 2014, pp. 553–554).

Several explanations have been put forth to account for the fact that exclusionary school discipline leads to negative life outcomes. Although it is unlikely that expulsion itself causes these effects, they may stem from a variety of subsequent outcomes, such as a negative impact on academic achievement, school attendance (Taylor, Zuber and Shoup, 2023, pp. 584–585), school climate, and ultimately, a higher likelihood of dropping out of school (Skiba, Arredondo and Williams, 2014, pp. 551–552). Students who drop out of the educational system are at a significantly increased risk of incarceration (Taylor, Zuber and Shoup, 2023, p. 587) as they lose the protective factors, such as the opportunity to develop strong relationships with peers and adults and the attendance of prosocial extracurricular activities, provided by school environments (Goldstein *et al.*, 2021, p. 498). Furthermore, there has been an increasing recognition that students who exhibit disruptive or delinquent behaviour are often stigmatised as 'troublemakers', which may lead to heightened scrutiny of their actions by teachers and other school personnel (Welch *et al.*, 2022, p. 575; Goldstein *et al.*, 2021, p. 499; Mittleman, 2018, p. 198; Ramey, 2015, p. 183). The practice of school expulsion, in particular, contributes to the development of further delinquent behaviour in students. When students are expelled, they are more likely to face further sanctions and find themselves caught in a vicious cycle of delinquent behaviour (Mittleman, 2018, p. 199).

Exclusionary discipline and its detrimental outcomes affect students differently. In the US, there is an ever-growing body of literature focusing on differences in the application of disciplinary action based on race (Simson, 2014, pp. 522–525; Skiba, Arredondo and Williams, 2014, p. 550). These studies typically use quantitative methods and have found that Black and Latino students are more likely to receive harsher punishments, such as out-of-school suspension and expulsion, compared to their white peers (Taylor, Zuber and Shoup, 2023, p. 587; Stalker, 2019, p. 222; Gregory, Skiba and Noguera, 2010, p. 59). Black US students, in particular, seem to lack resources to 'prevent, mitigate, and cope with [official delinquent labels]' (Hirschfield, 2008b, p. 580). Even when exhibiting similar behaviour as white

students, teachers (Okonofua and Eberhardt, 2015, p. 622) as well as principals (Jarvis and Okonofua, 2020, pp. 495–496) show a greater tendency to consider black students as troublemakers. Given that race and SES are highly entangled in the US, it has been suggested that 'disproportionality due to race is a by-product of disproportionality associated with SES' (Skiba *et al.*, 2002, p. 321). Other studies, on the other hand, provide evidence that race still does have a significant impact when controlled for SES and other contextual factors (Wu *et al.*, 1982, pp. 269–270; Skiba *et al.*, 2002, p. 333; Mittleman, 2018, p. 193). Disabled (e.g., Krezmien, Leone and Achilles, 2006, p. 222) and non-heterosexual (Himmelstein and Brückner, 2011, p. 54) students also face disciplinary disproportionality.

A recent judgment by the High Court in Gauteng Local Division underscores the need for research into the workings of the STPP in South Africa (Ally, Beere and Moult, 2021, p. 24). In the underlying case, four boys who tested positive for cannabis in their respective schools were referred to the criminal justice system, despite the explicit prohibition of such referrals under the SASA (see Section 8a(14)(b) SASA). The court held that the decision to refer them to a diversion program involving a period of temporary residence violated the boys' constitutional rights (S v L M [2020] 4 All SA 249 (GJ), p. 54). Based on a positive cannabis test, Magistrates had sentenced the boys to an unspecified period in a youth detention facility, usually designed for serious juvenile offenders such as murderers and rapists (Chester, 2019). One of the boys came back from the facility with a variety of prison tattoos and has since exhibited an increase in delinquent behaviour (Wicks, 2020).

Yet, despite its potential gravity, the relationship between school disciplinary measures and the criminal justice system has been identified as '[c]ritically underresearched' in South Africa (Ally, Beere and Moult, 2022). Although the SASA provides several safeguards against actions associated with the STPP, the actual practices of South African schools sometimes contradict these regulations (Ally, Beere and Moult, 2021, pp. 27–28). For instance, while the legal framework as shown provides various procedural precautions with

regard to disciplinary hearings, there is evidence to suggest that many schools do not follow the prescribed rules of due process (Daniels, 2022). Moreover, it has been observed that schools have a tendency to react to student transgressions with automatic suspension and unlawful expulsions, even though SASA again provides clear provisions to the contrary (Cooper-Bell, Mkuzo and Funda, 2019). This is especially worrisome as it appears that these exclusionary practices can label offenders as problematic and perpetuate their stigmatisation, ultimately reducing their chances of being accepted by other schools after expulsion (Ally *et al.*, 2021, p. 27).

3.2 Medicalisation of School Discipline

Zero-tolerance policies have become increasingly prevalent in US schools but a new mode of repressive social control, the so-called medicalisation of discipline, has emerged more recently. Medicalisation may be defined as the process to treat a problem as medical, implying that it best be tackled through treatment (Conrad, 1975, p. 12). While in some cases treatment proves to be the adequate response, in others the root cause of the problem is not medical and falsely labelling it as such may prevent effectively addressing it (Conrad, 1992, pp. 209, 211). In the United States, health professionals are progressively considering disruptive behaviours exhibited by students, like inattention and hyperactivity, as potential signs of psychological conditions, including ADHD (Ramey, 2015, p. 183). On first sight, this seems commendable as it complies with US federal laws that require schools to consider underlying health issues when disciplining students (2015, p. 181). As a result of these regulations, schools can play a significant role in influencing parents' decisions regarding medication as it can have a considerable impact on their disciplinary treatment. However, schools in the United States that opt to medicalise or criminalise breaches of school discipline are not uniformly distributed. The distribution is racially skewed and reflects long-standing social structures (2015, p. 184). Teachers often attribute delinquent behaviour by black and Latino children to poor parenting or character, which they believe requires swift and severe punishment (2015, p.

185). Educators are less likely to attribute misbehaviour by minority students to underlying disorders compared to white children (2015, p. 185). Furthermore, parents with a higher SES tend to have more knowledge about behavioural disorders and are more likely to ensure that their children receive a diagnosis and can also prioritise investing in their children's treatment (Simoni and Drentea, 2016, pp. 126–127). This disciplinary advantage leads to a situation where white children who misbehave are excused from responsibility, while minority students may often be subjected to criminalisation at a young age (Ramey, 2020, p. 10). Research also shows that schools with a greater population of black and Latino students are more likely to rely on criminalisation rather than medicalisation when dealing with student misbehaviour (Ramey, 2015, p. 195).

Claiming psychological problems to avoid disciplinary measures seems counter intuitive at first. Being subjected to medicalised control may come with disadvantages for students. Children who are removed from the general class for special treatment may sense feelings of isolation and exclusion and some conditions are associated with poorer academic performance (Ramey, 2020, p. 5). Due to behavioural treatments often being ‘open-ended and long-term” diagnosis may funnel a student into a life-long relationship with the mental health system (2020, p. 5). In addition to negative effects on the child itself, it has been shown that parents of students diagnosed with psychological illness can experience stigma and social exclusion (dosReis *et al.*, 2010, pp. 813–814). Therefore, it seems unlikely parents would seek such diagnosis deliberately. However, connecting one incident with a psychological disorder does not carry the same gravity as being diagnosed with a chronic disorder, such as ADHD.

Even being diagnosed with a behaviour disorder may also save significant advantages for a child in disciplinary proceedings and other school-related matters. In the US, many disorders fall within the scope of the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) which comes with a variety of safeguards for disabled children (Ramey, 2020, p. 4). For instance, in so-called manifestation

hearings it has to be determined whether a child's misbehaviour is related to their condition and, if so, the range of consequences is limited (Walker and Hott, 2015, p. 42). Children with diagnosed disabilities are eligible for and do receive special assistance in test taking (Kern *et al.*, 2019, pp. 188–189). They may receive adequate treatment and often show improvement of academic performance (Arnold *et al.*, 2020, p. 81) and overall behaviour (Raggi and Chronis, 2006, pp. 87–88).

Overall, research from the US indicates that attributing medical reasons for student transgressions is a strategy employed by educated and financially well-resourced parents to shield their children from adverse disciplinary experiences. Currently, there is no South African material on this matter.

3.3 Conclusion

Research suggests two primary approaches to managing student indiscipline: one is to respond with exclusionary consequences, and the other is to pathologise students' misbehaviour. Both strategies carry potentially severe negative impacts and can be viewed as worst-case scenarios in terms of school discipline. While research on these issues in South Africa is scarce, first publications dealing with the STPP indicate that students in South Africa may also be at risk.

4 Theoretical Perspectives on the Adverse Effects of School Sanctions

4.1 Criminological Perspectives on School Sanctions

While there is growing scholarly interest in the labelling effects of school sanctions, most studies, if at all, only vaguely reference labelling theory (e.g. Ramey, 2020, p. 203; Mittleman, 2018, p. 199), and hardly any conduct a thorough analysis of how labelling processes actually operate in school discipline (e.g. Lavin, 2016, pp. 1283–1284; Bowditch, 1993, pp. 499–501). Thus, in the following section, I will present an overview of labelling theory's principles, charting their development and elaboration over time. Then, the

theory of reintegrative shaming will be explored to explain how it might counteract the negative effects identified by labelling theory.

4.1.1 Labelling Theory: The Disciplined Student as a Troublemaker

According to Becker's original labelling theory, deviant behaviour is not defined by an objective standard but determined through subjective ascriptions. Deviance is not a fixed concept but varies based on the rules created by different groups (Becker, 1963, pp. 1–2). The individuals and groups who create these rules play a crucial role in the creation of subsequent deviance since merely breaking a rule is not sufficient; an individual must also be held accountable for the infringement by the rule setters (1963, p. 4). He posits that deviance is a 'product of a process which involves responses of other people' (1963, p. 14) and that rule-breaking therefore requires public acknowledgment to be labelled as deviant. Furthermore, once an individual is labelled as deviant and given the master status of 'deviant' which results in the overriding of all other qualities an individual may possess, they may be more likely to commit further delinquent acts as their reputation denies them access to conventional means necessary for carrying on with everyday life (1963, pp. 33-35). Over time, the individual may become fully integrated into the deviant subculture and adopt deviant values and behaviour as a way of life (1963, pp. 37-39).

Edwin Lemert (1967) further refines the process of deviance development, drawing a critical distinction between primary and secondary deviance. Whereas primary deviance refers to initial acts of deviance that arise due to various factors such as social, physiological, or psychological pressures (1967, p. 40), secondary deviance emerges when individuals internalise the societal reactions to their deviant acts, consequently incorporating them into their self-concept (1967, p. 42). Thus, the deviant label may become a self-fulfilling prophecy where labelled individuals embrace their new identity, leading to further engagement in deviant behaviours (1967, p. 42). While his theory aligns with Becker's foundational ideas, Lemert proposes a more nuanced understanding of the psychological processes accompanying deviant

careers. This perspective is particularly helpful in understanding the vicious cycle that some youth who are subjected to disciplinary proceedings become trapped in (Mittleman, 2018, p. 199), because it provides an explanation for the internal processes at work in deviant youth. There may come a time when it is easier for disciplined students to embrace their label as a 'troublemaker' and behave in line with that label, rather than attempting to conform and failing to do so.

More recently, Hirschfield's (2008b) qualitative study on juvenile delinquents also suggests a significant role for schools in shaping deviant identities. Seemingly contrary to labelling theory, an objection raised by Triplett and Upton (2016, p. 283), his findings indicate that the experience of arrest had not notably affected the interviewees reputations and self-concept (Hirschfield, 2008, p. 585). However, Hirschfield observed that these individuals had already been pre-labelled as troublemakers by their teachers before any arrest (2008, p. 586), leading him to argue that classical labelling theory might be overly focused on official sanctions as the sole source of labelling (2008, p. 597). The accounts of the students suggest that labelling occurs earlier, through informal means, and that formal criminal justice responses might not be necessary. This also aligns with earlier research which found that 'the crucial labelling experiences for a juvenile may occur long before he finds his way to court' and that the criminal justice decision only 'represents the end product of a series of institutional reactions to a youth' (Mahoney, 1974, p. 588). These analyses once more underscore the significance of understanding labelling experiences within educational institutions and the factors that contribute to them.

4.1.2 Theory of Reintegrative Shaming: Avoiding the Stigma

Braithwaite's (1989) theory of reintegrative shaming offers another perspective on the development of deviant identity but moves on to identify protective factors. He distinguishes between two forms of shaming: reintegrative and stigmatising. Reintegrative shaming, which encourages the reintegration of offenders into society, can be a sustainable response to

deviance, helping to prevent the formation of a deviant identity (1989, pp. 100-101). In contrast, stigmatising shaming can lead to social exclusion of the delinquent and may inadvertently heighten the allure of deviant subcultures in their search for self-esteem, potentially escalating delinquent behaviour (1989, p. 102). Societies that engage in stigmatisation thus are at risk of creating 'populations of outcasts with no stake in conformity' (1989, p. 102). Braithwaite (1989) argues that reintegrative shaming is essential in creating 'a route to freely chosen compliance', thus serving as an effective form of informal social control (1989, p. 69). He posits that shaming works best in societies with high levels of interdependency, with communitarianism as an archetype of such a societal structure (1989, p. 87). He defines interdependence as the presence of numerous mutual obligations, trust, and a strong sense of group loyalty (1989, p. 86). These aspects closely resonate with the discussions on social control at the beginning of this dissertation. While shaming is primarily reactive, it has a dialectical relationship with preventive social control as effective shaming can help deter future offenses. Therefore, the community characteristics identified at the outset of this dissertation and in Braithwaite's analysis are important not only for preventing deviance but also for sanctioning offenders in a way that prevents reoffending, thereby strengthening social control. Accordingly, the literature on STPP implicitly (e.g. Marsh and Walker, 2022, p. 110; Ally, Beere and Moult, 2021, p. 28; Goldstein *et al.*, 2021, p. 506), sometimes explicitly (Morrison, Blood and Thorsborne, 2005), acknowledges and implements Braithwaite's ideas. They advocate for non-punitive disciplinary systems, emphasising the importance of giving voice to all parties involved, with a particular focus on reintegrating youths who may have become alienated often long before disciplinary action became necessary.

The practical effectiveness of these principles is illustrated by a study by Goldstein et al. (2021), which found that youths in diversion programs, as opposed to those arrested, were less likely to face exclusionary sanctions in the year following their initial incident (2021, p. 507). The authors suggest this might be due to these individuals being perceived more leniently by peers and

teachers, helping them avoid a lasting negative label (2021, p. 507). In line with Braithwaite's idea of reintegrative shaming, these students, rather than being isolated and penalised, were directed to voluntary community programs addressing the root causes of their behaviour (2021, p. 498). A social worker met with the diverted youth and their families to assess their needs and offer services like mentoring or academic support if necessary (2021, p. 499). Like Braithwaite suggests, transgressing students were treated as whole individuals, not merely cast out as deviants (1989, p. 88). Overall, an increasing body of research indicates that reintegrative shaming has positive effects in reducing crime rates and deterring deviant behaviour (for instance, Johnstone, 1999; Rebellon, 2010; Schaible and Hughes, 2011).

4.1.3 Conclusion

Labelling theory posits that individuals who are arrested and labelled as deviants or criminals are subject to differential treatment from their peers and teachers. However, research indicates that official criminal justice sanctions are not essential for effectively labelling youth; this can also be achieved through other authoritative figures or entities, schools in particular. Students' labelling may result in (further) exclusionary discipline, such as school suspension or placement in special classes for delinquents, as well as damage to their social relationships with their families and communities (Kirk and Sampson, 2013, p. 37). Restorative disciplinary reactions may help to avert such negative outcomes.

4.2 Social and Cultural Capital: Why Students Navigate the School Environment Differently

To further understand what may avert labelling and other adverse outcomes of disciplinary processes for one student but not for the other, I will explore the concept of social and cultural capital in the subsequent sections.

4.2.1 The Concept of Cultural and Social Capital

Bourdieu is widely acknowledged as the original thinker of a coherent theory of social and cultural capital (Portes, 1998, p. 3). He found that conventional economic research tended to overlook the non-monetary factors relevant to children's success in school and academia even though these factors, while intangible, may well constitute 'the most disguised and socially determinant educational investments' (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 17). He conceptualises these investments as the ‘domestic transmission of cultural capital’ (1986, p. 17). Bourdieu argues that cultural capital is subtly transmitted within families, being a major contributor to reproducing broader societal structures (1986, p. 17). Cultural capital implies a commitment of personal time for its acquisition and assimilation, resulting in a deeply ingrained disposition that forms one's habitus (1986, p. 18). Having a specific habitus may enhance communication and ease of movement in environments where it is positively received (DiMaggio, 1982, p. 190; Calarco, 2020, p. 226).

Swidler (1986) suggests that it is precisely this aspect of culture which exerts an immediate and significant influence on individual action. She posits that individuals shape their 'strategies of action' – not necessarily with full awareness - based on their 'habits, moods, sensibilities, and views of the world' (1986, p. 277). These factors act as a 'toolkit' to guide action, providing insight into why an individual or group may choose one course of action over another (1986, p. 277). In this conception of culture, she presents an idea which very closely resembles Bourdieu’s later work in which he specifies habitus as ‘systems of durable, transposable dispositions’, meant to ‘function as structuring structures’ (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 53). When applied to this study, the idea of cultural capital implies that students may exhibit diverse attributes aiding their navigation through the school environment. The extent to which a student, either implicitly or explicitly, exhibits qualities that align with the central habitus of their institution, the more effortless and instinctive adherence to norms becomes for them.

Of similar interest for this research is what Bourdieu describes as institutionalised cultural capital. The institutionalised state of cultural capital, he explains, is exemplified by educational qualifications, which somewhat materialise or objectify the cultural capital held by individuals (1986, p. 20). Educational qualifications can be regarded as a ‘certificate of cultural competence’ (1986, p. 20) serving as a clear indication to others of the specific knowledge and abilities possessed by the holder of the qualification. For the purpose of the present research, this aspect of cultural capital underscores the idea that individuals wield varying degrees of authority, which in turn may result in differing influences on the disciplinary process.

Social capital, on the other hand, Bourdieu conceptualises as the sum of resources an individual can access through their membership in a network of relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition (1986, p. 21). This membership effectively acts as a credential, conferring credit and facilitating material or symbolic exchanges (1986, p. 21) that ultimately render ‘material or symbolic benefits’ (1986, p. 22). The size and richness of one's network, and the capital held by those within it, determine the volume of social capital one possesses (1986, p. 21). Social capital is not a given and is continuously created and maintained by engaging in ‘institution rites’, aimed at fostering useful relationships (1986, p. 22). Thus, social capital can be described as the ‘unceasing effort of sociability’ (1986, p. 22).

In a similar attempt to merge sociological and economic theory, Coleman (1988) made an effort to further specify the idea of social capital. According to him, as opposed to classical forms of capital (physical, human), social capital does not reside in one entity but is characterised by its ‘structure of relations between actors and amongst actors’ (1988, p. 98). Yet like other forms of capital, it presents itself to its holder as a means to achieve specific ends (1988, p. 98). Based on the examples of social capital provided by him, it appears that Coleman views social capital primarily as informal mechanisms that provide safety guarantees, enabling smoother human interaction. For instance, merchants who share a common ethnic and religious background

tend to trust each other more, leading to faster and more efficient transactions (1988, p. S99). While social capital can serve as informal safety guarantees that facilitates human interaction in the way described, it is not limited to this function alone. Rather, social capital can be defined more broadly as ‘certain aspects of social structure’ that have value because they can be leveraged to achieve interests (1988, p. S101). From his observations in private schools, he argues that the closer a group is, the more effective the establishment, monitoring, and enforcement of norms can be (1988, S105-S107). Thus, in a (school) community where not only children but also their parents know each other, norms are more likely to be effectively enforced. Generally, families play an important role in his understanding of social capital. For instance, when human capital, such as education, is lacking in a family, increased parental support may still compensate for it (1988, p. S110-S111). Yet, social capital is not confined to the family unit but also extends to a family's external connections, such as their involvement in communal institutions and contact to other families (1988, p. S113).

A principal source of social capital is the internalisation of norms (Portes, 1998, pp. 7–8). Within groups that have a well-defined code of conduct, members hold social capital in the sense that they can rely on fellow members to adhere to the community's established rules (1998, p. 7). Furthermore, such capital created in close-knit communities serves as an effective tool to ‘parents, teachers, and police authorities as they seek to maintain discipline and promote compliance’ (1998, p. 10) among those united in the community. In the same vein, individuals united by a shared burden or belief are more likely to dedicate themselves to the collective welfare than those in communities without such a cohesive foundation. This 'bounded solidarity', arising from a profound identification with the group, is a powerful motivator, compelling members not only to operate within the group's regulatory framework but also to act in the group's interest (1998, p. 8). Accordingly, the closer the integration and the greater a group’s ‘sanctioning capacity’ (1998, p. 8), the more social capital every group member possesses.

In addition to its role in establishing robust informal social control, social capital functions as a source of family support and as an enabler for accessing extended network resources (Portes, 1998, p. 9). For instance, a growing body of research indicates that children raised in single-parent households may face disadvantages due to having one fewer parent available to invest in their education and overall development (1998, p. 11). Access to network resources, which was already established by Bourdieu, is the most widely known and practical category of social capital. It relates to the enhanced ease with which individuals can attain certain goals through the use of their informal networks (1998, p. 12). This access can expedite processes such as job searches due to favourable references. Social capital, however, is not exclusively beneficial; it can also entail disadvantages, which Portes refers to as 'negative social capital' (1998, p. 15). The social capital that arises from a close-knit and cohesive community often requires high levels of conformity from its members, potentially impeding their individual expression and posing barriers to those outside the group (1998, pp. 15-16).

Social capital has also been employed to characterise organisational attributes as opposed to individual traits. In his analysis of the state of the US community, Putnam finds that the most successful societies are characterised by 'generalised reciprocity', a culture where members generally trust one another and are willing to do favours without immediate or specific expectations of return (Putnam, 2000, p. 18). To create a culture in this sense, the more interaction between group members the better. Hence, societies who exhibit a high volume of civic participation and other forms of social interaction have more trusting members (2000, p. 18-19). Accordingly, in some earlier piece of work he had defined social capital as ‘features of social organisation, such as networks, norms, and trust, that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit’ (Putnam, 1993, p. 2). He drew inspiration from observations made by himself and other scholars in Italy, noting that provinces with identical governmental structures exhibited marked disparities in quality of government. He postulated that these variations were not linked to a region’s wealth but rather to distinct levels of civic involvement, such as

memberships in societies and clubs, and the presence of leaders devoted to fairness and integrity (1993, pp. 2-3). His proposal to view social capital as an organisational characteristic, rather than a personal resource, has faced criticism for being circular. For while he asserts that civic engagement, as a manifestation of social capital, is the root of community success, he also derives this insight from his observation that thriving communities display significant levels of such involvement. Social capital becomes 'simultaneously a cause and an effect' (Portes, 1998, p. 19).

As can be seen from the preceding discussion, the concepts of cultural and social capital are not perfectly clear-cut but there still is a growing consensus that social capital effectively explains how individuals gain advantages by virtue of their membership in social groups and networks (Portes, 1998, p. 6). The theory has been criticised for neglecting the role of race and socio-economic status, and thereby downplaying the impact of structural inequality on educational opportunities (Dika and Singh, 2002, p. 44). However, research found that while there is a correlation between academic success and a student's 'active participation in prestigious status culture' (DiMaggio, 1982, p. 190) - operationalised as proficiency in art, music, and literature esteemed by elite groups (1982, p. 191), there is little correlation with parental (socioeconomic) background (198, p. 199). This finding suggests that cultural and social capital may not replace but should rather be seen to complement considerations of the impact of low SES. Even when acknowledging that poverty can structurally impede children's academic success, enhancing other forms of capital may offer an alternative route to address the challenges faced by children from low SES. The critique that social capital inherently overlooks structural disadvantage seems misplaced for another reason, as it can be well argued that indeed Bourdieu originally applied his ideas to explore structural issues (Lamont and Lareau, 1988, p. 159) and how class may favour or disadvantage a child (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990, p. 158). His examination of schools, in particular, concludes that success in this setting often hinges on a child's familiarity with the 'key social and cultural cues' of the dominant class

(Lamont and Lareau, 1988, p. 155) which in turn hinders children from other classes in achieving academic success.

The ideas discussed under the umbrella of social capital have found their way into criminological research as well. Sampson, Raudenbush and Earls (1997) posit that elevated levels of collective efficacy are associated with reduced rates of violence. The concept of collective efficacy suggests that social control relies heavily on mutual trust and shared convictions within a community (1997, p. 919). Community members are more likely to intervene for the common good if they believe their actions will be met with solidarity from others. Like efficacy on the individual level, a community's capacity to achieve collective goals varies. Factors that enhance collective efficacy include long-term residential stability and shared financial contributions, whereas concentrated disadvantage poses a significant threat to it (1997, p. 919). Other research has found that the presence of social capital, in the form of civic engagement, can mitigate the effects of socio-economic disadvantage. Youth growing up in communities characterised by substantial civic participation are considerably less likely 'to end up hooked, booked, or dead', compared to their peers in less engaged communities, when all other factors are held constant (Putnam, 1993, p. 7).

4.2.2 Leveraging Social and Cultural Capital in Challenging School Decisions

In recent years, several US studies have focussed on how and why some parents successfully use forms of capital available to them to oppose school decisions and others do not.

To understand differences in the success of parents contesting school authority, Lareau et al. (1999) argue that any capital's value is context-dependent; it can be highly influential in one environment but not in another (1999, p. 38). The true impact of capital only emerges when institutional responses are considered (1999, p. 38). They argue that cultural and social resources only amount to capital when they actually enhance an individual's

relationship to a given institution (1999, p. 42). A resource can be considered capital only when it is activated and results in a 'moment of inclusion' - an objective demonstration of its beneficial impact (1999, p. 48). The absence of capital or the failure to activate capital in the given context, on the other hand, result in 'social or cultural exclusion' (Lamont and Lareau, 1988, p. 156). Determining what resources qualify as capital therefore depends on the context of its activation and the ability to activate it may require specific skills which are not equally available to all (1999, p. 38).

Of particular interest to the present research is their finding that schools tend to favour trust and cooperation in their relationships with parents (1999, p. 42). They observed that due to the legacy of racial discrimination in the US, black parents often approach schools with more critical attitudes and thus may be in contravention of schools' inherent expectation to the school-parent relationship (1999, p. 42). In contrast, interaction with schools is easier for white parents as they are instinctively complying with the schools' expectation of trust and cooperation more willingly. While black parents' awareness and critical reception of the role of schools also presents a form of capital, it cannot be activated in the school because of the institution's expectation of benevolent compliance. Neither is the role of race the focus of this research, nor can their findings straightforwardly be applied to the South African educational system – notwithstanding the historical disadvantage of black students within this system (Spaull, 2013, p. 436) – but their insights regarding institutional expectations of parents are equally relevant to this research.

Further insights regarding the involvement of parents are provided by research which explored the role of social capital in US primary school (Horvat, Weininger and Lareau, 2003; Lareau, 2011). The authors sought to establish what enables families to resist decisions and judgments made by schools regarding their children (Horvat, Weininger and Lareau, 2003, p. 323). They found that parents from middle-class backgrounds were more likely to intervene on behalf of their children and contest primary assessments made by the school (2003, p. 346). Working-class and low-income families were

found to be significantly less likely to challenge their child's teacher assignment or a diagnosis of developmental disorder by the school (2003, pp. 332, 336, 338). They show a greater tendency to accept the educational expertise of school personnel unopposed (Lareau, 2011, p. 198) even though this submissiveness does not necessarily show in relation to other experts (2011, pp. 213-214). One possible explanation for these differences is that, in addition to having more extensive financial resources, middle-class families possess a 'distinct set of cultural repertoires' when interacting with institutions (2011, p. 265).

Lareau et al. (2018) came to similar conclusions about the capability and willingness of certain parents to leverage their personal and network resources to oppose decisions by school authorities in two elite schools in the US. The school community in their research was characterised by a high 'capacity for mobilization, as well as the expertise of highly educated professionals and an expectation that officials will respond to their preferences' (2018, pp. 31-32). Their findings suggest that high SES parents in elite school districts are more willing to take collective action against schools due to these plentiful resources available to them (2018, p. 31).

Whereas this growing body of research suggests that white higher SES parents in the US are prone to challenging schools (Calarco, 2020, p. 224) some schools may opt to completely avoid confrontation. In public schools in wealthy school districts, children with 'helicopter parents' might be exempted from standard rules by teachers as a strategy to dodge conflicts with their parents as they are often central to the school's everyday functioning (Calarco, 2020, p. 238).

In summary, research suggests that parents at privileged educational institutions may heavily influence disciplinary proceedings.

5 Research Rationale

The literature review revealed two major conflicting philosophies in school discipline and explored trends in school discipline as well as risks associated

with it. School disciplinary action can lead to significant disadvantages for the students subjected to it, potentially deepening a path towards deviant behaviour. These risks are not uniformly distributed across school communities but are more prevalent in those grappling with a range of social issues. Typically, the literature on (in)discipline and its potential consequences focuses on the negative, aiming to identify the root causes of adverse outcomes for schools and students.

This study adopts a different perspective. As indicated in the introduction of this dissertation, it investigates former Model C schools in South Africa, renowned for their excellent reputation and superior financial resources compared to other public schools in the country. While internationally there is a growing body of research on the contribution of informal social control to school discipline, this theme remains unexplored in South Africa. In the same vein, the influence of privilege on the educational environment has not been an issue in South African educational research. This research thus aimed to examine two aspects: firstly, whether schools in South Africa which exhibit the characteristics identified in literature that contribute to informal control, maintain an effective disciplinary environment despite supposedly soaring levels of indiscipline; secondly, it observes the use of various forms of capital by schools, students, and parents in school discipline incidents.

Overall, this dissertation was motivated by the belief that examining highly functional disciplinary environments can reveal practices and safeguards that might be applicable to other educational settings.

6 Methodology

This study uses a qualitative design to explore the role of social and cultural capital in disciplinary proceedings at former Model C schools in Cape Town. While much research examining the relationship between parental involvement and children's academic success has used quantitative methods, it has been argued that qualitative research is equally valuable and necessary because it allows for the understanding of 'the underlying actions that produce

or expend social capital' in schools (Horvat, Weininger and Lareau, 2003, pp. 319–320). By employing a qualitative approach, this study aims to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the qualities and actions that constitute social (and cultural) capital in school discipline.

6.1 Research Sites

This research was conducted in two ex-Model C schools. The focus on public schools was due to the applicability of national and provincial school legislation, particularly regarding disciplinary proceedings, which does not extend to independent schools. The only significant regulatory stipulation for independent schools is found in Section 46(3)(a) SASA, which requires the education department to register a school only if it is satisfied that 'the standards to be maintained by such school will not be inferior to those in comparable public schools'. Consequently, independent schools have considerable autonomy in organising their disciplinary processes, resulting in varied disciplinary formalities across different institutions. This variability and lack of comparability rendered independent schools unsuitable for this study, despite the potential presence of significant social and cultural capital in some independent schools noted for wealth accumulation and elite status.

However, considering the description given in the introduction, former Model C schools also possess characteristics promising insightful observations into the dynamics of social and cultural capital. While their fees are lower than in some private institutions, they are still beyond the reach of most South Africans. Fees for ex-Model C schools in Cape Town range from ca. 30,000 Rand to almost 80,000 Rand (Bredeveldt, 2024).[1] This suggests that the majority of their students come from a certain level of wealth which is typically associated with the presence of social capital (Sechi *et al.*, 2023, p. 4).

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[1] Fees for former Model C schools appear to vary considerably based on their location and over time. In 2008, Pampallis (p. 16) noted an average fee of around 12,000 Rand for these types of schools.

Accordingly, it was to be expected that parents at these schools possess considerable amounts of social capital. Moreover, students often attend these schools not merely for proximity but with a clear intention to prepare for future success. Given the fee structure, it is reasonable to assume that parents are supporting their children in this choice, indicating active involvement in their children's education. This involvement, on the other hand, gives reason to expect that parents would in fact leverage capital available to them for their children's benefit. These factors collectively suggest that former Model C schools are a fertile ground for studying the presence of social (and other forms of) capital in school disciplinary cases.

Accessing schools can be a challenging task due to the sensitive nature of the environment. Schools, particularly those with an affluent student body, will be cautious not to attract unwanted attention, which may later harm their reputation. Furthermore, schools may be reluctant to participate due to their lack of time and competing priorities (Oates and Riaz, 2016, p. 62). Their primary focus is the education of their students, leaving little room to devote resources and attention to other endeavours, including research studies. However, I assumed that because of their financial stability and greater autonomy, financially privileged schools may be less restricted and more willing to participate in research than other schools. Additionally, this study required only a few meetings and therefore did not impose a significant burden on the schools' resources. Unlike long-term research that requires continuous involvement from teachers and other staff, this study did not necessitate such ongoing commitment from the school community. Finally, these schools pride themselves on upholding the highest standards of integrity and are committed to providing an excellent education for their students. I assumed that this would create a conducive atmosphere for this research.

Notwithstanding these considerations, gaining access to the schools differed in difficulty. After securing authorisation from the WCED to conduct research in public schools within the Western Cape (see Appendix A), I initially

contacted the headteachers of five ex-Model C schools. Except for one institution, none responded to my initial email; some responses came only after subsequent outreach to other staff members. The delayed responses to my inquiries were attributed to heavy workloads since my request coincided with the beginning of a new quarter. One school declined participation, citing significant structural changes and a desire to avoid further disruptions. Another school did not reply at all. Only after seeking contact through an alumnus of this school, the school explained that they had considered but chose not to participate, without providing a specific reason for this decision. According to them, they had merely forgotten to inform me. Finally, one school, through its head of discipline, agreed to participate in the study and recommended another staff member as a suitable participant. However, after themselves suggesting a suitable time range for the interviews and one time postponing the timeframe, the head of discipline ceased responding to my emails.

In designing this research, I had been concerned that educators might be hesitant to participate, fearing that the study could expose inconsistencies or unjust practices within their disciplinary procedures. Generally, these apprehensions proved unfounded. The prevailing sentiment among participants could best be characterised as ‘we have nothing to hide’. Participants rather conveyed a sense of pride in their institutions' handling of disciplinary issues. They appeared quite comfortable discussing their schools' practices and responding to the questions posed. With one exception, there was no evident hesitation to participate. Initial reservations from this individual were alleviated by a thorough explanation of the stringent confidentiality measures in place.

6.2 Method of Data Collection

While a document analysis of past disciplinary proceedings could have been informative, its feasibility was limited by privacy concerns related to the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA). The sensitive nature of such documents and the necessity for parental consent for the release of student

information rendered this approach impractical. However, using interviews as the primary data source proved to be highly valuable. The interviews allowed participants, including a principal, two Heads of Discipline, and another educator involved in discipline as a House Head, to reflect on their extensive experiences with school discipline. The interview format provided a suitable platform for participants to share information and perspectives, including insights that would not typically be recorded in formal documents. To safeguard their identities, I used pseudonyms. Participants from one school are designated as 'AA' and 'AB', while those from the other school are labelled as 'BA' and 'BB'.

I used a questionnaire of 42 questions for this study (see Appendix B). However, the original structure of the questionnaire, which assumed that these schools frequently conduct SGB disciplinary proceedings, was not entirely suitable. The interviewees had difficulty recalling more than a few significant disciplinary cases that led to SGB proceedings, if any. Consequently, I omitted questions targeting severe cases and formal proceedings, which had initially been a major focus of the questionnaire. Instead, I chose to concentrate on detailed probing during discussions about specific disciplinary cases, to ensure the collection of enough relevant data.

To address privacy concerns, the research was designed abstractly. I formulated the questions to focus on the overarching issue of disciplinary proceedings in the respective schools and the factors influencing their outcomes, rather than eliciting information on specific, identifiable cases. However, given that disciplinary proceedings inherently involve individual parties, the interviews inevitably brought forth accounts of particular cases. These were discussed without revealing any identifiable information about the parties involved.

The interviews lasted 54 minutes on average, the shortest being 43 and the longest 74 minutes. After informing participants on the aims and objectives of this research (see Appendix C), I recorded the interviews with permission of

each candidate (see Appendix D) using my tablet computer and transcribed them later using riverside.fm. I took notes during and after the interviews to provide additional context to the recordings and as backup in case any of the recordings were lost.

Researchers often do not provide a comprehensive description of their sampling method even though researchers must develop a prior sampling strategy and engage in on-going evaluation throughout the research process to ensure meaningful sampling (Guetterman, 2015). As requested, in the schools participating I was able to speak to the head of discipline. Given their role, the head of discipline is privy to all disciplinary proceedings within their school. This comprehensive exposure ensures that their perspective on discipline is all-encompassing, mitigating the risk of a skewed viewpoint that might arise from exposure to only a limited number of cases.

I encountered limitations in specifying my preferences for the second interviewee at each school. The schools, citing other commitments and strict time constraints, offered their proposed second interviewees as the only viable options. One school initially proposed a single, collective interview, although this was later negotiated. Under these circumstances, I accepted the interviewees provided by the schools without contesting their choices.
This may prompt concerns of sample bias due to the schools' role in selecting the second interviewee. However, the primary objective of this exploratory study was to gather comprehensive information on disciplinary proceedings. Therefore, the preference for participants was based specifically on their experience in disciplinary matters. This criterion was met by all participants. Moreover, the consistency in the accounts provided by all participants indicates that they were appropriate representatives for the study, mitigating concerns about the inappropriateness of the sample (which will be addressed in further detail below).

6.3 Analytical Strategy

My analysis aimed to discern how social control as well as social and cultural capital influenced disciplinary proceedings and their outcomes at the studied schools. I was guided by the theoretical propositions outlined in the first part of this dissertation (Yin, 2018, p. 243). I organised and scrutinised the collected data for themes the literature links to social and cultural capital.

Initially, the analysis focused on the manifestation of social and cultural capital through direct parental involvement in disciplinary proceedings. This involved investigating if parents effectively used personal and network resources on behalf of their children. Particular attention was given to parental communication strategies and their attitudes within these proceedings. This also included examining familiarity with teachers and staff, connections among parents (intergenerational closure), and classical network resources like connections with professionals such as lawyers. The analysis also looked for indications of parental engagement in school life, including participation in school events, contributions to community activities, and volunteerism. Finally, I examined the data for the institutional dimension of social and cultural capital. This involved assessing aspects such as a distinct school ethos, a shared belief system, the level of community integration and participation, and the attitudes of students and school personnel. I manually coded the scripted interviews based on these themes.

To minimise potential biases (Yin, 2018, p. 243), I refrained from using an entirely rigid analytical framework, allowing for a degree of inductive analysis. This approach facilitated the emergence of themes which, while not aligning with the categories identified above, were nonetheless recurrent and evident across schools.

6.4 Limitations

Besides general limitations of qualitative research (Babbie, 2010, pp. 326–328), limiting research to only two schools raises the concern of producing an insufficient and potentially biased sample. Unfortunately, if schools opted not

to participate despite my various efforts of getting them on board, there is little I could do to change that. There are a limited number of schools that theoretically meet the criteria for this research, and I was unable to secure further access. However, I believe that additional interviews were not necessary to fulfil the objectives of this research, as it is exploratory in nature and I reached a point of theoretical saturation. The narratives provided by the interviewees were remarkably consistent, with only marginal differences across participants and schools. Some interviewees have occupied their roles in school discipline for a decade or more and have served in various schools over the years, with some having several decades of school experience. Their experiences and observations therefore cover a substantial period, providing them with a broad basis for comparison. Yet, they consistently relayed the same story after many years in the school environment, which equates to many generations of students and their parents. Hence, the breadth of experience possessed by a single interviewee is ample and, even though they only account for the experiences of one individual, one interviewee's insights are considerably diverse due to the high volume of different students and parents they meet throughout their professional life. Ultimately, an informal discussion with the headteacher of another former Model C school before commencement of this research, though less structured compared to the formal interviews, yielded information that was strikingly similar.

The circle of interviewees was sufficient to illuminate the unique disciplinary characteristics of these schools. Given the exploratory nature, in particular, these interviews were enough to reveal first insights that can subsequently serve as a basis for future research in other schools. For the same reason inquiring about disciplinary proceedings more generally rather than examining specific cases was sufficient at this stage.

Due to practical concerns, this study did not include interviews with parents and students, which may be a significant limitation given the main objective is to understand the role of children's social and cultural capital which mainly relies on their parents' circumstances. Obtaining personal accounts from

parents of delinquent students regarding their responses to school decisions simply seemed too challenging. Some parents may be open to discussing their actions, while others may be hesitant due to concerns about potential negative perceptions of their children and parenting. This could be particularly true if the parents believe that their actions were justified and helped their child avoid consequences perceived unfair or overly harsh. They may be unwilling to acknowledge any discrepancies between their perception of doing the right thing and the legitimacy of their intervention. Therefore, I did not conduct interviews with parents. However, school staff involved in disciplinary proceedings can provide sufficient insights into the effects of parents' social capital. When students through their parents activate capital and take measures in disciplinary proceedings, these actions are directed at school representatives, and therefore, school staff can testify to the issues of interest. While this is only a secondary source of information, it still provides valuable insights into the role of parents' capital in disciplinary proceedings.

In the same vain, conducting interviews with former students who have undergone disciplinary proceedings could have offered valuable insights into the labelling process but presented similar, if not even bigger, challenges. Therefore, for practicality reasons and lack of necessity, I also chose not to pursue student accounts as a source of data.

During the analytical process, I was aware of the possibility that participants may have omitted unfavourable information to manage their school's reputation. While it did not seem that interviewees felt pressured to downplay or conceal aspects of disciplinary proceedings, there were occasions when I sensed they might have been more open and willing to share additional information had they been in a private setting or held a higher position within the school's hierarchy. Moreso, schools and teachers may not even aware that they are excluding relevant information. They may not have been aware of the issue of interest or hindsight bias may have influenced their perception of how proceedings transpired.

Finally, data outcome depended on the staff I had access to, as different teachers have different knowledge. While I initially anticipated that the Head of Discipline would possess the most comprehensive insights, it seems that the principal had an equally, if not more, extensive understanding of the matters at hand. I partly attribute this to their senior position within the school, coupled with the fact that all personnel are ultimately accountable to them instead of the other way round. It is possible that, had I engaged in discussions with the principal of the other school, additional details might have emerged. However, given that the narratives provided by the principal largely mirrored those of the other interviewees, it is unlikely that any essential or critical information was overlooked

6.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance for conducting this research was obtained from a University of Cape Town Faculty of Law Research Ethics Committee (see Appendix E).

The ethical implications of conducting research within privileged educational settings are generally less pronounced than in studies involving marginalised communities. Issues related to power imbalances, often a concern in the latter, are not as applicable in the context of privileged schools. In fact, there has been relatively limited research on privileged educational environments (Lareau et al., 2018, p. 2), which might even indicate a power dynamic skewed in favour of these institutions. This scarcity of research could be attributed to the resistance of privileged schools to scrutiny, posing challenges for researchers in accessing information from these environments.

Nevertheless, it is important to consider the implications of research in any setting to guarantee that it is conducted in an ethical and responsible manner (Israel, 2015, p. 3). This is particularly true as this research took place in an environment for minors and research with minors faces a variety of ethical implications (Goredema-Braid, 2010). For instance, interviews in this research could have been perceived by students who were subjected to disciplinary proceedings as adding another layer to their identity as a deviant, which could

be detrimental to their well-being and further development. However, this research avoided negative impacts on minors for two reasons. Firstly, the interviews were not focused on individual incidents but rather addressed disciplinary issues in a general sense, ensuring students' anonymity. Secondly, the research required minimal school visits and no direct engagement with students. Students' privacy and confidentiality therefore was not breached and no student was identified.

In general, confidentiality was a critical concern in this research. The disclosure of the schools' identity could harm its reputation and negatively affect the privacy and well-being of students and staff. Additionally, contents of disciplinary proceedings are of a sensitive nature, and I had to ensure that my presence in the schools did not reflect negatively on any party to these proceedings. News and gossip can travel quickly in a school which may result in already forgotten incidents resurfacing, having detrimental effects on the students involved. To protect the identity of schools and participants of the proceedings, pseudonyms were used and any specific geographical information was omitted. A data management protocol was implemented to further protect participants' privacy. Data was anonymised and stored on encrypted devices and platforms. I destroyed the original interview files and stored only de-identified transcripts.

7 Findings

7.1 The Research Sites

The educational institutions chosen for this research are among the most prestigious in the province. According to their websites, these institutions aim to nurture students who are academically proficient, socially aware, ethically grounded, and resilient. These schools, which opened their doors to other than white students only after the end of Apartheid, have established a formidable reputation for providing excellent academic education. These schools typically boast a 100% pass rate in the National Senior Certificate (NSC) examinations and they serve as top feeder schools to the country's

best universities. Each year, they receive a significantly higher number of applications than the available spots.

Situated in the affluent Southern suburbs of Cape Town, these schools boast expansive and historic grounds. Students here benefit from a wide array of extracurricular activities, supported by well-furnished facilities and sports venues. Extracurricular activities, including musical education and a strong emphasis on sports, are central to the student experience. Participation in various societies and regular interactions with non-governmental organisations enrich students' awareness and responsiveness to social issues. The schools employ house heads who guide students through their educational journey, fostering an integrative atmosphere that connects various age groups. This system ensures ongoing support, routine, and stability for the students. Overall, the extensive time students spend within the school and its community highlights the immersive nature of these educational institutions. The deep involvement and exposure within the school environment likely foster strong bonds between the students and the school. This attachment is instrumental in establishing a heightened level of social control (Payne, 2004, pp. 4–5).

These schools boast not only a rich historical legacy and a robust academic reputation, but they also enjoy a superior financial standing compared to other public institutions. They require significant termly fees for attendance, affording them privileges that are not common in most South African schools. Among these advantages is the provision of full-time social workers, employed directly by the schools, unlike in typical public institutions where a single departmental social worker may be responsible for several schools.
In some schools, there might even be no counsellor at all, despite a consensus among teachers regarding the importance of counselling in addressing deviant behaviour in students (Padayachee and Gcelu, 2022, p. 7).

One head of discipline noted that their school employs as many, if not more, additional teachers than those financed by the department, resulting in an advantageous teacher-student ratio:

> ‘I mean, especially if you think about schools in informal settlements, they're sitting with what, 60 odd kids in the class. So, we have more than half our teachers are paid by our SGB, whereas in most schools they wouldn't have school fees or very limited ones so then there are only department paid teachers.’ (*AB)*

These schools not only have substantially more teachers than the average school, but the demeanour of the interviewees suggests a highly motivated teacher body, too. The interviewed educators were open and passionate about their roles, willing to engage in extended conversations, and clearly conveying the unanimous sentiment that the well-being and success of their students are of utmost importance. Teachers’ resignation other research has found to be prevalent in South African schools (for instance, Segalo and Rambuda, 2018, p. 5) is not present in these schools.

All participants demonstrated an acute awareness of the privilege enjoyed by their respective schools. In most interviews, participants characterised their institutions as 'fortunate' in contrast to 'less fortunate' schools, specifically those in townships and rural areas:

> ‘We're actually quite fortunate at our school. It's all very minor things. I think it's probably one because it's a girl’s school and two probably also with the type of kids that we have here. It's not to say we don't have any disciplinary issues but it's very, very minimal […] I mean like from a more fortunate background. So, I think like, you know, we're not, our kids are not like from areas where there's like gangsterism and drugs and stuff like that. So, if I say from the type of kids, it's like they haven't been exposed to those kind of elements

> fortunately. So yeah, so we don't have ... problems directly with drugs and that kind of thing.' (*AA*)

This observation implies that even with the availability of financial aid programs and scholarships for poor students, the termly fees generally lead to a student body primarily composed of individuals from higher SES. As outlined in the literature review, an individual's habitus is fundamental to their strategic approach to action. Since habitus is closely linked to class, students in this school are likely to have similar action approaches. This homogeneity may be a key factor in the low incidence of indiscipline observed in these institutions.

In addition, interviews with participants indicated that these schools not only enjoy a special status in public perception but also attract a distinct type of student. In line with the schools' reputation for high academic standards, they draw students who are highly motivated and academically capable:

> 'A large percentage of our students are not here to mess around. They are here for the academic excellence of the school and you know being one of the number one schools in the country in terms of our academics. Our students are aware of that and they are aware of that status and parents are aware of it, so they come here not to mess around, they come here to learn.' (*BA)*

Participants from both schools report that students who attend these institutions have a strong intrinsic academic motivation and, as a result, largely accept the structures and rules of the school environment:

> 'We are pretty fortunate because being a high-performing schools the pupils know when they arrive here what the expectations are in the classroom. So yeah, as I said being a high-performing school the expectation is we are here for academics and we would find a lot of the time in class if

> there's a child misbehaving or talking too much or disrupting the class the other students in the class would normally deal with it. They would say that can you please be quiet and we, yeah, we would like to listen to what the teacher says. […] Yeah, we are pretty fortunate in the class that the students do behave quite well.' (*BA)*

These students inherently possess the attitudes required to successfully navigate the school environment, negating the need for external efforts to align them with the school's norms. This natural conformity could suggest a successful transfer of cultural capital from their parents, that is, the instinctive understanding of how to behave in ways that secure approval in these institutions. They are well aware, it seems, of the 'key social and cultural cues' (Lamont and Lareau, 1988, p. 155). In addition to their own motivation, students are faced with positive peer pressure which acts as an effective mechanism of social control. Criminological research found that fear for peer and family disapproval is particularly effective in deterring youth from deviance (Rebellon, 2010, p. 995).

Parents are actively involved in these schools. While their involvement includes participation mandated by legislation in the SGB - as every school is required to have a specified number of parents on its board - it is not limited to formal SGB participation. Parental involvement can also extend to providing services for the school that draw upon the parents' professional backgrounds:

> 'So, we have a lot of parents like that are willing and that do help on the SGB. I know in the past when we were looking into wanting to do some building, some parents who were architects volunteered some services free of charge just to give a few ideas before we actually started doing things properly. […] But there are also some parents that are very busy with their jobs, and they don't have the capacity to do that.' (*AB)*

In one of the schools, the professional expertise of the parents is used in that they offer information and training on the topic of restorative justice. This creates a somewhat dialectical situation where one of the potential key participants in the disciplinary process plays a significant role in shaping the framework of these proceedings:

> 'We've got parents that are in diverse careers and that can assist us. So, we generally would call on our parents for any assistance with regards to restorative justice. In actual fact, we have two parents. The one is the, I think she's the head of the restorative justice process at [university A] and her partner is the head at [university B].' (*BA)*

Some parents have been acquainted since their children's primary school days, and long-standing friendships among students can lead to continued interactions between their families. In one disciplinary instance highlighted, the parents of the student who was bullied were friends with the parents of the child who was bullying:

> 'Their parents were called in as well and... Yeah, as I said, the parents are quite supportive. So, and also because they've been coming a long time together, it was quite difficult for the parents as well, because they would chat like after school, we'd hear them say like, aren't they friends yet again and that kind of thing.' (*AA)*

The relationship between those parents exemplifies what Coleman refers to as intergenerational closure (1988, S105-S107). Parents of children socialising with each other often correlates with shared values, leading to an intensified state of norm clarification and, consequently, enforcement.

In one school, the sense of connectedness extends beyond close personal relationships and some parents are willing to support anyone who is a member of the school community. A teacher recounted an incident during the

recent taxi strike in Cape Town, where parents offered lodging to students from distant areas, ensuring their continued attendance at school. This willingness to provide support within the community is bolstered by the significant number of alumni parents, who are deeply committed to the school's ethos, as their Head of Discipline analysed:

> ‘Parents at our school are very caring, not just about their children but about the school and all the children in the school. We have a lot of the time where we can call on parents […] Parents know why they want their children at [this school], and a lot of our parents are Ex-[school members], they are ex-pupils from our school. So they know the ethos and the status of the school. […] We have that level of connection with some of our parents. It's a very family-oriented school. We are very caring school. We care about each and every pupil that walk through our gates.’ (*BA)*

This quote once more underscores the closely-woven fabric of the school community, resulting in a heightened level of interpersonal trust, which is central to the development of social capital (Coleman, 1988, p. S99). Moreover, the shared ethos and alumni status of the parents suggest a deliberate choice of the school for their children, motivated by an affinity for the spirit or 'habitus' which permeates and is cultivated within the institution. The children of former school members are not merely exposed to the school's perspectives on values, but this exposure is consistently reinforced at home by their parents. The reinforcement of values that promote smooth integration into the school's environment can be seen as another example of parents transmitting their cultural capital to their children (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 17). As previously indicated, the unified approach to these values among various parents may also act as an additional strengthening factor through intergenerational closure. Overall, the cross-generational membership in this school lays the groundwork for substantially increased levels of social control as well as the existence of social and cultural capital in the student body.

In one of the schools, interviewees often alluded to the necessity of protecting the institution's reputation. Given the schools' (perceived) exceptional status, there were pronounced responses to students engaging in behaviours deemed inappropriate for their school environment, such as underage drinking or smoking, especially when displayed on social media. These actions were not viewed as private matters by those affiliated with the school community; instead, schools considered them to fall within their jurisdiction. Consequently, students, particularly those in formal leadership roles, are expected to uphold high standards that encompass their private lives as well. This dynamic could be perceived as a form of negative social capital described by Portes (1998, pp. 15-16) since it puts pressure on students to behave in certain ways even when they are not in school:

> ‘Let's say one of our prefects, our school leaders, the pupil leaders, would vape. And you know, obviously as a leader, you've got to set an example. So, the other kids would see it [on social media] and they would report it to us. So, naturally because the child’s a leader we have to act. And then the parent may come and say, but it happened at home and I give my child permission to do it at home, it's got nothing to do with the school. But it actually does have a lot to do with the school because your child serves in a leadership role in the school. And it's always getting parents to understand that fine line between when the school has to intervene and when they don't need to intervene.’ (*BA)*

In this example, students are not only held to high standards of conduct, even outside of school, but their peers also play a role in upholding these norms by informing the school about deviations, once more highlighting the existence of prosocial peer pressure This collective effort to maintain order, as defined by the schools and their communities, illustrates the presence of robust social control. This statement furthermore underscores the school's readiness to override parental authority if deemed necessary, further reinforcing the

stringency of the schools' normative expectations. From the school's perspective, the guidelines for acceptable conduct are clearly defined, and in situations where its reputation is at stake, the school is reluctant to entertain any challenges to its assessment.

In summary, the interviews revealed that these schools are unique in terms of their resource availability and the quality of education provided. Students become part of a tightly-knit community, where values and expectations are well-defined. Attending these schools adds a dimension to their identity that is not shed at the end of the school day but extends into their personal lives. Just as these schools follow a holistic educational approach, being a part of these institutions is an all-encompassing experience for the students.

7.2 The Disciplinary Process

The formalised structure of the WCED disciplinary process, as articulated in the provincial regulations, has a noticeable impact on teachers' description of disciplinary procedures within their respective schools. Interviewees were acutely aware of the stringent framework established by Western Cape legislation and WCED protocols and pointed to the strict formalities that come with it:

> ‘’Because that's how we have to. You can't just come in and say let's just all talk about it. And so, the procedure is set out. You know, the way, the letter, the timing that it's got to go out. You've got to give seven days’ notice to the parents.’ (*BB)*

All interviewees in accordance with the RDSE employed legal terminology and, for instance, referred to the gathering of facts as 'investigations'. This adoption of legalistic language lead to some interesting statements where interviewees seemed more akin to prosecutors than to educators, as exemplified by the following account:

> ‘And sometimes you've got to be willing to say, […] we just can't go into it because we just don't have enough on the child

> right now. Because you hear something happen, but you want justice, but right now there's not enough sticking to this child to actually bring them in and that can happen.' (*BB)*

At the same time, interviewees expressed the opinion that the formality of SGB proceedings can hinder the disciplinary process. They believed that treating the child as an accused party on trial, rather than as a participant in an educational intervention, obstructs the resolution of the conflict. Lawyers, in particular, were seen as potentially complicating matters, although the presence of lawyers is a very rare occurrence in these schools:

> 'We haven't had the need to this year yet [to deal with lawyers], but it depends. […] In previous schools I have yeah and it's generally it makes it a little bit more difficult to deal with it because the lawyer [… would try] to get the defender off, trying to defend and clear the defender's name […] It makes it difficult and drags out the process that could have been easier. But we not even had that here yet.' (*BA)*

However, in these schools, severe disciplinary action is rarely ever needed. With few exceptions transgressions are medium to minor and can be addressed with rather mild consequences, after which normality resumes. The disparity in the severity and frequency of incidents compared to other schools is immense:

> 'I've been in other schools where I served in the same role and by this time of year, I would probably have had ten disciplinary hearings, so they do differ.' (*BA)*

These schools are far removed from the realities faced by other public schools where researchers have identified 'trends showing that the main problems experienced include school-based violence in the form of violent crimes such as murder, attempted murder and assault, corporal punishment, rape, statutory rape and sexual assault and robbery' (Reyneke, 2015, p. 58).

Due to the rarity of severe indiscipline incidents, it was unsurprising that participants showed a preference for avoiding formal disciplinary proceedings that involve the SGB. In one of the schools, for instance, the Head of Discipline endeavours to address disciplinary issues before they necessitate SGB involvement. This preference is influenced by several factors. Interviewees' accounts made it clear that the SGB is usually involved only in cases where suspension or expulsion is under consideration. In other cases, with the SGB members being predominantly working professionals, the Head of Discipline seeks to resolve disciplinary issues informally to prevent additional burden on the SGB or the principal. But again, instances warranting such serious measures are infrequent. And even in case of a serious transgression, students get second chances. One school's principal expressed their belief in the effectiveness of supporting students within the school community. They prefer to encourage lasting behavioural change in students rather than opting for suspension or expulsion:

> 'Sounds funny saying that, but some schools do break kids. They just wanna, you're wrong, you're rubbish, you just get out of here. And I think we're looking for ways to try and keep everybody but improve what they do, to just get them to realise it won't happen again.' (*BB)*

Another reason for preventing SGB proceedings is that, if contested by the student, these proceedings escalate to the WCED. While WCED proceedings are pending, the school cannot enforce any internal sanctions. This situation can lead to students continuing their regular activities without facing immediate repercussions, given that WCED proceedings can last for several months.

Finally, on a more pragmatic note, the tendency to handle disciplinary cases in-house originates from schools' experience that the WCED is generally reluctant to agree with the schools in the rare case they are seeking to administer severe disciplinary measures:

> 'Took that as a direct threat to the teacher. […] And the department said, no, you may not expel. You have to keep him in the school. And he's still in the school and it's fine but it's that sort of thing you think, okay, so what will not, what will the department say yes to you?' (*BB)*

The interviewee just cited reported that reaching a consensus with the WCED on expulsions is a challenge experienced across the province. SASA stipulates that every child in South Africa is entitled to an education and must be enrolled in school. However, once a student is expelled, schools are hesitant to admit them. As a result, the WCED is reluctant to sign off on the expulsion of students, thus ensuring that they remain – at least formally – within the school system:

> 'Yeah. Because a lot of the schools, particularly in the township areas, they say we don't want another one. We've got too many in the system already pulling out knives and fighting and that. We're not going to take another one. So, they're just literally going to cause more trouble on the street.' (*BB)*

The WCED's reluctance to endorse expulsions, as evidenced by its infrequent approval of such measures, suggests an aversion to a practice widely recognised as a contributing factor to the STPP. However, this approach appears not to be underpinned by a WCED's comprehensive action plan for managing discipline, but rather seems driven by a formal commitment to uphold a student's right to education.

The interviews therefore show that it is up to schools to find their own effective ways of discipline. Interestingly, although formally barred from taking part in disciplinary committees set up by the SGB, in both schools the principal is heavily involved in these matters as well. As became clear, Heads of Discipline, principals and SGBs closely cooperate and communicate before any official investigation commences. Only if both prima facie deem that SGB

proceedings are necessary will the Head of Discipline begin formal investigations.

One interviewee reported that all over the Western Cape, schools may signal to parents of transgressing students that they will eventually push for expulsion, suggesting it might be better for the child to be withdrawn voluntarily to avoid lengthy proceedings. Such informal agreements, of course, run contrary to official regulations governing these procedures. As often, the regulations and their practical application are two different things. However, breaches of the regulations dealing with serious misconduct were, unsurprisingly, neither evident nor acknowledged in these institutions. In the rare event of a formal disciplinary hearing, it was reported that the rules concerning due process would be followed with precision, as schools were sure to face challenges if any procedural misconduct occurred.

The absence of exclusionary sanctions and formalised disciplinary proceedings in these schools suggests that instances of discipline are unlikely to lead to the negative labelling experiences discussed in chapter 4.1.1. In these educational environments, transgressing students are generally not perceived as 'troublemakers' in need of exclusion, but rather as individuals who require guidance to correct their missteps. However, this is not necessarily due to procedural safeguards within these institutions. Rather, it is because there is seldom indiscipline of a nature that calls for such measures. In addition, although the RDSE provide a loophole that could categorise a wide range of behaviours as serious (see 2.3.1.), potentially leading to exclusionary sanctions for minor transgressions (a practice observed in some US schools and associated with ‘zero tolerance’ approaches, see Skiba, Arredondo and Williams, 2014, p. 550; Mowen, 2017, p. 833; Taylor, Zuber and Shoup, 2023, p. 584), there is no such inclination in these schools.

7.3 Philosophy of Discipline

Prior to the beginning of this research, during informal discussions with a headteacher of an ex-Model C school in Cape Town which is not part of this

research, it became apparent that privileged schools – in line with calls of educational researchers - may have largely implemented additional institutional safeguards to counteract the potential negative consequences associated with school disciplinary action. This headteacher reported that their school had implemented a disciplinary approach that gives priority to restorative justice while refraining from exclusionary retaliation. My expectation to see a similar system in the schools under investigation was not disappointed. They both have a disciplinary system which is guided by restorative principles.

In one, interviewees could not recall a time when a different system was in place, while in the other, implementation of restorative practices has been and is currently underway. Interviewees unanimously agreed that traditional punitive measures, such as detention, failed to achieve their intended objectives. Having realised that punitive measures are unlikely to affect any lasting change in students' attitude, they aspire to educate them on the consequences of their actions instead. Students are typically required to undertake activities relevant to their misconduct. For instance, those caught vaping might be tasked with researching and presenting on the hazards of vaping. Similarly, for bullying, a comparable assignment would be set.

One common disciplinary outcome in these schools is the assignment of community service. These schools typically maintain relationships with NGOs, and in cases of transgressions, students are provided with a list of potential sites where they can fulfil their assigned consequences. One interviewee recollected an instance where a student caught stealing a book was required to assist in the bookstore on weekends as part of their restitution. In other cases, the schools have collaborated with parents connected to NGOs to identify appropriate tasks for students who violated disciplinary rules. These examples illustrate a broader willingness to optimise the mutual benefits within the school community. There appears to be a significant drive to leverage collective knowledge and skills:

> ‘I would always ask parents, to share that knowledge with us as well. Okay. Because I'm an educator, my knowledge is limited to what I do and my profession. But if there's anything you can share, and that is something I have to say, our parents are very willing and keen and eager to share with us. So that we can take that on board for future reference as well, if something like this were to come up again.’ (*BA)*

The processes described by participants, such as relying on parents’ expertise and cooperation with community organisations, portray discipline as a collective effort, potentially engaging various members of the extended school community. The capacity to draw upon diverse network resources for resolving a disciplinary case aligns with what Bourdieu conceptualised as the ‘material and symbolic benefits’ (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 22) of one’s social relations. The standing of the school within the local community empowers it to transform a student's consequence into a lesson rather than mere punishment, thereby facilitating the effective functioning of a restorative discipline system.

Parents play an important role in the disciplinary process of the schools. This was expressed by all interviewees and may best be described in the words of one Head of Discipline:

> ‘So, yeah, parents do play a very important role and you don't want the role to be, you want the role to be supportive of the school. Yeah, and we want to ensure that parents are aware of what our expectations are.’ (*BA)*

Overall, interviewees signified that they expect parents to engage with the process and ensure that the disciplinary actions have a significant impact on their children. It was evident that lack of parental cooperation is perceived as disruptive to the disciplinary process, and such non-cooperation is deemed as a nuisance by the school:

> 'The parent was supportive of the child and not really seeing that what that person did was actually as severe as what it was. So, kind of parents supporting the child even though what the child did was wrong. Yes, we expect parents to support their children but you need to acknowledge actually when your child does do something wrong. Because that child's got to learn from that.' (*AA)*

Interviewees conveyed that although their schools are well-resourced to manage disciplinary matters, the effectiveness of these processes is significantly diminished if parents are unwilling to participate in and support them. Without parental involvement, the process soon reaches its limits:

> 'Our biggest hold factor in terms of trying to install change is the parent component. You know, getting a positive response from the parent, but if the parent says they don't know what to do anymore, it does minimise what you can do as a school in terms of trying to change the child's behaviour as well.' (*BA)*

This perspective among interviewees aligns with previous research discussed in the literature review, which noted that educational institutions hold a firm expectation for parental cooperation and support (Lareau et al., 1999, p. 42), viewing any deviation from this norm with disapproval.

Evidently, the primary objective of these procedures is not to punish – or on the parents' side, (unduly) extract a child from proceedings -, but to facilitate students learning from their mistakes:

> 'And also, we don't really use the word punishment, so we use consequences, and they're always going to be restorative. You don't see the point in just, you know, this is your punishment and you've got to go and do whatever. You want them to actually learn from it.' (*AB)*

As a result, students are not excluded from the school community; instead, they are given opportunities to learn and develop from their mistakes. This approach ensures that the child is not isolated but integrated into a disciplinary framework that emphasises learning, effectively avoiding the assignment of negative labels (Mittleman, 2018, p. 199; Goldstein *et al.*, 2021, p. 507). In the same vein, these schools typically maintain a stringent confidentiality policy to prevent reputational harm to those involved. Individuals not part of the proceedings - be it students or staff - are not informed about the identities of the involved parties or any details. Nevertheless, given that many disciplinary cases recalled by interviewees were linked to social media, it is uncertain how widespread knowledge of the incidents is among students or other members of the school community.

During the interviews it became clear that the possibility to have a restorative process of discipline seems to be largely depending on the superior financial standing of these schools. They possess significantly greater resources and expert staffing, dedicated to addressing issues that require considerable time and expertise in social and psychological fields:

> 'So, we have the head of wellness, one of the deputy principals, and we have a full-time social worker on site every day. And then we have, I think it's three part-time social workers as well. And then we also have two staff members that are teaching, but they also have psychology degrees, they also serve as part time social workers […] I think it comes down to we can afford to have those members of the social workers. We can afford it as a school, but a school that's not able to afford it wouldn't have a social worker on the school. There would be a social worker allocated by the education department, but one social worker might be responsible for 50 different schools. You never get to see them ... So, whereas here with us having a social worker on site if a pupil needs to see a social worker now due to a death

> in the family or we can act immediately we have somebody that can take care of that. Yeah, it's the difference between the lower income schools and the schools that are able to ... to afford those services that we need to provide.' (*BA)*

This is consistent with Ramey's observation that financially underprivileged schools are inclined towards a criminalisation approach to discipline (2015, p. 186), potentially lacking the resources to foster a positive disciplinary environment and resorting to brute force instead. The (perceived) deficiency in capabilities and alternatives has also been identified to be a significant factor in the persistence of corporal punishment by educators within socioeconomically disadvantaged school communities in South Africa (Jethro and White, 2014, p. 61).

While the interviews indicated that the schools adopt a restorative approach to justice, it also became evident that educators in these institutions are not entirely immune to more reactionary perspectives on discipline. When contemplating restorative discipline as opposed to punitive measures, it became clear that the interviewees perceived quite clear limitations to the restorative process. This sentiment was best articulated by one Head of Discipline:

> 'I mean, obviously, depending on the level of severity, if it's something, you know, if there's repeated theft, it has to be punitive in terms of suspension and possible expulsion. But I think in most of the kind of things we deal with, it's not that extreme. So, then the restorative justice makes sense." (*AB)*

In South Africa, this sentiment is not uncommon. Even researchers who principally favour restorative and preventive approaches to discipline acknowledge that this may only be feasible in 'school settings where there are no serious disciplinary problems and transgressions' (Oosthuizen, Wolhunter and Du Toit, 2003, p. 476). In all other environments, they contend, a need for more punitive measures still exists.

As previously noted, all interviewees were aware of the unique social and financial composition of their schools. There seems to be an implicit acknowledgment that the approach to discipline is strongly influenced by these specific circumstances. As this Head of Discipline put it:

> ‘So, we're quite privileged in that sense because we've got good kids here who want to learn and that's their priority. Yes, they're naughty and they do silly things on social media and stuff, but we don't often have to take it to an extreme of a hearing as such.’ (*AB)*

The appreciation of principles of restorative justice thus seems to be based on two factors. The first of these, as mentioned earlier, is that the infractions are generally of a relatively minor nature. These schools typically, if at all, have only one case per year brought to the attention of the SGB. Virtually all disciplinary matters therefore are dealt with informally. While interviewees did not mention any disciplinary cases they considered to be outside the scope of restorative justice in terms of severity, it was interesting to see that they still seemed to struggle with the concept. A certain ambivalence was apparent, with interviewees explicitly supporting restorative justice yet also stressing its limitations quite firmly. This ambivalence is well captured by a principal's seemingly contradictory statement:

> ‘But if they're walking around beating up kids in the school, I don't want you here. If you're a bully and you... There's a point where you just say, this far and no further. But I do believe everybody needs a second chance.’ (*BB)*

Although there had never been an instance of a student exhibiting such behaviour, and despite the principal's repeated assertions that students deserve a second chance, the mere notion of physical aggression within their school community led them to momentarily set aside restorative principles. The second reason for these schools’ favourable view on restorative discipline is the virtual absence of repeat offenders. Students rarely reoffend which is

fortunate as in these high-end institutions there seems to be little tolerance for repeated mistakes:

> 'And again, it's a first offense for most of them, so you generally take a ... more restorative approach because you want to help them to learn from mistakes.' (*AB)*

One interviewee went even further and expressed that it is their special student body and their receptiveness to the disciplinary process who allows them to follow a restorative approach in the first place:

> 'My experience has been that students react very well to our methods of discipline and our procedures that we have in our school. They are amenable to change as well. That is why we are able to look at taking this option of restorative justice as opposed to punitive justice. We do feel that our students will adapt to it and will take it on board.' (*BA)*

This appears to be in sharp contrast to the situation in other schools, where repeated infractions are commonplace rather than rare, as recounted by this Head of Discipline with experience across various institutions:

> 'Whereas in other schools that I've experienced where sometimes you can, it doesn't matter what sanction you impose, whether it be punitive, restorative or community service**,** whatever, if the child wants to break that law again, they will go ahead and do it.' (*BA)*

Simultaneously, there was recognition that students are seldom solely responsible for the transgressions they commit. However, even while acknowledging that there is more to a disciplinary case than just the straightforward facts, educators expressed a strong need to balance these individual circumstances with the overall functioning of the school:

> 'So, I think we're realising more and more everybody wants justice, everybody wants people to have their heads taken off, everybody wants people to cleanse the school and say we don't have people like that here. But very often it comes out of a very difficult background and people who are, particularly if it's a racist thing, you know that you're dealing with the family and you're dealing with the parents or the uncles or… the kid is just manifesting what they say. But does that mean they get a free pass to say what they like or do what they like? And it looks like it's an easy option, oh we'll counsel, we'll help the person more than we jail them, we can't jail them at school because you know, in the old days people just wanted justice, they wanted pain.' (*BB)*

This quote stresses the perceived limitations of restorative justice and speaks to the general conflict in disciplinary philosophy which was outlined in the beginning of this dissertation. Notwithstanding their own potentially conflicting views regarding the philosophy of discipline, teachers in South African schools are confronted with a society which in part promotes physical violence to be the answer to ill-disciplined children (Sekhonyane, 2018). Considering this, it seems understandable that educators would experience ambivalent feelings.

Interestingly, none of the schools shied away from involving the police in conducting school raids in the past. Such actions were reported not only in their own institutions but also in other prestigious schools, suggesting that this is a relatively common practice in Cape Town high schools. The use of sniffer dogs mirrors similar trends observed in US public schools (Mowen, 2017, p. 834). Interviewees indicated that these raids were conducted to underscore the significance of a disciplinary issue – in the case of the school that recently executed a raid, it was vaping – and to signal the school's intolerance of such behaviour. Students were provided the chance to voluntarily surrender their vapes upon the police's arrival, which would result in more lenient disciplinary action. This approach demonstrates that the school's intention was not to

single out children who transgressed but rather to act in the interest of maintaining general discipline within the institution. The police therefore did not intervene in the school environment on their own terms but were rather used as a tool by the schools to reinforce their disciplinary agenda.

In cases where school-led investigations failed to identify the responsible parties, schools deemed police involvement also a viable option. However, it was also noted that, typically, students would not be reported to the police for criminal law breaches which has to be seen against the backdrop that these schools do not encounter serious violence or significant substance abuse issues. The worst criminal offence experienced by these schools would be the theft of mobile phones. Consequently, for these relatively minor offences, there seems to be a tendency to shield the students from the potentially harmful consequences of early contact with the juvenile justice system:

> 'Yeah, because again, like a grade 8 boy, like boys don't think, girls don't think, teenagers don't think. So do you really want to ruin that child's record by taking them to the police?' (*AB)*

Again, these schools seem confident that they can deal with these infractions in house and can help best by keeping transgressing children in their school:

> 'I mean, the worst one we've had, as I mentioned earlier, was the theft of the mobile phones, even that we didn't report it to the police. […] But through the process we can feel that we're not mending the friendships or anything like that but at least it's the child feels guilty about having done what they did. But we need to make them feel comfortable coming to school and so that process is working really well here.' (*BA)*

As seen from the collective accounts of all interviewees, disciplinary proceedings, though challenging for students, do not lead to their exclusion. Both educators and parents ensure that certain boundaries are respected, but

they assure these students at the same time that they remain an integral part of the school community, as long as they will not reoffend:

> ‘And then you always say to the kids, you know, you do make mistakes, you've made your mistake, this is going in your file, but essentially, we'll forget about it, you know, and we'll carry on with life. We're not going to hold a grudge, but you can't obviously repeat the same offense because then it shows that you haven't learned from that procedure.’ (*AB)*

From the interviews, two points were evident. Firstly, the restorative justice approach employed by these schools seems effective, with very few cases of students reoffending. It remains uncertain, however, whether this success is solely attributable to the disciplinary method itself or – at least in parts - the unique characteristics of a student body composed of mature and motivated individuals. Secondly, it is in the students' best interest to engage positively with the process. Patience is limited for the exceptional few who do not learn from their disciplinary experiences.

7.4 Parental Involvement in the Disciplinary Process

On first sight, social capital did not play the role in disciplinary proceedings that I initially expected when designing this research. I had hypothesised that parents would use their resources to seek advantages for their children in disciplinary proceedings, even in justified cases. I thought of scenarios where parents might use their established, positive relationships with the school to negotiate or dismiss disciplinary actions. Also, I had envisaged them leveraging connections with professionals such as doctors and lawyers to mitigate the charges, thereby helping their child avoid consequences by navigating the system more effectively. As will be shown in the following sections, this expectation, however, was only partially confirmed by the research findings. Within these schools, parents do apply their resources more generally to support the overall process. Forms of capital available to

parents are not leveraged *against* the school but instead in cooperation *with* the school.

7.4.1 Parents Opposing the Disciplinary Process

Interviewees recalled only a few instances that could be seen as direct parental interference in disciplinary proceedings. These cases were not as indicative of the resourceful resistance I had initially envisioned as the predominant form of social capital at play in this research.

All interviewees were able to recall situations in which parents ardently participated in the disciplinary process, refusing to acknowledge any wrongdoing on the part of their child. Parents would entirely dismiss the school's perspective and withhold the necessary cooperation to properly address the disciplinary matter:

> '[Some parents are] not willing to listen to what the school has to say and sometimes the parents would blame the school you know we in their view they feel that we haven't dealt with this properly they would blame the school and sometimes parents would take the social media on issues like, yeah issues like that.' (*BA)*

Interviewees often noted that in cases where parents did resist and challenged the school's perspective, it generally hindered the disciplinary process, offering no real benefits to any of the parties involved:

> 'It's been interesting that the growth over the years, how many parents will defend their child. And even if the facts are there, any parent would do that. Please give this child another chance. Two years ago, we had another racist incident where it was, if you can grade it, it was extremely shocking, likening people of colour to animals and evolutionary sort of, it was just wrong. […] And the parents sort of put up quite a fight,

> you know, in terms of, but then took the child out of the school.' (*BB)*

As seen from this example, parental interference in disciplinary proceedings can be significantly detrimental, leading in this instance to the student's departure from the school. Though the parents obviously felt equipped to contest the school's assessment and evaluation of the incident – showing their cultural capital in the 'sense of entitlement to interact with teachers as equals' (Lareau and Horvat, 1999, p. 42) - they were not able to avert their child being subjected to disciplinary action. In this instance, leveraging their cultural capital proved ineffective as they did not meet the school's expectations of cooperation. The parents were unable to activate their principally available cultural capital, as they failed to conform to the 'standard' (1999, p. 42) of cooperation in this cultural context. However, simultaneously, the parents' ability to transfer their child to another school suggests they have connections and access to alternative educational institutions. The reliance on their network to secure an institutional position is a text-book example of social capital as conceptualised by Bourdieu (1986, p. 21). While their social capital did not prevent the adverse outcomes at the current school, it still confirms the initial assumption that parents in these schools generally possess social capital. In securing their child a fresh start at another institution they were able to avert any lasting negative consequences which could be expected given the grave nature of the student's transgression.

Only one educator recalled an instance where they believed that a parent's aggressive behaviour ultimately led to more lenient treatment of the student in disciplinary proceedings at their school:

> 'And if in that case, I think possibly because we're seeing a different side or maybe the parent is adamant about a few things, maybe the child's punishment then would not be severe as if that person was proven to have been guilty or having admitted to being guilty, that kind of thing.' (*AA)*

What was unequivocally absent, or at least not acknowledged by the educators, was parents blatantly using their financial or other forms of contributions to the school as leverage to extricate their children from disciplinary situations. Symbolic capital in the form of a sense of entitlement that Lareau et al. (2018, p. 5) identified in their case study is not present in these schools:

> ‘Nah, I don’t think it’s, they don't call in favours, they don't say, remember that I've given money to the school, I was the one who did this, therefore you need to give my child a free pass. I've seen that happen before. Yeah, other schools. I mean, a father saying, I bought the school and you're not making my child a leader. Yeah, that type of comment. Well, that doesn't link up to your child being a leader, just because. So again, being a government school, not a private school where there's been benefactors. And, you know, I gave... money for the swimming pool, how can you punish my kid? There's never been that type of sense of entitlement, you know, it's pretty low level now.’ (*BB)*

The interviewee recalled an incident from a previous position at a private school, where a parent responded to a simple case of detention by sending a lawyer's letter - a quite clear-cut case of social capital leveraging. This implies that such institutions might encounter greater degrees of self-entitlement or a more pronounced readiness to use personal (network) resources for confrontational purposes, which resonates with findings by Lareau, Weininger and Cox (2018, p. 5) in a US elite school.

From the interviews, it became apparent that parents who behaved in confrontational ways were typically not well-integrated with the school and its community. One interviewee observed that the parents who are not typically seen at school events tend to have children who are also less present at such gatherings. It seems that parents’ extensive and aggressive interventions in

disciplinary proceedings were actually indicative of a lack of social capital - in terms of school internal network relations -, rather than an abundance of it:

> 'So certainly, that child on the social media thing a while ago, their parents were very... He was very aggressive, the dad, and didn't... yeah, he was defending his child at all costs. Yes, even though we had screenshots of what she said, he tried to defend […] But that is the unusual case, I would say. Yeah, so like in that case, I didn't, I hadn't ever met the parents before.' (*AB)*

At both schools, interviewees took their observations further, expressing the belief that parents who resist the disciplinary process are also often absent from their children's lives:

> 'Normally they are supportive, and they support the school and then it carries on after that in the good way. Probably the parents who aren't that supportive are the ones that aren't around either. So, if there is a disciplinary and they're not very supportive of the process, they're the ones that aren't very present in their kids' lives anyway, so they're probably not really at school.' (*AB)*

Contrary to expectations formed from the literature review at the beginning of this research, the use of medically inspired rationales to excuse a child's behaviour and secure advantages in disciplinary proceedings was not a strategy commonly employed by parents. Although interviewees acknowledged that such arguments might be introduced in proceedings and considered to some extent, none could recall specific instances. Similarly, one interviewee noted that parents occasionally leverage their professional expertise but was not able or willing to cite specific examples. As a result, the interviews offer little evidence of parents using their profession as institutionalised cultural capital or professional networks as social capital to exempt their children from disciplinary proceedings.

The absence of (successful) direct parental interference resonates with the unanimous sentiment among interviewees that they must uphold proceedings as equitable and fair, ensuring equal treatment for similar cases. This commitment to fairness appears to extend beyond the mere necessity of satisfying the WCED requirements, reflecting a deeply held conviction within the educators that their institutions are inherently bound to principles of fairness and consistency. To facilitate fair proceedings, some schools have implemented policies that precisely outline the consequences corresponding to specific infractions. For instance, in response to a rise in vaping incidents, one school introduced specific guidelines tailored to address vaping transgressions. The protocol had dual aims: firstly, to ensure that the SGB would not need to intervene in every vaping case, and secondly, to clearly communicate to students the expected repercussions specifically for vaping-related deviance. Simultaneously, this approach is in line with Tyler's concept of procedural fairness (2006). By clearly establishing school norms and applying them uniformly to all students, these regulations create an environment conducive to enhanced norm adherence. Since last year, the school observed a reduction in vaping incidents that coincides with the publication of these regulations. However, the decrease could also be attributed to the raid, which may have heightened awareness and caution among the student body.

7.4.2 Parents Supporting the Disciplinary Process

The previous accounts indicate that while parents play a role in disciplinary proceedings, their intervention is potentially harmful when they are not meeting the expectations set by the schools. Participants more or less explicitly noted that there is an expectation for parents to agree with the school's evaluation of disciplinary situations and to assist in managing these processes accordingly. However, most parents' general attitude, in accordance with schools' expectation, was reported to be in fact not destructive but nurturing. Most parents tend to support the disciplinary actions, aligning themselves with the school's ethos and placing trust in the school's

authority on disciplinary matters. This creates a collaborative dynamic in handling disciplinary procedures, with the schools leading and parents actively supporting the process:

> ‘So, in most cases, they will say, you know, I'm horrified that my child has done that, and we have implemented, you know, whatever they've done at home. And then they will support, and they'll say, please do whatever you need to do at school. We will support that.’ (*AB)*

All interviewees conveyed that parents typically endorse the school's disciplinary actions and augment them with measures enforced at home. By mirroring the school's disciplinary efforts, parents demonstrate that they view breaches of discipline not solely as a school issue but as a matter of personal concern as well. Thus, both school and families create a strong layer of informal social control and collaboratively reinforce norms.

The diligent cooperation of parents with the school likely originates from the prestige of these institutions. Parents are motivated to ensure their children maintain their enrolment:

> ‘But again, parents are just, because we're a top academic school, you do well, parents are like saying, no, you can't just kick my kid out of here.’ (*BB)*

One interviewee recalled that a student's transgression and the ensuing disciplinary process ultimately served to strengthen the relationship between the school and the parents. It seems that in some instances, collaborative efforts in addressing the issue led to enhanced integration within the school community:

> ‘Okay, so last year we had several caught vaping and then parents informed then coming into meetings with the head of houses and the deputy principal and they very supportive […] and actually building a very good relationship with those

> parents afterwards and supporting the fact that the school is giving them the consequences of doing presentations and giving them community service and that kind of thing.' (*AA)*

The ethos of cooperation extends beyond the parent-school relationship to encompass other dynamics as well. Students in these schools recognise their responsibility to engage in the disciplinary proceedings and value their parents' involvement in the process:

> 'Here, we have the support of the parents in that regard, and the child does respond even without the parents. That's why we don't contact parents for everything as I mentioned. So, we try and see if we can get through to the child and get the behaviour to change there. And a lot of the time we are able to do that here. Whereas in other schools you almost have to go to the parents immediately. And sometimes going to the parent is almost more negative than positive because the child will take offense to you contacting the parent. […] Here our students have, I find that their relationship with their parents are so open, they don't mind if their parents know anything about them.' (*BA)*

The correlation between the depth of student-parent relationships and low levels of delinquency in these schools is consistent with criminological research indicating that greater parental involvement tends to result in less delinquent behaviour among children (Wright, Cullen and Miller, 2001, p. 7). The authors termed this preventative factor 'family social capital', measuring it by examining the amount of time children spend with their parents, their attachment to their family, and their parents' attitudes towards deviance (2001, p. 4). From the gathered accounts, it emerges that children in these schools, as perceived by interviewees, trust their parents, implying significant time spent together. Additionally, parents' general support for the schools' policies suggests that these children are exposed to parental attitudes that

endorse the schools' rules. Overall, this points to a substantial presence of family social capital in these environments.

In summary, the interviews revealed that most parents support the disciplinary process, thus adding another layer to the already exceptional levels of social control present in these schools.

8 Discussion

The legal and policy frameworks at both national and provincial levels for schools adopt a highly formalistic approach. While, in theory, this seems justifiable as it aims to ensure fair and equal proceedings, the reality is that these schools often find the formal procedures obstructive and counterproductive. However, the interviews revealed that, due to a shared alignment between parents and schools on certain values, there is practically no need to invoke the rights and procedures outlined in the regulations within these schools. From the schools' perspective, there is a reluctance to approach the department even in relatively serious cases, as the chances of achieving the desired outcome are considered low. On the part of the parents, the majority entrust the disciplinary process to the schools, actively seeking to comply with the consequences deemed appropriate by the educational institution. When viewed from a broader perspective, it seems that these students do not require the legal protections afforded by the regulations. Instead, they are safeguarded from further harm by the supportive and beneficial social environment in which they are embedded. The institutional environment of these schools seems to create a unique social fabric that shields students in numerous ways from the adverse effects discussed at the outset of this dissertation. This research suggests the presence of social capital in these schools not as a resource leveraged for individual benefit, but rather on a broader, more systemic level. The most significant form of social capital in operation within these schools is their high degree of integration, which leads to an abundance of informal social control.

8.1 Parental Interference in Disciplinary Proceedings

The data indicates that in some instances, parents have vigorously contested the school's disciplinary decisions and used their connections to transfer their child to another school, effectively allowing them to start anew and circumvent the disciplinary process. This ability to relocate a child to a different school is a manifestation of social capital. However, the interviews did not reveal instances where parents successfully leveraged their resources to negate or reduce disciplinary actions at their current school. When parents chose to use their influence against the school's assessment, it eventually resulted in their child leaving the school, a quite literal case of a '[moment of] social exclusion' (Lareau and Horvat, 1999, p. 38). Even if parents possess cultural capital in form of the habitus necessary to contest institutional decisions, they failed to activate it in these schools. A potential reason why these schools do not accommodate alternative parental assessments of disciplinary situations could be their strong reputation resulting in an independence which has been identified to be lacking in some public schools serving wealthier districts in the US (Calarco, 2020, p. 225). These schools are not reliant on appeasing individual parents, as there is an abundance of families ready to take the place of any departing student.

This investigation therefore did not corroborate the results of prior studies from the US which found that (white, middleclass) parents often used their own and network resources to (successfully) contest the authority of schools. A reason for a differing outcome may be that Lareau et al. (2018) were exploring the impact of a school's proposed plan affecting many parents, a scenario quite different from individual disciplinary cases. While this distinction does not hold for Horvat et al.'s (2003) research, as they also focused on individual child-centred school situations, such as teacher assignments or assessments of their child's development, parents of disciplined children are typically faced with behaviour of their child which they themselves find objectionable. As noted, there is a shared ethos and set of ideals between parents and schools, rendering the child's misconduct unacceptable to both

parties. Consequently, there is an inherent motivation for parents not to resist the disciplinary process since it pursues an aim they share with the school: to educate children to become well-adjusted adults.

Overall, while parental support is highly valued and encouraged at these institutions, any challenge to the school's authority by parents is viewed not necessarily as a threat, but certainly as an unwarranted hindrance to the disciplinary process. These schools expect parents to agree with them and support the process as the schools see fit. This findings resonates with prior US research which found that schools operate on a 'standard' that emphasises 'deferential and positive parental involvement' (Lareau and Horvat, 1999, p. 49).

Differences to US studies can be seen in how teachers perceive parents and the dynamics of their relationship. Interviewees from the schools studied largely reported an atmosphere marked by mutual understanding and respect. In contrast, studies in the United States suggest that schools often perceive privileged parents as demonstrating disrespectful and disruptive behaviours (Lewis and Forman, 2002, p. 80; Lareau, Weininger and Cox, 2018, p. 31), which had been the exception at the schools under investigation. This difference could again be attributed to the fact that these schools are not dependent on particular families for their operation. Their distinguished reputation ensures a steady influx of suitable students with parents willing to pay the fees which enable a high-end education environment. Parents' interchangeability may prevent the development of a sense of entitlement, which could otherwise lead them to exhibit such disruptive behaviours.

8.2 Institutional Forms of Capital

The research indicates that key forms of capital are prevalent within these schools, ensuring that the students experience meaningful and non-detrimental disciplinary processes. The school community as a whole is an excellent example of social capital functioning as informal social control

(Portes, 1998, p. 7). Here, parent-school relations truly serve as ‘a cornerstone for school functionality’ (Munje and Mncube, 2018, p. 88).

These schools stand distinct not just in terms of resources but also in the community they cultivate. Parents fortify their ties to the school and its broader community through active civic engagement, exemplified by actions such as parents helping with accommodation during the Cape Town taxi strikes or contributing their professional expertise for the community’s benefit. In some instances, parents have known each other for years, establishing a social connection that complements and extends their children's friendships. This intergenerational closure further upholds the community norms and guards against violations (Coleman, 1988, S105-S107). The tight-knit nature of these communities creates a level of social control (Portes, 1998, p. 10) that transcends mere external constraints, cultivating a culture, 'a route to freely chosen compliance' (Braithwaite, 1989, p. 69) that encourages children to develop a natural inclination to norm adherence. School and parents by a cooperative effort in restorative justice processes focus not on merely exonerating or punishing the student but on recreating their internal motivation to follow the community’s rules. Overall, these accounts evidence the ‘unceasing effort of sociability’ (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 22) taking place in these school communities.

It is the distinctive interaction between schools and the families they serve, facilitated by the parents’ strong alignment with the school's spirit and ethos, that empowers the disciplinary process to be as effective as described by participants. In essence, parents do not merely leverage pre-existing capital; rather, they generate fresh and unique capital in collaboration with the school which results in disciplinary proceedings amounting to a ‘moment of social inclusion’ (Lareau and Horvat, 1999, p. 38). In these institutions, the social capital of students is not employed as a tool against the schools. Instead, it is an intrinsic part of their membership in these school communities.

On the individual level, students in these schools are predominantly driven by a desire for academic excellence. Students display an eagerness to use the opportunities these schools offer and a genuine willingness to learn. The interviews illuminated a considerable sense of community awareness and even an air of elite status. Being immersed in this triangulate of regulatory influences - school, peers, and parents - all embracing a similar ethos, students can cultivate a distinct habitus. This habitus results in a high degree of self-regulation, minimising the need for stringent external supervision. While in some educational settings it might be considered 'cool' to skip classes or vandalise school property, in these schools it is not. Here, (at least in part) ‘coolness’ is synonymous with (academic) excellence.

8.3 Institutional Safeguards in the Disciplinary Process

The schools are deeply invested in being perceived as impartial and equitable in disciplinary proceedings, setting a benchmark for proper conduct and fostering an environment where the school community has confidence in the school's judgements and resolutions concerning disciplinary issues. This commitment to engendering trust creates a high degree of procedural fairness (Tyler, 2006) resulting in a heightened motivation to follow the institutions rules. This form of social control helps prevent or at least alleviate conflict, thereby potentially protecting the interests of all parties involved in disciplinary proceedings.

As anticipated, the schools under investigation showed no inclination to penalise, let alone criminalise, breaches of school discipline. In contrast to some US studies which reported that even typical childhood behaviours, like tardiness or uniform infractions, are met with severe punishments like suspension (Mowen, 2017, p. 834), these schools address student transgressions, even those in breach of criminal law, in a constructive and supporting manner. The disciplinary process follows a restorative doctrine and incorporates elements of reintegrative shaming, in which parental support plays an important role. The school, backed by the parents, signals to the children that their misbehaviour is unacceptable. Through varying degrees of

formal responses, the school ensures that the gravity of the offence is understood and that consequences will ensue. Concurrently, both the school and the parents make it clear that these proceedings do not amount to banishment, avoiding the creation of lasting negative labels. They effectively communicate that a remorseful individual will be welcomed back into the community of the school. One plausible explanation for this type of disciplinary approach may again lie in the inherently close-knit nature of these school communities. Parents and children alike understand the value of belonging to such a community and likely take some pride in their association with it. This shared sense of belonging provides a cohesive foundation, ensuring that students who have transgressed are invited to reintegrate, provided they demonstrate the motivation to atone for their actions and commit to adhering to the institution's rules henceforth. The situation which presents itself at these schools reflects Braithwaite’s analysis that a high level of group loyalty leads to effective shaming (1989, p. 86).

The reintegrative dimension of the process is further strengthened by the prevailing motivation within these schools to manage disciplinary cases 'in-house'. Rather than escalating matters to the WCED, the preference is to handle them at school level. This approach is partly influenced by the prevailing experience that the WCED is generally reluctant to approve of expulsions. However, interviewees also conveyed a preference for retaining these students within the school community, believing they have the means to support them. This view on student disciplinary breaches suggests that offenders are not regarded as outsiders, as labelling theory would suggest, but rather as community members who have veered off and must be guided back to the right path.

This sentiment holds true, that is, as long as the students in question do in fact exhibit remorse and desist from future transgressions. Interviewees displayed strong opinions regarding repeat offenders. They generally appreciate the restorative approach their schools have adopted for disciplinary matters, but it becomes clear that they do not universally endorse a non-

punitive approach for recurrent misconduct. Several statements conveyed the impression that, in the view of the interviewees, repeat offenders may not necessarily merit another restorative process. This reveals a degree of ambivalence among those interviewed. While they largely support a restorative approach, they also showed approval for or saw the necessity of more punitive measures, particularly for more serious infractions. This dichotomy perhaps reflects the broader debate on justice within educational settings, illustrating the complex task of reconciling empathy with accountability. Either way, these considerations remain largely hypothetical, as instances of serious misconduct are exceedingly rare in these schools. It seems that many lofty disciplinary ideals - or at least their implementation - are largely contingent upon the social realities in which they are administered.

What was thoroughly unexpected to me, was schools' openness and willingness to accept and even invite severe police action on school premises. While it may not be as frequent as in other schools, they did not hesitate to conduct extensive police raids, involving the deployment of sniffer dogs. However, on a closer look it becomes clear that the police serve to the school more as a tool for deterrence and establishment of authority rather than that schools grant them an active role in the criminalisation of discipline. These raids, while a considerably severe intervention, seem to be strategically implemented to maintain order in the school as a whole. They are not aimed at singling out transgressing students which may result in their negative labelling. This is evidenced by the fact that students were given a chance before the beginning of the raid to surrender illegal contraband which would not only prevent public embarrassment but also lead to a more lenient disciplinary treatment. In contrast, while the schools would also use police to investigate ownership of social media accounts or for securing evidence, students committing crimes such as theft were not reported to the police. By preventing criminal consequences for individual students, these schools avoid the risks that are typically associated with the STPP.

9 Conclusion

Reflecting on the outcomes of this study, one cannot help but feel somewhat disheartened. The initial aspiration to identify protective factors that could be universally applied across various schools was not realised. Instead, it became apparent that the students in the schools featured in this research reap the benefits of the creation and mobilisation of social and cultural capital which is inherently linked to their social backgrounds. While the institutional responses favoured in these schools theoretically and practically benefit the outcome of disciplinary proceedings, the source for the overall functioning of these processes seems to stem from outside the institutions. A highly motivated and discipline-orientated student body is a reality in itself and obviously has a major impact on the general discipline in a school. Well-integrated and active parents play an equally important role. The distinctive collaboration and the resources devoted to the disciplinary process therefore are not easily replicable in or transferable to other educational settings.

However, the evidence suggests that the well-functioning disciplinary environments in the schools investigated in this research are not merely the result of socioeconomic advantage but are mainly due to the robust and extensive connections between schools, students, and families. These institutions have established themselves as the centre of a community, providing students with a sense of identity and belonging, which in turn fosters intrinsic motivation to adhere to the school's rules and values. Creating a community does not require financial resources as such.

Naturally, schools with significantly poorer teacher-student ratios face challenges in cultivating such a community. It requires time and dedication from the teaching staff and parents to shape and nurture students in a manner that fosters a cohesive community, as seen in these more affluent schools. Nevertheless, this research underscores the critical importance of aligning schools and parents on disciplinary matters. This is not to imply that the significance of parental involvement in children's academic career has been neglected in research. Over the last twenty years, numerous studies in South

Africa have investigated the impact of parental engagement on educational outcomes (Sibanda, 2021, p. 1). Munje and Mncube (2018) recently have once again highlighted that the issue of parental non-involvement remains prevalent and persistent in underprivileged communities, exacerbated by a lack of strategies to combat the principal causes of parents' absence from their children's education (p. 88). Instead of removing obstacles to parental involvement, parents are further alienated.

And the importance of considering the reasons for non-involvement of parents may be of even greater importance in disciplinary proceedings. Recent research suggests that punitive and exclusionary discipline measures can have severe repercussions not just for students, but for their parents as well. Through a series of interviews with parents of students that were subjected to exclusionary discipline, Mowen (2017) found that these families experienced financial hardships, such as lost workdays and job termination, due to the time invested in disciplinary matters, or legal expenses (p. 841), as well as emotional distress leading to anger, stress, and frustration (p. 842). This suggests that a deterioration in school-family relations and the abandonment of a restorative principles may not only diminish educational chances but can create a harmful cycle, exacerbating the day-to-day challenges faced by disadvantaged families. In light of these consequences, it is all the more troubling that the majority of South African schools resort to retributive forms of discipline (Reyneke, 2015, p. 58).

The exploratory nature of this project opens avenues for further research to broaden its scope. Although the detailed and extensive insights from interviewees have mitigated the impact of a small sample size, the study's focus solely on educators omits wider perspectives, particularly those of students and parents. Future studies are encouraged to include the experiences and perceptions of these groups. Such inclusion would provide a more complete understanding of disciplinary practices in former Model C schools. This broader view might uncover additional strategies for

safeguarding children in any educational setting from negative disciplinary consequences.

10 References

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Appendixes

Appendix A WCED Research Approval
Appendix B Questionnaire
Appendix C Information Letter
Appendix D Informed Consent Form
Appendix E UCT Ethics Approval