Chapter 3
Acculturation and Immigrant African Adolescents' Experiences of Education in the Diaspora

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ABSTRACT

Even though adolescents face challenges in adapting to the new environment in the diaspora, a lot of research focuses on adults, and the other partly deals with children left behind in heritage countries. Very minimal research focuses on children and adolescents in the diaspora, especially regarding the challenges they face in their psychosocial life and academic pursuits. This chapter adopted a qualitative research paradigm to investigate the acculturation experiences affecting adolescents' psychological and academic life both within the African and European contexts, in particular, Zimbabwean adolescents in the African diaspora, in Botswana and African adolescents in the European diaspora, in the United Kingdom. Findings show that adolescents in both the African and European diaspora suffer varied acculturation challenges which negatively impact their psychosocial and academic life in several ways.

INTRODUCTION

The simultaneous occurrence of the adolescence stage and diaspora experiences tends to cause strain and psychological challenges for which the adolescent may require counselling to maintain mental and emotional well-being (Durham, 2004). Adolescence often compounds the whole acculturation process. Both the adolescence stage and diaspora experiences necessitate bridging and crossing over, letting go

of the past, but still drawing from it to create a new reality, fitting in, and making sense of the new reality (Santrock, 2005).

Acculturation represents various changes in cultural identity due to contact with a new society and the resultant transitional choices made (Schwartz et al., 2006). It is a process of cultural change and adaptation that comes about when individuals from different cultures come to co-exist (Gibson, 2001). When applied to immigration, the acculturation process becomes an interplay between adopting new ideals, values, and behaviours of the host culture; and retaining ideals, values, and behaviours from one's own heritage culture (Phinney et al., 2001). The ranging degrees of acculturation can be explained by looking at the four options: *separation, assimilation, integration, and marginalisation* (Berry & Sabatier, 2008). The separation option rejects the host culture and strictly sticks to the heritage culture. The assimilation choice means fully accepting and desiring the host culture while rejecting the heritage culture. Opting for integration involves fitting in well within both the host culture and the heritage culture. Marginalisation represents rejecting both the heritage and host culture. These are discussed later in depth.

Acculturation is inextricably intertwined with identity since whatever changes happen as an outcome of acculturation, they can be equally viewed as changes in cultural identity (Schwartz et al.,2006). In this chapter, acculturation involves the changes and challenges immigrant adolescents face when they encounter the host culture in the diaspora, at a delicate stage of development in their lives. Furthermore, acculturation and identity formation, as pertains to immigrant children, can be considered as triggering experiences of anxiety and mental anguish (Schwartz et al., 2013) thus necessitating further study and understanding of how schools' cultures might play a positive role in the life of immigrant adolescents. This chapter investigated the impact of acculturation challenges on high school learners' psychosocial and academic life in the diaspora, focused on the African diaspora, specifically Zimbabwe's adolescents in Botswana, and the European diaspora, particularly, Africa's adolescents in the United Kingdom. The chapter tackled the intricacies of immigrant adolescents who face challenges of creating a cultural identity that incorporates two or more cultures simultaneously, while also grappling with personal identity crises typical of adolescence.

This chapter draws from a broader study which adopted a qualitative research paradigm where the phenomenological approach employed semi-structured questionnaires to gather immigrant students' perceptions and experiences. With the continued rise in migration due to globalisation, conflict or other economic pressures, this study is critical for educators and policymakers and bridging knowledge gaps in the field. Several related studies conducted on challenges faced by adolescents in the diaspora focus mainly on those left behind at home when their parents emigrate (Filippa, 2016). Research shows that the challenges faced by such children vary and are a cause for concern (Mabharani, 2016; Filippa, 2016). Much as there are challenges for the children left behind in parents' home country, there are more pressing challenges faced by adolescents who move alone, or with their parents to the diaspora. The next section addresses some contextual background issues relevant to the chapter.

BACKGROUND

At a global level, people have had to acculturate to new environments since the beginning of well-defined settlements. Worldwide divisions according to states, races, linguistic variations, ethnicity, cultures, and religious affiliations have separated groups of people (Berry et al.,2006; Lane, 2003), but people have been on the move since then, crossing these set boundaries for socio-economic, political, and educational

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