What Scholarship Boarders Really Need:

A Case Study in an Elite South African School

Abstract

Development scholarships promote access to opportunities that would otherwise be unreachable to disadvantaged students. These students face multiple challenges to leveraging the full might of such opportunity. This case study employed semi-structured interviews of 13 scholarship recipients in an elite, South African, boys boarding school to establish the factors that promote or hinder successful transition of the scholarship recipients into the institution, using Bourdieu's theory of capital as an analysis framework. Revealing entrenched deficit perceptions and cultural-linguistic hegemony, the recipients navigate competing outcomes of assimilation and inclusion through resilience, continuous expenditure of emotional capital and effective mentorship support.

Contents

Introduction

In his book, *Outliers*, Malcolm Gladwell argues that successful individuals “are invariably the beneficiaries of hidden advantages and extraordinary opportunities and cultural legacies that allow them to learn and work hard and make sense of the world in ways that others cannot.” (2008, p.19) One could argue this statement encapsulates the essence of the development scholarship – an extraordinary opportunity conferring otherwise unattainable advantage on its recipients. But is it this simple?

This case study attempts to identify the specific factors that operate to either help or hinder the successful transition and adaptation of development scholarship recipients into an elite boarding school environment, and asks if Bourdieu’s (1986) theory of capital can help to explain any impediments to the success of the scholarship programme. Events beyond the gates of the institution are largely beyond its locus of control, therefore, this study looks specifically at those internal factors that can be adjusted by the institution.

Context

This South African study is located at a small, English-medium, independent, elite, boys only, preparatory school with a large Boarding Establishment (BE). The school has strong colonial roots from its British heritage reaching back over a century and holds closely to its founding Anglican traditions.

The scholarship recipients involved in the study enter the school in Grade 4 (age 9) and graduate after Grade 7 (age 13). There are typically 3 scholarship recipients in each grade, however one cohort presently has a fourth recipient, thus totalling 13 boys in all. Qualification criteria for the scholarship include being of previously disadvantaged ethnicity, being below a maximum household income threshold and being age appropriate by grade, while, as a condition of the scholarship, recipients must board in the BE. The selection process includes interview, scholastic and athletic evaluations. Historically, the vast majority of recipients have been Black African and almost exclusively of Zulu heritage.

The BE provides termly boarding, but boys are free to go home over weekends. Logistical and financial challenges result in the scholarship recipients going home less frequently than most full-fee boys. These 13 boys thus form the core of what is oftentimes called the ‘weekend crew' by the boarding staff, recognising the small group of children who regularly remain at school each weekend.

The BE is staffed by a Housemaster and several senior masters who are fulltime teachers at the school. A group of students and teacher interns act as junior boarder masters. Additionally, a female boarding assistant, also a full-time teacher, works closely with the younger boys who are further supported by a team of lady interns. Two nursing sisters staff the sanatorium and provide day-to-day care. As scholarship coordinator, another female teacher is responsible for the particular needs for the scholarship recipients. Various ethnic and linguistic backgrounds are represented among this group. The boarders have frequent contact with the teams of cleaning ladies and kitchen staff, whose primary spoken language is isiZulu.

As a white, middle-class, English-speaking male, I possess the stereotypical characteristics of a privileged South African who grew up during the final days of the apartheid era. As such, by every metric other than gender and nationality, I am an outsider to the group of scholarship recipients. Conversely, as a member of the school's management committee, I occupy a space where I possess the ability to be an agent for change.

Origins of the Study

The motivation behind this study is encapsulated in the following:

"The alienation, tension and disruption brought about by intercultural differences are often experienced by children who occupy spaces that were previously off limits because of the policy of separate development during apartheid."

(Singh, 2024, p.3)

This particular scholarship programme, funded and overseen by people who look and sound like me, provides a golden opportunity for disadvantaged boys to enjoy the privilege of an elite education at one of the country's leading preparatory schools. The school staff and scholarship trustees decide on how best to support the scholarship recipients. To the best of my knowledge, the recipients themselves have never been asked what they actually believe is required. This study aims to address that.

Methodology

A case study method was employed, with semi-structured qualitative interviews utilized for data development. A theoretical thematic analysis of the interview transcripts was conducted using the following themes developed through the literature review: hegemony; asymmetric power relations; cultural inclusion, belonging and identity; and voice.

Results

The study found that, according to the scholarship recipients, much of the programme is working well. However, careful interpretation of what was said uncovered: deficit perceptions of the home environments, privileging of English language to the detriment of indigenous language and culture, an environment that demanded enormous reserves of emotional strength and energy and continuous tension between the competing outcomes of assimilation and inclusion.

Conclusions

The scholarship programme is working effectively and received little criticism from the boys. However, there is still work to be done on resolving biases and hegemonic attitudes that result in deficit characterisations of home environments by institution staff. Furthermore, good mentorship can have a significant effect on the scholarship recipients, providing the necessary support and understanding needed to maximise the scholarship opportunity.

Literature Review

The literature review sought answers to two overarching questions within the context of my particular institution:

- What specific factors either help or hinder the successful transition of scholarship recipients into the elite boarding school environment, and the possible reasons for these factors doing so?
- Might there be gaps in the support programme for scholarship recipients, that could reasonably be filled?

In considering these questions, and possibly making changes to how the scholarship programme is implemented, we could further enable development scholarship recipients successful transition into, and maximisation of the opportunity that they hold. By approaching the problem from their point of view, this amounts to carrying out a 'start, stop, continue' assessment of the scholarship programme.

The search for relevant literature was complicated by two main factors. Firstly, the array of terms used and their meanings in different locations to describe the specific characteristics of this institution and the scholarship recipients causes ambiguity. For example, schooling of 9-13 year olds is called "primary", "elementary" or "preparatory", but those terms also have other meanings in different localities and contexts. Even deciding how to describe the scholarship recipients in this search was a non-trivial task. Therefore, a systematic approach had to be applied to the multiple iterations of each Boolean search. "Boy's", "boy's-only", boy's only", "single sex" and "monastic" all had to be put to each of the above terms. As a result, only the OU Library search engine was used. Secondly, the tender age of these children when they begin their scholarship journey with a move into a residential schooling system, appears to be rare both locally and internationally.

Literature relating to development scholarships in South Africa is lacking. According to Singh (2024, p.5), research into psychological effects of underprivileged, non-white children entering into elite schools in South Africa is limited. Possible reasons for this dearth could include the modest number of children affected[1], the significance of the widespread structural changes and challenges that exist within the South African schooling system generally (Matashu, 2021; Wolhuter, 2020; Spaull, 2019; Hofmeyer, 2015), and the marginalised nature of scholarship beneficiaries within elite schools. Spaull (2019, p.4) explains the motivation for his work being the lack of an authoritative and recent account of inequality in South African schooling. Therefore, the specific group of development scholarship beneficiaries concerned in this study, particularly at elementary level, inhabit an under-researched area.

Parallel Fields of Study

Owing to the paucity of specifically relevant literature, various analogues have been employed. These contain varying degrees of suitability to the particular context, in either location, developmental stage (elementary, secondary or tertiary education) or both. A further factor that has been difficult to control for is the interplay of language, ethnicity, culture and minority/majority status. Musundwa and Hammond (2024) point out the peculiar characteristic that in South Africa, contrary to most of the research on social closure, the groups being marginalised constitute a majority of the general population. The particular demographic characteristics within South Africa, where English as a second language is widely spoken, especially as the language of formal business (Posel, Hunter and Rudwick, 2022), and used as the predominant language of teaching and learning (McKinney, 2024; Spaull, 2013), but is in fact a minority language (StatsSA, 2018), is unusual in the literature. These characteristics mean that, with widespread and daily use of indigenous African languages being omnipresent, the scholarship recipients are not entirely removed from their cultural identities while residing at school.

Therefore, rather than looking for comparative studies, a range of literature dealing with conceptual understandings of the core issues is presented. These core issues have been developed within the theoretical framework lens presented below.

[1] Two thirds of school goers attend non-fee schools (StatsSA, 2023), and only 15% of high school students attend 'high fee' schools (Spaull, 2019). Therefore, scholarship beneficiaries make a very small fraction of total school goers.

Theoretical Framework

This research relies heavily on the underlying theoretical framework provided by Pierre Bourdieu in his major work, *The Forms of Capital* (1986), and further developed in multiple other works. In them, Bourdieu elaborates on the myth of perfect competition and equal opportunity among individuals within a society. He describes how "capital" which takes time to accumulate, imprints itself into the range of possibilities available to individuals or groups such that those opportunities are no longer equally possible. Here Bourdieu speaks not simply of economic capital, but of capital "in all its forms" (Bourdieu, 1986, p.280).

Bourdieu's Capital

Social, cultural and education capital work together to open the doors of opportunity.

(Bass, 2014, p.23)

Advantage and disadvantage are the result of the interplay between the various forms of capital – economic, social, cultural and symbolic – within a defined space or *field* (Reay, 2000). *Economic capital* is the wealth either inherited or earned by an individual interacting with the economy. *Social capital* is created through interactions between families and the broader community, and is enacted through social networks. *Cultural capital* is broken into three distinct sub-forms, namely *embodied capital* comprising one's tastes and dispositions, *objectified capital* contained within artefacts such as books or art, and *institutionalised capital* of educational qualifications and certificates. Bourdieu (1986) explains that cultural capital is accumulated over time. Woodward (2018) notes that the value of cultural capital lies in its scarcity; its worth stemming from its unequal distribution. Reay (2000) conceives cultural capital as a relational concept, primarily passed down through the family, that coexists with other forms of capital. *Symbolic capital* is the reputation, status, authority, charisma and prestige that combine and result from the accumulated translation of other forms of capital, recognised within a social context, and enabling the utilisation and efficacy of that capital (Carrington and Luke, 2012).

Bourdieu's theory is not without criticism, with Jenkins (1992) and Goldthorpe (2007) being just two voices recognising the limitations of his work. They both argued that the model was overly mechanical and deterministic of a person's future, taking no account of individual agency, thus relegating the subordinate classes to a life without hope or aspiration. Goldthorpe cites data that are “generally replicable from other advanced societies” (2007, p.8) to dispute Bourdieu’s view of interclass immobility. However, the present two-tier society (Spaull, 2019) with the highest income inequality globally (Valodia, 2023) would suggest that South Africa falls short of Goldthorpe’s criterion of an “advanced” society. Referring to the relationship between the biographical characteristics of the average South African child and their future life chances, Spaull (2019, p.1) asserts that “these realities are so deterministic”, and later points to “the stubbornness of inequality and its patterns of persistence” (p.2), that Jenkins’ and Goldthorpe’s critiques of Bourdieu’s model can be set aside. Spaull (2019) outlines how educational outcomes in South Africa are, for the most part, determined by racial and spatial characteristics that overlay onto divisions of wealth and class. It would therefore seem an appropriate context in which to apply Bourdieu’s framework.

It is important to note here the particular case of linguistic capital, which Yoon (2020) stresses is often integrated within the sphere of cultural capital. According to South Africa’s Language in Education Policy (1997), the language of teaching and learning (LOTL) at schools is determined by the school governing body. However, rather than develop multilingual learners through an additive approach to language learning as intended (Mpanza, 2023), the effect of the policy is a monolingual orientation toward English or to a lesser degree, Afrikaans (Banda, 2017). This privileging of European languages cements the cultural and symbolic capital of individuals who are deemed proficient in these languages (Musundwa and Hammond, 2024).

Schools represent just one of many fields or social spaces that an individual has to navigate their way through, moving according to their relative accumulations of capital (Carrington and Luke, 2012). Within any one field, differing institutional configurations recognise different forms of capital, and individuals operate within that field attempting to accumulate capital as is appropriate in that field. This fluctuating pattern and volume of capital dictates the social position that a person can hold within that particular field at any one moment in time (Carrington and Luke, 2012). Thus the same allocation of capital resources might result in different social positioning within different fields.

Weininger and Lareau (2018) maintain that Bourdieu concerned himself with the ways in which families deployed their varying types and quantities of capital in the pursuit of social reproduction and social mobility toward higher class status. They argue that Bourdieu's theories, while initially describing the French educational system of the time, spoke in generalised terms that necessarily included a "non-trivial degree of mobility between classes" (Weininger and Lareau, 2018, p.268) which served to prove the rule of unequal benefit bestowed upon the various classes by the system. This framework is helpful in seeing the independent education system in South Africa as one that serves to maintain the relative privilege of the middle-class while retaining room for a limited number of individuals to leverage this system in order to escape the clutches of the working class. However, the widening gap between South Africa's upper and lower classes over the past three decades (Kirsten et al, 2023) necessarily makes this transition an increasingly more challenging one.

Bourdieu's work has been influential, particularly in theorizing how education broadly, and schools in particular, have been transmitters of inequality favouring the dominant classes (Weininger and Lareau, 2018). Goldthorpe (2007) explains that the children of the dominant class enjoy continuity between the culture of their home and school, benefitting from a positive interplay between the influences of the two, whereas children from working-class homes experience school as an unfamiliar, and even hostile, environment where they feel perpetually out of place. Less advantaged children therefore experience difficulties that, according to Goldthorpe (2007), become greater barriers to adjustment over time.

Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) made three primary claims about the way in which cultural capital contributed towards the social reproduction of class:

1) Rather than being neutral, educational institutions reflected the experiences of the dominant class. Yoon claimed that "[t]he education system is deeply embedded in the social system" (2020, p.206).
2) The effect of economic resources did not adequately explain the differences in achievement of children originating from differing social classes. Walker noted in her discussion of Sen's capability model (where a capability could be seen as loosely analogous to activated capital), echoing the language of Bourdieu, that economic

indicators alone could not explain the “barriers in our societies against equity for all” (Walker, 2006, p.164).

3) Habits, mannerisms and interests absorbed within the family home had significant impact on school success. This cultural capital stands juxtaposed to Moll et al (1992), who argue that the funds of knowledge of minority students, whose homes are often characterised by the dominant class as being poor in both economic and experiential terms, were a rich but under-utilised resource within classrooms.

Reay (2000) explains that this frame assumes middle-class attitudes and practices to be normative, thus opening the door to deficit theorizing of everything not considered middle-class (Woodward, 2018; Moll *et al*, 1992). Hence dominant middle-class patterns of behaviour and world view are held as modern and sophisticated, while those of the working-class are portrayed as primitive or backward (Walton, 2018). In a schooling system marked by such extremes of inequality (Spaull, 2019), this dichotomy easily becomes entrenched and self-perpetuating, and correlates well with Weber’s concept of social closure (Sica, 2012) where groups build communities that construct identities and draw boundaries to monopolize scarce resources for themselves. Spaull (2019) explains how such boundaries have been drawn in the South African education sector through the adept manipulation of loopholes in legislation, frequently through use of language of instruction policies (Mpanza, 2023), that enable the exclusion of the economically vulnerable. This monopolization necessarily restricts the choices available to excluded groups, and relegates working-class children to Spaull’s lower-tier (2019).

Emergent Themes

With Bourdieu’s framework in place, we now consider the relevant themes that emerged from the literature. Studies involving minority, marginalised, socioeconomically or otherwise disadvantaged students, approach the issue from multiple angles and for myriad separate reasons. Broadly however, the following four concepts recur frequently. The first is hegemony at a societal level and the struggle between indigenous/minority cultures and entrenched systems of dominance and control. Secondly, and related to the first but on an individual level, is asymmetric relations of power. The third commonly occurring theme is that of cultural inclusion, belonging and identity, and the fourth concerns the issue of voice.

Hegemony

Viswanathan (1988) pointed out the cunning of colonial education being used to colonise the mind as it was more effective than colonising the body. More recently, Walton (2018) argued that the inclusive education discourse is framed within knowledge systems of the Global North that perpetuate colonial hierarchies. Within these neoliberal and neoconservative economic frameworks there is a reliance on an assumption that schools are meritocratic institutions promoting equality of opportunity (Apple, 2006), which the reproductionist argument disputes (Collins, 2009).

Tatum (2017) explains how segregated communities amplify the negative effects of socioeconomic disadvantage while inhibiting access to beneficial social networks and necessary resources that are available in wealthier communities. According to Tatum then, economic disadvantage is thus reinforced by residential segregation, which in South Africa is still very much tied to racial or cultural characteristics. This hinders outreach beyond one's community and acts as a form of social closure for the privileged.

Marginalised students therefore have to assimilate into the dominant culture through acquisition of the habitus, often at the expense of their own. Devine (2009, p.527) described the precarious path of outsiders as they balance the tension between being recognised or rejected based on how much they adopt the "ways of 'being' and 'doing'" of that dominant culture. Of particular relevance for this study, Bass (2014) points out that for boarders, social capital gained at school often comes at the expense of social capital lost at home as a result of reduced interaction with the social networks of home.

At a late point during the project, I came across Lareau (2011) in which she found a dichotomy in parenting. Lareau called the strategies of middle-class and wealthy parents "concerted cultivation" (2011, p.2), where those parents manage their children's daily lives and facilitate a rich and varied schedule of activities for them. This contrasts with poor and working-class parents who view the development of their children's interests differently, what Lareau calls "accomplishment of natural growth" (2011, p.3). When institutions like schools fervently promote the former, Lareau argues that for poor and working-class parents, "the cultural logic of childrearing at home is out of sync with the standards of institutions" (2011, p.3).

Asymmetric power relations

Asymmetric relations of power feature regularly in the literature. Woodward (2018, p.637) devotes significant space explaining the difference between possessing cultural capital and translating that into symbolic capital. Furthermore, activation of that capital through recognition or acceptance within the field, is dependent on symbolic capital, thus placing further limitation on the effectiveness of cultural capital that might be possessed (Bourdieu, 1989). Devine (2009) goes so far as to state that recognition is the most critical requirement for cultural capital mobilisation. In the elite school context, the low socioeconomic standing of scholarship recipients magnifies the disparity of recognised cultural capital possessed by these children.

Because cultural capital in its various sub-forms is bound by context, there exist multiple barriers to its mobilisation in each context (Moskal, 2016). Here, language is the most obvious example of such, which is itself a form of cultural identity (Ndimande, 2012). Recognition of one's cultural capital is central to the distribution of power which is additionally affected by the abundance of capital an individual holds and its relative significance within any particular field (Devine, 2009). This further aligns with Woodward's (2018) activation principle.

Cultural Inclusion, Belonging and Identity

"[T]hose most disadvantaged culturally suffer their disadvantage most severely precisely in the situations to which they are relegated as a result of their disadvantages."

Bourdieu and Passeron (1979, p.8)

Using Moskal's (2016) study of migrant children as an analogue of outsiders entering an institutional context, their struggles to realise benefit from their cultural capital are greater than those of their native peers and this capital may even be devalued by their schools. Moskal further noted the proven correlation between language proficiency and academic achievement during standardized testing.

Participation in majority cultural activities enables children to integrate, with displayed competence in activities such as sports or music earning them social capital (Devine, 2009).

Bourdieu (1986) explained that such social capital is generated through persistent effort and accumulates through repeated recognition.

Arriving students who are academically capable often seek to establish their social status through classroom achievement. Devine (2009) points out how this can sometimes be counterproductive to the development of diverse social networks. However, these transfers into new schools or social classes have been shown to often have negative lasting effects on academic results in core subjects such as Mathematics and English Language even in mono-lingual environments (Waddington and Berends, 2018). Therefore, even for academically talented scholarship beneficiaries, the change in language of instruction can be detrimental to their classroom performance and social network development. In reference to literacy learning, Dyson (2018) argued that a sense of institutional belonging was foundational to any learning taking place because this underpins the relationships upon which that learning process relies.

Voice

In Bourdieu's (1986) conception, the educational system privileges and entrenches attitudes of the middle-class, resulting in voices of working-class children being devalued. Arnot and Reay (2007) describe the ways in which voices are created through and within the power relations of the societies within which they occur. Furthermore, marginalised identities have little exchange value that can be converted into capital in any form, and result in self-monitoring of their utterances and behaviour to minimise embodied cultural differences wherever possible (Devine, 2009). Thus the expressed voice, in contrast to the authentic voice, of these marginalised individuals and groups is oftentimes carefully cultivated to deliver maximum return at lowest possible risk or cost to self.

The four themes above are those which proved most pertinent in the context of this study. They intertwine untidily with blurred boundaries wherein they affect and are affected by one another repeatedly. The multifaceted lives of the scholarship recipients with their manifold contradictions and disjunctures between home and boarding, various classrooms, sports fields and cultural activities exhibit an ebb and flow moving between spaces of recognition, meaning and significance and others of struggle, isolation and dislocation.

Research Design

Location and Participants

This study follows a case study model with the clearly delineated location of a school, and the specific categorisation of the development scholarship recipients providing distinct boundaries. Therefore, while broad principles for this type of scholarship programme might be developed from this case study, the particular characteristics of the school – South African, elite, independent, boys only, elementary, boarding, English-medium, Anglican heritage – and its inherent structure, will determine any possible applicability and generalizability to other institutions (Hammersley, Gomm and Foster, 2009).

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018, p.377) highlight the "rejection of a single reality" in case study research, with the researcher's perspective being only one of many realities within this interpretive paradigm. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), in Articles 12 and 13, also emphasises that "due weight" be given to the opinions and perspectives of children, especially in matters that affect them directly (United Nations, 1989). Distinct understandings of the scholarship programme are true even for the 13 individual recipients who each bring their unique backgrounds, perspectives, experiences and personalities to bear when engaging with the demands he faces. Therefore, even treating these boys as a homogenous group is somewhat unfair on them.

As Mercer (2007) identifies, the biographical characteristics of both the researched and the researcher produce a superficial distinction between insider and outsider. A deeper examination of characteristics reinforced the reality that as researcher, I am undoubtedly an outsider to the group being researched. Therefore, being positioned as an ally was an important step, that required fostering of healthy relationships with all of the participants, to facilitate their openness in participation (Scholz, Gordon and Treharne, 2021).

Aim

While harbouring echoes of critical pedagogy, this research aims rather to contribute to the challenge and negotiation of social phenomena that Grix (2002) argues are continually contested by social actors and thus in perpetual flux. Von Holdt (2018, p.105) describes South Africa's social reality as being "fractured, contested, disputative, disorderly and violent".

Within these negotiations, by virtue of having lower socioeconomic status and thus symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1989) in comparison to some other members of the school community, these scholarship recipients can be easily overlooked. By placing them at the centre of this research, it is hoped that their marginalised voices can be amplified to effect meaningful change. Indeed, Smith, Gollop and Taylor (2008) noted how children of primary school age are aware of issues that affect them, and that these young people express a desire to be both better informed regarding said issues and involved in contributing to their solutions.

This interpretive study seeks understanding of a subjective world of human experience (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018, p.19). It uses critical pedagogy to challenge the current *status quo* of children who experience the privilege of an elite education while not necessarily accessing the full spectrum of its associated benefits. This *status quo* comes about through the intersectional marginalisation of these children who form a small minority within an institution steeped in the longstanding traditions of hegemonic power structured toward a collective and uniform majority, resulting in layered experiences for those marginalised by such (Scholz, Gordon and Treharne, 2021).

Paradigm

Rather than an action research approach, this study remains in the case study tradition owing to a lack of any specific problems being initially identified with the scholarship programme and to be addressed through the project. It also lacks the self-reflective element of action research (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018) as it focusses rather on identifying institutional structures and processes that either promote or erode well-being and belonging. Dependent on the outcomes of this case study, an action research project could be an appropriate extension.

During the Masters course, the works of Bishop *et al* (2009) and Milner (2008), both stressing the importance of student agency and being informed by critical theoretical perspectives, had a profound impact on me. Without this agency, one risks patronising capable individuals as helpless victims of circumstance. However, I was torn between how the immaturity of some of the children in this study would limit their potential for agentic action, thus raising ethical questions of care. This provided further reason to adopt an interpretive case study approach rather than a critical theory stance.

The assimilationist paradigm, as currently perceived to be the *status quo*, is encapsulated in McArdle and Mansfield's (2007, p.487) warning that diversity of perspectives is not necessarily valued in inclusion. They argue that in order to challenge a discourse, the development of voice is a prerequisite, enabling the development of a critical consciousness that can challenge the prevailing hegemony rather than inclusion being cast simply as the adoption of middle-class values. Thus, consulting the boys about their experiences provides the opportunity for educators to critically examine "the specialized pedagogic identities that their teaching has created" (Arnot and Reay, 2007, p.322).

Sampling and Case Study Method

The Interviewees

The two staff most directly involved in overseeing the boys were interviewed together first. This provided a test run of the interview questions with mature interviewees who would be more reflexive if necessary were there any challenges in the questioning format. They were the only ladies interviewed. While gatekeeper approval had been granted by the school's head, this initial interview with these ladies being responsible for the boys specifically, also served to ensure transparency and a more direct gatekeeper approval before undertaking interviews with the scholarship children (The Open University, 2022).

While I was hopeful of a favourable response rate from their parents, I was surprised that none expressed reservations about the study. Therefore, all 13 of the current scholarship beneficiaries, spread across four cohorts of 3 or 4 children each, were interviewed by cohort. This made for a smaller, manageable group where boys could more easily share their thoughts and experiences amongst their direct peers with less fear of contradicting other recipients (Bucknall, 2014).

Owing to safeguarding requirements, these interviews had to take place on the school campus. Thus, despite best efforts, having access to a suitable venue without the inherent symbolism of unequal power relations within the venue (BERA, 2018) and between interviewer and interviewees (Burton and Bartlett, 2005), while still meeting the contradictory needs of confidentiality and privacy within a public space (Skinner, 2018), was a significant challenge and may have affected the freedom with which particularly the younger groups spoke. Each interview lasted approximately the equivalent duration of one ordinary lesson in the school day, and was carried out during free time in the afternoon or early evening. Despite all being boarders, getting the boys together when they were available and relaxed was a challenge. One group, interviewed on a weekday evening, seemed to find this an imposition on their limited free time, whereas the other three groups, interviewed in the afternoon or on weekends, gave no such indications.

Two alumni of this scholarship programme were interviewed. Both would be considered successes of the programme, although in very different respects. The most recent graduate, still in junior high school, was able to provide relevant recent insight of the programme while being slightly removed and having a more mature perspective. The older graduate, now working in this same boarding house as a boarder master, provided a longitudinal element to workings of the programme in addition to his own insights and experiences from 'both sides of the fence'.

Two teacher interns who share similar backgrounds to the scholarship recipients and who also work as boarder masters in the boarding house were interviewed together. These gentlemen, who both previously worked in low-wage employment, provided a mature adult perspective of the reality of the scholarship boys and an understanding of the challenges faced by the boys coming into this new school environment.

Semi-Structured Interviews

As de Fina (2009) explains, rather than being artificial social encounters, interviews are, and should be treated as, interactional events. Thus interviews followed a set of predetermined questions, but were conducted in a conversational manner allowing for digression and further exploration of specific points raised by interviewees, what Guest, MacQueen and Namey (2012) term "inductive probing". The interviews were carried out in groups, with the exception of the two alumni who were interviewed individually due to logistical complexities.

I considered using the narrative interview format for the engagements with the alumni and interns. This would have allowed them to tell their stories with limited influence or direction from the interviewer (Muylaert et al, 2014). Ultimately though, I decided upon adopting the same format as that done with the boys, in part because of the struggle I had with the narrative format during EE814, and this semi-structured form provided consistency in what was discussed, ensuring that these accounts could be compared and contrasted with those of the boys. To ensure the interns and alumni were still able to tell their own story, the questions posed in these interviews were left more open than had been the case for the children.

The interviews were carried out in a specific order beginning with the oversight staff before moving onto the boys. The intended schedule for the children's interviews was slightly disrupted by unforeseen events and resulted in the Grade 5 cohort being interviewed one round earlier than planned. This sequence was designed to allow me more opportunities to refine my technique before meeting with the youngest groups who I anticipated to be the least responsive and forthcoming to the questions (Burton and Bartlett, 2005). The alumni and interns were interviewed last providing an opportunity to cross-examine any issues raised by the children. The original intention was to interview the interns prior to the boys, in order to provide better insight into the dichotomous worlds of these children, however, the interns own examination schedules delayed meeting until after the boys had already all been interviewed. In retrospect, this was probably advantageous.

The intentional use of small group interviews for the groups of boys was designed to minimise their potential anxiety during the interviews by providing peer support, address the power imbalance with a 'strength in numbers' approach, enable the children to exchange ideas with each other thus facilitating discussion, and alleviate the pressure on any one child to generate responses (Bucknall, 2014; Costley, Elliott and Gibbs, 2010; Burton and Bartlett, 2005). These authors all note the possible risk, and challenge in identifying, that group dynamics affect the data generated in some significant way.

Data Analysis

As shown to have been a successful method in a similarly styled study by Nimer and Çelik (2020), a thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) process, was carried out at the semantic level once all the interviews were completed. This supported the constructionist epistemology being followed. Bucknall's (2014) cautions regarding interpretation of children's words as matching the understanding ascribed to those words by adults, and that silence is oftentimes a response in itself, are noted here.

Applying Braun and Clarke's (2006) methodology, the interview transcripts were coded for theoretical thematic analysis. A thematic analysis approach was chosen because of its capacity to "both reflect reality and to unpick or unravel the surface of 'reality'" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.81) across an entire data set.

I anticipated following a hybrid approach to code generation that allowed for both theory- and data-driven codes to be established (Xu and Zammit, 2020). However, the categories established during the literature review covered the data relating to the research questions well, and I therefore concluded no additional data-driven code generation was necessary. Coding in this way also helped me to remain focussed on the research questions rather than being distracted by interesting, albeit irrelevant, data.

Ethical Considerations

The BERA Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (2018, p.6) states all social relationships are affected by structural inequalities that must be accounted for during the research process. These are further complicated by the insider-outsider continuum (Mercer, 2007). The particular socioeconomic inequalities at the heart of this study were omnipresent during the ethical considerations for this research. Fortunately, the BERA ethic of respect, highlighted by The Open University (2022), aligns particularly well with the core values of the research site where it is often said "respect is the only rule". Applying Stutchbury and Fox's (2009, pp.495-496) four-layered framework for ethical and moral decision making in educational research, the significant considerations relevant to this study are detailed below:

External / Ecological Considerations

Cultural sensitivity

Implicit in this research is the challenging not only of overt customs, but also institutional norms and taken-for-granted practices at the school in question. Being sensitive to the implications of the results of the study, how those are communicated and suggestions for how they are addressed is necessary to ensure all stakeholders emerge believing the changes to have improved conditions.

Awareness of all parts of the institution

The sense that as scholarship recipients, the boys and their families are somehow indebted to the school for the opportunity they have is real and must be accounted for. It could be expected that the boys will filter some of their responses to mitigate the fear of retribution for anything negative they may have to share.

Sponsors

There are no direct sponsors of this research, however the school acts as host. Furthermore, between the 13 current scholarship recipients, there are three different funding models; the various unrelated funders are not connected to the research in any way. There is thus no obligation, either covert or overt, to deliver positive findings. In fact, a significant risk to the success of this investigation was that, due to filtering as described above, no negative or critical feedback was disclosed thus preventing any meaningful improvements or recommendations being made. An explicit objective of this project was to expose weaknesses that could be improved upon.

Quality of evidence

With such a small sample size, the risk of a low response rate was significant. Through effective engagement with parents/guardians and healthy relationships with the boys, all current scholarship recipients agreed to be interviewed.

Applicable Law

Located in South Africa and as a registered member of the South African Council of Educators (SACE), the SACE Code of Professional Ethics (2021) had to be adhered to. Specifically, rights of children articulated in the South African Constitution such as their rights to confidentiality, privacy, and a safe environment had to considered (SACE, 2021).

In the event any criminal or illegal behaviour was disclosed, statutory regulations and institutional procedures around addressing such were to be followed.

Risk

There was possibility that participants disclose instances of discriminatory, criminal or otherwise intolerable behaviour, either by caregivers at home, or adults or other children within the institution. Individual accountability for such behaviour falls beyond the control of this study, however, reputational damage to the institution might result if such indiscretions were made public.

Consequential / Utilitarian Considerations

Benefits for Individual Participants, Particular Groups and Society

As per Articles 12 and 13 of the UNCRC (1989) by giving a voice to these children, both they and future beneficiaries of this or similar such programmes might have a better experience as a result of this research, both at the site in question as well as through any principles which could be applied to the many other schools with similar type scholarship programmes.

Arnot and Reay (2007) highlight the risk of voice work and student consultation providing a veneer of social transformation when none in fact takes place. They argue the “tragedy” of such work lies in the “lack of consequence in being able to challenge classification structures” (Arnot and Reay, 2007, p.323).

Avoidance of Harm

This study necessarily requires examination of the most challenging aspects of the scholarship experience for the recipients. Therefore, the potential for touching sensitive issues, uncomfortable topics and negative memories is expected to occur. Engaging these topics with compassion and empathy, with clear opportunities for the children to maintain their privacy around these things is paramount. Bucknall (2014) insists this choice should be clearly articulated as part of facilitating fully informed consent given by children.

Harm here should not be confused with discomfort. Creating the space for children’s voices to be heard, listened to and taken seriously, as required by Article 12 of the UNCRC (1989), sits in tension with the reality that in order to change the negative circumstances that children experience, adults with the power to change the circumstance need to be aware of and understand why and how such circumstances occur and are harmful. Expounding on these painful experiences in an authentic way to prevent their recurrence is necessary and might also prove cathartic in some instances.

Benefits for the Researcher

Numerous personal benefits exist to myself as the researcher. Deeper understanding of the scholarship recipients and enhanced relationships with them as a result of seeking out their perspectives are a likely outcome. My career development prospects are enhanced generally through the attainment of the qualification and specifically through potential publication of the results in industry media or conference presentations raising my professional profile.

Deontological Considerations

Avoidance of Wrong

Throughout each step, the institutional gatekeepers have been aware of this undertaking and what it involves (The Open University, 2022). Research participants were informed of the research and its intentions, their willing consent to participate and freedom to withdraw at any stage either in full or in part without consequence (BERA, 2018) was obtained. The option to not answer a question was made explicit, and especially with the children, was repeated numerous times throughout the interview.

Fairness and Reciprocity

No incentives were offered, however in an effort to make the setting as comfortable as possible for the children (BERA, 2018; Burton and Bartlett, 2005), juice and biscuits were provided during the interview.

Interviews with the alumni and adults were affected by asymmetric power relations less. Additionally, their greater understanding of the research motives shifted the power dynamic with me relying on the interviewees, who themselves had nothing to gain directly from participation. These interviews were much more relaxed and conversational, often interrogating issues together.

Tell the Truth

This project aims to make meaningful suggestions for change. Some of those suggestions may be unpopular owing to the specific group of children they are intended to benefit among a larger community of individuals who have not been canvassed and pay for the benefits of being at the institution (Yoon, 2020). Unpopular findings and suggestions must be weighed against the potential harm caused to others within the community and the feasibility of implementing those changes given other constraints, the political push back described by

Yoon (2020) notwithstanding. Some proposals may require significant reworking, refinement or further stakeholder engagement before they could be implemented. Being sensitive to these multiple implications is part of *Doing the Most Positive Good*.

Relational / Individual Considerations

Genuine collaboration / Trust Established

As a member of staff involved in the care and education of the boys concerned, an already established relationship with each boy exists. Leveraging these relationships, built through displays of respect and genuine care for their well-being, was required. This extended to attaining parental consent to interview the boys.

Collegial bonds with the adults interviewed exist due to regular workday contact ensuring ease of access as an insider (Mercer, 2007). Histories with these individuals extend back between 4 and 9 years enabling the formation of long-established and trusted relationships. However, given the topics being discussed, particularly with the interns and alumni, both my biographical characteristics and life experience precluded me from being perceived as anything more than an ally, making these relationships all the more important (Scholz, Gordon and Treharne, 2021).

Avoid Imposition / Respect Autonomy

Throughout the interviews, it was emphasised that the participants were responsible for what and how much they chose to share. Some of the questions touched on negative experiences, however, a sincere attempt was made to ensure that the interviewees always understood their rights to determine what, if anything, they spoke about.

Confirmation of Findings

By interviewing the boys before the alumni and interns, those latter interviews provided the opportunity for corroboration of points raised earlier by the boys. Along with personal observational data, this provided a degree of triangulation.

Data Presentation and Analysis

A theoretical thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) was applied to the interview transcripts using the themes identified during the literature review process. These themes are addressed individually although they frequently overlap and are closely connected.

Hegemony

The clearest examples of hegemonic attitudes related to deficit perceptions that existed in both the minds of the adults and children, although how these were expressed differed between them. The adults saw home as a place that lacked the support, structure, consistency and resources to meet the needs of the children. One intern commented:

> "School is their best place"

and a teacher asserted the reason for the scholarship recipients boarding was that:

> "The wheels fall off at home".

These perceptions align with Bishop *et al* (2009), who found that faculty's pathologising of marginalised student's circumstances or characteristics could be linked to how those faculty members engaged with the students, something which I have witnessed first-hand. How those normative standards are established with which such pathologising takes place is itself an intrinsically hegemonic practice.

Staff pathologising the home environment reveals Lareau's (2011) cultural logic of the institution, that of concerted cultivation. The scholarship recipients affirmed this, all highlighting the wider range of activities on offer than at their previous schools, with one even claiming the hardest thing to get used to was:

> "The structure of the day and how you go from one thing to the next. The busyness!"

While provision is made for the scholarship recipients, their families are oftentimes excluded from mundane functions and activities by both staff and the wider parent body. The teachers spoke extensively around tensions between including these families and placing unmanageable expectations on them, particularly in an environment where the history and institutional culture can be so intimidating to parents lacking the financial, cultural and sometimes also linguistic, capital of the majority (Singh, 2024). Yoon (2020) explains this alienation using Bourdieu's theory of social capital while Moskal (2016) describes how it can hinder marginalised parents from engaging meaningfully with the institution, which then reinforces the pathologising described above.

English linguistic proficiency was identified as a gateway to accessing the institutional culture. Rogers *et al* explain that "critical discourse analysts locate power in the arena of language as a social practice" (2005, p.369). One alumnus recalled learning English phrases so he could communicate during the interview process, and later not understanding what was being spoken about during assemblies, while the other, fluent in English when he started, stated plainly:

> "Being poor in English made lots of things very difficult for the other [scholarship recipients]."

Yoon describes this as colonial languages continuing to signify access to power and how that maintains "advantageous social, economic and political positions" (2020, p.198).

The alumnus told another account where an English-speaking staff member entered the dormitory when only the three isiZulu-speaking scholarship boys were there. The adult proceeded to tell them they must not speak isiZulu while around her. He recalled:

> "That hurt on a deep level and even now when I look back."

He described the challenge of remaining Zulu in such an anglicised environment. Bass (2014, p.31) styles this as a risk that, as the boarding school culture differs more significantly from the home life, the students acculturate into the new environment such that their home relationships suffer corresponding disjuncture as consequence. Singh (2024) explains this as the difference between integration and assimilation.

While reflecting on how he managed to develop the necessary relationships when he started at the school, one boy remarked:

> "I had to be a different person so that I could try to understand the other people and how their personalities worked."

The sentiment conveyed was one of having to actively cultivate his personhood to facilitate his entry into the social and institutional discourse.

The scholarship recipient's hegemonic perceptions portrayed their new school positively, as a place of opportunity that reflected an aspirational stance. They spoke about the range of new experiences they enjoyed exposure to and clearly believed their new school to be superior to their former ones. The teacher reported boys wishing their friends could also share in the opportunity. However, a different alumnus, in a seminar discussion, told of how he would lie about where he had started going to school to avoid the consequences of his home community's negative reaction (Mthalane, 2024, personal communication, 21 July).

The alumni made the most interesting comments when asked if they ever missed or wished to return to their former schools. One stated that he missed some of the people that he was close to,

> "but there was nothing to miss really"

and later:

> "Moving from there showed me how much I was actually missing, how much more there could actually be"

while the other said bluntly:

> "No, I understood there wasn't much opportunity there."

This reflects an innate understanding of the dispossession effect of location (Yoon, 2019, p.204) and its effects on capital accumulation.

The interns had never heard the boys wishing they could return to their former schools, but warned that the scholarship recipients were very sensitive to what could be perceived as unfair treatment. This overlaid with the pressure on the young boys to be grateful and make the most of their opportunity at an elite school, while simultaneously fearing retribution or consequences, such as losing the scholarship, should they complain or raise concerns. However real or imagined, such pressure to conform places the scholarship recipients in a paradigm of subjugation. An alumnus mentioned throw away comments from adults in power as an example. He recalled being told,

> "you are a scholarship kid, you shouldn't be doing that".

Asymmetric Power Relations

The differences between the full-fee boys and the scholarship recipients was evident when the scholarship recipients spoke about the hardest or worst part of boarding. Although natural and to be expected that all boarders feel some sense of missing home, the scholarship recipients described the difficulty of being in the BE for multiple weeks at a time. While they all highlighted the dense social networks of boarding, the scholarship recipients alluded to the exhaustion of being continuously surrounded by people and lacking peace, space or privacy. On seeing their full-fee peers leaving for home each weekend, oftentimes traveling past their own home towns, one boy commented:

> "It makes it harder just seeing it".

Despite this, the scholarship recipients felt that going home less frequently also had some benefits, especially in forming stronger relationships with the BE staff and getting less homesick.

The scholarship coordinator explained she had begun a process of doing home visits in an effort to better understand the scholarship recipients' backgrounds. Moll *et al* (1992, p.139) explain how these intentional visits can reduce asymmetry between teachers and parents, and teachers and students. However, Lareau (2011) found that while middle-class children are deliberately taught to insert themselves into the centre, being entitled in a positive UNCRC sense, working-class children are accustomed to remaining peripheral, distant and constrained in their school experiences. This somewhat explains the scholarship recipients' desire to keep a low profile and reticence to speak out or complain.

Reay (2000) explained that middle-class mothers achieved greater gains from intensive emotional involvement in their children's education than did working-class mothers. Paradoxically, working-class mothers were better able to pass on emotional capital when they remained disengaged from pressuring their children's education. This difference, Reay argued, is due to distinctions in available capital. Such understanding gives context to the frustrations expressed by the teachers over the perceived lack of involvement of the scholarship parents.

The senior boys revealed a subtle understanding of their position in relation to the broader organisation when asked what they would advise of new scholarship recipients. Among statements of identity and belonging, they also spoke of "keeping a low profile", knowing one's place and not causing a stir. While not explicit, this set of comments reveal a deep-seated 'us-them' binary these boys contend with. It sits in tension with the advice of an alumnus who suggested that boys must accept invitations when offered and "don't let anything stop you", even though he remarked that it was hard going to other people's houses because "I felt too out of place".

The interviewees all identified the effort required to make the most of each opportunity, with boys recognising various sources of pressure to perform. One advised:

> "Remember who you are here for. You're not just here for yourself, you're here for your entire family!"

And an alumnus remarked:

> "The transition wasn't easy, for everyone, my family included."

The other alumnus advised:

> "Don't expect things are going to be easy. It's a hard battle both physically and emotionally."

He went on to speak about feeling the need to continually prove himself to make up for what he felt were his material inadequacies. In a Bourdieuan sense, he was substituting forms of capital. As he remarked:

> "The worst thing was when people were comparing. You'd just sit quietly in the corner."

As a young child, he didn't feel that he had somewhere to discuss or unpack his feelings around the material inequality that he was navigating, so much so that he recounted physically removing himself, and his disqualified voice, from conversations. Providing the necessary support to help navigate this challenge might be an area for improvement in the programme.

Cultural Inclusion, Belonging and Identity

These three concepts, although closely linked, will be addressed individually. Like so many elements of this study, they intertwine to affect and be affected by each other, sometimes amplifying one another while at other times existing in opposition.

Cultural Inclusion

The scholarship recipients all identified missing home and feeling far away from their roots. The adults explained this in greater detail, describing the challenges of adaptation/ assimilation into an unfamiliar environment and culture. They remembered how scholarship recipients learned to fit into any situation even though they sometimes felt out of place, feeling inadequate in comparison to the privileged individuals they had never previously been exposed to, and the difficulty making friends who didn't really understand where they came from. When asked what was easiest to adjust to, one alumnus replied:

> "Nothing was comfortable, nothing you did felt comfortable. Nothing you did felt like you were supposed to be doing it. Everything was foreign."

He recalled the magnitude of the adjustment he experienced in things as simple as sleeping in pyjamas, which he was learning of for the first time! Replying to what was hardest to get used to, the other alumnus responded:

> "It's difficult to get used to how much people actually care. It's very different."

This accorded with the interns describing the biggest difference between where they are now and the schools these boys originate from, saying:

> "[Here], teachers try to help boys who are struggling. Nobody cares in the rural areas."

Although a crude brush, countered by multiple accounts of a teacher who the scholarship recipients were particularly fond of at their previous school, such pathologising aligns with Spaull's (2019) describing much of South Africa's public education system. However, the above anecdotes illustrate how even some of the most taken-for-granted elements represent significant changes that these boys might have to adjust to, necessitating the deployment of emotional capital resources that are then unavailable for utilisation elsewhere. Such challenges exist in tension with the possible destructive effects of boarding especially when begun at a young age (Schaverien, 2004).

Reay argues that in working-class households, the culture of "survivalism" replete with anxiety and tension, is unconducive for passing on emotional capital (2000, p.581). In contrast, Goldthorpe (2007) highlights the delicate balance between early removal from the family home which facilitates lower barriers to adjustment in boarding, but runs the risk of greater levels of assimilation, and delaying the removal into boarding to benefit development of the home culture, but increasing the barriers to adjustment.

Therefore, effective guidance is important to help these young boys. The role of the various mentors was identified as being important by a number of the scholarship recipients. An alumnus described how his mentor family even helped him during his early high school years. He explained that the parents were pivotal in ensuring that relationship was effective, saying:

> "If the parents understand, then the boys understand."

This thought was affirmed by the scholarship coordinator who detailed the importance of selecting the correct mentor families. The scholarship recipients described their mentor families as an important support during their journey, although between the boys, these relationships sometimes run their natural course. One boy described his mentor family as:

> "Someone I can rely on".

The boys suggested that it might be better if the mentor children and scholarship recipients were kept in the same classes as they go up through the grades feeling it might help to perpetuate a strong relationship between them. They recognised it as being especially important when the boys got on well.

Belonging

The dense social networks these boys develop from being in the BE for extended periods was highlighted in all of their interviews and concords with Bass's (2014) observations of boarding schools. One boy described:

> "It's like a big permanent sleepover."

Boarding facilitates greater sense of belonging developed through the broad variety of experiences the boys can enjoy together including their exploration of interests and development of self through full access to the extra-curricular timetable.

The scholarship recipients revealed a contradiction in answering the best and worst thing about being in boarding, describing the BE environment with such warmth saying:

> "[BE staff] make us feel safe and make us feel like families. I can sleep at night"

and

> "My school is my home. I feel safe here."

This was, however, always juxtaposed with talk of missing home, their parents and siblings. These point out the continuous dichotomy of the worlds the boys straddle and the challenge of developing a deeply rooted sense of belonging in either of them. It explains why the scholarship recipients felt that having people understand them well was so central to their success. As one alumnus implored:

> "Just understanding the person. Support them. Because that's what we need the most. That support gives us that sense of belonging."

The younger boys identified the importance of having motherly figures that they related to, both in their classrooms and in the BE, whereas the older boys developed much more significant relationships with the male boarding staff. While this in part reflects the staffing structure in the BE, it also speaks to the male relationships being rooted in shared experiences which take time to accumulate in contrast to maternal caring which is sought out immediately.

Expressed multiple times and reflecting a clear sense of reliance on community, an interesting outcome was the degree to which the scholarship recipients articulated the antidote to missing home. To overcome the periods of difficulty, they remained engaged with their peers.

The boys conveyed conflicting emotions such as guilt, pride, happiness and longing. In being exposed to experiences that their families are unable to enjoy or relate to, while experiencing their own thrills, these emotions could be challenging to navigate.

Identity

Identity formation exists on both the personal and social levels. Individually, the importance of remaining authentic to themselves and their home culture was captured strongly when asked what advice they would offer future scholarship recipients:

> "Be who you are, remember where you come from."
>
> "Never forget where you come from."
>
> "Be yourself. Don't try to be like others just so you can fit in."
>
> "Stick to what you know is right."

These encouragements to be proud of and authentic about their backgrounds were balanced by multiple statements imploring recipients to remain grounded and humble. Despite being surrounded by wealth and privilege, one recipient even described how being in this environment had helped him appreciate and love where he comes from.

Mastery of the institutional identity which forms the habitus, was seen as important. Weininger and Lareau called this "explicit inculcation" (2018, p.261) carried out within the schooling environment. One recipient identified the high expectation of gentlemanly manners and conduct which is made clear and deliberately taught. An alumnus described the considered focus on values and behaviour as:

> "things that are instilled in you that make you a man. It's character."

He went on to explain that these actions, continually discussed, explained and expected from those in the institution helped develop the collective identity of all the boys.

Voice

A common thread throughout the interviews was the perception of having a voice and being comfortable uttering it. Although an alumnus referred to actual speech when recalling being treated differently because he initially battled to express himself in English, more mention was made of metaphorical voice as described by Arnot and Reay (2007).

The teachers expressed that faculty needed to know more about the scholarship boys, while simultaneously being conflicted in how much background and personal information about these boys to disclose. Riddell (2009) articulates this tension between policies of redistribution and recognition where the purpose of recognition is to facilitate greater levels of inclusion. However, the risk of recognition is that by celebrating difference, the marginalisation becomes reinforced rather than reduced.

One of the alumni felt that a positive change would be:

> "If the classmates knew more about our background, had a better understanding of what it means to be a scholarship boy, would make the whole experience easier."

This statement, echoed by the other alumnus, reflects a sense of isolation and existing, at least in part, on the margins. It was supported by numerous other references that implied the boys knew that help was available to address this, although other comments suggested enlisting such help was sometimes difficult. In response to advice for incoming scholarship winners, these responses:

> "Speak up when you don't feel comfortable"
>
> "Always keep calm and ask for help because you aren't alone"
>
> "Don't be afraid to talk and actually say how you feel"

contrasted with negative perceptions such as:

> "Guys don't always feel comfortable to ask for help"
>
> "When I felt like the odd one out and felt lonely".

These comments illustrate the contradictions these boys continually navigate as they move through each day attempting to present themselves authentically.

One of the boys reflected about the interns who share a similar background to them:

> "Those are the kind of people that really understand what kind of person you are and what you are going through."

He further described how having one of these interns as his Big Brother[2] had been particularly helpful for him being able to deal with pressures and responsibilities. This sentiment was best summed up by the alumni who spoke about removing the pressure of being a scholarship boy because they already felt so much pressure and expectation coming from home. He put it thus:

> "People need to understand that its more than just giving, than paying for someone to go to a school. I'm here and it's my first time in this environment. So people need to be understanding. We're very grateful but there's also a lot that comes with being there."

McArdle and Mansfield (2007) describe the development and expression of voice as central to being able to challenge the status quo. One intern felt that some of these scholarship recipients were not comfortable raising concerns for fear of being perceived as ungrateful or risking retribution for speaking out. He suggested an anonymous comment book be implemented to enable these boys to air any frustrations. This sentiment was affirmed during one of the interviews with the boys where their long pauses combined with a reticence to be critical in any way whatsoever that appeared as though they were trying to give the 'correct' answers.

[2] The Big Brother programme assigns each boarder to a small group of approximately 6 boys, with one boarder master who takes a particular interest in those boy's well-being.

Conclusions and Implications

This project set out to ascertain what factors operate to facilitate or hinder the successful transition and adaptation of development scholarship recipients into an elite boarding school environment from their own point of view. It further asked if Bourdieu's theory of capital could help to explain any impediments to the success of the scholarship programme. During the literature review, four primary themes emerged and were applied as a lens to interpret the data developed through interviews with scholarship recipients and care givers within the school. The data were analysed using these themes within Bourdieu's theory of capital as a framework.

The scholarship recipients described the relentlessness of the challenge in various ways. From their continual, conscious effort in how they present themselves in order to access and develop their social capital, to being perpetually alert to unfair treatment and having to show a brave face, while having few opportunities to disengage from the high stimulation communal living environment, all the while being surrounded by very little that is familiar, these boys face a challenging battle. Therefore, one of their most necessary attributes is their resilience. As caregivers, being intentional in ensuring that these boys have opportunities to quieten down, decompress and enjoy a change of scenery on a regular basis could reduce the accumulated effects of this strain.

Some of the recipients described the magnitude of adjustment they had to make when they began in boarding. This can require deployment of scarce capital, simply ensuring the child begins at the same point as his peers, but yielding nil further return. The demands of navigating contrasting emotions created by circumstances, all the while trying to plot a path through early adolescence, necessitates high levels of understanding and empathy. The boys identified this in their desire for mentors who could walk alongside them, and preferably ones who could relate well to their backgrounds.

A surprising result was the significance and extent of the deficit perceptions and pathologising of the home environment by the adults. Acknowledging this reality will be the first step in creating a more inviting and inclusive environment for parents who do not share the social, economic, cultural or symbolic capital of the majority. While it is important that the school takes active steps toward addressing this mind-set in the staff, perceptions of the full-fee parents are beyond the bounds of the institution, but are also significant in creating an intimidating environment for scholarship parents.

Despite isiZulu being spoken widely both on the campus and beyond, linguistic competence in English is key to unlocking symbolic capital. Furthermore, English proficiency retains a position of prestige and power, and is sometimes still deployed in the act of subjugation. While the intention at the heart of such deployment may be debatable, the effect is not. It leaves lasting damage.

Throughout the interviews, there existed a continuous ebb and flow between assimilation on the one hand and adaptation or inclusion on the other. This transition was not linear, but rather exists in a multi-dimensional space where numerous factors work in concert or conflict simultaneously. Practices that differ by culture and between social classes are thrown together into an institutional habitus that reveres tradition but remains contemporary. These subtleties, permeating all corners of the boarding school life, reinforce the distinctions, separation and disjuncture between home and school that these children continually face. Their extended periods of time being at school help them to learn the habitus instinctively without having to consciously process the discrete behaviours required to succeed.

Bourdieu's theory of capital provides a framework within which the thoughts and experiences of the individuals concerned with the scholarship programme can be interpreted. By analysing those thoughts in this way, a more nuanced understanding of some of these subtleties can be achieved, which will ultimately lead to a more inclusive institution.

I began by describing this project as an exercise in stop, start, continue, and with this we conclude.

To stop:

- Privileging particular ways of doing and being at the expense of others which are simply not understood.
- Considering working-class homes and communities as deficient.

To start:

- Creating the space for the scholarship recipients to share their backgrounds in an authentic manner.
- Being more deliberate about the mentorship provided to scholarship recipients, ensuring that they are supported by people who can understand them.

To continue:

- So much of the programme is functioning well as evidenced by the children graduating from it each year. It does not require wholesale changes, rather only small adjustments that could make meaningful improvements.

In all of this, it is an injustice that these 13 unique individuals and their families have been considered as a uniform collective. Each is walking his own path and faces distinct challenges along the way. My greatest takeaway is that inclusion requires more than a passive welcoming in. If we wish to see our scholarship recipients and their families fully integrated into the broader life of the school, inclusion necessarily requires an act of reaching out from those who feel most at home.

This study was about the scholarship recipients at my particular school, all aged between 9 and 13 years old. While each of them had the opportunity to voice their opinions and thoughts during the interviews, the richer data came from the two alumni. Various possibilities for this exist, namely their greater maturity and ability to express themselves coherently, the more equal balance of power in our underlying relationships, possible 'group think' during the interviews with the boys and self-editing of their responses because their friends were with them. Therefore, a possible extension of this project would be to carry out a larger scale study of all alumni from this programme.

My original intention was to include scholarship parents in the study. It quickly became clear that this was too broad. However, another extension would be to enlist the perceptions of the parents in how they felt their engagement with both the school and the scholarship programme could be improved.

Where indigenous languages are frequently characterised as deficit, an interesting follow-on would be testing if Bernstein's theory of class differences in linguistic codes applied in this setting, particularly given the amount of code-switching and trans-languaging that takes place between multi-lingual speakers. Of particular interest would be if this mapped with socio-economic differences as it does with the scholarship recipients.

So what then do scholarship boarders really need? People they can rely on. The support of those who care for them. To be treated fairly. Understanding. And that means they are no different to anybody else!

Narrative Reflection

Throughout the Masters course, I have wrestled the victimhood mentality of intersectional classification that pervades the critical theoretical paradigms. In contrast, I believe that as humans, we are all fallen and only God's redemptive grace can rescue us. While I still object to using intersectional characteristics as badges on the totem pole of disadvantage, I have come to realise that despite personal agency, it is only the most exceptional of individuals who are able to overcome their circumstances and break free of intersectional limitations. As a result, I hope I am a more compassionate practitioner.

I had to continually park my own opinions and perceptions, particularly during the interviews. I was acutely aware of not coming across as judgemental of anybody involved or related to the study. This was when I felt my positionality as an outsider to the recipients and their parents most specifically. Despite my best efforts, I am unable to stand in their shoes.

Being an insider researcher within an organisation raised the ethical conundrum of how to present adverse findings without exposing important role-players to undue scrutiny. Most scholarship parents requested a copy of the final dissertation when providing consent, and the staff interviewed are intimately involved in the care of their boys. Positioning within the study was important to understanding how that positionality affects the day-to-day experience of the scholarship programme. Therefore, despite the anonymity, readers close enough to the institution could reasonably accurately determine the identities of the staff participants. That I consider many of these individuals as friends further complicated this challenge. Thus there existed a constant tension between the ethics of 'Avoidance of Harm' and 'Tell the Truth'. To address both of these fairly, I found it helpful to remember that as an insider examining institutional practices, I also had to own every critical finding!

Each of the 13 current scholarship recipients, and the 2 alumni, are unique individuals with their own stories. They cannot be treated as a uniform collective. However, in aiming to do the most good for the largest number, the scholarship programme and this study end up doing exactly that.

Families allocate their capital resources in the hope of improving the likelihood of positive outcomes for their children (Waithaka, 2014). This is seen in Riddell's "sharp-elbowed middle class" (2009, p.292) benefitting disproportionately from learning support. This phrase has long haunted me and affected the eventual shape of this study. Unsurprisingly, the web of capital forms intersects differently for each family in nuanced, non-trivial ways. These varied distributions of capital fundamentally direct the way that people interact amongst themselves and with institutions. Consequently, to be empathetic to the children I teach and their parents, I must be far more conscious and deliberate about removing my biases and taken-for-granted assumptions to understand people rather than passing judgment on their actions.

I have become more sensitive to how, as teachers, our subtle assumptions direct our engagement with children and parents. The course has made me more aware of the multitude of factors that interconnect within individuals and classes.

While I really wanted to focus on institutional habitus, the most insightful lessons concern the relational aspects of these children leaving home at such a tender age. That they cope as well as they do is testament primarily to these exceptional boys, but also the scholarship programme and the support that they receive from home and within the school despite those failings described already. While some changes or adaptations to the support of these children can be easily implemented, changes to the influence of larger socioeconomic challenges are far less simple.

TOTAL WORD COUNT: **12 257**

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Appendices

Appendix 1:

E822 Ethical Appraisal Form

Masters: Education, Childhood and Youth

NB: it should be noted that The Open University is unable to offer liability insurance to cover any negative consequences students might encounter when undertaking 'in-person' data collection. It is therefore very important that you follow appropriate research protocols which should include seeking Gatekeeper permissions to undertake any data collection within your setting and adhering to ethical principles for the safety of yourself and your participants.

Because ethical appraisal should precede data collection, a completed version of this form should be included with TMA02 for those developing a Small-Scale Investigation (SSI) and as part of the EMA submission for those completing an Extended Literature Review and Research Proposal (EP) form of the Dissertation.

- Fill in section 1 of this document with your personal details and brief information about your research.
- For section 2, please assess your research using the following questions and click yes or no as appropriate. If there is any possibility of significant risk please tick yes. Even if your list contains all "no" you should still return your completed checklist so your tutor/supervisor can assess the proposed research.

Section 1: Project details			
a.	Student name	Richard Bruce Robertson	
b.	PI		
c.	Project title	What scholarship boarders really need: A qualitative exploration of critical success factors for scholarship winners in an elite South African boarding school	
d.	Supervisor/tutor	Anita Pilgrim	
e.	Qualification	Masters in Education	x

		Masters in Childhood and Youth
f.	MA pathway (where applicable)	Inclusive Practice
g.	Intended start date for fieldwork	17 April 2024
h.	Intended end date for fieldwork	21 June 2024
i.	Country fieldwork will be conducted in *If you are resident in the UK and will be conducting your research abroad please check www.fco.gov.uk for advice on travel.*	South Africa

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	Section 2: Ethics Assessment	Yes	No
1	Does your proposed research need initial clearance from a 'gatekeeper' (e.g. Local Authority, head teacher, college head, nursery/playgroup manager)?	x	
2	Have you checked whether the organisation requires you to undertake a 'police check' or appropriate level of 'disclosure' before carrying out your research?[3]	x	
3	Have you indicated how informed consent will be obtained from your participants (including children less than 16 years old, school pupils and immediate family members)? Your consent letters/forms must inform participants that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time.[4]	x	

[3] You must agree to comply with any ethical codes of practice or legal requirements that maybe in place within the organisation or country (e.g. educational institution, social care setting or other workplace) in which your research will take place. If required an appropriate level of disclosure ('police check') can obtained from the Disclosure and Barring Service (England and Wales), Disclosure Scotland, AccessNI (Northern Ireland), Criminal Records Office (Republic of Ireland), etc.

[4] This should normally involve the use of an information sheet about the research and what participation will involve, and a signed consent form. You must allow sufficient time for potential participants to consider their decision between the giving of the information sheet and the gaining of consent. No research should be conducted without the opt-in informed consent of participants or their caregivers. In the case of children (individuals under 16 years of age) no research should be conducted without a specified means of gaining their informed consent (or, in the case of young children, their assent) and the consent of their parents, caregivers, or guardians. This is particularly important if your project involves participants who are particularly vulnerable or unable to give informed consent (e.g. children under 16 years, people with learning disabilities, or emotional problems, people with difficulty in understanding or communication, people with identified health problems). There is additional guidance on informed consent on the Masters: Education and Childhood and Youth website under Project Resources.

4	Will your proposed research design mean that it will be necessary for participants to take part in the study without their knowledge/consent at the time (e.g. covert observation of people in non-public places)? If so, have you specified appropriate debriefing procedures? [5]		x
5	Does your proposed design involve repetitive observation of participants, (i.e. more than twice over a period of more than 2-3 weeks)? Is this necessary? If it is, have you made appropriate provision for participants to renew consent or withdraw from the study half-way through? [6]		x
6	Are you proposing to collect video and/or audio data? If so, have you indicated how you will protect participants' anonymity and confidentiality and how you will store the data?	x	
7	Does your proposal indicate how you will give your participants the opportunity to access the outcomes of your research (including audio/visual materials) after they have provided data?	x	
8	Have you built in time for a pilot study to make sure that any task materials you propose to use are age appropriate and that they are unlikely to cause offence to any of your participants?		x
9	Is your research likely to involve discussion of sensitive topics (e.g. adult/child relationships, peer relationships, discussions about personal teaching styles, ability levels of individual children and/or adults)? What safeguards have you put in place to protect participants' confidentiality?	x	
10	Does your proposed research raise any issues of personal safety for yourself or other persons involved in the project? Do you need to carry out a 'risk analysis' and/or discuss this with teachers, parents and other adults involved in the research?		x
11	Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants?		x
12	Will the study involve recruitment of patients or staff through the NHS or the use of NHS data?		x

-
- If you answered 'yes' to questions **12**, you will also have to submit an application to an appropriate National Research Ethics Service ethics committee (https://www.hra.nhs.uk/about-us/committees-and-services/res-and-recs/).

[5] Where an essential element of the research design would be compromised by full disclosure to participants, the withholding of information should be specified in the project proposal and explicit procedures stated to obviate any potential harm arising from such withholding. Deception or covert collection of data should only take place where it has been agreed with a named responsible person in the organisation and it is essential to achieve the research results required, where the research objective has strong scientific merit and where there is an appropriate risk management and harm alleviation strategy.

[6] Where participants are involved in longer-term data collection, the use of procedures for the renewal of consent at appropriate times should be considered.

Appendix 2:

RESEARCH STUDY PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

STUDY TITLE

"What scholarship boarders really need: A qualitative exploration of critical success factors for scholarship winners in an elite South African boarding school"

Richard Robertson,

Student for Masters in Education: Inclusive Practice

CONTACT DETAILS

Richard Robertson

INTRODUCTION

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

This study aims to improve the implementation of scholarship programmes in elite South African schools. You have been selected to participate in this study, because your perspective is valued as a person involved with a scholarship programme.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and choosing not to take part will not have any impact on your academic or co-curricular activities either at (school name) or any other institution in the future.

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE RESEARCH STUDY AND COLLECTED RESEARCH DATA

- This research project is being conducted for a dissertation report to fulfil the requirements of the degree of Masters in Education: Inclusive Practice, under the Open University, and carried out by Richard Robertson.
- The research requires focus group interviews with groups made up of individuals who have intimate knowledge of a scholarship programme. As beneficiaries of the programme, the opinions and perspectives of what these young people believe to be most effective or necessary, are valued.
- The study will run from April to September 2024, with interviews taking place in the period April to June 2024.

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO IF I AGREE TO TAKE PART?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form.

- Your participation in this study is **entirely voluntary**.
- Taking part in this study will require you to give up approximately **1 hour** of your time to participate in a focus group **interview**.
- The groups will be made of three to four scholarship winners of similar ages to you.
- These interviews will be **audio-recorded**.

The intention of the study is to improve the implementation of scholarship programmes similar to the one that you are a part of. By helping schools to understand the unique needs and challenges faced by scholarship students in schools like ours, your perspective will help to enable future scholarship winners to make the most of the opportunity that they get on this type of programme.

This is an opportunity for you to safely share your thoughts about some of the difficulties that you may have faced coming into (school name), and to help us as a school improve so that future scholarship winners do not have to go through the same struggles that you did. Nobody at (school name), or involved in the scholarship programme, will know who said anything as no names will be used in the final report. It will not be possible for anyone to connect your experiences or perspectives to you from the report.

HOW WILL THE DATA I PROVIDE BE USED?

All data collected in the interview will be audio-recorded for transcription. Once transcribed, any identifying information will be anonymised or removed.

The transcript and audio files will be stored on a password encrypted USB flash disk that will remain in a locked safe unless being used. This original data will be destroyed within 9 months of collection.

Any quotations from the transcript will be used without any identifying information. If necessary, they will be paraphrased to ensure confidentiality.

Signed consent forms will be retained in a secure safe until such time as the dissertation module is concluded, after which they will be destroyed.

Data that has been collected and used in the dissertation report may also be used in future reports, articles or presentations in its anonymised form.

YOUR RIGHT TO WITHDRAW FROM THE STUDY

- You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time during your participation by informing the researcher (Richard Robertson) of your desire to withdraw, and leaving the focus group interview.
- You have the right to ask for your data to be removed after your participation in the study by informing the researcher in writing, up until 15 July 2024. After this point, data will already be anonymised, aggregated and submitted.

HOW DO I AGREE TO TAKE PART?

In order to take part in this study, you will need to complete the consent form, sign and return it to Richard Robertson, either in hardcopy or electronic format.

THANK YOU

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and considering to participate in this study. If you have any further questions not answered above, you are welcome to discuss them with me further.

DATA PROTECTION

Richard Robertson is the Data Controller for the personal data that you provide.

You have a number of rights as a data subject:

- To request a copy of the personal data we have about you
- To rectify any personal data which is inaccurate or incomplete
- To restrict the processing of your data
- To receive a copy of your data in an easily transferrable format (if relevant)
- To erase your data
- To object to your data being processed

All data will be processed in accordance with the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA). If you are concerned about how your data is being processed, please visit www.inforegulator.org.za.

Appendix 3: Participant Consent / Ascent Forms

CONSENT FORM ON BEHALF OF MINOR CHILD

INFORMED CONSENT FOR "WHAT SCHOLARSHIP BOARDERS REALLY NEED: A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION OF CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS FOR SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS IN AN ELITE SOUTH AFRICAN BOARDING SCHOOL"

Richard Robertson,

Student for Masters in Education: Inclusive Practice

Please highlight your choice by clicking inside the appropriate box

1. Taking part in the study

I have read and understood the information sheet for the following study: *What scholarship boarders really need: A qualitative exploration of critical success factors for scholarship winners in an elite South African boarding school*, or it has been read to me. I have been able to ask questions about my child's participation and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.	YES ☐	NO ☐
I consent voluntarily for my child to be a participant in this study and understand that he can refuse to answer questions he is not comfortable with and he can withdraw from the study at any time by leaving the interview or contacting Richard Robertson up until data have been analysed and submitted, on July 15 2024, without having to give a reason.	YES ☐	NO ☐

I understand that taking part in the study involves participating in an audio-recorded interview / small group that will be fully anonymised prior to analysis or publication in any form.	YES ☐	NO ☐
I agree to the interview / small group being audio-recorded.	YES ☐	NO ☐

2. Use of the information in the study

I understand that information my child provides will be used for a dissertation report and may later be included in articles or presentations to educationalists in connection with the stated topic. All use of any such data will be fully anonymised.	YES ☐	NO ☐
I understand that personal information collected about my child that can identify him, such as his name or where he lives, will not be shared beyond the study team.	YES ☐	NO ☐
I understand that my child's data will be stored on a password protected USB device for a period not exceeding 9 months from date of interview, at which point it will be destroyed.	YES ☐	NO ☐
I agree to my child being quoted anonymously.	YES ☐	NO ☐

3. Access to findings

I would like to receive a copy of the summary of the findings of this study. *Please insert your email address in the space below if you answer 'yes'* Email address …………………………………………………………………	YES ☐	NO ☐

4. Signatures

Name of Child [in CAPITALS] ________________ **Name of Parent / Guardian [in CAPITALS]** ________________	**Signature of parent / guardian** ________________ **(electronic signatures may be accepted**	**Date** ________

For participants unable to sign their name, please mark the box instead of signing ☐

This research project conforms to and complies with the OU Human Research Ethics Committee's conditions for exemption from formal review.

ASSENT FORM

INFORMED ASSENT FOR "WHAT SCHOLARSHIP BOARDERS REALLY NEED: A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION OF CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS FOR SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS IN AN ELITE SOUTH AFRICAN BOARDING SCHOOL"

Richard Robertson,

Student for Masters in Education: Inclusive Practice

Please highlight your choice by clicking inside the appropriate box

1. Taking part in the study

I have read and understood the information sheet for the following study: *What scholarship boarders really need: A qualitative exploration of critical success factors for scholarship winners in an elite South African boarding school*, or it has been read to me. I have been able to ask questions about taking part and I am happy with the answers.	YES ☐	NO ☐
I agree to take part in this study. I am here by my own choice. I do not have to answer any questions that make me feel uncomfortable. I may leave at any time. I can even withdraw from the whole process afterwards by contacting Richard Robertson up until July 15 2024, without having to give a reason.	YES ☐	NO ☐
I understand that taking part in the study involves participating in an interview / small group. I understand that the interview will be recorded. I understand that all information that could identify me will be taken out before anyone else sees or hears it.	YES ☐	NO ☐
I understand that my parent / guardian has already agreed to me taking part in this study.	YES ☐	NO ☐

2. Use of the information in the study

I understand that information I provide will be used for a report and may later be included in other articles or presentations. No information	YES ☐	NO ☐

that could identify me will ever be used in these reports, articles or presentations.		
I understand that personal information collected about me that can identify me, such as my name or where I live, will not be shared beyond the study team.	YES ☐	NO ☐
I understand that my information will be safely stored only for as long as it is needed before it will be destroyed.	YES ☐	NO ☐
I agree to being quoted without my name attached.	YES ☐	NO ☐

3. Access to findings

I would like to receive a copy of the summary of the findings of this study. *Please insert your email address in the space below if you answer 'yes'* Email address …………………………………………………………………	YES ☐	NO ☐

4. Signatures

Name of Participant [in CAPITALS] ________________________	**Signature** ____________________ **(electronic signatures may be accepted**	**Date** ________

For participants unable to sign their name, please mark the box instead of signing ☐

This research project conforms to and complies with the OU Human Research Ethics Committee's conditions for exemption from formal review.

CONSENT FORM

INFORMED CONSENT FOR "WHAT SCHOLARSHIP BOARDERS REALLY NEED: A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION OF CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS FOR SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS IN AN ELITE SOUTH AFRICAN BOARDING SCHOOL"

Richard Robertson,

Student for Masters in Education: Inclusive Practice

The Open University

Please highlight your choice by clicking inside the appropriate box

1. Taking part in the study

I have read and understood the information sheet for the following study: *What scholarship boarders really need: A qualitative exploration of critical success factors for scholarship winners in an elite South African boarding school*, or it has been read to me. I have been able to ask questions about my participation and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.	YES ☐	NO ☐
I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study and understand that I can refuse to answer questions I am not comfortable with and I can withdraw from the study at any time by contacting Richard Robertson up until data have been analysed and submitted, on July 15 2024, without having to give a reason.	YES ☐	NO ☐

I understand that taking part in the study involves participating in an audio-recorded interview / small group that will be fully anonymised prior to analysis or publication in any form.	YES ☐	NO ☐
I agree to the interview / small group being audio-recorded.	YES ☐	NO ☐

2. Use of the information in the study

I understand that information I provide will be used for a dissertation report and may later be included in articles or presentations to educationalists in connection with the stated topic. All use of any such data will be fully anonymised.	YES ☐	NO ☐
I understand that personal information collected about me that can identify me, such as my name or where I live, will not be shared beyond the study team.	YES ☐	NO ☐
I understand that my data will be stored on a password protected USB device for a period not exceeding 9 months from date of interview, at which point it will be destroyed.	YES ☐	NO ☐
I agree to being quoted anonymously.	YES ☐	NO ☐

3. Access to findings

I would like to receive a copy of the summary of the findings of this study. *Please insert your email address in the space below if you answer 'yes'* Email address …………………………………………………………………..	YES ☐	NO ☐

4. Signatures

Name of participant [in CAPITALS] ____________________	**Signature** ____________________ **(electronic signatures may be accepted**	**Date** __________

For participants unable to sign their name, please mark the box instead of signing ☐

This research project conforms to and complies with the OU Human Research Ethics Committee's conditions for exemption from formal review.

Appendix 4: Interview Templates

Questions – Scholarship Recipient Focus Groups

Welcome, pleasantries and explanation:

- Not being judged
- Nothing will be held against you
    - No identifying information will be included in the report
    - Confidentiality
- Don't have to answer anything if you don't want to
- Right to leave at any point

- What, for you, is the best thing about being in boarding at (school name)?
- What for you is the worst / hardest thing about being in boarding at (school name)?
        - Is it possible to make this thing less difficult? How so?
- What aspect(s) of being at (school name) is(are) most different to the school you came from?
- What do you miss most from your time at your previous school?
- What one thing did you find easiest to adjust to when you began at (school name)?
- What one thing did you find most difficult to adjust to when you began at (school name)?
- How would you describe your transition from your previous school to (school name)? e.g. easy, hard, smooth, difficult, etc. Why do you describe it like this?
- What one thing helped most with your transition into (school name)?
- What one thing did you find made your transition to (school name) more difficult?
- Have you ever felt like you wish you could go back to your previous school? What made you feel that way? How often do you feel like this?
        - What do you do / think about to help you feel better?
- What piece of advice would you give to next year's scholarship winners to help them settle in to (school name) as easily as possible?
- What things would you advise them not to do / expect as they prepare to come to (school name)?
- If you could make one change for future scholarship winners coming in to (school name), what would that change be? Why do you think that would be helpful to them?

Questions – Scholarship Recipient Alumni

Welcome, pleasantries and explanation:

- Not being judged
- Nothing will be held against you
    - No identifying information will be included in the report
    - Confidentiality
- Don't have to answer anything if you don't want to
- Right to leave at any point

- What, for you, was the best thing about being in boarding at (school name)?
- What for you was the worst / hardest thing about being in boarding at (school name)?
    - Was it / is it possible to make this thing less difficult? How so?
- What aspect(s) of being at (school name) were most different to the school you came from?
- What did you miss most from your time at your previous school?
- What one thing did you find easiest to adjust to when you began at (school name)?
- What one thing did you find most difficult to adjust to when you began at (school name)?
- How would you describe your transition from your previous school to (school name)? e.g. easy, hard, smooth, difficult, etc. Why do you describe it like this?
- What one thing helped most with your transition into (school name)?
- What one thing did you find made your transition to (school name) more difficult?
- Did you ever feel like you wished you could go back to your previous school? What made you feel that way? How often did you feel like that?
    - What did you do / think about to help you feel better?
- What piece of advice would you give to next year's scholarship winners to help them settle in to (school name) as easily as possible?
- What things would you advise them not to do / expect as they prepare to come to (school name)?
- If you could make one change for future scholarship winners coming in to (school name), what would that change be? Why do you think that would be helpful to them?
- Looking back as an adult, if you could turn back the clock, what would you change about your experience through the programme?

- What would you wish that (school name) knew more about you when you were here?

Questions – Staff oversight

Welcome, pleasantries and explanation:

- Not being judged
- Nothing will be held against you
    - No identifying information will be included in the report
    - Confidentiality
- Don't have to answer anything if you don't want to
- Right to leave at any point

- What, do you believe, is the best thing about our scholarship boys being in boarding at (school name)?
- What do you see as the worst / hardest thing for our scholarship boys about being in boarding at (school name)?
    - Is it possible to make this thing less difficult? How so?
- Do these boys ever express what they miss from their old schools to you? What is it?
    - Why do you think they miss this particular thing?
    - Is it a failing on our side?
- What do you see as the thing they find most difficult to adjust to when they begin at (school name)?
- What do you see helping them most to transition into (school name)?
- What do you see hindering their transition to (school name) making it more difficult?
- Have you ever heard the boys wishing they could go back to their previous school? Do you know what made them feel that way? How often have you heard this this?
    - What did you do to help him feel better?
- What piece of advice do you give to incoming scholarship winners to help them settle in to (school name) as easily as possible? Why this thing?
- What things do you advise them not to do / expect as they prepare to come to (school name)?
- If you could make one change for future scholarship winners coming in to (school name), what would that change be? Why do you think that would be helpful to them?

Questions – Boarder Masters from Underprivileged Background

Welcome, pleasantries and explanation:

- Not being judged
- Nothing will be held against you
  - No identifying information will be included in the report
  - Confidentiality
- Don't have to answer anything if you don't want to
- Right to leave at any point

As gentlemen who can identify with the circumstances of many of our scholarship boys:

- What do you see as the best thing for our scholarship boys about being in boarding at (school name)?
- What do you see as the worst/hardest thing about being in boarding at (school name)?
  - Is it possible to make this thing less difficult? How so?
- What aspect(s) of being at (school name) are most different to the schools you came from?
- What should we at (school name) learn from your previous school?
- What one thing would you think is easiest for the scholarship boys to adjust to when beginning at (school name)?
- What would you predict is the hardest thing for our scholarship boys to adjust to at (school name) coming from their previous schools?
- What one thing would help most with their transition into (school name)?
- What one thing would make their transition to (school name) more difficult?
- Have you ever heard the boys wishing they could go back to their previous school? Do you know what made them feel that way? How often have you heard this this?
  - What did you do to help him feel better?
- What piece of advice would you give to next year's scholarship winners to help them settle in to (school name) as easily as possible?
- What things would you advise them not to do / expect as they prepare to come to (school name)?
- If you could make one change for future scholarship winners coming in to (school name), what would that change be? Why do you think that would be helpful to them?

- What would you wish that (school name) knew more about these boys?

Appendix 5:

EMA Reflective Grid

Category	**Feedback received, targets achieved and areas of development worked on**	**How did this shape my dissertation?**
Knowledge and understanding: Targets, reflections or feedback relating to knowledge of current debate and issues in your specific area of focus; drawing out concepts and themes; choosing a focus area for your dissertation; identifying and overcoming ethical issues.	My effort at a narrative interview for TMA03 in EE814 was unsuccessful and I did not feel comfortable with the format. I also felt that the format would open the study too wide to be able to maintain a reasonable focus appropriate for a small-scale investigation.	I felt that allowing all of the scholarship boys the opportunity to participate would allow broad canvass of opinions and feelings about their experiences. The narrative interview format would be too intensive to allow for this range of views in the time available, therefore a more efficient data generation strategy was applied, with directed foci provided by myself during the interview.
Critical analysis and evaluation: Targets, reflections or feedback relating to justifying or challenging your personal perspective; interpreting and critically analysing evidence and methodologies from your own and others' research; analysing and evaluating themes and issues; sourcing and critically reviewing a wide range of publications; creating an academic argument using synthesis; comparing and connecting practice and theory.	I began the course believing that my institution was not doing enough to assist and support the scholarship recipients make the most of their opportunity. I was criticised in EE814 for looking for ways to justify that opinion.	My reference frame has had to be more explorative during the dissertation. Therefore, the driving questions had to remain less directed to create the space for the opinions of the boys to come out. As a result, almost all of the questions posed during the interviews asked for both positive and negative positions from the boys.
Links to professional practice: Targets, reflections or feedback relating to: designing and/or applying research methods;	Feedback from my tutor suggested that carrying out 8 separate interviews would be challenging and might be more than necessary for a	Although the boys produced data of reasonable quality and volume, the greatest insights were generated from the alumni and

developing ideas from previous research and frameworks; reflecting and making adaptations during the research and writing process; addressing problems in research design; identifying implications for practice and professional debate; challenging your own assumptions; managing workload and personal motivation.	SSI. I had concerns about producing sufficient data to reasonably work with from the boys alone, therefore I felt that the additional interviews would be significant to the overall validity of the project. Furthermore, I was hedging against the possibility of parents or boys being unwilling to participate, which would have made a small sample even smaller.	interns. These gentlemen, with varying degrees of maturity, were able to articulate the challenges faced by the scholarship recipients in a more detailed and thorough way, without which, my learning and understanding of this situation would have been far more superficial.
	The EE815 focus on language was a completely new space to me. While I learnt much about which I previously had not known, I felt as though I was shoe-horning a project into a question when confined to language-based concepts for the EE815 EMA.	I returned to my original focus area for the E822 dissertation, being concerned with specific cultural dynamics in a diverse boarding house environment. Understanding better that language is culture made me more alert to issues of language-based culture during the research process.
	The works of Milner (2008) and Bishop *et al* (2009) were instrumental in challenging my own thinking about deficit positions and assumptions which I make about my students.	Some of the strongest findings from this study relate to deficit theorizing that is unconsciously adopted within the institution. While harmful practices are easy to change, how we collectively think is far more difficult to do so. On this point in particular, I found it very delicate to address as it requires great sensitivity.
Structure, communication and presentation: Targets, reflections or feedback relating to using academic style and referencing; presenting, managing and sharing information in different modes;	This comment in the tutor feedback for EE814 TMA03 was a shock. "The breach of anonymity in the documentation was a major blow." I resolved to ensure that I would not redact identification details in	I was far more careful about the ethical standards regarding anonymity and de-identification and have been meticulous in my tracking of identifiers and personal particulars of participants.

communicating concepts, findings and ideas for different audiences.	documentation, but will rather produce copied documents that are fully de-identified.	When a significant anecdote was shared with me, working out how to reference that appropriately, and the ramifications of doing so, had to be carefully considered.