

Youthscapes: The politics of belonging for ‘Makwerekwere’¹ youth in South African schools

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Abstract

This paper is framed within the global context of immigration and the ensuing debates around citizenship and belonging, inclusion and exclusion. Schools as social institutions are tasked with “absorbing” “integrating” and “educating” immigrant youth and can thus be seen as the primary sites where the politics of belonging and struggles over belonging and citizenship are waged. Drawing on the conceptual framework of “Youthscapes” and the theoretical framework of Critical Race Theory this paper engages with the contradictions inherent in schools and the manner in which national systems of education are implicated in constructing different ‘kinds’ of citizens and reproducing hierarchies of belongingness, even in their efforts to “welcome” and “include”. {110}

Introduction

Politically, a sense of belonging in democratic South Africa can be presented in terms of three different models (Worby et.al, 2008). On the one extreme is the conservative 19th century European romantic ideal, with its emphasis on nation as common blood and belonging based on an ideal of ethno-linguistic homogeneity. At the other extreme lies the model that prioritises common democratic values, a citizenship that is chosen and made rather than given and claimed. And somewhere in-between lies the model chosen by the African National Congress (ANC) and embodied in the Constitution, a democratic, civic republicanism that nevertheless holds onto the idea of nation as the anchor of citizenship. The ‘rainbow nation’ rather dissolved than celebrated difference. How do these models engage with the relatively new phenomenon of Black² immigrants? Where do Black immigrants belong?

The demise of formal apartheid has created new and as yet only partially understood opportunities for migration in South Africa. One of the most notable post-apartheid shifts is the sheer volume and diversity of human traffic now crossing South Africa’s borders. South Africa is increasingly host to a truly pan-African and global constituency of legal and undocumented migrants. Legal migration from other Southern African Development

¹ Makwerekwere: people who were identified as not properly belonging to the South African nation.

² Black

Community (SADC) countries, for example, increased almost ten-fold since 1990 to over four million visitors per year. South Africa's (re)insertion into the global economy has brought new streams of legal and undocumented migrants from outside the SADC region and new ethnic constellations within. The easing of legal and unauthorized entry to South Africa has made the country a new destination for African asylum-seekers, long-distance traders, entrepreneurs, students and professionals (Bouillon 1998; Saasa 1996; Rogerson 1997a; Perbedy and Crush 1998b; Ramphela 1999; Klotz, 2000). As this population continues to grow, its children have begun to experience South African schools in an array of uniquely challenging ways.

The advent of democracy in South Africa witnessed most South African public schools opening its doors to all children irrespective of race, colour or creed. In addition these schools have also opened their doors to a number of [black] immigrant children. There is however, very little research on the the politics of belonging (Yuval-Davis, 2006) and struggles over belonging and citizenship in schools. A detailed examination of immigrant student experiences and the influence of distinctive cultural contexts at the local level are needed if we are to address pressing immigrant education issues. Accordingly, this study asks, (1) What are the larger "official" citizenship/membership narratives invoked and promoted within the school? (2) What role do institutional structures play in constructing immigrant youth's belonging or non-belonging within (and beyond) the space of schools? (3) In what ways do immigrant youth negotiate their belonging within and beyond school?

The argument is presented as follows: I begin by sketching the background context of the study. This is followed by a review of the literature in the field and a discussion of the theoretical and conceptual groundings of the study. The research design that outlines the meta-theoretical and methodological stance of this research study is then presented. This is followed by a presentation of emergent themes from the captured data. I conclude with an analysis and discussion of findings and examine ways in which the South African schooling context has chosen to respond to Black immigrant students.

Background Context

To date studies in the field of diversity have focused mainly on the black and white dynamics of South African students. There is very little, if any research on the experiences of [black] immigrant students within South African schools. Schools through both formal and informal

relationships, represent powerful interpretations of what it means to be “South African”, “Mozambican” or “Zimbabwean” that is of belonging and non-belonging. This research study sets out to explore the politics of belonging for ‘makwerekwere’ youth in South African schools. The context of this study was limited to the Gauteng³ province of South Africa.

The central cities of Gauteng have some of the largest numbers of Black immigrants, who are diverse not only in terms of national origin, but by ethnic affiliation, cultural tradition, and generational status. The majority of Black immigrants in the Gauteng province of South Africa are from Mozambique, Lesotho, Zimbabwe, Democratic Republic of Congo, Swaziland, Botswana, Angola and Malawi, but substantial numbers of immigrants also come from Zambia, Pakistan, Nigeria, Namibia, India, Kenya, Somalia, Uganda, Rwanda, Etopia, Sri Lanka, Tanzania and Mauritius (Gauteng Department of Education, Ten day statistics - 2007). As this population continues to grow, its children have begun to experience South African schools in an array of uniquely challenging ways. As a result of these demographic trends, it becomes increasingly important to shift our focus to how Black immigrant youth fare once in South African schools.

Very little is known about the day to day experiences of black immigrant students in South African schools, because often these children are grouped with African children on the basis of "race" and the data compiled is rarely disaggregated on the basis of any other social identity dimension. This homogeneous categorization of Blacks ignores the important national, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, political, and even racial differences that exist within the population. In particular, homogenous descriptions ignore the fact that for many Black immigrant youth, racial and ethnic identities are fluid and complex, thus many do not strictly identify with the rigid and dichotomous Black/White constructs through which racial and ethnic identities are based in South Africa. In addition, by presenting members of the African Diaspora as a monolithic group, we tend to neglect the increasing racial and intra-racial strife that affects individual development and academic achievement, as well as school climate (Jackson & Cochran, 2003; Traore & Lukens, 2006).

³ Gauteng:

Immigrant students and the politics of belonging

While there is a great deal of research internationally on immigrant students who are ethnically (and in other ways) different from their mainstream peers, cognizance has to be taken of the following factor that relates to literature in this field in the South African context. The global 'age of migration' has, by virtue of the sequestering effect of apartheid come late to South Africa (Castles and Miller 1993; Cohen 1995, Sassen 1999). The conceptual and analytical debates that have swirled around the issue of migration and globalization elsewhere have largely bypassed South Africa. Consequently, literature on [black] immigrant students is very limited and studies focusing on immigrant students' sense of belonging in South African schools are even more scant. Much of the literature in the field of immigrant studies is based on issues of housing, land, labour and the recent xenophobic attacks (Reitzes, 1994; Grobler et al., 2006). There are a few studies that have been conducted on immigrant students in South Africa, however, these studies focused on new African migration into the Durban region (Maharaj & Moodley 2000) and interrogating inclusionary and exclusionary practices among refugee learners of war and flight (Sookrajh et al. 2005). Thus this literature review will be embedded largely within the international context.

A review of the extant international literature reveals that much educational research on immigrants is synoptic and addresses broad concepts of immigration, for instance, voluntary/involuntary immigrants (Ogbu 1978); demographics (Isajiw 1999); acculturation (Delgado-Gaitan & Trueba 1991); immigration patterns and school policies (Dentler & Hafner 1997); bilingual education (Cummins 1989); and race, gender, and class issues (Corson 1998). [Phillion \(2008:283\) argues that](#) while this work contributes to theoretical understandings of the context of immigrant education, it is mostly abstract and does not take us inside the world and experiences of immigrant students. Some researchers examining language, culture and identity issues, key issues in understanding immigrant students' experience (He et al. 2008), incorporate narrative into their inquiries and provide a close-up perspective on immigrant students as they interact in new cultures and new education systems: for instance, Carger (1996) and Valde's (1996) in English-language learning for Hispanic youth; Feuerverger (2001) and Soto (1997) in bilingual/bicultural education in conflicting cultural contexts; Chan (2007) and Phillion (2002a, 2002b) in multicultural teaching and learning in inner-city Canadian classrooms; and Olsen (1997) and Valenzuela (1999) in school culture and the impact on immigrant student identities. Utilising critical race theory other researchers attempted to bring forward silenced narratives of

underrepresented groups, such as immigrant students, to counter pervasive meta-narratives that have portrayed them as deficient and inferior (Villenas and Dehyle 1999). Some researchers have fostered dialogue on the schooling experiences of immigrant students who are ethnically, culturally and linguistically different from their mainstream peers and have raised awareness of key issues in their education (Phillion, 2008). There is however, very little research in education that specifically explores how immigrant students are made to feel a sense of belonging or non-belonging in schools. Much of the research in this regard focuses on the 'acculturation' processes and assumes that immigrants want to acculturate into the host society.

'Sense of belonging' is a frequently used concept in the sociology of education. It refers to the student's subjective sense of being a valued member of the school community. It is about validating the importance of the cultural lives, cultural expressions and cultural experiences of immigrants and asylum seekers as part of the process of their inclusion and integration in society. It appears that when students have a lower sense of belonging at school they are less socially integrated in school and feel less attached to school and teachers (Pearson et.al, 2007). They isolate and alienate more from school and peers (Pearson et.al, 2007) and skip classes more often to avoid interactions with others (Johnson, Crosnoe, Elder, 2001; Pearson, et.al, 2007). Students with a lower sense of belonging engage less with academic activities, have more chances to get lower grades, fail more often and choose a less challenging curriculum (Pearson, et.al., 2007). In contrast, when students do feel they belong in school, they often have a higher school motivation and interest (Goodenow, 1992). Sense of belonging can be influenced by many factors. One of these is what is often called the "Person-Environment Misfit" (Edwards, Caplan and Van Harrison, 1998). This misfit occurs when certain people or groups do not conform to the norms or expectations of the environment. This is often the case with minority groups in society, like immigrants.

The degree of belonging to the school centres on how and who the immigrants associate and identify with, in a bid to shape their identities which is the road to acculturating to their new environment (Dika & Singh, 2002). Dika and Singh (2002) imply that in order to gain understanding of the schooling experience of immigrant students, pertinent issues like their level of affiliation, commitment and identity should be considered. A common occurrence among immigrants is the persistent feeling of not being sustained, notion of not being important, and caginess (Gibson, Gándara, & Koyama, 2004; Noguera & Wing, 2006).

When immigrants identify with the school environment they are able to “quickly discover that schooling is essential to success” in their host country so as to be able to ascend the steps of social class mobility (Delgado-Gaitan 1994: 137). Acculturation is one of the dimensions that can be used to determine the extent of belonging among immigrant groups of children to the mainstream culture (Berry, 1995; LaFromboise et al., 1993; Yeh & Inose, 2003; Yeh, 2003; Mouw & Xie, 1999). Acculturation connotes the way people bargain in the midst of cultural diversities with the premonition that there are hierarchies in terms of the affiliation to one or more cultures than the others. This is usually recognized when such individuals describe their identities to show their degree of affiliation to cultural preferences (Berry, 1995; LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993). The process of acculturation borders on knowing and taking on the way of life and customs of the “adopted society”.

Identity formation is linked to acculturation of immigrants to their host society. In the formation of identity, hybrids emerge depending on the experiences of the immigrants in their host society (Vandeyar, 2008; Asanova, 2005). It has also been demonstrated that identity formation is dependent on the degree of affiliation of immigrants to home cultures and transnational space enterprises existing between the two cultures. Two pertinent concepts in the formation of identity are that of the ‘social mirror’ and ‘psychosocial passing’. Winnicott (1971) suggests that a child’s sense of self is profoundly shaped by the reflections mirrored back to him by significant others. ‘Psychosocial passing’ refers to people who seek to render invisible the visible differences between themselves and a desired or chosen reference group.

Youthscapes: A Conceptual Framework

In theorising about the cultural dimensions of globalization Appadurai (1996) proposed the notion of a ‘scape’ to explain the uneven character of forces of globalisation. He introduced terms such as ‘ethnoscapes’, ‘technoscapes’, ‘financescapes’, ‘mediascapes’ and ‘ideoscapes’ to describe dimensions of global cultural flows that are fluid and irregular in nature.

Ethnoscapes comprise the shifting circuits of people who animate a given social world; technoscapes draw attention to high-speed channels connecting previously distant territories; financescapes encompass new systems for accumulating and moving money, mediascapes refer to the dispersal of images and texts to small and vast audiences; and ideoscapes embody the "imagined worlds" produced through intersections between and among all of the above.

Maira and Soep (2004) extended this idea of a 'scape' by introducing what they term 'youthscapes'. 'Youthscape' suggests a site that is not just geographic or temporal but social and political as well, a "place" that is bound up with questions about popular culture and relations of power in local, national, and globalized contexts (Dirlik 2001/2002; Soja 1989). This metaphorical concept of 'youthscapes' lends itself to analysis of the related processes of nationalism and popular culture while simultaneously theorizing the political and social uses of youth to maintain repressive systems of social control. Youth is thus an ideological category and hence the ideological battleground in contests of immigration and citizenship as they attempt to 'suture' local practices, national ideologies and global markets while always occupying an ambiguous space within and between them. This paper attempts to address the shape and meaning of this "suturing" process and the tensions or renegotiations it entails between local, national, and transnational communities in the lives of South African youth.

Theoretical Moorings

Critical Race Theory [CRT] provides a theoretical framework through which individually and institutionally motivated racist acts can be highlighted, critiqued, and corrected (Tate, 1993; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Lynn, 1999; Tyson, 2003). It distinguishes between individual racism and institutional racism. CRT is an important construct for understanding Black immigrants who have made South Africa their home. It sheds light on the fact that Black immigrants are racialized as Black in South Africa, despite their varied self-identification on the basis of nationality, ethnicity, language, and other cultural signifiers and are, therefore, subjected to the same racial prejudices and discrimination as their native black counterparts. The concern of critical race theory is to re-narrativize the globalisation story in a way that places historically marginalised parts of the world at the centre rather than the periphery of the education and globalisation debate and, thus, ultimately, to bring about social change (Amnesty International, 2000).

According to CRT there are two primary types of racism: individual racism and institutional racism. CRT pivots on four primary tenets. First, it rejects claims towards neutrality, objectivity, color-blindness, and meritocracy, arguing that these notions systematically devalue Blackness and Brownness by privileging and normalizing Whiteness. Second it asserts that racism is an embedded and institutionalized facet of society and, thus, is found at the core of its political, economic, and social structures. Third, it argues that liberalism has been and always will be, at best, a band-aid type of approach to remedy civil rights-oriented

injustices. And, fourth, it uses autobiography and autobiographical narrative, by and/or about people of color, to discuss larger societal issues (Crenshaw et al. 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

Research strategy

The study was qualitative in nature and used the social constructivist approach. The methodology involved narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly 2000) and case studies to explore the educational and socio-cultural experiences of immigrant students within the schooling context of South Africa. Three secondary schools located in the Gauteng province of South Africa provided the research sites for this study; a former white Model C school, a former Indian school and an inner city school that had a majority of black African learners. Criteria used in the selection of students were based on racial background and gender.

The data gathering techniques that were used in this study included a mix of semi-structured interviews, observation and field notes. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a purposive sample of immigrant students to determine the experiences of immigrant students and were used to provide an opportunity for immigrant students to share and reflect upon their experiences as well as to bring new meanings of change and growth in their lives. Approximately fifteen [black] immigrant students (Lesotho, Kenya, Nigeria, Malawi, Congo, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka) across Grades 8 to 10 were selected at each school. The selection of immigrant students depended on the mixture that was found at each of the identified schools. An attempt was made to include both Anglophone and Francophone immigrant students in this study. A total of 45 students were interviewed. These interviews were conducted in 2008 over a period of six months. Questions comprised of five to six broad categories and were open-ended. The duration of interviews ranged between 90 and 120 minutes. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the Principal, the School Management Team, the School Governing Body, selected teachers of these Grades (8 -10) and parents of immigrant children at each of the three research sites.

Observations were conducted to coincide with the interview period. Researchers observed immigrant students over a period of six weeks at each school with a focus on their experiences of school life and how it plays out on the classroom floor and school grounds. Observations of classroom practice, activities and associations during the break sessions,

assemblies and other activities of the school including after school activities were captured. It must however be noted that there are advantages and limitations of observations at a small number of schools. The advantages of such a technique is that it provides a lens into the 'lived experiences' of classroom life over a period of time that allows for in-depth study and creates the opportunity for patterns (if any) to emerge. The limitation is that the small number of school observations could be seen as instructive and illustrative, and not as representative of all schools.

In order to get a better feel of the schooling and learning environment, various field notes were written, based on informal observations of these schools (ethos, culture and practices of the school). Informal conversations were conducted with some teachers. Attention was also given to the physical appearance of the school, which included observations of artefacts such as paintings, décor, photographs, portraits and school magazines to provide a sense of the institutional culture of the school.

The data was analysed utilising qualitative content analysis (Mayring, 2000; Sandelowski, 2000). Codes were generated from the data and continuously modified by the researcher's treatment of the data "to accommodate new data and new insights about those data" (Sandelowski, 2000, p. 338). This was a reflexive and an interactive process that yielded extensive codes and themes. The extensive codes were further analyzed to identify data related to key concepts in the research question, theoretical frameworks, and literature review (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Multiple readings of the data were conducted, organizing codes and themes into higher levels of categories within and across the interviews, observations, and other sources of data (Merriam, 1998).

Findings: So how does a sense of belonging play out in South African schools?

To many onlookers, Black immigrant students in South African schools easily pass as indigenous Black students. Most white teachers at the former model C school were quite unaware of the fact that the Black immigrant student was actually an immigrant as they shared the same phenotypical features as those of indigenous students. Although their external appearance allowed them to 'pass' for one of the indigenous students they did not 'pass' in terms of finding a niche or feeling a sense of belonging at schools. However, these dynamics played out very differently in the inner city school and the former Indian school where indigenous students and teachers could make the distinction and readily identified

these students as the 'makwerekwere'....Subtle second order levels of operationalisation made it quite clear to them that they did not belong in South African schools. This intra-black racism took the form of social and academic exclusion; conflicting values, shared identities and psychosocial passing.

Academic and Social exclusion

The most pertinent challenge for all black immigrant students was that of language. Language played a pivotal role in terms of academic and social exclusion both inside and outside of the classroom. Black Anglophone [African] immigrant students found that they were discriminated against in terms of a lack of proficiency in indigenous African languages. In an attempt to 'fit in' Mike an Angolan began learning Sepedi as a subject at school so that he could speak to his South African peers at school. His rationale for learning Sepedi is that

... sometimes, when you're communicating, most of them at this school they don't speak proper English, so if I get to know their language, it would be easy to communicate.

Black francophone [African] immigrant students were doubly disadvantaged as they entered the country lacking proficiency in both English and indigenous South African languages. Consequently many francophone immigrant students found a sense of solidarity with immigrant students who could speak French, mainly DRC students, and formed their own social networks in an attempt to create a feeling at home or a sense of belonging

That time I was still speaking French, I felt very much an outsider, but then they got other newcomers who were not South Africans, who came from the DRC. They're in my class; they are my friends (Jafet, DRC).

These students also shared similar learning experiences as the local black students in terms of a lack of proficiency in English, which was the medium of instruction at these schools. However, they were disadvantaged as were the Anglophone students, when the teacher code-switched during teaching in order to ensure that the local black students fully understood what was being taught. The majority of black immigrant students at one of the research sites were extremely aggrieved and agitated by this practice as evident from the following response,

I feel excluded. It forces me to learn Sotho. The South African learners and teachers talk Sotho most of the time. They like start speaking English and then, they go into Sotho, like especially if one of the students asks a question, then they reply in Sotho and then the rest of the lesson continues in Sotho (Packo, Zambia).

Furthermore, code-switching was used by local black learners during breaks to entrench social exclusion. Many local black learners utilised the power of the indigenous languages to exclude immigrant students from their social networks. During breaks one could witness pockets of ethnic groups intensely engaged in casual conversations through the use of indigenous languages.

They don't speak English when we in a group. I have to tell them English, English please and then they get all nasty and say you don't belong here (Jedidah, Zambia).

To counteract this feeling of non-belonging, Annuarite a DRC student decide to learn Sepedi because she wanted to 'flow with them' by knowing,

how to speak with other people and sometimes during break I know some of the South African children are speaking about me, but I don't understand, so then I will be able to know what they are saying. I want to be able to flow with them (Annuarite, DRC).

Academic exclusion was experienced in terms of curriculum content, which focused mainly on South African cultures, and also in term of group dynamics that at times played out in the form of extortion,

When the learners choose groups, most of the time, I don't have a group. I have to pay to be in a group. I don't speak English good. It's a language problem, but they see I am not good [academically], I feel bad. Indians tell me to go back to my country. They say I don't belong here. They don't like me because I am from Pakistan. They call me a 'Paki'. They chase me away all the time. They say "our government should take you back to Pakistan". I wish I could go back, I am not happy here [sobs] (Moosa).

A tributary attached to the issue of language was that of accent. Accent was a clear indicator of immigrant status and contributed to academic and social exclusion. The above practices by local black students and teachers conveyed a strong message to immigrant students that they were 'the Other – makwerekwere'; that they did not belong and were unwelcome at the school.

5.2 *Conflicting Values*

Immigrant students struggled to come to terms with conflicting values, disrespect, and ill-discipline, code of conduct and inappropriate dress codes of indigenous students. They found that the indigenous students indulged in activities that they could not condone. Furthermore they claimed that the indigenous students were culture deficient, they too readily gave up

their cultures to assimilate into the western culture. Immigrant students experienced that values that were ingrained in their respective homes and communities were suddenly being challenged on the classroom floor and school grounds. As such they did not want to be associated with indigenous students and did not seek to 'belong' in this regard

South Africans... our values and their values, they're completely different and to us they [my children] come back home and we try to do our best to put our values in them, it's not easy for them when they get to school, they are the minority, to keep strong with the culture in that diversity of cultures, diversity of mentality, that's what is a big challenge for my kids [Parent from Congo].

In appropriate dress code was another aspect that tested immigrant student's sense of belonging,

If my clothes or dressing is not appropriate, my parents would tell me that it's not appropriate. In Zimbabwe your dressing depends on what you're doing and where you are. Girls don't wear tight trousers or clothes that show parts of your body because that's just disrespectful. But here some of them because sometimes you look at someone and you're like this person isn't wearing something nice, appropriate for walking around (Alice – Zimbabwe).

Immigrant students found it difficult to come to terms with the fact that indigenous students had boyfriends and took to dating at a very young age and indulged in activities such as drinking, smoking, gambling and drugs. Such immoral activities served to dissuade immigrant students from wanting to belong,

It seems like there are many things in this country which is normal, but for us it's abnormal. There's this thing of boyfriend, ... it's that mentality of saying that as a woman I don't need men, I just need to have a child and you know, they've got that a lot and for us that is not acceptable. In our culture, a boyfriend is someone you can have at a certain age and he must be someone that the relationship can lead to a marriage. The bad side of South African culture is the dressing, the disrespect, drinking, smoking, drugs and this whole issue of boyfriends (Mrs Onamaka – Congo).

A yearning for discipline, good mannerism and respect towards teachers and elders were clearly articulated by most of the immigrant students. Ill-discipline and a lack of a culture of learning and teaching were further factors that made immigrants question their sense of belonging,

There is more discipline back home [country of origin], it's more difficult to misbehave. Here sometimes the learners will talk back to the teacher... eish they don't respect their teachers (Mbeng – Cameroon).

The classes are quieter in Zimbabwe. Here most of the children make a noise; they play, gamble, swear and get into fights all the time. They have no respect for their teachers. They are ill-mannered and have no discipline at all (Brenda – Nigeria).

5.3 *Continental identity*

In an effort to create a sense of belonging in the new environment in which they found themselves, many immigrant students identified themselves in terms of the continent of Africa as a means of finding common ground and seeking a sense of solidarity with the indigenous students.

I do not classify myself as 'black' according to South African racial categories. I am 'coffee brown'. I am an African since like them [South Africans] I too am from the continent of Africa. How can they [South Africans] call me a makwerekwere? (Andrew, Ghana).

5.4 *Psycho-social passing*

The concept of 'passing' within the black community in the western world traditionally referred to blacks who pass for white because of their light skin colour. However, in the South African context this concept refers to black immigrant students who 'pass' for indigenous black students because of similar phenotypically racialised features.

I can honestly say, I have not once noticed that the girls treat them any differently to a South African Zulu girl or a South African Xhosa girl or a South African Sotho girl, they look the same. It is really difficult to tell them apart physically (Ms Wilson, Grade 10 teacher).

I fit in well, like the other South African Indians in this school. I speak English well, I don't really have an 'Indian' accent so I am like one of them (Jeet).

Well they didn't really see me as an immigrant I was just like one of them. So I just let them go on believing that I am one of them. I don't let them know that I am really an immigrant (Vena, Zimbabwean).

Attempts of immigrant students to hide their immigrant status and to pass as one of the local students were politically motivated. To 'pass' as an indigenous black was in their interest given the current ruling party in South Africa. However, all immigrant students were quite adamant that they only wanted to 'pass' as black indigenous students in term of physical appearance and nothing else. They did not want to be affiliated with indigenous black students in terms code of conduct, dressing, disrespect and other vices. They saw the host country as a site of contamination and shame.

Discussion and analysis of findings

This research study uncovered both similarities and differences with what was found in the literature review. The similarities are that immigrant students in the South African context also have to contend with discrimination and harassment, but this is largely in terms of intra-black dynamics; they struggle with issues of language; curriculum and instructional strategies do not address their cultural or linguistic background and they feel a sense of alienation rather than one of belonging. Where these findings significantly contrast with the literature are in terms of the aspect of psychosocial passing, identity and language as a tool of exclusion.

Findings from this study clearly illustrates that South African schools are not just geographic or temporal but social and political as well, a "place" that is bound up with questions about popular culture and relations of power in local, national, and globalized contexts (Dirlik 2001/2002; Soja 1989). South African schools have become a place where repressive systems of social control are maintained by the youth through the related processes of nationalism and popular culture. As such South African schools can be defined as 'Youthscapes'. Within these 'youthscapes' the shape and meaning of the "suturing" process of immigrant students as they navigate their way between local, national, and transnational communities revealed some tensions and renegotiations.

These tensions and renegotiations took the following forms: The politics of belonging for immigrant students played out in two ways. By virtue of their phenotypical likeness, immigrant students felt a sense of belonging. However, the 'youthscapes' in which they found themselves where repressive systems of social control were enacted, emitted clear signals of their non-belongingness, the most stark example being that of language usage, both by indigenous students and by teachers. In an attempt to create a sense of belonging immigrant students forged a continental identity in the spirit of common 'brotherhood', but this attempt was counteracted by indigenous students who seemed to accentuate their ethnic identities. As much as immigrant students 'passed' for indigenous students in terms of their physical features, they experienced the value system and conduct of indigenous students as abhorrent and distasteful. They found a sense of belonging in terms of shared phenotypical features but, not in terms of sound moral conduct expected of youth. Consequently many of these immigrant students experienced "Person- Environment Misfit" (Edwards et.al, 1999) as they did not conform to the norms and expectations of the South African environment.

In the South African context language has become a powerful tool. In all of the research sites, English was used as a means of instruction, however, in the one school that had the majority of immigrant students, indigenous students and teachers code-switched to an indigenous language [Sepedi]. Thus Anglophone students were disadvantaged and Francophone students were doubly disadvantaged. Language became a tool of exclusion both on the classroom floor and the school grounds.

Given that the South African psyche has been etched by an ‘apartheid’ ideology, it is not surprising to find that Critical Race theory has contributed to the ways in which Black immigrant students’ sense of belonging in South African schools are examined and understood by foregrounding race. It has been found that actions and thoughts of immigrant students are guided by their understandings of the societies in which they reside and their roles in these societies. These understandings are highly dependent on the manner in which the "minority groups have been incorporated into their various societies" (Ogbu, 1991:8) and are influenced by environmental factors. In the South African context, the xenophobic attacks of 2008 have played a pivotal role in this regard. Immigrant students are labelled as ‘makwerewere’ and the ethos of reception is largely a hostile one (Worby et al., 2008). CRT has uncovered that individual and institutional racism is deeply embedded and institutionalized in the education system and is politically, economically, and socially operationalized by broader societal structures.

Conclusion

The metaphor of an onion (Worby et.al, 2008:16) aptly describes how the ‘rainbow nation’ has been displaced in South Africa: ‘a way of imagining degrees of national belonging, layered around an authentic core’. In this view, the fragile outer skin is made up of black African immigrants: Congolese, Zimbabweans, Malawians, and Nigerians. Beneath that fragile exterior – so easily exfoliated and discarded – lie the Tsonga, Shangaan, Venda and Pedi⁴, people with a firmer claim to inclusion, but on the periphery of the political heartland and therefore of dubious loyalty to the national project. In the vortex of the attacks, those testing for authenticity and looking for deserving victims used the Old Testament technique of the shibboleth, demanding of those whose true nationality remained in doubt to correctly render the IsiZulu word for elbow – *indololwane* – or face the brutal consequences. The Zulu

⁴ Tsonga, Shangaan, Venda and Pedi – Different South African ethnic groups.

and Xhosa⁵ people comprise the core of the onion. And, somewhere in-between the periphery and the core lie the Tswana, Swazi, Sotho, Ndebele⁶.

The illusion of inclusion for black immigrant students has successfully been created by means of common physical features. However, the contradictions inherent in schools and the manner in which national systems of education are implicated in constructing different 'kinds' of citizens and reproducing hierarchies of belongingness, even in their efforts to "welcome" and "include" convey in both overt and covert ways a clear message of non-belongingness to the 'makwerekwere' youth of South Africa.

As the number of Black immigrants continues to rise in South Africa, it is important to recognize the impact of their presence in South African schools, especially the specific, unique needs of students who come from these populations. "South Africanness" is not just a question of citizenship or official documentation. It is also about contests over the more concrete (and often mundane) daily requirements of life, and the territoriality and space that accompany them. It becomes imperative not only to acknowledge and recognize the heterogeneous constitution of black groups in South Africa but to incorporate the linguistic and cultural capital of these differing groups into the very fabric of schooling so as to ensure that all students feel a sense of belonging and feeling at home. It is only in this way that all students can truly become 'cosmopolitan citizens' of the world guided by common human values.

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⁵ Zulu and Xhosa

⁶ Tswana, Swazi, Sotho, Ndebele

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