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Double consciousness :a comparative approach to interpreting the experiences of Black female pupils in a predominantly Black well-resourced and historically White school in South Africa?

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Abstract

An abundance of literature – recounting the history of apartheid education policy and desegregation within secondary schools – undoubtedly exists. However, the same cannot be said with regards to literature that equally speaks to the educational experiences of black womxn in South Africa during and post-apartheid. This gap in effect means that conversations around transformation and decolonisation within schools remains, to a large extent, limited to race and excludes the valuable perspectives that come from black womxn.

Through a comparative analysis, this dissertation seeks to examine how twenty young black South African womxn, who are alumni of the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls and Pretoria High School for Girls, have made sense of their former schooling environments. The intent of this is two-fold: firstly, it seeks to analyse how these two groups of womxn – from different socio-economic backgrounds and school contexts – have navigated the space that is their previous educational institution and how this has impacted their own identities over the years. Secondly, this research intends to closely examine whether W.E.B DuBois' notion of "Double Consciousness" (1903), can be used as theoretical framework in exploring the identity formation of these black womxn. By doing this, I seek to solicit the similarities, differences and nuances in how these two groups of black womxn have articulated their realities. This research thus centres the experiences of young black womxn in conversations pertaining to decolonisation and transformation regarding South Africa's educational policy.

Furthermore, it delves into the intersecting importance of race, class and gender in order to convey the varying levels and subtleties at which double consciousness may manifest. These two schools, and in the context of the experiences of these black womxn, are but microcosms of South African society at-large, its history and offers us an opportunity to not shy away from being critical of what the idea of "progress" has meant in schools and for young black girls in relation to key challenges on representation, identity and black subjectivity.