

**The geographies of teaching and learning at a secondary school:  
Narratives of six high performing immigrant learners**

by

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## DECLARATION

I, Sanam Isseri declare that this dissertation entitled:

***The geographies of teaching and learning at a secondary school: Narratives of six high performing immigrant students,***

is my own work and that all sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references. This research has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university.

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Sanam Isseri  
November 2015

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Professor Anbanithi Muthukrishna (Supervisor)

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## ABSTRACT

As the number of immigrants entering South Africa increases, so does the enrolment of immigrant learners at our schools. It is therefore imperative that the schooling experiences of these learners be studied and understood. Thus, the focus of this research was to explore the schooling experiences of immigrant learners within the province of Kwa-Zulu Natal. Previous research has been conducted within the local context, which highlighted the experiences of immigrant learners and the varied challenges that they encounter at South African schools (Hornberger and Vaish, 2008; Maduray, 2014; Mpofu, 2013; Vandeyar and Vandeyar, 2012). With this research study, the focus was specifically on the experiences of *academically high functioning* immigrant learners.

The participants were six female immigrant learners from a secondary school in the central Durban area, between the ages of thirteen and eighteen years old, ranging from grades eight to eleven. Theoretically, the paradigm in childhood studies referred to as *New Sociology of Childhood* (NCS), and the sub-field of *Children's Geographies* framed the study. The study was qualitative in nature and the research tradition was narrative inquiry. Data generation involved semi-structured interviews and an innovative participatory research method known as photo voice.

The findings of the study revealed the agency of the young participants as they navigate schooling in South Africa. It was apparent that they take on a positive stance despite the challenges they have experienced viz. language and cultural barriers, social isolation and exclusion, bullying and discrimination as well as vulnerability and emotionality in the face of xenophobia. The study revealed their strong sense of self-efficacy, responsibility and self-discipline, determination to succeed, commitment to their studies and to make the best of valued opportunities in South Africa. They displayed a strong sense of pride in their culture, language, and ethnic background. They are proud of their multi-lingual competencies and view this capability as an asset despite being aware of the political stigma attached to their home languages by peers in school. Participants showed that they are intrinsically motivated to perform well academically, and have clear goals and aspirations.

An important finding in my study related to social capital in the learners' everyday lives, an aspect that shaped their schooling experiences. The study illuminated the networks and social groups that support the high functioning learners socially, emotionally, and academically, for example, religious institutions, immigrant social groups; friendship groups, caring teachers, the family and extended family; other immigrant families in the country. The family is a central site of social capital and this is evident in the relationships between the participants and significant adults. The study illuminated the agency and resourcefulness of the learners as they access the various networks of social capital in their everyday lives. The study also highlights strong evidence of caring as a social process in learners' lives, and how this contributes to the educational resilience of these high functioning immigrant learners.

The findings of this study have important implications for future research, teacher professional development, and whole school development.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY**

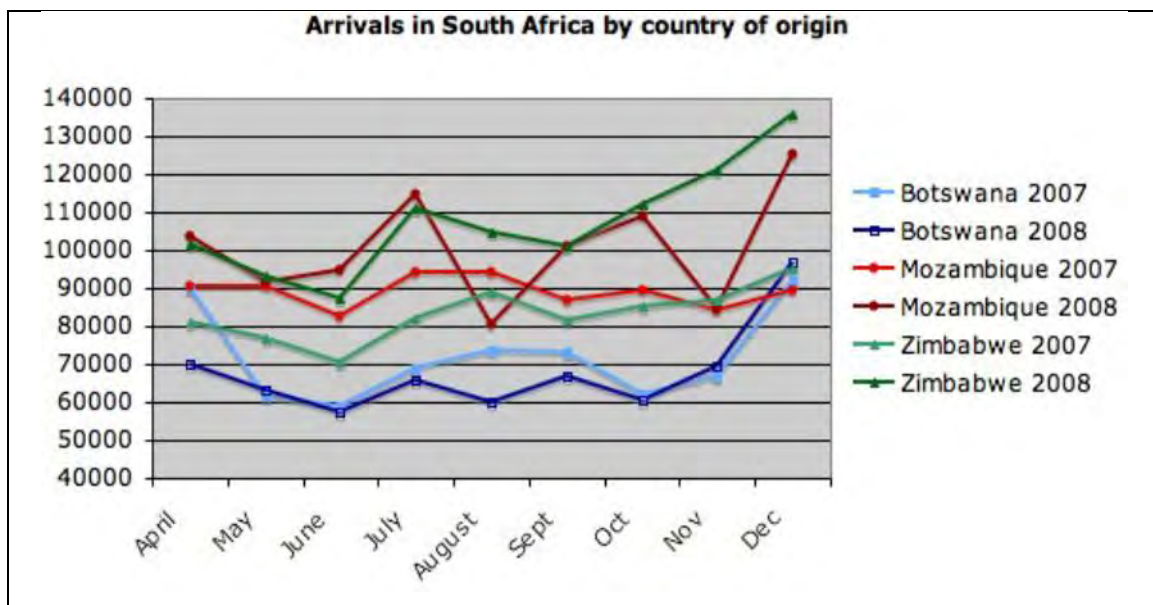
#### **1.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides the reader with insight into the research study undertaken. The purpose and rationale of the study is discussed as is the background information that foregrounds this research. Finally, a synopsis of the chapters to follow are described.

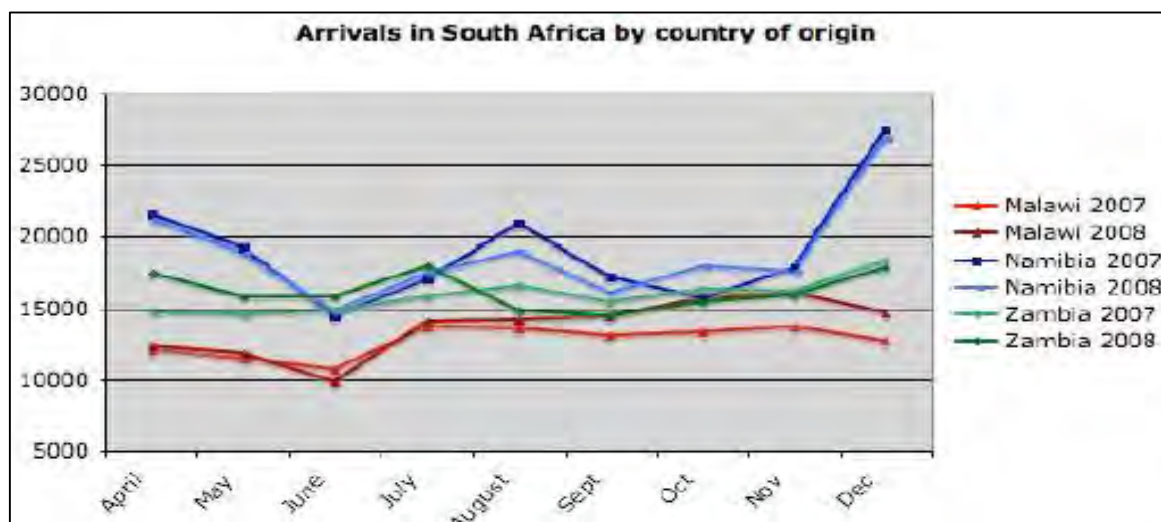
#### **1.2 Purpose and rationale for the study**

South Africa has become today's economic centre of sub-Saharan Africa and the country's success has attracted a wide range of regional and international migrants seeking economic opportunities or refuge from oppression in hopes of a better life (Vandeyar, 2012). With this migration, the increasing number of immigrant learners attending South African schools has motivated research related to how children experience schooling spaces.

While the exact number is unknown, a significant number of immigrants cross the South African border illegally (Adedayo, 2010; Adjai and Lazaridis, 2013; Duponchel, 2009; Tati, 2008; Vandeyar, 2012). As follows, Figures 1 and 2 (Lehohla, 2009) highlight immigration trends between 2007 and 2008, and it is likely that this trend has continued in the ensuing years. A search of various data bases was undertaken during the course of my study and it was found that there has been a steady increase in the number of immigrants that find suitable refuge in the host country i.e. South Africa. Statistics also showed that the highest number of immigrants hail from Southern African countries, for example, Botswana, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Namibia, and Malawi. This transition can possibly be attributed to proximity and easy accessibility to South Africa, as the host country (Lehohla, 2009).



**Figure 1: Immigrant arrival statistics from Botswana, Mozambique and Zimbabwe to South Africa 2007-2008 (Lehohla, 2009)**



**Figure 2: Immigrant arrival statistics from Malawi, Namibia and Zambia to South Africa 2007-2008 (Lehohla, 2009)**

Studies have shown that internationally, and in South Africa, immigrant learners encountered many struggles and challenges in schooling contexts (Hornberger and Vaish, 2008; Maduray, 2014; Mpofu, 2013; Vandeyar and Vandeyar, 2012). Haskins and Tienda (2011) contend that language barriers, bureaucratic complexity, and distrust of government programmes may negatively impact participation in education.

As a teacher, it is imperative that I am able to understand all of my students – immigrant and local - and an important aspect of that is to try and find out the possible challenges they face, and thus, help them effectively navigate teaching and learning. Although internationally, (Hornberger and Vaish, 2008; Mpofu, 2013; Vandeyar and Vandeyar, 2012), much research has been conducted on the schooling experiences of immigrant learners, few have incorporated the concepts of care and caring into establishing how these learners experience schooling on a micro-level. Further, limited research has focused on the experiences of high-functioning immigrant learners in host countries schools. My study examined the schooling lives of high functioning immigrant learners and with this process I hoped to illuminate their agency and resiliency as well as how they negotiate the vulnerabilities they may face. Teaching learners from various social, cultural, and economic backgrounds is a daily challenge for most educators, including myself. By conducting research on the experiences and challenges of high functioning immigrant learners, I was able to better understand their perspectives in providing suitable assistance to their various needs.

Researchers and policy makers have long recognised the importance of care and caring in promoting healthy development (Károly and Gonzalez, 2011). Many feminist scholars such as Gilligan (1982), Martin (1995) and Noddings (1992) have argued that caring, and specifically, the act of caring for others, is an invisible and undervalued ethic or practice. They have also argued that caring should be made more publicly visible and valued, and that schools should be reframed to better support caring orientations, interactions, and relationships. My study focused on the extent to which schools reflect an ethos of care and caring in respect of academically high functioning immigrant students.

### **1.3 Research questions**

The following section presents the research questions that form the basis of this research project.

- What are the schooling experiences of high-functioning immigrant children in South Africa?
- How do they navigate inclusionary and exclusionary spaces in their lives?

- What are the emotional geographies of their schooling experiences? What stories do they have to tell about their experiences of care and caring in their context of teaching and learning?

#### **1.4 Background to the study**

This study examined the teaching and learning experiences of six immigrant learners who academically, are high achievers at a secondary school in central Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. This school was selected because of the high numbers of immigrant learners who were also very willing to share their stories and experiences as immigrants in South Africa. Secondly, as an educator at the school, I was provided with easy accessibility to these learners in order to gather data and as well as the opportunity to track their performance and stories. Through the personal narratives of the learners, I gained insight into how they experience and navigate the socio-cultural and socio-political spaces of schooling at a micro level. This study also explored immigrant learner's experiences of care and support within their learning spaces.

Descriptive data was collected from the participants by means of a narrative inquiry, using semi-structured individual interviews and an innovative participatory research method known as photo voice. With photo voice, participants were given disposable cameras to visually document their school and social experiences. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. The transcriptions were then analysed to enable a true description of the participant's experiences.

The theoretical framework of New Sociology of Childhood and the sub-field of Children's Geographies structured this research project. These paradigms view children as active agents of change who have a voice in order to interpret their experiences in the world in which they live in (Muthukrishna, 2013; Tucker and Matthews, 2001; Van Ingen and Halas, 2006). In addition, the concept of social cultural capital was significant to understanding how immigrant learners navigate and assimilate their pathway through the South African education system as well as the society in which they interact on a daily basis.

#### **1.5 Significance of the study**

The findings of the study revealed significant details that shaped the lives of immigrant learners who perform exceptionally well in school. My research questions assisted in the

collection of relevant data that focused on the stories and experiences that immigrant learners had to share. While immigrant learners were able to assimilate in their new environments, this did not come without challenges as participants also highlighted the many challenges that they encountered and how with resilience and a positive attitude, they attempted to overcome their challenges. Furthermore, the coping mechanisms in the form of social capital in the lives of these learners brought to the fore, inspiration in coping and assimilation as immigrant learners in South Africa. This study forms an important field for further research in the lives of immigrant learners, more especially with regards to exploring other avenues when conducting research the lives of academically high functioning or low functioning immigrant learners. In addition, this study is interdisciplinary, focusing on the fields of both educational psychology and social justice education.

## **1.6 Structure of the dissertation**

**Chapter 1** provides a broad view into the study. The purpose, background, and significance of the research study is outlined in this chapter. The background information helps to guide the data analysis of this study. In addition, a synopsis of the chapters to follow is presented.

**Chapter 2** presents an analysis into current national and international literature related to immigrant learners. The chapter will begin by defining key concepts that will be used in this research. The educational rights of immigrant learners, including current literature on the experiences and the spaces and places of immigrant learners will be discussed. The chapter concludes by providing the reader with an insight into the theoretical framework that underpins this study.

**Chapter 3** provides a discussion and validation into the adopted research methods and design will be explored in this chapter. The limitations and ethical considerations is also be included in this chapter.

**Chapter 4** comprises of an analysis into the data collected, concluding in a discussion of the main findings of the research project. The analysis and discussion is closely linked to the literature review and theoretical framework of this study.

**Chapter 5** provides a discussion into my journey and experiences of being a researcher. Within the chapter, I provide a summary of the suitability of the research methods selected, theoretical framework, and the main findings of the study. I conclude by stating the implications of the research as well as an insight into the reflections of my research process.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

Immigrant learners are fast becoming an integral component of South African schools (Osman, 2009 and Vandeyar, 2012) and as educators, it becomes necessary for us to be aware of their needs in order to develop the skills that they might be lacking in. The following literature review comprises of three sections. The first section examines key concepts related to the topic of immigrant children. Secondly, a literature review based on issues affecting immigrant learners schooling experiences is discussed. The third part of this literature review describes the theoretical framework for this research, which is New Childhood Studies i.e. Children's Geographies.

#### **2.2 Key concepts**

##### ***2.2.1 The concept of 'child'***

In my study, I define a 'child' as a person under the age of 18. This is in line with the South African Children's Act 38 of 2005 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, 1989).

##### ***2.2.2 The concept of an 'immigrant'***

Defining concepts forms an integral foundation when undertaking research. In this study, it was necessary to understand the concept 'immigrant' and Osman (2009) defines an 'immigrant' as an individual who settles in a country not of their birth. Haskins and Tienda (2011) define 'immigrant' youth and children as individuals who have at least one foreign-born parent. According to Manser and Turton (2000 in Mpofu, 2013) an 'immigrant' is a person who has moved out of his country to settle in a foreign country. Immigrants can be divided into two categories, that is, illegal and legal immigrants.

On the other hand, an 'asylum seeker' is a person who from fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, social group or political opinion, has crossed an international border into a country in which he or she hopes to be granted refugee status (Collins English Dictionary, 2009). An 'asylum-seeker', is a person who has made a claim for recognition as a refugee, and who is waiting for that claim to be decided (Schuster, 2012).

In contrast, a 'refugee' is defined as someone who flees his or her home country when having a substantial fear for one's life and safety due to the political situation in one's native country. Thus, such a person seeks refuge and security in a country that is not his or her own native country (Hornby, 2000).

Furthermore, a 'migrant', as defined by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Migrants (2002), is a person who involves him/herself in a remunerated activity in a state where he or she is not a national. Unlike refugees, migrants make the choice of leaving their country to seek for better prospects in another country.

For the purpose of my research, 'immigrant students' will be defined as children who are from foreign nations who have settled in South Africa, and are now learners at South African schools. Their families may be legal or illegal immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers or migrant workers.

### **2.2.3 The concept of 'care' and 'caring'**

I envisaged that the concepts 'care' and 'caring' would most likely form an integral component of this research project as they relate to my third research question. The participants in my study included immigrant learners who are 18 years and younger. One of the aims of the study was to determine whether or not these learners experience 'care' and 'caring' in their teaching and learning environments. To elucidate these concepts was therefore necessary.

Over the last twenty years, the concepts of 'care' and 'caring' have captured the imaginations and agendas of many contemporary educational writers and researchers (Gilligan, 1982; Larrivee, 2000; Noddings, 1992; Valenzuela, 1999). Noddings, (1992, p.30) writes that care "is the very bedrock of all successful education...contemporary schooling can be revitalized in its light". Drawing on the above literature studied, I note that the concept of 'care' can be broken down further into *caring for* and *caring about*.

*Caring for* involves the day-to-day interpersonal interactions that impact a person's needs at a specific time. For example, a teacher might *care for* a student by inquiring about her emotional well-being (McKamey, 2011). In contrast, *caring about* denotes an action or interaction that attends to a more general principle, concept, or policy. In other words, the act of *caring about* has implications that are greater than any one interpersonal relationship.

*Caring about* is sometimes associated with social or hierarchical positions of power, and it is also sometimes associated with communities of practice (McKamey, 2011). To me a school is a community of practice – a context with a particular culture and ethos, and values within which to explore the concepts of *caring for* and *caring about*. McKamey (2011) conducted research based on students' narratives about care and caring. Her sample of seventeen students from fifteen countries and ethnic backgrounds over a three year period in the North Eastern United States revealed that the element of care plays an important part of learner development. One respondent stated that during lessons, her teacher spoke Spanish to the learners in the classroom, a language that she did not understand. Even though she was proficient in three other languages, including English, she felt 'unequal' and 'isolated'.

### **2.3 The educational rights of immigrant children in South Africa**

Since the settlement of Dutch, British, German, and French in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries (Kaplan, 1998), as well as Africans from the around the sub-continent, immigration has steadily increased in South Africa and one of the last Apartheid laws aimed at controlling the entry of immigrants into a country, entitled the 1991 Aliens Control Act, tried to mould the migration policy with its 'control and expulsion' mentality. This act was named by many as 'Apartheid's last act' and it was only with the implementation of the Immigration Act of 2002, and its Amendment in 2004, that the policy towards migration changed (Republic of South Africa, Immigration Act, 2002). As per government's official discourse, migration is now perceived as a development tool, both for South Africa and the neighbouring countries (Crush 2008).

Since the commencement of a democratic South Africa in 1994, the Government has had to deal with numerous challenges, and one of these was related to the implementation of an immigration policy suited to the transformative and developmental needs of the nation. Tati (2008) explained that owing to poverty and high unemployment prevalent in most parts of sub-Saharan Africa, migration to South Africa was likely to increase. And in saying so, the South African Constitution and its Bill of Rights seeks to protect the rights of all children in our country; irrespective of whether they are immigrants or citizens of our country, all children are t entitled to education and have a right to quality education.



The Refugee Act, passed in 1998, has been welcomed as a necessary piece of legislation that provides for the needs of forcibly displaced persons coming to South Africa in search of asylum (Republic of South Africa, Refugee Act, 1998). It states that refugees are allowed to seek employment and to access education, as well as being entitled to the rights enshrined within Chapter 2 of the Constitution (with the exception of political rights and the rights to freedom of trade, occupation, and profession) (Palmary, 2002).

South Africa's Immigration Act No. 13 of 2002, was subject to a wide range of criticism, due to poor consultation during the drafting process and this led to the amendment of the Act and to the passing of the Immigration Amendment Act No. 19 of 2004 and the Immigration Regulations of June 2005. This was done after a thorough consultation with the relevant governing bodies (Republic of South Africa, Immigration Act, 2004). The Department of Home Affairs as per Statistics South Africa (Lehohla, 2009) states that the aims of the Immigration Act No. 13 of 2002, implemented on the 7<sup>th</sup> of April 2003, enabled the issuance of permits to skilled and qualified foreigners so as to promote foreign investment and tourism to South Africa. The Immigration Act No. 19 of 2004 stipulates the use of quota work permits but the use of this system for allowing immigrants into the country was found to be problematic for various reasons according to Bisschoff, Botha and Rasool (2012), who state that a possible reason was South Africa's high unemployment rate amongst indigenous citizens.

Although a myriad of laws and regulations that govern the acceptance of an immigrant into South Africa are in place, the Department of Home Affairs makes the process of application for jobs and residency very difficult and the following issues were examined by Bisschoff et al. (2012) in their study: quota work permits, application backlogs, evaluation of qualifications, police clearance, business permits, permanent residence, permits, applications, and documentation. These were found to be inhibiting factors when applying to South Africa as a host country. Findings from this research also indicated that the process of application for residency and work as well as business permits was extremely difficult and the paperwork can take up to two to three months (Bisschoff et al., 2012) which causes serious restrictions upon immigrants' social integration. Stevens (2011) agrees with the view that immigrant migration law does impede the settlement and education of immigrant learners. The following sub section will describe the schooling experiences of immigrant learners nationally as well and internationally.

## **2.4 Immigrant children's experience of schooling: International and national perspectives**

### **2.4.1 *The language issue***

The issue of language in the context of curriculum access for immigrant children in host countries is a key theme in literature (for example, Calderon, Sánchez and Slavin, 2011; Daoud, 2011). A major shift towards English as an international language has been observed by scholars. These students, like many other people, see English as a means of linking and connecting with the rest of the world, thereby moving towards English as a means of communication. Although many immigrant learners want to make a head start towards acquiring proper skills for their English proficiency, they do face linguistic challenges, such as pronunciation of words and code switching between the immigrant's home languages versus the language of English. Therefore, support programmes should be instated to guide these learners (Boyson and Short, 2012; Kayaalp, 2014).

According to Kamuangu (2007), language difference is a key barrier that many immigrant children face in the new country. Adedayo (2010) suggests that proficiency in the dominant language of the host country may create opportunities for, or barriers to acceptance and the building of friendships between immigrant and indigenous learners. Hornberger and Vaish (2008) state that when immigrants leave their country, they leave behind their language and way of life, in order to adapt to the new country. In other words, the indigenous languages of immigrants are lost during the process of assimilating to a different country. Thus, many young children enter schooling systems with limited mother tongue literacy and low proficiency in the language of instruction. Little is known about how teachers respond to this complexity (Miller and Windle, 2012).

Scholars and researchers have investigated factors that impact and shape language acquisition in the host country. Heywood and Peterson (2007) focused on immigrant students and their family's level of English language acquisition in Canada. The views and experiences of parents, teachers, and school principals were evaluated to understand parents' linguistic, social, and cultural capital in supporting their children's literacy development. Results from the research indicated that immigrant learner's parents do play a large role in ensuring that their children do progress and excel in acquiring and learning the skills of a foreign language, such as English (Heywood and Peterson, 2007).

The Heywood and Peterson study (2007) also showed that parents who were more enthusiastic towards learning English themselves, were able to motivate their children to learn the new language. Research conducted in Australia by Dumenden and English (2013), suggests that immigrant learners do indeed face linguistic barriers to understanding key concepts that are transmitted to them via educators. For the purpose of their study, Bourdieu's theoretical framework (1989) 'fish out of water', was used to compare immigrant student's experience of being out of their host country. Through interviews conducted with these immigrant students, Dumenden and English (2013) found that immigrant learners tend to shift blame onto their teachers when they do not perform well in their assignments, due to a lack of understanding of the language that can be attributed to a lack of English proficiency.

Within the South African context, teaching and learning in a second or third language has become a common occurrence (Myburgh, Poggenpoel and Van Rensburg, 2004). The study by these scholars showed that local as well as immigrant learners face challenges in adapting to the language of teaching and learning. Myburgh et al. (2004) found that learners in South African schools are constantly faced with difficulties in interpreting the English language and that these discrepancies in the comprehension of the English language by South African students can be due to the imbalance between the language of instruction at schools and the learner's home language as well as the change in South Africa's political landscape, post 1994. Many South African learners speak a mother tongue language at home whilst they are taught in English at school, which makes communication difficult (Myburgh et al., 2004). The researchers have thus formulated guideline documents to help teachers cope with second language English speakers in the classroom, including immigrant learners.

Li (2007) conducted research on Canadian Chinese second language English speakers, and found that a major problem is the discontinuity between the Chinese children's school and home language and their literacy experiences. Further, students view school and home literacies as separate learning experiences rather than as a continuum. Li (2007) explains that 'school literacy' is mediated through English language and culture. In contrast, 'home literacy' is shaped through Chinese language and culture and thus, is there conflict between school cultural values and the values the families uphold. For example, there were contradictions between home and school due to differing assumptions about each other's practices related

to homework, free play, and drawing. Li's study (2007) points to a need for school-home partnerships to better support immigrant children as they become bicultural and bi-literate. Bang, O'Connor and Suárez-Orozco (2011), researched immigrant student's attitude to completing homework tasks that were assigned to them. They found that even though students are willing to complete their tasks, the English language barrier prevents them from fully understanding the requirements of the task. In addition, the parents of these learners have not fully grasped the English language which also results in them not being able to provide the necessary guidance. Similarly, Dutch research by Ohinata and van Ours (2011), suggest that immigrant learners should rather be distributed evenly into classrooms in order to freely integrate with local learners so as to associate and improve their understanding in the English language.

Research by Fergus, Martin and Pedro (2010) investigated the literacy levels of primary school immigrant learners at a suburban, elementary school in Washington. The researchers found that immigrant learners did encounter challenges in respect of the learning of English and achieving good literacy levels. They indicate that the levels of literacy of these immigrant learners have greatly improved from the late 1990's to early 2000's, as evident in the English Language Arts (ELA) results which are exams written annually by these learners. A summary on the performance trends of immigrant learners suggest that only 19% of Grade four immigrant learners reached proficiency or above in the ELA exam in the years 1998-1999. After two years, there was an improvement of 84% followed by 98% in the years 2005-2006. These results suggest a great improvement in the overall scores of immigrant learners and as the number of years passed, the results of these learners improved suggesting that over time, immigrant learners were able to better assimilate into their new environment. Results were also shown to have improved substantially between first generation and second generation immigrant learners (Ohinata and van Ours, 2011).

#### **2.4.2 Cultural and social integration**

A common challenge that immigrant learners face is at the level of cultural and social integration (for example, Heywood and Peterson, 2007; Maduray, 2014; Singh, 2002). It is a struggle for many immigrants to assimilate and fit into a new society and school environment. Studies have highlighted that this initial barrier may be attributed to a difference in culture

and lifestyle (Heywood and Peterson, 2007; Maduray, 2014). The degree of 'belonging' within school cultures have been examined by researchers such as Maduray (2014) and Vandeyar and Vandeyar (2012). The extent to which immigrant children feel a sense of belonging within a school setting and are able to identify with others, shapes their identities and their acculturation to their new environment. Singh (2002) implies that in order to gain an understanding of the schooling experiences of immigrant students, pertinent issues such as their levels of affiliation to the new context and emerging identities should be considered.

Research related to immigrant learners show that they do experience a difficulty in identifying with the curriculum content that is taught to them at school (Ghong, Lychene, Larke and Johnson, 2007). These researchers stress that culturally responsive teaching is recommended for these learners. Ghong et al. (2007) argue for the importance of using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits to teaching them more effectively. This argument is based on the assumption that when academic knowledge and skills are situated within lived experiences and frames of reference of students, they are personally meaningful, have higher interest appeal, and are learned more easily. Assimilation into a host country's education system does not necessarily take place over a specified period of time (Ghong et al., 2007).

Research in the US by Jimenez and Waters (2005) on immigrant assimilation examined four issues related to immigrant integration, viz. socioeconomic status, spatial concentration, language assimilation, and inter-marriage and indicates that immigrants are able to adapt well into their new environment. A significant finding from this research was that second and third generation immigrant learners are able to better fit into their new social environment than the first generation. Second generation West Indians do better than native-born Native Americans in the city, and Dominicans, Colombians, Ecuadorans, and Peruvians do better than Puerto Ricans. Chinese students do better with regards to high school graduation rates and college attendance than all the other groups, including native whites of native parentage (Jimenez and Waters, 2005). Possible reasons cited by the authors for this trend is that immigrant learners have the willingness and drive to succeed as foreigners. They do understand the difficulties they experience to get into the labour market away from their host countries, and therefore find it noteworthy to achieve so as to reach their goals (Jimenez and Waters, 2005).

Locally, research by Vandeyar (2012) revealed that immigrant students were proud of their background and heritage and were eager to maintain this balance, even though they were in the process of assimilation into the host country. Her research on fifteen high school immigrant learners from the province of Gauteng indicates that immigrant learners do not want to be identified by their physical appearance, but rather their personality traits and their ethnicity. A major finding also revealed that immigrant learners are not accustomed to being labelled as 'black'. A comment made by an immigrant learner interviewed, read as follows, "They use my surname Dakkar to mock me and they say I am dark. I am a 'makwerekwere' and I must go back to Zambia" (p. 6). Although this sort of humiliation is prevalent within the South African school context, Vandeyar (2012) found that immigrant learners have learned to form a 'continental identity' with local African students. This simply means that immigrant learners have tried to alter their personalities and identities in order to assimilate into the South African schooling context (Vandeyar, 2012).

Canadian research based on the educational and cultural experiences of Turkish students at schools indicate that students face exclusion on the basis of linguistics and racism at the hands of their educators (Kayaalp, 2014). Research conducted with fourteen Turkish students living in Vancouver, Canada suggests that the Canadian education system predominantly favours a British and American way of life and tends to "disregard other cultural groups" (Kayaalp, 2014, p.660). On the basis of linguistics, a Turkish student claimed that he had been put into an English Second language group, even though English was his mother tongue language. Students even reported having to change into their traditional Islamic dress code, because they were not seen as modern when they dressed in Western clothing, one student interviewed recounted how this was first time that she got 'covered' (Kayaalp, 2014,).

Similarly, research conducted in South Africa based on Turkish immigrant learners suggests that these learners also face exclusion by South African students due to different cultural practices (Ergul, 2012). Ergul's research with Turkish immigrant students revealed that learners prefer interacting with other foreigners as this provides them with greater comfort (2012). When Turkish learners were asked why they do not associate with South African learners, they responded that, "they were from different cultures" (Ergul, 2012, p.53).

### **2.4.3 Xenophobic threats**

The experience of xenophobia and the intolerance of foreigners have been documented internationally both in societies and schooling contexts (for example, Adjai and Lazaridis, 2013; Duponchel, 2009; Friebe, Gallego and Mendola, 2011). Xenophobia is defined by the *World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance* as, “attitudes, prejudices and behaviour that reject, exclude and often vilify persons, based on the perception that they (*immigrants*) are outsiders or foreigners to the community, society or national identity” (WCAR, 2001, p. 192). Research by Friebe et al. (2011) indicates that violence and xenophobic attacks do impact on migrants’ experiences and social interactions in host countries.

According to Duponchel (2009), xenophobic unrest is not uncommon within the South African context and Misago, Landau and Monson (2009 cited in Duponchel, 2009) state that xenophobic violence can be traced back to as early as a few months after the first democratic elections in 1994. The biological-cultural features of hairstyles, accents, vaccination marks, dress, and physical appearance signify difference, and play a role in prompting racist actions. Biological-cultural markers are significant in generating xenophobia and racism because they point out whom to target (Adjai and Lazaridis, 2013). Misago et al. (2009 cited in Duponchel, 2009) attribute the high rise in xenophobic violence to a high unemployment rate as well as a lack of service delivery in many communities.

The xenophobic attacks that plagued South African cities during May 2008 caused enormous unrest and threatened to mar Nelson Mandela’s dream of a ‘rainbow nation’, in which all individuals were treated with dignity and respect. Surveys conducted by the South African Migration Project (SAMP, 2008) during the post-apartheid period (respectively 1999 and 2008), aimed to discern the sentiments of South Africans behind xenophobic violence. The survey showed that the incidence of negative attitudes towards immigrants had continued to increase between 1999 and 2006. In 2006, 37% of the respondents wanted a total ban on foreigners entering the country. Three quarters (75%) supported the electrification of borders and almost as many agreed that non-citizens should carry personal identification with them at all times. As many as 30 % of the respondents reported that they would take action to prevent migrants from neighbouring countries from moving into or

operating a business in their community. Finally, a startling 16 % of those interviewed declared that they were prepared to join forces with others to expel foreign nationals from their area (SAMP, 2008).

Apart from xenophobia, another concept known as Islamophobia has emerged which relates to Islamic immigrants being segregated and treated differently. According to Alshammari (2013), Islamophobia means “acts of fear or hostility towards followers of Islamic religion” (p.177) and has increased significantly after the September 2011 terror attacks. Distinct characteristics of Islamophobia include a deliberate segregation of Muslim people as well as hate crimes against them. Kayaalp (2014) stated that female learners Turkish learners at a Canadian school were discriminated against due to them wearing head scarves. In addition, Kunst, Sam, Tajamal and Ulleberg (2012) researched the integration of 210 Norwegian-Pakistani and 216 German- Turkish Muslims and found that they too experienced a lack of integration into Western society, due to them not being fully accepted.

The purpose of including xenophobia and xenophobic attacks in this research study was mainly to determine whether the immigrant participants were affected by it or not. When participants were interviewed, one of the questions or incidents that they had to account for was whether their families, friends or even they were victims of xenophobic violence. The results would thereby determine whether xenophobic unrest still is a threat to immigrants or not.

#### **2.4.4 Resilience of immigrant learners**

According to the Merriam Webster Dictionary (2002), the concept of resilience can be defined as “the ability to recover from, or adjust easily to change or misfortune” (p. 596). Scholars have often defined the concept of resilience and one of the earliest delineations provided by Rutter (1985) reveals that resilience is about having the ‘ability to bounce back’ and cope positively despite having challenges. Over time, the terms ‘invulnerable’ and ‘invincible’ have been replaced by resilience (Ramirez, 2007). In defining resilience, a few characteristics that can be used to describe a resilient individual include, having the ability to form positive relationships, reintegration, a high expectancy and self-esteem (Friborg, Hjemdal, Rosenvinge, and Martinussen, 2003). According to Trueba (1999), resiliency is a skill that enables students from various social and ethnic backgrounds to cope with the challenges that



they have to overcome. For the purposes of this research project, the term resilience was used to describe high achieving immigrant learners who were able to cope in South Africa both academically, and socially. Research by Trueba (1999) revealed that immigrant learners who were able to maintain their identity were able to overcome their challenges and barriers to learning.

A strong feature of immigrant learners is their ability to display the agency and according to Vandeyar (2012), the term agency refers to, “the determination to succeed” (p.7). Her research revealed that immigrant students have the will power to become high achievers and in addition to this, they also can be very encouraging towards their fellow local students. It can therefore be concluded that their aim of education is not to solely empower themselves, but also others around. This thereby shows that immigrant students are trying to develop a ‘brotherhood’ with their fellow South African peers by also showing concern towards their academic performance.

Karabenick and Noda (2004) conducted research on teacher constructions of immigrant learners who are second language English speakers in Michigan, United States. These immigrant learners originated from a spread of countries, including Eastern Europe, Southeast Asia and Arabia. One of the findings of the study was that most immigrant learners have agency and are able to adapt to their new learning environment and district teachers reported that, on the whole, immigrant students relate well to other students, socialise in ways similar to those of regular students, and do not experience unduly conflicted interactions. However, teachers did express concern over the emergence of ethnic cliques, which could serve to isolate immigrant students from their peers (Karabenick and Noda, 2004).

Research by Collins and Toppelberg (2010) on immigrant Latino students in the United States of America, suggests that while many immigrant families and their children face multiple risk factors they also bring with them, a number of characteristics that may serve as protective factors such as religion, sense of community, optimism, and an appreciation of education. Latino parents frequently share the goal to have their children develop instrumental competences and to preserve values related to intrapersonal (*personalismo*) and interpersonal (*respeto*) skills, family connections (*familismo*), the expression of affection

(*cariños*) and the value of education (*educación*) (Collins and Toppelberg, 2010). It was found that many children of immigrants have shown to be extremely resilient despite risk and adversity.

Some studies indicate that early identification of high performing immigrant students can be made at schools (Bracken and Brown, 2008; Zimmerman, 2000). The highest number of American immigrants emerges from Korean and Mexican backgrounds (Kao, 2004) and studies determining the academic achievements of immigrant learners in addition to their acculturation into American society revealed that Korean immigrant children with parents who have higher acculturation and an authoritative parenting style showed relatively higher school achievement as opposed to students with parents who have lower acculturation and an authoritarian parenting style (Bonstead-Bruns and Hao, 1998). The result with the Mexican sample indicated that only two demographic variables (parents' education and length of stay in the United States) were significantly associated with school achievement in contrast with the results of the Korean sample. Children who have parents with higher education and a longer stay in the United States showed higher school achievement than children who have parents with lower education and a shorter stay in the United States (Suk-Young, Sung Seek and Soonok, 2009). These results indicate that early assimilation of immigrant learners into a host country yields positive and pleasing results.

The emergence of 'cultural capital' and 'human capital' are contributing factors that enable immigrant learners to cope with the demands of assimilating into a foreign country (Lee, 2011; Jerald, 2001). 'Cultural capital' can be defined as family-mediated values and outlooks that facilitate access to education (Portes, 2000). 'Human capital' includes the skills that students and parents bring along in the form of prior education, work experience, and language knowledge that make individuals productive at home, school, and work. Research by Lee (2011) indicates that a combination of 'cultural and human capital' does enhance the education of immigrant learners and serves to improve their development within a foreign country and education system.

A sound way of determining whether immigrant learners fit into a country is by assessing their academic performance and early research by Zhou (1997) suggests that immigrant learner's academic performance can be a measurement as to how well these

learners have adapted to their host countries. The academic attainment of immigrant learners as well as their adaptation as successful employees in the labour market are signs of determining whether immigrant learners have adapted into their host country. This becomes an imperative step to assimilation and better performance (Zhou, 1997). In addition, research by Conger (2012) suggests that immigrant learners do have a positive influence on the academic results of other immigrant learners as well as native born learners. His research on immigrant learners at a public high school in Florida, United States of America, suggest that these learners influence other learners positively by influencing the attitudes of other learners (Conger, 2012, p. 5), such as encouraging them to study as well as listen more attentively during lessons. These characteristics in turn influence educators to want to teach in this more responsive and motivated environment.

On the other hand, research by Bitew and Ferguson's (2012) research in Australia with a group of Ethiopian students indicate that students were concerned about the link that the school curriculum had for their future development and their potential careers after school. This could be attributed to the high unemployment rate that exists in their country. Results from the research concluded that Ethiopian students generally cope well with the academic component of the new Australian environment, and take on the curriculum as a challenge to excel and perform better. Ethiopian students in Australia, analysed and synthesised their reading material and when reading, they also tried to understand their reading, which showed a development of these learners studying techniques (Bitew and Ferguson, 2012). Learners also indicated that in Ethiopia, they had not developed certain skills, such as essay writing however, they managed to bypass this curveball by learning about them.

The concepts of 'care' and 'caring' in the context of schooling emerge in research on resiliency of immigrant children. A study by Naiditch (2013) indicates that 'not caring' shows that we have disconnected and given up on creating positive social relationships and a welcoming school culture and ethos. In a school context, teachers build knowledge but more importantly build the 'self' of learners, including immigrant learners in a host country. Such positive teaching requires commitment, caring, and dedication. In a multicultural school context, research suggests that there should be high levels of interest in, and affirmation of students' cultures, languages, customs, and values to create a welcoming school climate for learners and parents (Heywood and Peterson, 2007).

Heywood and Peterson (2007) stress that teachers and school management teams have the responsibility to create supportive environments for immigrant learners. In their study, one teacher, for example, stated that the majority of her students have Spanish-speaking backgrounds so she takes an interest in learning about their culture. School personnel in the study went to great lengths to learn about the languages and cultures of their students; they provided newly arrived immigrant parents with contacts who spoke their language who could help them establish social networks; and they created welcoming classroom and school environments (Heywood and Peterson, 2007).

In her research on the support and care that immigrant learners receive at school, Valenzuela (1999) highlighted the importance of what she refers to as the 'politics of caring' - a concept that emphasises the need to establish reciprocal relations of respect and support between students and educators. She explained that students and teachers need to develop positive feelings of trust and nurture meaningful relationships in order to "enhance their learning and academic success", (p. 78). Valenzuela (1999) argued that parents and teachers need to provide stable and supportive environments of care. Research conducted by Lalas and Valle (2007) in Los Angeles with thirty five post-secondary immigrant students' sought to explore their experiences about care and caring and data collected from these students was in the form of an essay based on their personal experiences about their education. The learners ranged from various cultural and ethnic backgrounds, including Spanish, Mexican, and English. Learners who excelled academically attributed their successes to positive guidance and support that they received from their teachers. One student stated this about her school counsellor, "she cared about how I was doing in school" (p.83). Thus, the help, support, and attention that this student received from her teacher helped to ensure her academic advancement and an improved self-esteem (Lalas and Valle, 2007).

## **2.5 Theoretical framework**

The paradigm in childhood studies referred to as *New Sociology of Childhood* (NSC), and the sub-field of *Children's Geographies* underpin the theoretical framing of my study. *Children's geographies* are an area of study within human geography that studies the spaces and places of children's lives (Muthukrishna, 2013; Tucker and Matthews, 2001; Van Ingen and Halas, 2006). The view is that children's lives will be experienced in diverse ways, in differing times,

places and spaces, and in different circumstances. Scholars in the field argue that the spaces in children's lives are often power laden, and the myriad of ways this power plays out is of vital scholarly importance and needs to be explored by researchers (Muthukrishna, 2013). Van Ingen and Halas (2006) explain that schools are power laden spatialities of the everyday lives of children. Critical questions may be:

- Whose culture and language is affirmed?
- Who is in?
- Who is out?

The concept of New Childhood Studies started to emerge in the early 1980's and 1990's during which the role of children as active agents of change was being contemplated (Punch and Tisdall, 2012). In the past, children were viewed as being marginalised, minorities, and hidden from public attention however, researchers have for over the past two decades advocated towards giving children a voice as they do have their perspectives and valuable stories to share (Punch and Tisdall, 2012).

The sociological perspective, New Childhood Studies provided a theoretical lens for my study as from this perspective, it is argued that children as a social group, share certain characteristics which are significant and indeed worthy of study (Morojele and Muthukrishna, 2013; Punch and Tisdall, 2012). With traditional conceptions that have drawn heavily from the discipline of psychology, children had been viewed as being immature, adults in the making, powerless, and unable to make concrete decisions by themselves. However, in the last three decades or so, this frame of thought has changed to focus on the child, rather than viewing the adult as the sole decision maker in the lives of children. This line of thinking aligns with the revolutionary United Nations Convention on Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) which brought childhood to the forefront of international political and academic debate (Bisht, 2008). Rather than focusing on norms of child development, the paradigm of 'new' sociology of childhood emphasises the social construction of childhood. Furthermore, it is argued that children should be perceived as social actors and individuals who have views about issues, and agency in the spaces in which they interact rather than those who are passive and dependent (Punch and Tisdall, 2012).

For the purposes of my research, the voices of the participants as well as their experiences at South African schools were vital therefore my epistemological orientation was influenced by the preceding debates on conceptions of childhood and children, and the power-laden spaces of their lives. Consequently, I engaged the use of innovative methods to elicit, listen to the voices of immigrant children on their schooling experiences, and examine the spatial, experiential, emotional, and ethical dimensions of the lives. I foregrounded their voices and their right to participate in my study as I believed that they had important views on issues in their schooling lives.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

This literature review defined vital concepts that underpinned my research. Extensive research has been conducted on immigrant learner's language proficiency and from the findings of local and international researchers, it was apparent that immigrant learners do experience many difficulties in acquiring the skills of the English language which can be attributed mainly to code switching from English to the mother tongue language. Researchers suggest extra lessons as well as more support from parents to assist their children. Immigrant learners also possess the quality of being resilient and trying to assimilate into their new environment in foreign countries. Although immigrant learners have tried to cope, they are still at risk of being victims of xenophobic attacks and segregation by learners and teachers at their schools. Care and support can help immigrant learners to overcome barriers that they may experience at school or community. During data collection, I interrogated these issues to ascertain whether the participants of my research experienced any of the points discussed in the literature review. The following section discusses the data collection methods that I utilised.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter highlights the methodological issues pertaining to my study and the design choices made. My decisions regarding research context, location, participants, sampling process and data generation are presented and justified. In addition, one gains insight related to the data analysis procedure and the ethical issues that emerged in the study.

#### **3.2 Methodological issues**

The study was qualitative in nature as this route allowed for the development of an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) explain that the strength of qualitative research lies in its ability to provide intricate textual accounts of how people experience a given research issue, i.e. immigrant learners' experience of schooling. It provides information about the 'human' side of an issue – that is, the often contradictory behaviours, beliefs, opinions, emotions, and relationships of individuals (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). As qualitative research is principally concerned with gaining an understanding of the social phenomenon from the participant's perspective, one endeavours to describe and analyse the participant's individual and collective social actions, beliefs, thoughts and perceptions (Osman, 2009). My research focused on understanding the schooling experiences of six immigrants thus it was essential that their life experiences were noted.

The research method that was used was narrative inquiry. People are storytellers by nature and stories or narratives, provide us with access to one's identity while playing a central role in social interactions (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber, 1998; Richardson, 1990). The stories people tell reflect and reveal assumptions that they may have about the way the world works, for example, what knowledge should be valued or the kind of relationships are important (McKamey, 2011). As a research approach, narrative inquiry is as an appropriate way to gather data about lived experience. Kramp (2004) explains that a narrative itself provides a way to order and give meaning to experience. My study attempted to make sense of the stories of immigrant children's schooling experiences in South African through their own voices.

The method of narrative inquiry has become very popular over the last decade (Bailey, 2004; Kramp, 2004) and this popularity can be attributed to the fact that researchers are drawn easily to the stories of the participants which generally, hold a great appeal to readers. Narrative itself, is one way to order and give meaning to experience. As a research approach, narrative inquiry was viewed as an appropriate way to gather data about lived experience as it is a process that allows for a story or narrative to be told and consequently, affords the researcher access to valuable discourses that emerge in the stories (Kramp, 2004). The participants of my research were involved in retelling their 'stories' or encounters. According to Clandinin and Connelly (2006), there are four main processes that are related to this form of research. They state that narrative inquiry comprises of four main terms, namely, "living, telling, retelling and reliving", whereby participants are encouraged to share their stories and life experiences. A few examples of documenting this evidence can be in the form of journals and photographs.

For the purposes of this research, I chose to use narrative inquiry as a methodology, in which participants narrated stories about their experiences of schooling as high achieving immigrant learners at South African schools.

### **3.3 Research Design**

#### **3.3.1 Context of study**

This research project was conducted at a secondary school in central Durban, in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. The site was selected as my context of study as it is the school at which I am currently employed as a teacher. Being a teacher at the school, I was aware that the enrolment of foreign students has increased over the past few years, thereby inciting my interest in exploring how these learners cope and perform academically. I also wished to investigate the impact that their immigrant status had on their emotional wellbeing at school. My position at the school facilitated the easy access to my prospective sample group. The study was also prompted by the fact that the experiences of academically high functioning immigrant learners was found to be an uncharted area of research. The focus of my research was therefore based on the experiences of high functioning immigrant learners at a South African school.



### **3.3.2 Participants**

The participants were six immigrant learners from a secondary school, aged between 13 and 18 years old. These learners ranged from grades eight to eleven as I excluded grade 12 learners due to final matriculation examinations being in progress. According to Leech and Onwuegbuzie and Collins (2007, p. 284) “in general, sample sizes in qualitative research should not be too large that it is difficult to extract thick, rich data”. The following definition provided by Oppong (2013, p. 203), states that, “sampling is a process of selecting subjects to take part in a research investigation on the ground that they provide information considered relevant to the research problem”. The aim of sampling was to determine the characteristics and draw conclusions about a certain part of the population (Fridah, 2002).

The first phase of sampling was purposive as learners identified for the research were foreign nationals. Patton (2002) define a purposive sample as participants who are selected because they are likely to generate useful data for the project. Onwuegbuzie and Collins (2007, p. 282) describe that, “if the aim is not to generalise to a populace but to get perceptions into a phenomenon, people, or proceedings, as is common in interpretivist studies, then the qualitative researcher tactfully chooses individuals, groups, and settings for this phase that increases comprehension of the phenomena”. Purposive sampling means that the participants are chosen for a specific reason and in this case, the phenomena under investigation related to a specific category of learners, that is, immigrant learners. The next criterion I set was that the participants must be high-achieving learners academically with average scores in the various subject areas of the curriculum obtained in the June 2014 examinations/tests reflecting 65 % and above. Another criterion was that the participants had to have started their primary school education at a South African school. If the students fell under these categories, then they were selected through purposive sampling.

In the second phase, as participation was voluntary, the participants for whom consent was attained were identified and eleven learners were in this pool. From this pool of learners, I selected six through random sampling. A systematic random sample was obtained by selecting one unit on a random basis (Fridah, 2002) i.e. I placed the names of all the participants in a hat and randomly selected six names. These six participants fulfilled the criteria for my research.

### **3.3.3 Data generation**

It was imperative that during data generation, I was able to obtain rich stories from learners and I carefully selected the most appropriate methods to ensure this outcome. Hence, the key data production technique was the semi-structured interview. According to Bradley and Harrell (2009), interviews are dialogues usually one-on-one that allows the researcher to gather information on a specific set of topics. With semi-structured interviews, the researcher is able to gain a better perspective of the participants due to flexibility and non-restricted questioning (Bradley and Harrell, 2009). Semi-structured interviews are non-standardised and are frequently used in data generation in qualitative studies (David and Sutton, 2004). In this type of interview, the order of the questions can be changed depending on the direction of the interview. This type of interview is useful in that it does not inhibit questions and responses by the interviewee as well as the researcher (Bradley and Harrell, 2009). Semi-structured interviews may start with open-ended questions and questioning can be altered, based on the responses of the participants. Therefore, this form of interviewing is not restrictive to the researcher. Semi-structured interviewing works well with qualitative research as there is a smaller sample group, and responses can be readily probed during questioning (Patton, 2002).

Throughout the data generation process, I kept in mind that my study was a narrative inquiry which foregrounds narratives (stories), facilitating the attainment of stories and experiences as well as making sense of participants' different social constructions of reality through the stories they share with the researcher (Pinnegar and Danes, 2007). Narrative research is about life as it is lived (Phillion, 2002) therefore, in my study accessing from participants; events, actions, critical incidents and happenings in the stories, was critical - as they were re-told by the learners. My interviews were in the form of 'natural flowing' conversation and I took care that I did not focus on my pre-determined questions. Although I did have an interview guide, this was for my purpose – that is, to remind me of any key issues that did not emerge in the conversation and which I could weave in through my probes. Thus, my aim was to keep the interviews in the form of open-ended conversations and allow myself, the researcher and the participant to construct the story through an interactive process (Phillion, 2002; Pinnegar and Danes, 2007).

An innovative 'edge' was added to this research project, and this was in the form of a participatory research tool, photo voice. Photo voice, developed by Wang and Burris (1997) is a methodological variant of photography as a visual technique of data collection (Kembhavi and Wirz, 2009). Photo voice allows one to visually document specific concerns and provides them with the basis on which to engage in dialogue around these issues. It was also developed as a method to reach policy-makers in order to influence change at the community level (Magill, McDonagh and Strack, 2004). The reading of several photographs is the *visual narration* (Lemon, 2006) and visual narrative tells many different stories at the same time as it mixes and combines multiple images. Cultural meaning, points of views, space, interactive sequences, and shifts come from the viewing of photographs. Research on visual narratives draw upon the use of photography to evoke memory in our lives, a memory that can be used to construct and reconstruct stories (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). This data collection tool enables the participants to freely capture their experiences; whether good or bad, via a series of photo images that portray their sentiments and experiences. Photo voice blends a grassroots approach to photography and social action. It provides cameras not to education specialists, policy makers, or professionals but to research participants (including young children) with least access to those who make decisions affecting their lives. In so doing, it brings back power of what matters to the people who are most affected by policy decisions (Morojele and Muthukrishna, 2013). Just like a story has a message behind it, so too do photographs and images. These images can be interpreted and linked to the mood and well-being of an individual. The photographs slow the moments in time and these moments are what allow for further study. Photos can be read and reread over time. According to Bach (2001), each reading can arouse a different sound, meaning as well as interpretation.

Photo voice is a technique that lends itself to active participation in the research by the participants. Lemon (2006) conducted a study in Australia with seventeen learners, between the ages of five to seven that involved capturing and analysing photographs. The aim of the study was to promote the use of a digital camera in the classroom as a useful tool for obtaining data based on the roles of the teacher and student in the classroom. The participants were children aged between five to seven years and also aspired to promote the use of technology to learners within a classroom. Even though these learners did not have any background to photography, they were able to use a digital camera successfully, in order

to express their experiences of lessons that were taught to them. Lemon (2006, p. 9) states that this process initiated a keen response and interest within the learners, amity between the classroom happenings and the camera. Learners became more confident when interacting with their peers, as the cameras empowered them to work with all students and also eliminated social barriers.

In the same light, research conducted with physically disabled adolescents in South India by Kembhavi and Wirz (2009), using the photo voice technique had positive results. Participants were required to take photographs of images that made them happy, sad, and angry and things that they wanted to change in their life. Using disposable cameras to engage in research made learners more excited to participate in the research and also eliminated their reluctance to share in their stories. They readily engaged with the researcher and stated why specific photographs had been taken by them (Kembhavi and Wirz, 2009). The aim of using the photo voice technique was to facilitate rapid discussion and engagement between the participants and the researcher. Photo voice also helped to overcome barriers, such as the reluctance and apprehension that the participants would have experienced, if they had to speak, rather than draw. By using pictures, the participants were able to get over their hesitation and shared their pictures with other participants (Kembhavi and Wirz, 2009). The method also proved to be successful, as even participants with physical and impaired fine motor skills were still able to execute the requirements of the task involving taking photographs.

In my study, the participants were given disposable cameras and requested to take photos that would tell to me, the story of their schooling lives, past and present. In designing the photo voice process, I was guided by recent studies in the African context, Jacobs and Harley (2008); Morojele and Muthukrishna (2013); Muthukrishna (2013) and Umurungi, Mitchell, Gervais and Ubalijoro (2008). In the main, the process was as follows:

- (1) Researcher explained research project and its purpose to the participants,
- (2) Briefing of the participants on how to use cameras,
- (3) Ethical issues were discussed with participants.
- (4) Participants were requested to take photographs that tell the story of their schooling lives over three days,

- (5) Collection of cameras and development of film by the researcher,
- (6) Reflective group workshop session with participants during which they discussed selected photographs (5 photos selected by each participant). The focus was on what was depicted, why a particular photograph was taken, and what was reflected in them.

### **3.3.4 Data analysis**

The interviews were conducted in English, digitally recorded and later transcribed. Qualitative data analysis involves organising, accounting for, and explaining the data. Further, qualitative data analysis relies on interpretation (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2001). Participant's stories gleaned from the two data sources were read and re-read a number of times to gain an in-depth understanding of how they depicted their schooling experiences of the high achieving learners.

Data analysis was an inductive process: identifying broad categories of constructs and issues, drawing on my literature review and theory to make sense of trends; identifying emerging patterns and themes. The data that I collected from the participants were analysed under specific themes. From the information, the experiences of the participants were classified and common and uncommon patterns were established.

### **3.3.5 Validity issues**

Rigour is central to any research project and the rigour that I applied to my research project was aimed at ensuring trustworthiness. Over the past twenty years, trustworthiness has become an important and integral component of qualitative research (Shenton, 2004). According to Long and Johnson (2007) failure to assess the worth of a study – the soundness of its method, the accuracy of its findings, and the integrity of assumptions made or conclusions reached – could have dire consequences. Ambiguous or meaningless findings may result in wasted time and effort, while findings which are simply wrong could result in the adoption of dangerous or harmful research practices. Throughout the research, I spent time with the participants which allowed them to gain confidence in me and as well as understand the requirements of the research project and they willingly shared and spoke about their experiences at South African schools with ease.

During data collection and analysis of findings, I ensured that learner's responses were accurate. I confirmed this by phrasing the same question to them in different ways to justify that their responses were indeed accurate and not ambiguous. During data analysis, I also verified information by looking back at the interview transcripts and verifying information with participants when required.

Triangulation may take several forms and is one process to ensure trustworthiness. It commonly refers to the employment of multiple data sources, data collection methods, or investigators. My study included the use of different data generation methods, namely, photo-voice and individual semi-structured interviews. This was consistent with the norm of qualitative research which involves the use of multiple sources of data collection from the same participants in order for responses to be verified. The method of triangulation was applied to ensure that the responses received from my participants were trustworthy and valid. In general, the purpose of this was to reduce the disadvantages inherent in the use of any single source (Long and Johnson, 2000).

One of the key criteria addressed by scholars on research methodology and design is that of internal validity. This aims to measure whether the results obtained from the research is what was actually intended or not (Shenton, 2004). According to Merriam (1998), the qualitative investigator's equivalent concept, i.e. credibility, deals with the question, "How congruent are the findings with reality?" To ensure credibility of my research, I provided clear and detailed description of how I had generated my data, and made explicit, what counted as data in my work. I have included, in the appendix of the dissertation, copies of interview transcripts and the photographs used as data. I accessed a critical friend to work with me to ensure that the voices of participants were accurately captured in the transcripts. During the data analysis process, my supervisor assisted me in the process of verification of my emerging interpretations, theories and inferences, in particular that my interpretations were supported by data. As suggested by Shenton (2004), in order to assist other researchers to ascertain the transferability of my study to other contexts, I have provided full descriptions of all the contextual factors that impacted and shaped my study, and a detailed description of the phenomenon under investigation. I also provided a detailed account of the design of my study and the design choices I made.

### **3.3.6 Limitations**

It may be argued that this is a small scale study in one schooling context, and involving a very small sample. I wish to point out that in qualitative research generalisation to other contexts and individuals is not the aim. Osman (2009) states that results obtained from using smaller samples and the qualitative style can be extended into further research from other suburbs or cities. This will be able to determine whether immigrants have similar or different experiences. My study focused on a specific group of learners in a particular schooling context. I will ensure that other researchers can examine the transferability of my findings by providing rich descriptions of my research design and the analysis and interpretation of my findings as explained above.

Working with immigrant children presented challenges such as the cultural barrier. Using narrative inquiry and giving learners the opportunity to tell their stories in an open and conversational manner helped address this concern. The use of the participatory research tool, photo voice – a visual tool - was also an advantage. A high rate of absenteeism by learners towards the latter part of the year made the collection of data and completion of the research project difficult. Data had to therefore be collected and analysed at different time intervals so as to move forward the research project.

### **3.3.7 Ethical considerations**

According to Dawson (2002),

*A code of ethics provides participants with information about what you propose to do with the data they give (p. 22).*

The following ethical issues were considered during the research process:

- The location for research was a secondary school in KwaZulu-Natal, therefore, a request to conduct research from the Department of Education and the school principal was necessary, before the commencement of the research project.
- In view of my epistemological orientation, in particular, my belief that children have the right to make decisions in matters that concern them, I obtained informed consent from the child participants.

- Due to the participants being legally minors, informed consent was also obtained from the parents or guardians of the participants.
- The participants were assured of their anonymity and confidentiality in respect of their responses.
- Participation was voluntary. Learners were told that they could withdraw their participation at any stage in the research process.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

This chapter highlights the research methodology and design of my study, justifies and makes explicit the choices I made and the research processes followed. That careful attention was paid to the issue of *design coherence* which is critical to any research project – was showed. The next chapter will present the main findings of the study.



## **CHAPTER 4**

### **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents and discusses the findings from my study. The study was a narrative inquiry with the key data production tools being semi-structured individual interviews and photo voice. The paradigm in childhood studies referred to as New Sociology of Childhood (NCS), and the sub-field of Children's Geographies provided the theoretical framing of my study. Children's geographies is an area of study within human geography that studies the spaces and places of children's lives (Muthukrishna, 2013; Tucker and Matthews, 2001; Van Ingen and Halas, 2006). Scholars and researchers in the field of Children's Geographies view children as active agents who have a voice and the ability to express their unique views and opinions. Through this lens, I investigated the experiences of high functioning immigrant learners and determined how they navigated their experiences at a South African school. I begin by providing a profile of the participants in the study. I then discuss the key themes that emerged in the study as I explored my research questions:

- What are the schooling experiences of high-functioning immigrant children in South Africa?
- How do they navigate inclusionary and exclusionary spaces in their lives?
- What are the emotional geographies of their schooling experiences? What stories do they have to tell about their experiences of care and caring in their context of teaching and learning?

Excerpts from the transcribed interviews as well as photographs taken by the participants through the photo voice method were analysed so as to gain a better understanding of the immigrant learners' schooling experiences in South Africa.

#### **4.2 Who are the child participants in the study?**

Six immigrant learners participated in the study which was conducted at a girls only secondary school in the inner city of a city KwaZulu Natal. The high school is a middle class public school located in the central Durban area and accommodates learners from grades eight to twelve.

The current learner population at the school is approximately nine hundred and fifty students. During the Apartheid era, the school was historically an Indian school. Due to the central location of the school, it has become a gateway for the integration of learners from a multitude of racial and cultural backgrounds. The school strives to be inclusive in its ethos, culture, and policies.

Over the last few years the numbers of immigrant learners have increased at the school which prompted me to conduct research on the schooling experiences of these learners. The majority of the school population are second language English speakers as majority of the learners speak IsiZulu as their home language. The language of learning and teaching is English and learners study English as their home language. Learners can choose between IsiZulu and Afrikaans as an additional language. Although the majority of learners have to contend with language barriers and despite the fact that many come from poor socio-economic home conditions, they rise above these challenges. The school has obtained a high pass rate over the last few years in the National Senior Certificate Matriculation Examination. In 2014, the average pass rate of ninety-one per cent (91%) was achieved, while in 2013, the pass rate was eighty five per cent (85%).

The participants in my study were chosen from a sample which consisted of academically high functioning immigrant learners. I present the profiles of the six participants of this study below:

**Jane\***<sup>1</sup> is fourteen years old and is in Grade nine. She arrived in South Africa in 2007 from Liberia and commenced grade one at a South African school. She arrived in South Africa with her parents and siblings. She has a brother, who is two years older than she is and two younger siblings. Her brother is in grade eleven, while her two younger siblings are in grades six and four. The poor socio-economic background of Jane's parents has motivated her to work harder to achieve academic success. Jane's father did not complete his schooling career due to the war in Liberia. Her mother works at a tourist centre in Durban while her father is employed as a salesman at a store in the central business district. Her parents do not speak English fluently as their home language is French. Jane stated that her family is the key support system in her life. Jane enjoys learning mathematics. She obtains average marks of

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<sup>1</sup> \* Denotes pseudonyms used.

between 60 to 70 % for Mathematics. The greatest challenge that Jane had to cope with in South Africa was her French accent. Her home language is French but she does speak and understand English. Due to her pronounced French accent, she was often mocked at school. In addition, coping with a new, foreign additional language, IsiZulu, was a challenge for her. A strong figure and motivator in Jane's life has been her elder brother. He is two years older than Jane and he has guided and supported her with her academic learning and sport. Jane is good at sport and has received awards in athletics.

**Susan\***, a sixteen year old, is in grade eleven. She arrived in South Africa in 2002 with her parents from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). She started nursery school in South Africa when she was three years old. She has three siblings, one a year older than she is and the other two are younger than her. Hailing from a middle class family background, her parents are well educated and had the opportunity to complete university degrees in their home country. Susan's home language is French however, she as well as her family members communicate fluently in English. Her choice to take on Afrikaans as an additional language resulted in a major challenge to her but she works hard to gain good grades. Coping with verbal abuse, namely, name calling at school was emotionally difficult for her. This kind of verbal abuse was associated with her French accent. Nevertheless, Susan has excelled academically, and has been placed amongst the top ten students in her class since grade one.

**Michelle\*** is a sixteen year grade ten learner. Her home country is the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). She arrived in South Africa in 2004 when she was six years old and commenced grade one in South Africa. Michelle's father received only a basic education in the DRC, whilst her mum only completed grade eleven owing to poverty and instability in the education system. Thus, Michelle's parents have become her inspiration by encouraging her to study and pursue the opportunities that they could not have. She has three brothers. Her eldest brother is currently completing grade 12, and her other two younger brothers are in grade nine and grade seven. At home, Michelle speaks a mixture of French, Lingala, Swahili and English. Learning English at school was not very difficult for Michelle, but learning Afrikaans as an additional language is still difficult for her. Michelle has achieved excellent results both academically and on the sporting field. Her family has supported her in her studies, but her brother, who is currently in matric, has been her role model. He was in grade

two when he arrived in South Africa yet still managed to succeed and overcome the language barrier.

**Ruth\*** formerly of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), came to South Africa in 2001 as a grade one learner. She is currently seventeen years old and is in grade eleven. Her parents have motivated her to work hard and excel in her studies. They both have mediocre jobs in South Africa and struggle to make ends meet. The language that Ruth mainly uses to communicate with her parents is French, but she speaks English fluently. The additional language that she has chosen to study at school, Afrikaans, is demanding for her. Ruth uses her drive to succeed to inspire her two younger siblings. She teaches them to communicate in the English language, so they can cope better in South African classrooms. The challenge that she experienced is her difficulty integrating socially with other South African learners. She mentioned the formation of cliques amongst foreign students as these social groups are more supportive and the members are able to share similar experiences. This has resulted in difficulty assimilating and integrating with South African learners at a social level. Ruth also explained that South African learners generally excluded her socially as they spoke IsiZulu even though they are aware that she did not understand IsiZulu. Ruth has managed to rise above these obstacles by keeping her goal at the forefront, which is to achieve academic success.

**Ayesha\*** is an eighteen year old, grade eleven learner, who came to South Africa in 2006, from Gujarat, India. She lives with her parents, an elder brother who has completed school and two younger sisters, who are in grade nine and grade two. When Ayesha and her family first arrived in South Africa, they could not speak a word of English as their home language is Gujarati. Gradually, through extra tuition classes at school, she and her siblings became more proficient in the language. Her parents, however, still struggle to speak and understand English fluently. This has resulted in her mother not being able to find employment; while her father tries to run a small business. On arrival in South Africa, Ayesha was pushed back two grades. Thus, instead of starting off in grade five, she was placed in grade three, due to her low proficiency in the English language. Coping with Afrikaans as an additional language at school is also challenging. In Ayesha's culture, girls marry at an early age, often not completing school. Ayesha does not approve of this practice. Her goal is to help free her family out of the

trap of poverty. She believes that she can do this by working hard at school and obtaining a career.

**Tina\*** came to South Africa in 2004 as a grade one learner from the Democratic Republic of Congo. She is currently fourteen years old and is in grade nine. Her home language is French and Lingala. However, she speaks English fluently. Tina's family comprises of her parents as well as an elder sister who matriculated last year. Her father is well educated and is currently completing his Doctorate in Theology, while her mother does not work. However, finding employment in South Africa, as a foreigner, has been difficult for the parents. At school, Tina speaks English fluently. She has opted for Afrikaans as an additional language and is coping well. Tina stated that adapting to South Africa as a foreigner is a very difficult process. She has encountered discrimination and social exclusion from South African learners and foreigners alike. South Africans have often excluded her socially by speaking in IsiZulu and not translating the language for her. In addition, when she speaks Lingala to her friends, South African learners object. Even other foreigners place pressure on her not to use her home language at school. However, it seems that her strength of character and high motivation to learn and achieve has not allowed this to discourage her. Tina stated that her parents and older sister have been her support system. They have influenced her goal of committing to her studies and excelling in her studies.

#### **4.3 Navigating difficult terrain in school and community**

According to my theoretical framework for this research, schooling spaces and places are critical to the development of the identities of immigrant children and their transition to, and integration into the culture of the school. The concept 'terrain' refers to the places and spaces within which immigrant learners interact on a daily basis, including their school and community. It thereby becomes important for me, as the researcher to investigate the impact of immigrant learners learning spaces and places on their educational and personal lives. In this study, I used the lens of Children's Geographies. Scholars in this field, Van Ingen and Halas (2003) and Weller (2000) state that schools are spaces where values, ideologies, and practices intersect. Weller (2000) argued that when the researcher examines schooling spaces, she looks at the power relations surrounding the categories 'children'. In my study, I define 'place' as physical places, for example, the playground and the classroom which can also be a power

laden spaces. Various sub-themes defining particular issues emerged from the analysis of my data relating to the theme of 'navigating difficult terrain'. I discuss these in the sub sections to follow.

#### **4.3.1 The language issue**

Knowing the language of the host country forms an important part of assimilating into a new social environment. Barriers to language and communication have been identified as a major challenge that most immigrant learners face in the host country (Kamaungu, 2007). Even though South Africa is a diverse nation, the English language dominates in many teaching and learning contexts.

All six participants in the study experienced language and communication barriers when they first arrived in South Africa. Out of the six learners, three had not been exposed to English in their home countries. Therefore, communication within their learning and social spaces was a problem. Discriminatory attitudes related to their home languages was reported by three of the six participants. The two participants below allude to the language barrier they experienced in social situations. Often the IsiZulu language dominated such informal social spaces – a language which they had no knowledge of.

*Sometimes when we were in class and we were sitting in a group in grade seven and we were talking, I would not understand what they were saying, but they would just say something in Zulu and I would just have to sit and listen and not say anything. They would sometimes explain what they were saying, but other times they would just talk.*

(Michelle, interview)

*I think it was mainly because of the language, they did not even try to speak to me in English... unless it was something really important, like if they were planning a picnic or something. (Susan, Interview)*

It seems classmates and friends were not consistent in assisting them to access conversations in social settings. Tina explained that she often felt excluded and marginalised in social spaces and how such experiences caused anguish and distress to her.

*I did have South African friends in grades six and seven. They will always speak Zulu around you and when you ask them to explain what they said, they would say, "aah, never mind." In class they will make a joke in Zulu and you are the only one that will be lost and they all will be laughing.*

*If you ask them what they said, they will carry on ignoring you and laughing, they won't tell you what it is all about. It makes me feel bad because I feel left out. (Tina, Interview)*

One participant spoke of their experiences of discriminatory attitudes related to language that they experienced from teachers. Ruth explains:

*My social science teacher was speaking in Zulu, and I could understand a bit, but then the boy behind me who was a refugee like me, could not understand, so then he put up his hand and said, "English please Mam", and the teacher asked, "Who said that?" Everyone pointed at him and the teacher said that, "this is South Africa and Zulu is the first language and if you do not understand, go back to your country. We didn't call you to come here. (Ruth, Interview)*

All six participants reported that they experienced discriminatory attitudes from learners also who did not approve of them speaking their own home language at school. Tina and Ruth explained,

*If one of my friends speaks to the other in Swahili, they would say, "stop talking in that language", so we say, "this is the Afrikaans class, but you always speak Zulu". They will say "it's different, that is Zulu, but you are speaking in a foreign language". We always translate for them. For example, one of the foreign girls, Sarah\*, speaks in Lingala and we translate it to them, but they never translate for us. (Tina, Interview)*

*I remember once, it was here at this school in grade 9 and we were sitting, and I was talking to my friend in class, and then one of the learners stood up and said, "Don't speak your language here". We were talking in Swahili when the learner told us this. To them, whenever we speak our*

*language, they think that we are swearing them or mocking them, I have to speak Zulu. A fight started. I understood them, but to my friends the comment was quite insulting. (Ruth, Interview)*

During my analysis, I examined how these learners navigate the language issue and it was interesting that in general, these participants indicated that they ‘understood’ the position of the South African learners. The question to put forth is: Do the immigrant participants adopt this positioning because of the power dynamics in these social spaces? The issue is that there are without question, unequal power dynamics playing out in these spaces – the immigrant participants try to ‘understand’ yet this kind of understanding did not emerge from the side of South African learners. However, this does not detract from the fact that the participants were emotionally vulnerable and hurt, upset, and insulted by negative comments about their use of their home languages. Tina explains how her mother has helped her deal with discrimination and navigates adversity – a strategy that has strong religious links.

*My mum always says that I should not worry about what other people say and I should not hold grudges. I should forgive them because God is watching them. It is better to forgive than hold a grudge because at the end of the day you feel better. (Tina, interview)*

Similarly, Ruth explains how her mother serves as a role model to her and she tries to adhere to her mother’s advice, and emulate how she has integrated into South African society. This is depicted in her photo voice picture and narrative.



**Figure 3: Ruth’s Inspiration – my Mum**



*This is my mum. She inspires me a lot. She always tells me to never give up. She is a cleaner at Hyundai. At the moment they are trying their best to train her as a secretary as they do not have a secretary. She has a great bond with South Africans. She loves to interact with them and loves to know more about them. At her work she does not face many troubles. She has not had anything major compared to what I was facing at school. She always encourages me and tells me even though there is discrimination; try to be friends with those who discriminate.*

(Ruth, photo voice narrative)

In the case of all six participants, the Language of Teaching and Learning was English throughout their schooling. Learners had to make a choice between Afrikaans as well as IsiZulu to take on as a second language.

*In primary school we did a bit of Afrikaans and IsiZulu, so it is a bit difficult.*

*I never really understood Afrikaans and IsiZulu. It is a challenge.*

(Jane, Interview)

The added complexity of the language issue is further evident when participants shared their experience of communication in the home. Of the six participants, four of their parents could not speak or understand English fluently when they first arrived in South Africa. However, these parents are now able to comprehend the English language at a basic level. These parents find that communicating in their home language is easier, as opposed to speaking in English. Thus, immigrant learners need to find a balance between their home language, being taught in English as well as navigating an additional language, such as Afrikaans or IsiZulu. Michelle poignantly explains the complexity of learning and communicating in the different languages she is exposed to, and how this spills over into the schooling context creating confusion.

*At home I am mixed, because with my mum I can speak Lingala or French, but we mix it up, because she also understands a little bit of English. But when I come to school, it is difficult because I have to stick to speaking English and sometimes, I tend to make mistakes and say some words that are not supposed to be said. (Michelle, Interview)*

Michelle's narratives indicated that she views her multi-lingual abilities (Lingala, French, and English) as an asset and yet, she experiences it as a barrier in the schooling context. Many of the participants were very aware of the political stigma attached to their home languages. They were however, proud of their home languages.

Greene (2012) reports similar findings in her study that examined the personal narratives of Latina adolescents in the US. The contested issue of language use in the schooling context emerged in the findings as did the social and political stigma linked to Spanish language use outside of the home community that was experienced by the participants. Similar to participants in my study, they also experienced language as a barrier to social capital (a sense of community; community identity, building trust, and social networks) and social cohesion in school and community settings. The participants talked of negative assumptions made by the non-Spanish peers and some teachers who banned use of their home languages at school.

In South Africa, the principles of inclusion, equity, and social justice for all are embedded in education policy frameworks such as Education White Paper 6 (Department of Education, 2001), The South African Schools Act of 1996, and the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996. These frameworks enshrine the rights of all children to quality education, to a schooling context free of discrimination and exclusion, irrespective of diversity on the basis of race, class, national origin, gender etc. Yet many immigrant learners continue to experience stigmatisation and marginalisation in South African schools. In Greene's (2012) study, students were encouraged to write narratives on immigration (which included stories of their schooling experiences). The students indicated that writing their stories was a therapeutic process and it was found that the reading and writing of their personal narratives worked as meditational tools that fostered academic and identity development. Greene (2012) suggests that future research and educational interventions should explore the potential of other tools of mediation that would benefit teachers who work with immigrant students. Lallas and Valle (2007) stressed the need for all school stakeholders to listen to the authentic voices of immigrant students by using a social justice lens. These researchers used the critical and political construct of 'inquiry as stance' as a way to make sense of and analyse

cultures, practices, and policies of schools and how these impact the life experiences and opportunities of immigrant children (Greene, 2012; Lalas and Valle, 2007).

#### **4.3.2 Spaces of bullying and discrimination: “Life goes on”**

Five out of the six immigrant learners reported being bullied on the basis of their nationality, language, culture, accent, and physical appearance. Nansel, Overpeck, Pilla, Ruan, Simons-Morton and Scheidt (2001) define bullying as a specific type of aggression in which behaviour is intended to harm or disturb, the behaviour occurs repeatedly over time, and there is an imbalance of power with a more powerful person or group attacking a less powerful one. All five immigrant learners indicated that they experienced bullying either by their peers in school or by people in their communities. In addition to bullying and discrimination, some of the participants stated that they were victims of xenophobic attacks. Participants indicated that being an immigrant learner in South Africa was difficult as they were subjected to bullying. Ayesha and Susan explain the various kinds of harassment they suffered in their schooling context linked to power dynamics, personal characteristics and language.

*I came to South Africa in 2006 and I did not know English like I knew a few words, like, “what your name is and how you are”, and then because I did not know English, I got bullied. There were girls who were telling me, “If you want to come to the tuck-shop, you have to give me a certain amount of money”. I tolerated this for a few days. I told her that I could not give her money anymore. People said that I had a strong personality, so I just got over it. (Ayesha, Interview)*

*I lost my colouring pencils, and when I asked who took them, everyone was acting as if they did not know and when I noticed it in someone else’s bag and when I accused them, they started calling me all sorts of names and being all mean. Well, they used to call me “Amy”, which rhymed with my first name, and in their accent it rhymed, so I was always called that. I was always standing in the taxi. (Susan, Interview)*

According to Brownlee, Friesen, Harper, Martin, Mercier, Neckoway and Rawana (2014), Aboriginal students in the state of Northwest Ontario in the United States of America,

experienced bullying significant levels of bullying and victimisation at school. The results of the research, conducted on both male and female students at the school, show that both male and female students experienced equal amounts of bullying. The most common form of bullying was verbal bullying, which according to the researchers is the most difficult form of bullying to detect, as it does not leave a physical scar on the victim, but rather affects him or her emotionally. This evidence is indeed relevant to my research as most immigrant learners who reported experiencing bullying indicated that it was verbal bullying in the form of threats, name-calling and mocking behaviour due to language and physical differences.

Research by Vandeyar (2012) in South Africa also found that immigrants were constantly harassed due to their physical appearance and characteristics. The term 'Kwerekwere' has also been used by South Africans to describe foreigners. Linking to Vandeyar's research, Tina states that she experienced discrimination due to her traditional Congolese hairstyle (2012). The following extract illustrates her experience.

*I think he was laughing at me because of my hairstyle. It was a normal hairstyle from where I come from... It is a thing that most kids in Congo do. When we came here we started doing it as well, it is like a star meeting together at the top. He was a South African and his name was Tom\* and he started laughing at me. (Tina, Interview)*

Apart from the school level, participants also experienced bullying and discrimination at the community level. Immigrant learners stated that derogatory comments on the street were made by South Africans in IsiZulu. Ruth, Jane, and Ayesha elaborate on this.

*When you walk past someone, they want to find out if you are Zulu or not. The name that they give to us is 'Kwerekwere' but now it has been shortened to 'Kwe'. If you pass by they ask, "Is this a Kwe?" Then you know already what it means. They ask this in IsiZulu, and I understand it. When they ask that and you look, for me I just smile because it happens so many times that I have gotten used to it." (Ruth, Interview)*

*Sometimes when you are going to buy your food, people do not treat you right, because you are a foreigner and you cannot speak like them. So,*

*they start speaking their language in front of you, like Zulu and Tswana. They speak this language while you are standing in a queue so that you do not understand what they are saying. You know from the way they are speaking and expressing themselves that it is in a bad way towards you. This happened to my mother. I told her it happens to everyone and life goes on. Sometimes you can do something about it, but other times it is better to just walk away. (Jane, interview)*

*The place that I am living in now has a lot of local Indian South Africans. They think that the Indians from India are very dirty for some reason. They tell us on our face that India people are very dirty, even though their background is from India. They have their own thinking and do not try to understand your thinking or situation. (Ayesha, interview)*

Although participants experienced negative attitudes by their South African peers and members in their community, they still found methods to cope with the discrimination and never allowed this to dampen their spirit. They simply ignored comments, smiled and walked away. The general feeling is acceptance of this situation, and that “*life has to go on.*” For them, their key focus is on their studies and on performing well in school. Ruth and Tina explain their ways of navigating bullying and negative attitudes.

*When they ask that and you look, for me I just smile because it happens so many times that I have gotten used to it. (Ruth, interview)*

*Sometimes you can do something about it, but other times it is better to just walk away. (Tina, interview)*

There are several issues that come to the fore based on the responses of the participants which need to be addressed and these are:

- Should immigrant learners merely accept the situation?
- Is the “life goes on” strategy acceptable in a country and education system that has committed in policies and the South African Constitution to principles of non-discrimination, inclusion, and social justice?

- Is the education system failing these learners by not creating schools that are safe, welcoming, inclusive spaces where all learners are affirmed and respected, whatever their histories and backgrounds?

Xenophobic violence caused fear and unrest amongst the participants. The following participants described the instances of xenophobic attacks that they had experienced since their arrival in South Africa. Their narratives reflect their personal experiences of vulnerability, fear and intimidation both at school and in the community.

*Firstly, it was in 2007, which was the time when xenophobia was taking place. I think it was grade five. We came to school and everyone was talking about xenophobia and then one of the learners came and told me that, "If you do not know how to speak my language then I will call my brother to come and kill you'll"... They were killing people during those attacks, and he was a South African from my class. It really scared me at first, because I did not know the language, I did not know anything. He spoke to me and threatened me in IsiZulu - I asked someone to translate for me. At that time, they were also asking us the body parts in IsiZulu, like the elbow and the knee. If you did not know it, they would do whatever they wanted to do to you. If they find you on the road, you will be stopped, and they would ask you to name the body parts. (Ruth, Interview)*

Michelle did not experience xenophobic attacks first hand but had close members of her family who did. These experiences 'forced' her to learn some basic IsiZulu.

*My cousin was walking on the street, and they were asking what the name of certain parts of the body was in IsiZulu, but he knew it, so he never got attacked. At that time, the attacks kind of scared me, because at the time, I did not know what the body parts were in IsiZulu, so I learnt the words so that I would be prepared if they ever asked me. (Michelle, Interview)*

Jane shared her experience of xenophobia and how she attempted to navigate this social ill in South African society. In her photo voice interview, Jane explains that the area in which she

resides recorded high incidences of xenophobia attacks. She also voices her feelings regarding the violation of the rights of foreigners during the xenophobic unrest.



**Figure 4: “Xenophobia happened here where I live” (Jane)**

*On Sunday, there was police on the street. The Congolese were marching because they threw petrol on a man’s body. But, I am not sure why, but they say it was the South Africans who had thrown petrol on him and now he passed away. These incidents make me feel bad because I came to another country for a better lifestyle, but it seem like the lifestyle is quite the same because people are abusing others because of their race and nationality. They are doing bad stuff to them and it does not feel right because as a foreigner, I feel that they are doing it to me, just because they did it to another foreigner. (Jane, photo voice narrative)*

In contrast to the findings of other studies, the participants were not only subjected to bullying by their South African peers but also experienced bullying by other immigrant learners as well. Tina stated that she was bullied by a foreigner. Her view is that this particular learner bullied her in order to gain some kind of positive recognition from South African peers. This reflects the power dynamics that play out in social spaces. Tina explains that he was ‘trying to fit in with other kids’ and be ‘cool’.

*It was shocking because it was another foreign boy who was the bully because he was trying to fit in. He was trying to fit in with the other kids and was trying to be cool. He always used to come to me and start pinching me and hitting and pushing me. I used to sometimes cry in grade three and four. I used to walk home or take a taxi with my cousin and we would just go. (Tina, Interview)*

It may be that this learner positioned himself in this particular way to deal with exclusion and discrimination he experiences, according to Tina. It may be his way of navigating the complex space. This adds another dimension to bullying in schooling contexts that have a diverse learner population. The likely targets or victims of bullying are most likely to be the emotionally weak and vulnerable minority groups at a school or institution, including those who are from a poor socio-economic background, those who experience language and gender barriers as well as immigrant learners (Garandeau, 2014; Postigo, Gonzalez, Montaya and Ordonez, 2013). Research by Nash (2011) on how six second generation Filipino immigrant youth between the ages of sixteen and seventeen adapt at school in Toronto coincides with the view above. Her research indicates that immigrant learners were seen to be different from non-immigrant learners at school and were therefore easy targets for bullying and victimisation.

Participants of my research study defined bullying and discrimination as two separate constructs i.e. bullying was seen as a norm, which every learner experienced at some stage at school and included name-calling and teasing, which led to feelings of sadness and depression. However, immigrant learners also experienced discrimination, characterised by name-calling but this developed into insults associated with difference in respect of cultural background, language proficiency, and stereotyping due to their immigrant status. My research also revealed the intersection of bullying (which non-immigrant children also experience) and discrimination on the basis of minority status and difference.

#### **4.4 Traversing social and cultural spaces**

Research has shown that recognising, affirming, and being accepting of immigrant children's historical, cultural backgrounds, and their distinct identities, including their linguistic and religious affiliations is critical to promoting a sense of belonging and fostering positive



academic engagement and experiences in the host country (for example, Brown and Chu, 2012; Richards, Brown and Forde, 2007).

The participants in my study commented on the issue of their ethnic and cultural differences and how they experienced difference in their school contexts. All six participants talked about how different their cultural backgrounds in particular, their norms and values, were from African learners in their schools. Ruth is adamant that she cannot align with the values and norms of South African culture. When probed further it became evident that her comment related to the culture of the African race group, in particular.

*I can talk to South Africans, I can understand their reply, but then to fit in as a South African, I still cannot, because we have our ways. Culturally, traditionally and morally, we are different. The way they are brought up, to have respect and all that, is different from ours. We are taught that even if an elder person is wrong we should just keep quiet, just let them be, and not reply back. But for them (African learners), if someone is wrong, they have to tell you if you are wrong. (Ruth, Interview)*

Tina explains her experiences of and her views on African culture, largely in respect of moral codes, norms, and values. Her comments are mainly in the context of commitment to, and engagement with academic work.



**Figure 5: Tina's friends**

*Most South Africans, not all of them have a negative attitude towards their school work and do not like doing it. They do not care about the work. For example, we have an assignment due today and most of the Congolese have it ready, but some of the South Africans always ask for an extension. They also say we should not tell the teacher the correct due date for the task. He even gave a second extension, but it was still not good enough. I have also noticed that there are mostly foreigners who feature in the top 5 at school, because we are more dedicated to complete our work. We know that we did not come from the best place, because of the high levels of corruption, when we come here we work hard to get a living. Yes the South Africans are more disruptive, but we always get blamed for most of the things. (Tina, photo voice)*

From the above narratives, it is clear that that Ruth and Tina tend to homogenise African cultures and people in South Africa. However, in her narrative, Tina provides some insights into how she constructs South Africa learners at her school. Again she voices the commitment of immigrant learners to their studies and their determination to make the most of their opportunity to live and study in South Africa. She believes that dedication to studies and a sense of responsibility is missing in her South African peers at school.

Ruth recounted an experience of discrimination and exclusion she experienced in a place of worship.

*Well it was the Africans from South Africa who made me feel uncomfortable. When I went to the Cathedral church, I was sitting next to an African lady and she was speaking in Zulu. At that time I did not understand Zulu that well, and I told her that I did not understand the language. She then asked me if I was a 'Kwerekwere'. I said yes and she said, "oooh", and then she turned away. Yes, it was an awkward moment, and I got to know that they did not like us. (Ruth, photo voice)*

However, the participants also spoke in positive terms about cultural difference. They showed a keen interest in trying to understand South African cultures and ways of life. Through their

photo voice narratives, Michelle and Ayesha provided their insights into similarities that can be drawn between the South African cultures and immigrant learners' cultures.



**Figure 6: Our culture (Ayesha)**

*Well I do chat to my classmates about the Zulu culture, how they live and I have figured out that the Zulu culture, not Christianity and the Islamic culture and the basic Islamic ways, like what they do when a person dies, when a baby is born, during marriage, those share a very close link. Our practices are similar. Zulu culture practices and Islam is very much similar, but there are also differences in the culture and religion. (Ayesha, Photo voice)*

*In the youth club, we are mixed, people from Ghana, South Africa, from Zambia, we are all together. We read the Bible together and sometimes we play Bible games, anything that has to do with just learning more about the Bible and religious studies. I attend this every Friday. This has changed my life because we all are mixed; I get to learn other people's cultures. For example, in my culture, if I do something differently, or if they do the same things in a different way, I get to learn and understand, so there will not be any conflicts if I say something wrong. Some of my South African friends want to learn more about my culture and the language that I speak - how to say some words in Lingala and French. (Michelle, Interview)*

Michelle's insightful narrative shows the powerful role faith and civic organisations such as a youth group can have in promoting social inclusion, empathy, and cohesion in a diverse society.

Ruth provided an interesting view regarding cultural integration. Reflecting on her younger siblings lives, she voiced the opinion that second generation immigrants are likely to integrate with greater ease than she did when she arrived in South Africa. This coincides with the view expressed by Jimenez and Waters (2005), whose American research on first and second generation immigrant learners found that second generation learners adapted better to the host country than first generation immigrants. These researchers explain that issues such as language and cultural or ethnic difference may not pose a huge barrier to second generation children. Ruth's photo voice picture depicts her younger brother and sister.



**Figure 7: Ruth's siblings**

*This is my brother and sister. They are the last borns. I have chosen them because they inspire me. They go to Anthony Primary School\* and they both take IsiZulu and Afrikaans, but they love IsiZulu. At home they speak Zulu, not fluently but better than I do. They are more interested in Zulu than Afrikaans. They inspire me because although they are children, they might not face the problems I did. Maybe when they reach higher grades, they may understand. Right now, they love Zulu and they want to learn more about it. They want to interact with South Africans. They do not have*

*African friends who are Congolese. They have only South African friends.*

*It is very different as when I was in school. (Ruth, photo voice)*

All six participants' narratives reflected cultural pride and there was no evidence of cultural denial, and a desire for cultural assimilation as found in the study by Lallas and Valle (2012) in south central Los Angeles with minority students who had recently graduated from high school. Many of the students in the Lallas and Valle study narrated how they passed through periods when they denied their heritage, experienced self-hate on account of their difference, distanced themselves from peers of their own cultural groups, and strove for assimilation into the dominant culture (2012). A study by Adebajji, Hartell and Phatudi (2014) that investigated how Zimbabwean immigrant learners adapt to schooling in South Africa at two primary schools revealed the adoption of biculturalism in that immigrant learners navigate towards the new country's culture, without ignoring their own traditional cultures and practices. As evident in my study, Berry (1986 cited in Adebajji et al., 2014) in his analysis of acculturation argued that whether individuals accept or reject the larger culture depends on the value they place on their home cultures. In my study, it does seem that the parents of the participants have socialised them to place a high value on the home culture and their language.

#### **4.5 Resiliency, care and support**

In this sub-section I explore: what are inclusionary spaces in the participants lives? What are participants' experiences of support, care and caring in their schooling and social lives, and what shapes their resiliency? I examined what makes the high functioning participants resilient and what shapes their high achievement in a South African schooling context. I illuminate the spaces of places of care, support and in which learner resiliency is shaped.

The term 'resilient' can be used to describe individuals who have the initiative to flourish and make a difference in their environments despite the challenges they may face (Friborg et al., 2003; Ramirez, 2007). Seror, Chen and Gundersen (2005) highlight various features of resilience: problem solving; cultural belief in the value of education, social competence, satisfaction with school, and family support. They further state that educational resilience is about a high likelihood of success in school despite adversities brought about by situated conditions.

#### **4.5.1 The drive to succeed academically**

Although there are ethno-linguistic and social class differences in the academic achievement of immigrant children across countries, research has shown that the principal positively contributing factor to the academic success of immigrant learners is their drive and determination of parents and children to succeed in the host country (for example, Esteban and Marti, 2014; Gunderson, D'Silva and Odo, 2012; Vandayar, 2012). Gunderson et al. (2012) explain that in Canada, the language groups with the highest achievement were the Korean- and Mandarin-speakers. This research shows that immigrant Mandarin speakers from Taiwan are economically advantaged and are able to invest in their children's education to ensure that they succeed in the host country. Furthermore, the drive and determination of parents and families motivates their children to work hard academically.

Research in Spain on immigrant learners' drive to succeed by Esteban and Marti (2014) showed that even learners from disadvantaged communities can develop unique strategies and attitudes to enable academic success. For example, students who had high academic self-concept were shown to have a high degree of resilience. The researchers argue that the ability to resist adverse situations associated with academic dropout may be related to the learners' social environment, such as support from family, good role models, and personal networks which build social capital and reduce vulnerability (Esteban and Marti, 2014).

In my study, having immigrant role models was important to the participants. They indicated that they were inspired by other high functioning immigrant learners. The narratives below reveal this influence that shapes their resiliency in the face of adverse experiences.

*I think I found other refugees in the country that spoke English and when I came here I did not know how to. The other refugees motivated me by speaking English because they spoke it so nicely. At first, I would just stare at them and not know what they said. Their fluency motivated me. I also used to read a lot. (Ruth, Interview)*

The participants also showed that they had a high level of competitiveness and drive to be top students in the school. Furthermore, a school environment that affirmed and rewarded high performance was an important factor in their growth as students. Other high

achieving learners in the class also influenced immigrant learners tremendously, thereby contributing to their own success.

*In grade seven, I sometimes used to compare myself to the excelling students in the class. We had a lot of competition going on to see who finished the work first, or to see who gets total marks for this and that. In the next term, we would try to get all nineties to see who would be better or who would do worse. There was a lot of competitiveness. (Susan, interview)*

*I looked at people and saw that other people were getting trophies and I also wanted to get those trophies. In grade six, I told myself that I needed to work harder, and I did. I was placed third and after that I saw a girl going on stage and she was getting all the Dux awards and Math, English and Afrikaans trophies, so I said, okay Ayesha, "this can be you next year." So I worked hard and got my Dux in grade seven, I got awards for English, Math and other subjects, except for Afrikaans. I became the Islamic scholar and the Dux awardee and then got admission to this high school. (Ayesha, Interview)*

All six participants were very appreciative of the opportunity to study in South Africa, country which they view as having a better education system than their home countries. Michelle and Jane explain,

*There is better schooling in this country. In Congo, they do not actually speak English, the schools are totally French. Here we are taught in English and English is an international language. In Congo it is not that good because the country's economy is down, the education is bad and there are no resources. In Congo, if you are going to a class, sometimes people take chairs to another class and there are so many people in one classroom. I only completed my pre-school in Congo and it was quite challenging. (Michelle, interview)*

*I have been here for seven years and it has been a good experience because it is better than my country because I could learn and get a better education, not like other people, who did not get a better education or died because of the war or there was no health care. (Jane, interview)*

Susan shares the same view. She is critical of many South African students who she believes do not appreciate the education opportunities they have, and are content with merely passing with minimum requirements and low grades.

*It is a fairly fine country to get help with education. Sometimes I don't understand why students fail grades like grade nine and even grade seven or eight, because it is easy. My mum tells me that in Congo, things are much more difficult, everything is strict, you have to get your study material by yourself, and late coming is dealt with serious punishment. Everyone is just sharp and punctual and well read. But in S.A. there is no reason for us to do so badly. It is as if they just come to school and slap through everything and come out with 30 % and still go to the next grade. (Susan, interview)*

Participants in the study showed that they are intrinsically motivated to perform well academically and, that they have clear goals and aspirations. Without doubt, they are goal driven and seem to have high levels of self-efficacy. Tina explains how her low grades in her last math exam spurred her to aim higher and overcome the difficulties she was experiencing in the subject. Her actions are self-initiated and show her agency.

*I cope by having a goal. My goal is to study, then finish my matric and then study at university and get my degree and then go back and work back home because if I have some knowledge and the knowledge that others have in Congo and if we put it together, we could develop the country. That's my goal and because I have a goal and know what I want, I go for it and carry on, no matter what people tell me because I know what I want and what they are saying will not impact or hamper me in any way. (Ruth, Interview)*



*My results were always top but in grade six, I think in the third term, I dropped a little in math. I think I got a two in Math, and I was very disappointed and that was what pushed me to actually go on and work hard. That is why my marks always used to stay at the top. (Tina, Interview)*

Ayesha feels that through education she can disrupt gender stereotypes and discrimination against women in society. She has strong views about gender issues as she explains below.

*There are some family members who try to demotivate you with their old thinking. Like they say that, “you are a girl and that you must not study too much, you must just get married.” I do not believe in those things and thinking. I think it is, “how can you discriminate?” If you tell a man to look after children, he would never be able to do it, but then you get a woman, who will look after the house, will cook for her husband and will still go to work, earn money to support her family. Even if the husband stops working, the husband will not do the housework, but she will still do it. She can manage the whole family all together, so why it is that men are getting more priorities and privileges than women? I want to change that thinking. (Ayesha, Interview)*

The voices of the participants showed their resilience and agency despite the adversities they may face. To these learners, failure to perform well academically meant they were not making the most of the valued opportunities they have in the host country and in a sense, felt that they were letting down their parents who have made sacrifices for them. Seror et al. (2005) highlight that resilient children are more satisfied with, and have more positive views of their schooling system and their school. As in my study, the study by Seror et al. (2005) shows that resilient learners believe that success depends on hard work, strict discipline, and determination.

#### **4.5.2 Narratives about spaces of care, caring and support**

As explained in chapter 2, I was keen to explore the concepts or notions of ‘care’ and ‘caring’ as they relate to the lives of the high functioning immigrant learners in my study, and their

educational resiliency. I draw on the notion of *caring about* and *caring for* from Noddings (1992) where *caring for* involves everyday interpersonal relationships, such a teacher inquiring about a learner's emotional wellbeing or listening to her learners. A parent may *care for* the academic progress of her child and may ask the child whether she needs assistance with an assignment or project or having high expectations for her child. *Caring for* is generally private, and happens within interpersonal relationships, and in specific situations. The act of *caring about* implies that is wider than any one interpersonal relationship. It is more about policy and principles, and may be associated with social or hierarchical positions of power. *Caring about* can be related to communities of practice such as a school where particular beliefs, values and cultures play out, as explained by McKamey (2011). An example is caring about test scores, the adequacy of learning teaching materials, or the school curriculum.

During my analysis of the data, I examined how caring plays out in the lives of my participants. McKamey (2011) explains that care is a social process which can be illuminated through the narratives of the participants. In the sub-sections below, I elucidate this process and link it to the educational resilience of the high functioning immigrant learners.

#### 4.5.2.1 *The family*

In the case of all six participants family support and the ethics of care was very strong. There was evidence of caring about and caring for. Caring about was related to the school curriculum and parents, siblings, and relative caring about curriculum access for the participants, in particular language access and doing well in school tests and exams. In caring for, the focus was on interrelationships and individual wellbeing. Parents in particular play a significant role in building self-esteem, motivation and drive in their children. Parental involvement assists in monitoring and creating conducive learning for children to develop (Crosnoe, 2010 and Thao, 2009). Parents, especially those of immigrant learners, have significant roles to play to create conducive learning environments at home, so as to support and enable their children to perform better in their new school environments. The narratives of Tina, Ruth and Jane reflect spaces of care and caring in their lives.

*My mum has helped me with my homework from the time I started school. Well, when I started school here, I met my cousins who came here before me and had already started school, so they knew a little bit of English. In Congo we do study English, but people just neglect it. My mum knew this, from Congo we went to Kenya and then Tanzania. There, the people speak a lot of English. So then she knew English, so she would read and help me, if she did not understand, she would ask my cousins and they would help her. (Ruth, Interview)*

*My dad also says that I should focus on my studies and he says that I must also make it to the next grade and I should not feel low about myself and must encourage myself to do better the next time. He says that it is my life and I should decide what is good for me and what is not. (Tina, Interview)*

*My brother has really helped and guided me throughout school, because he is really good at English. I really was not good in English so he would help me to pronounce the words I could not. He started his schooling here and he is now in grade nine. He was my role model because he would get high marks in class for English. He even received awards in grade one and two for having the highest marks in English. (Jane, interview)*

Tina explains how her father helps build her self-efficacy and belief in her ability to perform well academically. Successful, high functioning siblings serve as role models and motivate them to commit to their studies in a sustained and consistent way, as explained by Tina and Jane. Ruth speaks of her cousins who had immigrated to South Africa before her family did who added to her support system. Tina's photo voice picture of her sister strongly indicates that she sees her sister as a role model who has a tremendous drive to succeed.



**Figure 8: Tina's sibling support**

*My sister is studying radiography through UNISA. When she was in grade seven and I was in three, she motivated me to work hard. She was a prefect and I wanted to do the same. She motivated me to keep going and even if I got low marks, she wanted me to push for the next term and I should not be satisfied with the mark I get, I must want to go higher. I must be determines to push and do better.” (Tina, Photo voice)*

The preceding narratives clearly indicate that a strong family support system and an ethics of care from family members heightened the participants' agency and their competence in taking responsibility for their studies. Without doubt, the rich narratives reveal that the family is a safe, nurturing, and protective space for the six participants where the social process of identity formation takes place. McKamey (2011) states that the strength of narrative inquiry is that the stories participants share reflect and reveal assumptions about how the world works for the participants, for example, what knowledge is valued, how relationships work, and the kinds of relationships that are significant. The narratives not only show how families care for but also caring about when they talk to their children about issues of social justice – for example how to deal with discrimination in society.

#### *4.5.2.2 The school*

The culture and ethos of the school is key to creating an inclusive, welcoming school context for all learners irrespective of difference. School leadership and teachers are critical to the process of building a positive school climate characterised by mutual respect for the rights of everyone, the valuing and appreciation of diversity, and a deep understanding of difference.

The Ministry of Education (2002) stresses that respect for learner diversity is a moral responsibility for a society. Further, it is reiterated that the creation of an inclusive school culture is about the fostering of beliefs and value systems that create a safe, affirming, respectful, and socially just school community.

Bernaus, Gardner and Wilson (2009) researched how teachers motivated their second language English learners at a secondary school in Catalonia, Spain. 31 English teachers participated with a sample of six hundred and ninety four learners. The study found that teachers who used traditional, didactic methods of teaching and learning in the classroom, caused learners to become more anxious and tense during their lessons, causing a poorer grasp of the subject. However, learners who were taught by a more approachable teacher who broke away from traditional and stringent methods of teaching, experienced less stress in the classroom and were able to obtain better results, due to their less anxious learning environments.

Participants indicated that certain teachers with whom they interacted played a significant role in their lives, particularly in helping them to integrate into the South African schooling context. Below are five of the six participant views on the teachers that helped to motivate them at school. The participants below explain how their teachers helped them to overcome challenges that they experienced in subjects such as English and mathematics.

Ruth made special mention of her English teacher in grade two who 'went the extra mile' to help her develop her competence in reading and by being responsive to her individual needs.

*In grade two, my teacher supported me the most because at that time, English was a bit of a problem for me. Reading was a problem for me. She used to stay back after school and teach me words one by one and then she would write a sentence and read it out and then I would have to read it out after her over and over again. And from then on, I would go home and she would give me homework separately from everyone else had. She would give me reading books to take home and when everyone else were doing work, she would call me and ask me to read and I would read to her. It helped me a lot. (Ruth, Interview)*

It does seem that her practice is guided by the principle of equity. Equity does not translate into treating all students in the same way, but rather, responding to the particular needs of each learner and providing the support and interventions needed to help him or her experience success (Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE), 2014).

Jane alludes to the fact that one of her teachers contributed to her strong sense of self-efficacy and her self-confidence.

*One of the teachers who motivated me is Mrs S\*, because she told me that I can be anyone that I want to be, whether you are a boy or girl, you can achieve your goals. She is my English teacher from grade eight. She taught us about expressing ourselves when we read and facial expressions as well as voice and eye contact whenever you speak to someone. (Jane, Interview)*

Ayesha describes her teacher, Mrs B\* as being a great inspiration to her and how she enabled her to learn, understand and speak the English language fluently. With her help and translation of the language, Ayesha claimed she was able to adapt to her new environment faster and more easily. She elaborates,



**Figure 9: Ayesha's Inspiration- Mrs B\***

*I think my biggest inspiration in primary school is Mrs B\*. Even up till now, I still look up to her and thank her because if she wasn't there, I don't think I would learn English so fluently without any accent. I think she is the one*

*who has made a big impact on my life. She has changed almost everything. If there were some students who came to me and troubled me, and I would just have to go to her. I could not speak English, so I could only go to her, not any other teacher, because she knew Hindi.*  
(Ayesha, photo voice)

Susan talked with great admiration and appreciation about her Maths teacher in grade 7.

*I will never forget my Math teacher from grade seven. You always understand him. He uses one method of testing where early in the morning, the first thing you would do when you get into the Math class, you would do a five minute test and you had to get a total for that test ..... we were pushed to do better. Everyone always passed Maths because of the teacher who was a very good teacher. He is very motivating.* (Susan, Interview)

*My grade one to three teacher was very good. She used to help me a lot because she knew I did not understand some things, and then if I went to her she would try to help me to understand. For example, if I found out how to spell something or I did not understand something, or what a word meant or what the story was all about, she would try and make me understand and tell me where I went wrong in certain places, so that I could improve.* (Michelle, Interview)

Susan, in contrast, shared her experience of a negative attitude from her Grade 2 teacher, a memory that remains with her. She shared a photo of her Grade 2 class with the teacher.



**Figure 10: Susan's negative school experience**

*This is the only picture that I could get of my grade 2 teacher, Mrs A\*, I did not like her. She was the only teacher that I could look back and say that I did not enjoy being that year. She used to pick on me and make feel like a little child that did not understand anything. I used to always get low marks in her class and I wondered why. The following year when I went to grade three, my marks went very much higher. It was only with her that I did not do well. After that when I look back to my years with her, I feel that maybe I misunderstood her, maybe she was trying to sort me out because maybe I was just lazy. (Susan, photo voice)*

In her reflections, Susan's maturity is revealed when she tries to rationalise and make allowances for the behaviour of the teacher by stating that she may have misunderstood the teacher. Most of the participants stated that there were certain teachers in their schooling lives who motivated them and were sensitive to their needs. These teachers remain unforgettable figures in their lives. Susan and Ruth (as discussed earlier) were the only participants who described a teacher as being uncaring, and unapproachable.

Lumpkin (2007) stresses that "when students know that their teachers genuinely care, they respond by exerting greater effort to reach their potential" (p. 2). Further, she argues that teachers who care believe in their learners' abilities and place learners at the centre of



the educational process. This is evident in the narratives of the learners. In turn, learners themselves in my study knew when they were respected, recognised, affirmed and understood by their teachers, and were motivated by this.

Research suggests that schools act as the gateways to teaching and learning and that the experiences that learners receive play an important role in shaping their lives (Archambault, 2012; McKamey, 2011). All learners who were interviewed indicated they were happy within the South African school environments, despite their experiences of discrimination and oppression they shared. Participants view their school spaces as areas where they can gain the necessary skills and knowledge that can impact their future lives substantially in a positive way. They are determined to make the most of the educational opportunity they have as evident in the narratives of Susan and Ruth below.

*I have coped well enough, very well. Some people take things to heart and some of them would want to just go back to their country after the discrimination and the things that happen here. They just want to go back, but as for me, I have coped well and I am still coping. (Ruth, Interview)*

*Schooling in South Africa is exciting, it is fun, it is motivating, and the people are very friendly in general. (Susan, Interview)*

In one of her photographs (Figure 11), Michelle foregrounded a motto that reads “I HAVE ACHIEVED THE IMPOSSIBLE”, that inspired her and gives her hope for the future, despite her immigrant status. She firmly believes that she can overcome any obstacle that presents itself on her educational journey.



**Figure 11: Michelle's motto**

Michelle states:

*School inspires because when you leave school you can become someone from the knowledge that you get. The knowledge empowers you to. School is fun and exciting and you learn something new each day. The more you are educated, is better from day to day. School inspires me because I want to be someone one day in life and I do not just want to be that girl, but that lady. I want to be someone, I just do not want to walk on the streets with people saying, "that girl". I want to accomplish something in life. I want to be someone professional. (Michelle, Photo voice)*

The learners' strength of character, their determination and resolve as they navigate the challenges gives one insight into their agency. Agency is a characteristic that those individuals have which enables them to initiate intentional action in order to achieve goals that they value (Mashford-Scott and Church, 2011). Mashford-Scott and Church (2011) explain that important elements of agency are self-efficacy, resilience, a sense of self-worth, and the ability to take a reflexive stance and make considered choices – qualities evident in the participants.

## **4.6 Building and drawing on social capital**

### **4.6.1 Friends and friendships**

The participants in the study valued social networks to provide them with support and build their motivation and drive. The study shows that they are building social capital through friends, religious institutions, and immigrant support groups. They are very aware of the value of building social capital and apply effort to develop and maintain these relationships and networks. Building a rich social capital is important in fostering interpersonal relationships and networks that support learners socially and academically. The concept of social capital was defined and theorised by Bourdieu (1989), who stated that social capital can take three forms, namely; the embodied, objectified, and institutionalised state. The embodied state can be gained by learners improving on themselves by gaining knowledge that inspires them, by education. The objectified state is when knowledge is obtained from sources of data, such as books and paintings, whereas the last state, the institutionalised state, is gained by forging

relationships socially, such as with peers, teachers and religious organisations (Bourdieu, 1989; Capparelli, 2013; Seror et al., 2005). Capparelli's research on immigrant students revealed that social capital is an important factor in determining the success of these learners and their comfort level at schools (2013). Those immigrant learners who did not form significant social networks had difficulty assimilating in their new environment. The following section describes the nature of support the learner participants receive from their friends whom they interact with on a daily basis.

Michelle, Tina and Jane describe friends as positive influences on their lives. Michelle indicated that her friends understand her emotionally and have the potential to brighten up her mood. She can also be herself around them, indicating a level of comfort and confidence in their company. Ayesha's friends help her to deal with traditional thinking and views presented to her by her family members. Her friends encourage her to study and to gain a sense of independence. They are her support when situations on her home front are difficult and pressurising. After initially not being able to form friends in her new school, Jane met a friend who assists her with her academic work and has taught her the importance of goal setting.



**Figure 12: Michelle's network of friends**

*This is a picture of my friends. I took a picture because they inspire me in some way, when I feel down or happy or if I feel that my day can't get better, they always do things to cheer me up. We have the best time together, especially during breaks at the tuck-shop area. We just talk*

*about anything that makes us happy, such as what had happened in class. We share ideas and opinions on what we think about something. With them I feel as if I can act like myself because they understand me.*  
(Michelle, photo voice)

Ayesha shares how she values her friendship group, in particular the role they play in helping her to challenge traditional cultural practices such as early marriage for girls. The narrative suggests that her friends build her belief in her own ability and her agency to deal with challenges in her personal life that impact her schooling.

*Sometimes when these aunties come over and speak about these early marriages, they demotivate you. When I come to school, I am so angry with them, my friends say, “you know Ayesha, we know that you have the potential and we know that you are going to become successful and we know that you can change this whole thing around. You can’t just get demotivated by these people.” So they boost my self-esteem and help me. Even if I am weak in any subjects, Nicole\* and Sam\* are there to help me.*  
(Ayesha, Interview)

Jane’s friend has been her backbone and support structure ever since she arrived here in South Africa. Her friend has been armed with the ability to lighten up her mood as well as assist her in sections of the curriculum that she did not understand. She explains further in her photo narrative below.



**Figure 13: Jane’s friend**

*I met Cindy\*, she was kind and she said that I could come and sit with her during the breaks. So, she had been the only one who had been kind to me in my first year at high school, because I never met anyone else like her. She is very honest and loyal and I support her in everything that she does. She also helps me if I am having a difficulty in certain subjects. She encourages me and helps me if I do not understand anything. She would ask me to join her in the library during the breaks so that we would be able to do research and do our homework together. (Jane, photo voice)*

Previous research on immigrant learners indicated that these learners face problems adapting to the new social and school environments (Heywood and Peterson, 2007; Maduray, 2014; Singh, 2002). In contrast, the participants in my study indicated that their networks of friends have supported them tremendously through their schooling career, including navigating spaces of discrimination and oppression.

#### **4.6.2 Religion and religious institutions**

Three of the six participants in their study spoke of the impact of religion as an institution on their lives. Abun and Cajindos (2012) conducted research in the Philippines to determine the impact of religion on the lives of college students in a multi-cultural classroom. A key finding was that religion provided a reason for an individual to lead a righteous and morally sound lifestyle.

Michelle explains that the Bible is her inspiration, and her religion gives her hope and the confidence to overcome obstacles. Important quotations from the Bible contribute to her spiritual wellbeing. Tina's church support group is a key facet of social capital in her life. The members have been there for her during difficult phases of her life, in particular to support her integration into the schooling context of her host country, for which she is eternally grateful.



**Figure 14: Michelle's source of hope – the Bible**

*This is a picture of the Bible. It gives strength. In life, there are times that you feel that there is no hope, like last year when my Maths mark was not improving, each year it was getting worse and worse, there are always some inspiring words from the Bible that renew my strength. Just like a verse from the Bible that says, "Tears and pain last till the night, but joy comes in the morning", that shows even if you are hurt and give up hope, it only lasts for a short while, but all changes in the morning. (Michelle, photo voice)*



**Figure 15: Tina's church support group**

*Well, the pastor and all the members of the church care, like, when my grandmother died, the church members came together, they visited, gave things, they came to our house and also prayed for us for about one week.*



*With regards to my schooling, for example, if my dad could not make it for my meetings or to fetch my reports in primary school, our pastor would come and he would take the role of my dad. (Tina, Photo voice)*

Ruth's church has been a source of support during the troubled times in her life. The church that she attends mainly comprises of other immigrant people who served as a strong support network for her. Ruth stated that most members of the church are well educated, and are role models to her showing her that anything is possible if you are determined enough to achieve. She explains below in the following excerpt.



**Figure 16: Ruth's church altar**

*This is the picture of my church altar, with the name Local Assembly of God. When I arrived in South Africa, this was the church I started attending. The population of the church mainly comprises of refugees and many of them came here long ago, they studied here and we have a lecturer who is a refugee and who lectures at DUT. He graduated and got his PhD here in South Africa, so he is an inspiration in church. I find inspiration in church to persevere and work hard and get what I want in life. I draw motivation from the man who got his PhD. (Ruth, photo voice)*

#### **4.6.3 Immigrant support groups**

Social support and care are important aspects that can shape an individual. Generally, people who share similar characteristics find solace and contentment when they are around others with the same values and morals. Previous research indicates that immigrant learners find it difficult to form networks with learners from the host country due to differences in cultural practices and language (Heywood and Peterson, 2007; Maduray, 2014; Singh, 2002). Studies have also shown that immigrant learners are more comfortable emotionally and socially around other immigrant learners as they were able to share their challenges and support one another (Epstein and Levanon, 2005; Ergul, 2012). A similar trend was evident in my study. Most learners indicated that they felt comfortable associating with other foreign friends and learners, instead of South Africans. They had only or mainly foreign friends.

Ruth and Tina experienced a strong support system from their foreign friends.

*I do receive some support from my friends, because we all go through the same thing, we give each other advice with my foreigner friends. I have a lot of South African friends, but am not really close with them. I have tried adapting to South African friends and it was hard for them to accept me.*  
(Ruth, Interview)

*We friends are mostly foreigners. We like being united. We find it more comfortable to be joining each other, because when we talk, we do in English, Swahili, French and Lingala.* (Tina, Interview)

As indicated earlier, immigrant learners are a minority group and are therefore more susceptible to discrimination in many countries (Ghong et al., 2007). Immigrant learners therefore form cliques or groups to stand up for each other. Tina and Ruth both have experienced situations in which other immigrant learners, who were their friends, protected them when they were bullied by other South African learners. They were also advised to not get into confrontations with South African learners, as explained by Ruth below.

*From this year to last year (High School), there have been these incidents - South Africans against the foreigners. It was the South African versus the Congolese. I think we formed a group of about ten of us. There was one*



*of our foreigner friends, she is not in our class now because she did not make it, and she failed. They always used to laugh at her because she had short hair and whenever you saw her, she would put something on her lips, like a gloss, and they would start laughing at her. Her dress was also big and she tried to hem it and they teased and called her 'curves' or something like that. We did not like that, so we started to defend her. (Tina, interview)*

*Positively, well most of my foreign friends, they go through the same thing, like discrimination, they go through it, but the first time it happened to me was when I arrived in this school particularly (High School), my foreign friends advised me not to worry about them. This is how they react. Whenever you get into a conflict, they find a reason to say that you are wrong. They always fight the point that you are a refugee and that you should not be here. My foreign friends advised me not to worry about them, so whenever I talked, I should not worry, I should always focus on the goals that I have and my mission. I have a lot of South African friends, but am not really close. I have tried adapting to South African friends and it was hard for them to accept me. They didn't give me a chance to fit in. This happened for about a year in grade four. Then I found other refugees who I could adapt to, I am mainly friends with refugees. (Ruth, Interview)*

Four out of the six participants indicated that they seem to have a closer bond with peers from other African countries. This does not concur with Vandeyar's (2012) research that states that immigrant learners have developed a 'continental identity' so as to try and fit in with the South African environment. My study shows that the participants are more aligned to an immigrant African identity – there is tremendous pride in their cultural norms and values, immigrant social networks and languages.

#### **4. 7 Conclusion**

This chapter aimed to explore the findings from my study. As a researcher, a narrative inquiry proved to be very valuable in fully determining how high functioning immigrant learners experience schooling in their host country; South Africa. Although participants retold many positive stories about their adaption to schooling and life in South Africa, they also highlighted some negative experiences that they encountered, such as an initial difficulty coping with language barriers, and bullying related to their immigrant status. Despite the challenges that these learners have to overcome, the findings reveal the quality of resiliency, self-efficacy, agency and drive that learners possess to make the best of the educational opportunities in South Africa. Their ability to access social capital, strong family values, caring teachers, supportive friendship and social groups, and strong role models amongst family and friends are key to building intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy, agency, resiliency and fostering the academic success of these high functioning learners.

The next chapter presents my reflections as a researcher as well as the implications and limitations of my research project.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

#### 5.1 Introduction

The final chapter of my research project aims firstly, to provide a summary of the key issues that emerged in my study. A discussion on the appropriateness of the theoretical framework and research method follows. My research reflections regarding the implications and limitations of the study concludes this chapter.

#### 5.2 The focus of the study and research questions

The focus and aim of this research project was to determine the experiences of high functioning immigrant learners at a school in KwaZulu-Natal. Although much research has been conducted on the experiences of immigrant learners at South African schools, as well as the challenges that they encounter, little research has focused on the experiences of academic *high functioning* immigrant learners (see for example, Adebajji et al., 2014; de Villar, 2011; Mpofu, 2013; Osman, 2009; Vandeyar, 2011).

As a teacher at a school with a substantial population of immigrant learners, and many of whom excel academically, my interest was sparked and I sought to examine how these learners navigate and experience schooling in their host country, and what influences shape their high academic performance. My key research questions were:

- What are the schooling experiences of high-functioning immigrant children in South Africa?
- How do they navigate inclusionary and exclusionary spaces in their lives?
- What are the emotional geographies of their schooling experiences? What stories do they have to tell about their experiences of care and caring in their context of teaching and learning?

This research on high functioning immigrant learners can contribute to the ever expanding body of research in South Africa and internationally on immigrant learners' schooling experiences in their host country.

### **5.3 Theoretical framework and research methodology**

Theoretical frameworks and appropriate methodology provide the foundation for conducting research. The following section will review and evaluate the theoretical framework and methodology that was used in this research project.

The conceptual framework chosen for this research project was drawn from the sub-field, 'Children's Geographies', and this lens enabled me to explore the spaces and places of my participants' schooling lives, for example, power laden spaces of oppression and discrimination; the classroom as a place but which could also be spaces where various power dynamics play out. The framework of Children's Geographies is underpinned under the larger theoretical framework of New Sociology of Childhood Studies. From this lens, children are seen as active beings who have a voice and the ability to exert agency in the spaces and places of their lives (Muthukrishna, 2013; Tucker and Matthews, 2001; Van Ingen and Halas, 2006). The frameworks I used enabled me to give respect to the agency of my participants and their ability to voice their views about and constructions of their schooling experiences in South Africa, rather than obtain their perspectives from adults in their lives.

A total of six high functioning immigrant learners participated in this research project which was undertaken at a secondary school in central Durban, in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. These learners were between the ages of thirteen to eighteen years in age and ranged from grades eight to eleven. A qualitative approach to data collection was adopted for this research as rich, expressive data was required to be extracted from the participants. Denzin and Lincoln (2000, p.3), emphasise that qualitative research tends to take up more time, but is less able to be generalised and stress that it provides information about the "human side of an issue", which consists of contradictory behaviours, beliefs, opinions, emotions, and relationships of individuals." They also emphasise that this form of research enable detailed 'textual descriptions', on human experiences and circumstances, which I found was the case in my study.

Due to the participants having to narrate their stories about their experiences as high functioning immigrant students at South African schools, the most appropriate research method or tradition was narrative inquiry. Through a narrative inquiry, I was able to foreground the stories my participants had to tell.

As assured by Clandinin and Connelly (2000), undertaking a narrative inquiry enabled me to explore the social, cultural as well as institutional narratives within which the individual's experiences of schooling are shaped, played out, and enacted. Data was produced by using two techniques, namely, semi-structured interviews and a creative, participatory research method known as photo-voice. For the purposes of photo-voice, each participant was given a camera and was asked to take photographs that captured their experiences as immigrant learners here in South Africa.

Narrative inquiry as a research method worked well for this research project as by using narrative inquiry, the participants were able to relate their stories about their life experiences in an expressive and open manner (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; McKamey, 2011). In this way, I found that critical aspects of their lives were shared in an open and non-restrictive manner. By using the photo voice method, participants captured pictures of the spaces, places, and people that have either inspired or fostered good academic performance, or created barriers and challenges. Photo voice and the narrative approach have given me valuable insights through situated stories that reflected multiple perspectives and meanings, and layers of understandings which I have highlighted in chapter 4.

The section that follows provides a summary of the major findings from the research project.

#### **5.4 Findings of the study**

The findings revealed the agency of my participants as they navigate schooling in South Africa. They have taken a positive stance despite the challenges they have experienced such as language and cultural barriers, social isolation and exclusion, bullying and discrimination as well as vulnerability and emotionality in the face of xenophobia. Despite these odds, the resiliency and agency of these learners have enabled them to succeed academically as they do not view themselves as victims. The study revealed their strong sense of self-efficacy, responsibility, and self-discipline, determination to succeed, commitment to their studies and to make the best of valued opportunities in South Africa. They have a strong sense of pride in their culture, language, and ethnic background. They are proud of their multi-lingual competences and see this as an asset despite being aware of the political stigma attached to their home languages by peers in school. Participants showed that they are intrinsically motivated to perform well academically, and have clear goals and aspirations.

The narratives of the participants revealed that they have strong family support systems underlined by an ethic of care from family members. The family is a safe, empathic, and protective space for the six participants where identity formation is nurtured. There are also strong role models within the immediate and extended families.

An important finding in my study related to social capital in the learners' everyday lives which shapes their schooling experiences. Leonard (2005) stated that in research social capital does not feature much in the work of scholars in the field of childhood studies. The study illuminated the networks and social groups that support the high functioning learners socially, emotionally and academically, for example, religious institutions, immigrant social groups; friendship groups, caring teachers, the family and extended family and other immigrant families in the country. Leonard (2005), states that the family is a central site of social capital and evident in the relationships between children and significant adults. The study also illuminated the agency and resourcefulness of the learners as they access the various networks of social capital in their everyday lives.

The study revealed the resiliency of the learners and their drive to do well academically and flourish despite challenges they may face. This is fostered by the resources of social capital in their lives, for example, parents, family members and friends who motivate them and serve as strong role models. The study shows how the learners' personal networks that build social capital tend to reduce vulnerability, build self-efficacy, self-discipline and determination in learners.

The study also highlights strong evidence of caring as a social process in learners' lives, and how this contributes to the educational resilience of the high functioning immigrant learners. All six learners are happy in school and indicated that the school as an institution inspires them. They spoke of and provided critical incidents about certain teachers whom they constructed as 'caring'. The learners know teachers who genuinely care, and they indicated that teachers who show empathy for them, believe that they have the potential to achieve, and work to support them, spur them on to apply greater effort in their studies.

## 5.5 Implications of this study

My study has implications for professional development for teachers, further research and whole school development in the context of creating inclusive schools. The study raises the concerning issues of discrimination, social exclusion, and oppression experienced by the participants from their peers and certain teachers. The participants negotiate these power laden spaces by merely accepting the situation and adopting a 'life has to go on' strategy, implying that they remain focused on their goals and their studies and tries not to let such incidents bother them. It is their agency, strength of character and their self-discipline that supports their positionality. However, the kind of oppression the participants shared is still unacceptable and indefensible, and goes against the principle of social justice, non-discrimination and inclusion embedded in the South African Constitution of 1996 and all other education policy documents including the South African Schools Act of 1996 and Education White paper 6: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System (Department of Education, 2001).

Gunderson et al. (2012) remind us that schools are 'social institutions' containing 'micro-societies' (p. 153). School leadership and teachers and the rest of the school community need to understand the risk and protective factors in the lives of immigrant children who enter the institution. It is imperative that they build a school climate and ethos of respect, tolerance and inclusion where the rights of all learners are upheld and protected. The issue for immigrant learners should not be about how to circumvent oppression in their schooling lives. The question has to be about how the school and its leadership can foster positive racial and ethnic identities for all its learners whatever social groups they come from. Awareness programmes should be organised by the schools and the Department of Education to promote a culture of tolerance in all schools such as anti-bullying campaigns.

Schools need to form closer relationships with parents and families of immigrant learners and validate the 'invisible' ways in which they support their children, their styles of engagement with their children, culturally embedded expectations, and how to accumulate social capital around their children. There is potential for powerful dialogue that can make transition to schooling in the host country smoother and less traumatic.

The study raises certain issues that can be explored further in future research in different settings.

- The significance of, access to, and use of social capital in the lives of immigrant children in schooling contexts in host countries. Research on the notion of social capital has seldom involved children.
- The patterns of resilience evident in high functioning immigrant children in different contexts need to be further researched. My study illuminated self-discipline, social competence, problem solving, satisfaction with school, agency; cultural belief in the value of education; drive; a sense of purpose; strong sense of self-efficacy; access to social capital; strong family support and experiences of care and caring as significant resilience factors.

## **5.6 Limitations and challenges of the study**

It may be argued that my study involved a small scale piece of research in one schooling context and involving a very small sample. I wish to point out that in qualitative research generalisation to other contexts and individuals is not the aim. My study focused on a specific group of learners in a particular schooling context. Engaging with my research will enable other researchers to examine the transferability of my findings to other contexts. I provide in this dissertation, rich descriptions of my research methodology and design; data analysis and interpretation of my findings.

Researching with children was a challenge to me, and was even more complex as my participants were from a range of African countries with different accents, belief systems, traditions and cultures. However, it was truly a learning experience for me as the researcher and I felt enriched. The use of narrative inquiry and the photo voice technique helped to address the power dynamics between me an adult and a teacher at the school and my child participants. The child friendly data production approach I used helped build my participants' trust in me and made them share their experiences without feeling threatened in any way.

The photo voice technique did prove to be very challenging. At first, learners were enthusiastic to use the cameras that were provided to them. Although I did have a training workshop for them, learners experienced technical problems. For example, on developing the



photographs, I noticed that some participants did not handle the camera correctly, resulting in some pictures becoming over exposed, due to the camera facing the sunlight. In addition, the participants used the camera to take a small sample of pictures, and the entire camera spool was not used.

It was rather ironical that in the midst of my study, xenophobic attacks occurred throughout South Africa. This impacted my data collection process as the location of the school was central Durban, where much of the unrest occurred. My participants did not attend school, due to the unsafe and volatile environment. This lasted for almost a month. The whole situation significantly impacted me emotionally as I feared for the safety of my participants and other immigrant learners at my school.

I also found that trying to make appointments with learners to conduct interviews and to work through the photo voice process was time-consuming. Many of my participant learners were involved in tuition classes or extra-curricular activities during their breaks and relief periods. This resulted in me having to work around their busy schedules.

Although there were a few challenges that hampered the smooth flow of this research project, they were not unachievable.

## **5.7 Concluding thoughts**

Conducting this research project has enabled me to delve deeper into the lives of high functioning immigrant learners and I now understand my participants from a new perspective. Listening to the authentic voices of my participants enabled me to gain in-depth insight into the patterns of resiliency and the key resiliency factors that shape their identities and their agency as young people. The question I pose to myself is: Can the resources my participants draw on, intrinsic and extrinsic, counteract the risks many learners from disadvantaged, difficult backgrounds face in our schools in South Africa?

I conclude with the words of Fijian President, Josefa Iloilo, emphasising diversity,

*“We need to reach that happy stage of our development when differences and diversity are not seen as sources of division and distrust, but of strength and inspiration.”*

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Consent letter to school and participants

#### APPENDIX 1

#### INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

##### 1. Nature of the research project

The geographies of teaching and learning at a secondary school: Narratives of six high performing immigrant learners

Researcher	Name: Miss. S. Isseri (Educator, Durban Girls Secondary School) Qualification: B.Ed Degree, B.Ed Honours (Educational Psychology) Telephone Number: 078 544 3591
Supervisor	Name: Professor. A. Muthukrishna Qualifications: PHD Telephone Number: 084 245 9096 E Mail: muthukri@ukzn.ac.za
Purpose	This proposed study will examine the teaching and learning experiences of six immigrant learners who are high achievers academically at a secondary school in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. I hope to gain insight into how they experience and navigate the socio-cultural and socio-political spaces of schooling at a micro level and explore immigrant learner's experiences of care and support.

##### 2. What is required of participants

- Participation will be voluntary and subject to informed consent.
- Participants are free to withdraw from the study at any stage.
- Rights of participants will be safeguarded in relation to the preservation of confidentiality, access to research information and findings and misleading promises regarding the benefits of the research.
- Anonymity/confidentiality will be ensured through a coding system to avoid the inclusion of personal identifiers. The participants will not be identifiable when the researcher presents the findings. Confidentiality will be maintained in storing and disposing of research findings.

### 3. Declaration

I, ..... (full name of participant), hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw at any time, so I should desire.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent/ Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



## Appendix 2: Ethical clearance letter from the University of Kwa Zulu Natal



26 April 2013

Professor A Muthukrishna 845  
School of Education  
Edgewood Campus

Protocol reference number: HSS/0250/013

Project title: The geographies of children's schooling in six Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries: Narratives of children, parents/caregivers and teachers

Dear Professor Muthukrishna

### Expedited approval

I wish to inform you that your application has been granted Full Approval through an expedited review process.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. Please note: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

Professor Steven Collings (Chair)

/px

cc Dr P Morojele

cc Academic leader researcher Dr MN Davids

cc School administrator Ms B Bhengu

Humanities & Social Sc Research Ethics Committee

Professor S Collings (Chair)

Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, 4000, South Africa

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Founding Campuses: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS



## Appendix 3: Ethical clearance letter from the Department of Education



education

Department:  
Education  
**PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL**

Enquiries: Nomangisi Ngubane

Tel: 033 392 1004

Ref.:2/4/8/326

Miss S Isseri  
11 Kingsley  
32 Coronation Road  
MALVERN  
4093

Dear Miss Isseri

### PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **"THE GEOGRAPHIES OF TEACHING AND LEARNING AT A SECONDARY SCHOOL: NARRATIVES OF SIX HIGH PERFORMING IMMIGRANT STUDENTS"**, in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from 01 November 2014 to 31 December 2015.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Miss Connie Kehologile at the contact numbers below.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report / dissertation / thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Office of the HOD, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education:

Durban Girls Secondary School

**Nkosinathi S.P. Sishi, PhD**  
**Head of Department: Education**  
**Date: 24 November 2014**

#### KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

POSTAL: Private Bag X 9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200, KwaZulu-Natal, Republic of South Africa  
PHYSICAL: 247 Burger Street, Anton Lembede House, Pietermaritzburg, 3201. Tel. 033 392 1004  
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CALL CENTRE: 0860 596 363; Fax: 033 392 1203 WEBSITE: [WWW.kzndoe.gov.za](http://WWW.kzndoe.gov.za)

## **Appendix 4: Individual interview guide**

### **A. Personal Details:**

1. Name of participant
2. Age and grade of participant
3. When did you arrive in South Africa and from which country?
4. What grade were you in and how old were you?
5. Tell me more about the members in your family.

### **B. Narrative:** What were your experiences at South African schools?

#### **Questions used as scaffolding:**

- What challenges have you experienced as students in South Africa? Share your stories.
- What language do you speak at school and home? Do you experience any difficulties? What are they?
- Tell me stories of the challenges that you face out of school or in your community? How do you cope with these challenges?
- From whom do you receive care and support from at school and at home?
- How do these people care for and support you?
- Has this made a difference to your life? In what way?

## Appendix 5: Turnitin report

### Originality Report

- Processed on: 28-Oct-2015 10:45 AM CAT
- ID: 591409117
- Word Count: 58840
- Submitted: 1

# THE GEOGRAPHIES OF TEACHING AND LEARNING AT A...By Sanam Isseri

Similarity Index

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Student Papers: 2%

## Appendix 6: Letter from language editor

V HARIPERSHAD  
10 BENEVOLENT STREET  
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CHATSWORTH  
4092

[vaneshree@wisbygroup.co.za](mailto:vaneshree@wisbygroup.co.za)  
Cell: 072 222 4201

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27 October 2015

### TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to record that I have:

- Carried out language editing, formatting etc.
- And made suggestions to student to address at his/her discretion

On the following dissertation :

***The geographies of teaching and learning at a secondary school: Narratives of six high performing immigrant students***

by

Sanam Isseri



---

V Haripershad  
Language Editor

## **Appendix 7: Transcription on narrative interviews**

### 1. Narrative of Jane

What are your experiences of schooling in South Africa?

It was fun because I got to learn stuff not like my country because there were not many good schools there due to the war. My father did not actually finish school because of the war so I get to learn new things and I get to be a better person and have a goal in life for my family so I could help them because some of them never finish school.

I have learnt respect for people that are older than I and that there are a lot of opportunities here like creative schools and entering competitions can help you to win. These are good memories, also receiving certificates so that you can remember what you achieved when you were small.

I had good experiences from primary school till high school and I have learnt lots of stuff. A story that stays in my mind was when my mum got a new job and started working for a tourism centre. It was nice because she would get paid enough and she could buy things for us that we really did not get all the time. Things like shoes, normally we got it once in a while, but when she got paid she would buy it for us and take us out to restaurants because we don't usually go there all the time, just once in a while. This happened in 2010 when I was in grade 4, before that, she was not working. There are six members in my family, so she could provide better for us with the money that she earned.

My brother has really helped and guided me throughout school, because he is really good at English. I really was not good in English so he would help me to pronounce the words I could not. He started his schooling here and he is now in grade nine. He was my role model because he would get high marks in class for English. He even received awards in grade one and two for having the highest marks in English. My parents also motivated me to go to school and do well, because they did not complete their schooling.

I have been here for seven year and it has been a good experience because it is better than my country because I could learn and get a better education, not like other people, who did not get a better education or died because of the war or there was no health care. If you got hurt, no one would help you or get a cure. Even if I get sick here, the hospitals are not expensive here, by Addington. You pay R20 for medication and they treat you well, unlike my

country, because you pay a lot just to see a doctor and describe how you feel, not like here. We are healthier here and schools are government schools. Sometimes they help you to pay for the school fees. You don't need to pay all; sometimes you get a scholarship, as if you are going to school for free.

One of the teachers who have motivated me is Mrs Veeran because she told me that I can be anyone that I want to be, whether you are a boy or girl, you can achieve your goals. She is my English teacher from grade eight. She is a nice English teacher. I enjoyed the story telling lesson we had with her. She reads them out loud, she gives us the courage to express our feelings when we are reading. She taught us about expressing ourselves when we read and facial expressions as well as voice and eye contact whenever you speak to someone.

My grade seven teacher from Addington Primary School also motivated me. He was tall and kind and he used to teach us Maths. He would give us extra lessons after school or during the break. We could go to him and speak to him and tell him, "Sir I did not understand the work that you were teaching this morning, can you please say or teach it again in a way I could understand", and he would take his time and tell you. He would even wait for you to get it right and he would correct it. If it was wrong, he would re explain and describe to you why you were getting it wrong and right. It helped to improve my marks. Before his class, I was getting average marks for Math, like pass marks for every term. As soon as I got to his class, I would not get average marks, I would get above 60's and 70's for Math.

With my friends, I have not had many good experiences with them. Since we came to high school, they have just left me out. We used to be very good and close friends, but when we came to high school they changed and left me. They were foreigners and South Africans. I have no idea why they left me and I am not in their class anymore. I was close to them last year, but I do not know why they have changed. Now I have new friends, Isabelle (the one who had an operation to her heart), Sileni and Chima. They all are foreigners. I do get along with South Africans. My friend Andiswa is there, I used to walk home with her. She is a South African, but she is kind and very quiet and is innocent. She doesn't really like making friends, so she is quiet and shy girl that is why she is not like the other girls that like to make fun of me.

\*Who makes fun of you and why?

The foreigners from the 8A class. It is as if they do not like me for no reason. There are also some South Africans who also make fun of me, instead of correcting me and they start laughing at me. It was this year. I had burnt my uniform while ironing it and I did not see it. I pressed it at night and did not see it in the morning. I had a hole on my uniform, and they were laughing and no one came to tell me that my uniform was burnt. I was rushing and had to leave my sister and then come to school. I came to school and then my South African classmates were laughing at me. They were saying, "What happened to your uniform? It looks so strange and messed up." I told them that I did not see it because I was rushing in the morning, and they laughed. I then told my mother and she asked her friend to sew my uniform and fixed it up for me. This made me feel bad, because the whole day, they were laughing at me and everywhere I would go. At break time they would again ask me what happened to my uniform and then burst out laughing. They told me that I was "untidy and dirty". I did not say anything, I just kept quiet and told my mother when I went home. My foreign friends did not laugh at me, they just told me to get someone to sew it for me and they told me that they were laughing for no reason. They did not find it funny at all.

In primary school I had a friend in grade two, but she had to leave school when her mother gave birth to another baby and go back to her home country, Kenya. I had a lot of South African friends, one goes to Hunt Road Girls High and One to Sparks Road. These two friends stayed with me throughout Primary school.

\*Why did you have so few friends?

Even though everyone knew me and my name was easy to pronounce by everyone, we did not really get along. Even the players from my basketball team did not get along too well with me. I think the reason is that I am a foreigner and do not really speak their language or we do not really get along. They have not told me why. I have forgotten my home language because I have been here for many years. Sometimes they mock my accent this was in primary school, but I cannot remember the details of this. I would never forget that when I first came to high school, my friends left me for no reason and I had to make a new start. I had to find new friends. They may know me because they are in your class or lived in your area, but they will not play with you.



It was once when I was going home and this lady who was really old and she came from buying groceries, she would ask people to help. But no one came to help her, so I decided to go and help her because she was really old. They say we should respect people who are older than you and I did respect her. I helped her to get onto the bus and carry her groceries and she went home. She said thank you and she really appreciated it, because everyone who was passing by her did not offer to help her.

\*Have you experienced anything negative whilst in our country?

Yes, there was a boy who goes to Overport Secondary School, and he was about the same age as myself. They caught him with drugs at school. When I asked him why, he said he just does not know why he did it. He was from Liberia and his parents were not here. It makes me feel bad that someone from my own country did this, because he is supposed to represent our country as a good place, even though it was not the best country. You need to change as you are growing up. This makes me feel very bad. You should be a good representative of your country, because all these years Liberia has been a bad place, so you should try to make it a better place so that people can live better. This would also improve the tourism in South Africa and people would admire the country.

\*Have you experienced xenophobic attacks?

Sometimes when you are going to buy your food, people do not treat you right, because you are a foreigner and you cannot speak like them. So, they start speaking their language in front of you, like Zulu and Tswana. They speak this language while you are standing in a queue so that you do not understand what they are saying. You know from the way they are speaking and expressing themselves that it is in a bad way towards you. This happened to my mother. The last time she was at the shop, I think it was the beginning of the year; she was going to buy uniforms. She could not get my size in the first shop, so she went to the second shop. She was in the queue and this lady came to cut in front of her. She asked her why she did that and she started speaking her own language and she said something mean to my mother, I cannot remember the exact words. She also said, "These foreigners, they can't even learn to speak our own language". I could not do anything because I was not with her, she told me about her experience. I told her it happens to everyone and life goes on. Sometimes you can do something about it, but other times it is better to just walk away.

I have also experienced this. Like sometimes when you are going home, you see some people just run into you and then just push you. When you ask them why they did that, they just walk away. They sometimes say insulting things to you in their Zulu language that you do not understand. We hear them saying something, then they just walk away. When you ask them again, they will try to start a fight with you. I just walk away.

\*Do you not understand Zulu completely?

I understand a little, that is why I come to school to learn. In primary school we did a bit of Afrikaans and IsiZulu, so it is a bit difficult. I never really understood Afrikaans and IsiZulu. It is a challenge. These incidents also happen during very busy periods, such as Christmas and public holidays. I live near the beach, so there is a lot of traffic and people push you. They push you and say it is a mistake, when they really did mean it, just to get attention and create a scene. These South Africans are generally children.

\*What is the difference between your lifestyle and the lifestyle of South Africans?

I show people respect, usually not all South Africans have respect. My lifestyle is different because I go to church and pray. Some South Africans do not go to church and they believe in nothing. They ask for the reason of going to church and praying to God. I pray to God to thank him for all these years, I would not be here if it was not for him and I would be in all the war and shooting. I may not have been alive, so it's my way of going to church and thanking God. It is different from my lifestyle. They sometimes do not have any respect, small children can go and come whenever they feel like. In our house, there are rules.

I like it here in South African because it is a nice country, I am coping well. I am trying my best at school so that I can be a better person to help out my family when I am older. It is very different from my country and I am trying to cope well. Sometimes I try to speak Zulu, and I try, that is why I am coping well.

## 2. Narrative of Michelle

What are your experiences of schooling in South Africa?

I have had good times and bad. I remember one time , I think I was in grade six, and I came to school wearing a tracksuit jacket, and I did not know that it was not allowed and the principal said that it was not allowed, so I had to take it off when. When I went to class, he came after me and then he was shouting at me. He asked me “Why are you wearing this jacket? You are such a pig.” I felt very bad. He did not behave in that way with everyone because others were also wearing tracksuit jackets, but he only attacked me for wearing it and I do not know why. He was the principal, so I could not do anything, so I just kept quiet and looked at him. He then left. My teacher then asked what had happened. It was intense, because this never happened before and he just attacked me. It felt bad.

My friends are good. They are not bad or racist in any way. They are cool and we talk about everything. I have got a mixed group of friends. Some are from South Africa, some from Zimbabwe. At times it was difficult communicating with the South African friend, because they mainly spoke IsiZulu. For example, sometimes when we were in class and we were sitting in a group in grade seven and we were talking, I would not understand what they were saying, but they would just say something in Zulu and I would just have to sit and listen and not say anything. I would not understand anything. They would sometimes explain what they were saying, but other times they would just talk. I would just be there, because I could not stop them from talking because I did not understand. So, I would just let them talk and maybe after that I would ask one of them to explain what they said and then they would explain. They would explain only after I asked them to. In high school it is fine, because most of my friends speak different languages, so we can't all understand each other. I speak French, Lingala and Swahili. We all speak English at school, because they are from different countries of South Africa. In order for all of us to understand each other, we speak English, so we don't have any problems with understanding different languages.

\*Is it challenging switching between languages at home and at school?

At home I am mixed, because with my mum I can speak Lingala or French, but we mix it up, because she also understands a little bit of English. But when I come to school, it is difficult because I have to stick to speaking English and sometimes, I tend to make mistakes and say

some words that are not supposed to be said. For example, in French, you say certain words like, “cliché” in English, in French, it has a different meaning. In French, “cliché” means when you touch someone. Therefore, it is confusing.

\*Give me some examples of the successes that you have experienced?

In primary school, it was good because I got a lot of awards, academic awards. I was not really good at sport, but I in grade four and five, I got medals for running. It was always good to go on stage and gear an award because everybody applauds you and it feels good. In my class in primary school, there were only two of us who were foreigners. We were able to fit well and we were good from grade four up till grade seven and we both got along well. I had a lot of other friends in primary school. In primary school, I had a better bond with my South African friends. We just got along and understood each other. We met in grade five and then we started getting to know each other better in grade six. It was good, because when I did not understand something, she helped me because she was not that good in English because she mostly spoke Zulu and I helped her in some things. We just got along well and understood each other. I was closer to her than I was to my foreign friends. We shared many similarities, like doing the same things we talked about things that we understood, and just got along.

The last day of my grade seven year is a day that I will never forget. It was sad, but then nice at the same time, because we all were going to different schools and we went together and we sat and just talked about high school and how we would be I really enjoyed it, but at the same time, I was sad because I was leaving the people I knew for like seven years. We were all going to get separated the next year. It was nice.

There is better schooling in this country. In Congo, they do not actually speak English, the schools are totally French. Here we are taught in English and English is an international language. In Congo it is not that good because the country’s economy is down, the education is bad and there are no resources. Some schools do not even have them. In Congo, if you are going to a class, sometimes people take chairs to another class and there are so many people in one classroom. I only completed my pre-school in Congo and it was quite challenging.

\*From whom do you receive your support and motivation?

My grade one to three teacher was very good. She used to help me a lot because she knew I did not understand some things, and then if I went to her she would try to help me to

understand. For example, if I found out how to spell something or I did not understand something, or what a word meant or what the story was all about, she would try and make me understand and tell me where I went wrong in certain places, so that I could improve. At home, my parents they kind of helped me, but, it was not that much, because they also did not understand English, that well, but, if they understood some things, like Maths, they would always help me. My elder brother helps me a lot with Maths.

\*Do you think you have coped well enough in our country?

I think so, because compared to other people, I think it is fine because other foreigners have been here, but they still, cannot speak English and they still cannot get along with people because they say South Africans are kind of different, but I am used to them, and I can communicate and get along with them.

Where I live in my community, it is okay, because there are not a lot of South Africans, it is mostly foreigners. We get along well, because everyone in the area can speak the same language so we understand each other. We do not have any problems in my area. I have never experienced any Xenophobic attacks, but I have heard of people who have. My cousin was walking on the street, and they were asking what the name of certain parts of the body was in IsiZulu, but he knew it, so he never got attacked. At that time, the attacks kind of scared me, because at the time, I did not know what the body parts were in IsiZulu, so I learnt the words so that I would be prepared if they ever asked me. That was the time I started picking and learning Zulu words. I do know a little bit of Zulu words, but I don't actually know what those words were. I learnt more carefully, the words that they asked the meaning of (the body parts), in order to know if they ever asked me. I have never heard of any other way xenophobic attacks happened in the country.

I am a member of a youth club. In the youth club, we are mixed, people from Ghana, South Africa, from Zambia, we are all together. We read the Bible together and sometimes we play Bible games, anything that has to do with just learning more about the Bible and religious studies. I attend this every Friday. This has changed my life because we all are mixed, I get to learn other people's cultures. For example, in my culture, if I do something differently, or if they do the same things in a different way, I get to learn and understand, so there will not be any conflicts if I say something wrong. Some of my South African friends want to learn more about my culture and the language that I speak how to say some words in Lingala and French.

I do not have any problems with English, it is just that people have different accents and it sounds different. I don't think that this is a problem, because in my class most people have a different way of speaking. People speak in that English that is mixed with Zulu words and we all do not have problems with our accents.

### 3. Narrative of Tina

What are your experiences of schooling in South Africa?

I came to South Africa in 2004 and I started primary school here in South Africa. When I started I was really young so I did not really mind the environment around me, I was just like a normal child like everyone, but as I started moving forward, in some of my grades there were issues with the Kids in the school, for example being bullied sometimes because of you being a foreigner. I started getting bullied around about grade three. Our grade two teacher, she used to like hit us, with a ruler. The teacher, I can't really remember her name, I think she was Indian; she just used to be mean. I started my grade two and I had foreign friends, who are still with me in high school. One of my friends who are still in high school with me also experienced this and the rest of us. So, you would do something or ask for something, she would not ask you why, she would just walk up to you and say, "show me your knuckles", and she would take about two thick rulers and hit you on your knuckles and you would have a scratch and you would bleed. But because I was in grade two, I used to think that she was the teacher and would not mind it. I would just wipe it off. It was mostly for the foreigners, but she also hit one of my white friends once and my white friend went and called her mum and her mum came to school. But at the end, this teacher would still force you to do things, like clean her classroom and do things that you do not want to do. And when you would get home late, your parents would ask why you were late and you would say that you were cleaning the classroom, but you would not tell them the reason why you were cleaning the classroom, because you won't want your parents to come to school. All this made me feel bad, but I did not mind it, I used to say let me just drop it because she was the teacher and it happens in life, so I just used to leave it.

\*Tell me more about the bullying you experienced.

This mainly happened in grade three and four. It was shocking because it was another foreign boy who was the bully because he was trying to fit in. He was trying to fit in with the other kids and was trying to be cool. He always used to come to me and start pinching me and hitting and pushing me and I used to sometimes cry in grade three and four and I used to walk home or take a taxi with my cousin and we would just go. I think he did that because maybe he didn't like me because I have experiences with people who did not like me. I don't know why but mostly people do not like me.

Have you experienced bullying by South Africans?

Yes, I have, I was in grade six. I am not sure, but I think he was laughing at me because of my hairstyle. It was a normal hairstyle from where I come from. It is a hairstyle that goes up and it is like a cone or a star. It is a thing that most kids in Congo do. When we came here we started doing it as well, it is like a star meeting together at the top. He was a South African and his name was Junior and he started laughing at me. He started pushing me and shouting at me, because you know they like shouting a lot. You will be right next to them, but they will be shouting. Sometimes I would defend myself, and I would be like, "leave me alone." I continued with the same hairstyle, but after that, I changed. It was not because I was trying to fit in. I am not the kind of person who tries to fit in. Most of the places you go to there are people who talk bad about you, so I don't really try to fit in. I just like being me.

Grade seven was a good year for me because we all grew closer to each other, we used to socialise a lot and we had a good class. I got a chance to be a prefect so I socialised with a lot of prefects. My results were always top, but in grade six, I think in the third term, I dropped a little in math. I think I got a two in Math, and I was very disappointed and that was what pushed me to actually start and go on and work hard. That is why my marks always used to stay at the top.

From this year to last year (High School), there have these incidents- South Africans against the Foreigners. It was the South African versus the Congolese. I think we formed a group of about ten of them. There was one of our foreigner friends, she is not in our class now because she did not make it, she failed. They always used to laugh at her because she had short hair and whenever you saw her, she would put something on her lips, like a gloss, and they would start laughing at her. Her dress was also big and she tried to hem it and they teased and called her "curves" or something like that. We did not like that, so we started to defend her and they started shouting. Now you can't talk to a person nicely, because they just want to shout. So I do not like it when I am talking to someone and they shout. Just talk to me nicely because I am right there by you. They do not understand it, they keep shouting and shouting and shouting. Even this year, we came from SS we were sitting and we are a large lot (48 learners), and the SS class is full, so we had to share seats, now my friend was sitting like next to me and the other South African was sitting next to her friend. So we only had two textbooks shared between four desks and there were five of us. So I told my friend to look into their book



because she was further to them. So she starts to share and Nompumelelo starts shouting and saying that she cannot see the book. My friend also said she cannot see, and Nompumelelo said, "That's not my problem". The just pick fights that are unnecessary. You do something, they get angry, you say something and they get angry. It is mostly the South African Africans who shout. I do have coloured and Indian friends, but they do not shout at me. Even though we have incidents with them, we tend to forget. If they ask us for something, we are willing to lend it to them. We let it go. They tend to keep grudges. There was an incident last year in our English class. It was a group of South African who were making a noise, I was the English captain, so mam always told me to write down the names of the people who were talking as she went to the library. When the class starts making a noise, I usually say, "Guys, stop making a noise", before I write down their names. They usually listen, but I do not know what happened on that day, they kept on screaming and couldn't concentrate on their work. I kept telling them to be quiet, but they were not, so I told them that I would have to go to mam. They ignored that, so I stood up with the RCL rep and took them to mam. They started shouting at me again and when I took them to the library, they started giving me those "looks". They threatened that they would "catch us". I ignored them and the whole class was calm thereafter. They did not do anything.

This year, things have toned down a bit. It was just the one incident in SS class for this year but before that, there was nothing. They are good with us, but then when one topdog comes they just turn haywire. Like Ziphe, when that girl just enters the class, the whole class turns upside down. The first three days, the class was quiet, all were talking, and I think she came back on a Friday, the whole class went down. Yes the South Africans are more disruptive, but we always get blamed for most of the things because last year when we came, my friend usually just laughs. If you say something, she laughs, that's how she is, but the teachers get angry because she laughs. We get into trouble for asking her something or just for laughing. We all sit close together, to the board so we can see work more clearly and Joanna my friend, also sits there, and because of her we get blamed. Teachers are like, "you six girls, you are making a noise." Even if it is one that is making the noise, all of us will take the blame. Like the other day, Miss D Pillay said that we six were all making a noise, but it was not all of us it was another group, yet she kept on blaming us. Due to our class's bad behaviour last year,

teachers always target us, and state, “you six girls”, and blame us. Our behaviour has changed from last year and we do not mind anyone.

\*Have you experienced any incidents of being treated unfairly in your community?

Yes there was a negative reaction. One foreign girl, she was in my church, I think I was in grade six or seven. It was my aunt's wedding and as part of Congolese culture, you have to dance with someone for the wedding, so there is a group of girls and my friend also joined in. After that she lost my sister's hairbands and for that she got angry. She started carrying tales about me. The next day everyone just gathered by the girl's toilet. I was about to enter the toilet to use it and she came behind me, banging the door and asked me why I was “acting all that”, She started swearing and she said something which was rude and then one of the friends said “yes” and agreed to what she said. I told her what she said was wrong and told her she was not supposed to say that. She started shouting and then I got angry and most of the girls and my classmates were in the toilet or outside. I just caught her by the collar and pushed her against the wall and I told her leave me alone. And when I am very serious and angry I start to cry, I eventually just walked away from her because I did not want to fight with her. I did not want her parents to come to school. At the end they always come back to me and that was what she did, like recently she just gossiped about me and the word is out, “Maryce did this and that.” So we have been fasting for these twenty one days at church, so I saw her yesterday, I wanted to talk to her, but my dad was rushing, so I could not. So I said that today I am going to talk to her because of what she did and all that. So, I don't know where we are going to end up so I have to talk to her. This year, I told myself that I do not want arguments with anyone or fight, so I am just going to talk to her calmly. I have not at all experienced xenophobic attacks.

\*Tell me more about the group of friends that you join

We are mostly foreigners. We like being united. We find it more comfortable to be joining each other, because when we talk, we do in English, Swahili, French and Lingala. For example if three of us understand Lingala, we make sure that we all speak in a language that the rest of the group understands. But if you are with Zulu South Africans, they will speak Zulu and you won't get it because you don't really understand Zulu. I did have South African friends in grade six and seven. They will always speak Zulu around you and when you ask them to explain what they said, they would say, “aah, never mind.” They won't bother explaining and

would just say “never mind”. In class they will make a joke in Zulu and you are the only one that will be lost and they all will be laughing. If you ask them what they said, they will carry on ignoring you and laughing, they won’t tell you what it is all about. It makes me feel bad because I feel left out. They all are laughing about something and all of us foreigners are lost. They will tell you to not worry about what is going on and you will not even know whether they are gossiping about you or saying something bad about you. If one of my friends speaks to the other in Swahili, they would say, “stop talking in that language”, so we say, “this is the Afrikaans class, but you always speak Zulu”. They will say “it’s different, that is Zulu, but you are speaking in a foreign language”. We always translate for them. For example, one of the foreign girls, Deborah, speaks in Lingala and we translate it to them, but they never translate it. I am not sure if I will change, but I prefer staying with my foreign friends. The other race groups mainly speak English, so it is not a problem.

\*What language do you speak at home?

I speak English. Lingala and French. It is not really different switching between languages at school and home because I am fine and can manage doing it. Afrikaans is sometimes like English and it is easier for me to understand. Zulu is really hard, even when I used to do it in Primary school; it was luck that I got high marks in Zulu. It was much easier, in grade seven I got good marks for Afrikaans, but my Zulu mark was higher than Afrikaans. It is not all difficult, but pronouncing words in Afrikaans is easier for me. Afrikaans is similar to English and kind of like French. I have been doing both Afrikaans and Zulu from primary school, but now in high school, I just do Afrikaans.

\*Who do you receive most of your care and support from?

My family and my friends. My mum always says that I should not worry about what other people say and I should not hold grudges, I should forgive them because God is watching them. It is better to forgive than hold a grudge because at the end of the day you feel better. So you can hold a grudge against me or say something about me, but I will just let it go and act as though nothing happened and I will keep on going. My dad also says that I should focus on my studies and he says that I must also make it to the next grade and I should not feel low about myself and must encourage myself to do better the next time. He says that it is my life and I should decide what is good for me and what is not. My friend Dorcas has always been there for me because she is mostly with me. When she is here, most people do not like her

with me. They always ask her how does she cope being with me and she just tells them that it is easy. People just hear what others say about me, so they really don't get to know who I am and they already have a bad impression of me because somebody goes and makes a bad impression about me and the word spreads. Peoples think what I am what people say about me. I am so close to Dorcas because she is just like me, she is always funny, active and kind and she always speaks her mind. She is not a rude person; she just speaks her mind and if you know how she speaks you will not be afraid of what she says. So everyone know how we are, but most people, when you say something to them, they feel bad, so we have to change the way we speak to other people because they don't know you so you like have to be a certain way. They sometimes think you are saying something bad about them, but you are actually not. In primary school, it was my male teacher, Mr, Masikathi, he was a very good teacher. He told me to do well, focus and to not give up. He inspired me to not get low marks and to study.

#### 4. Narrative of Ruth

What are your experiences of schooling in South Africa?

I will start with the successes. With the successes, I have managed to lead the choir, I was a choir leader and I also had scholarships in primary school. From grade four until grade seven, I had been awarded with scholarships. It started when I came out first in class in grade four; it was a really big surprise to find a refugee coming out first. There were other refugees, but, I was placed first, then the other refugee was placed second and then there were other South Africans. It was a huge surprise because from my experience since grade three, there were usually South Africans that were placed first and I was very shocked. I was awarded badges for community service, because we used to go for community service every Sunday. We would go to charity centres and feed the disabled and do beach clean-ups.

The challenges:

The challenges mainly happened in primary school, because they would discriminate us because we were refugees and at that time we were not able to speak Zulu. I can understand Zulu now, not fluently, but just a little. Firstly, it was in 2007, that was the time when xenophobia was taking place, I think it was grade five. We came to school and everyone was talking about xenophobia and then one of the learners came and told me that, "If you do not know how to speak my language then I will call my brother to come and kill you'll". They were killing people during those attacks, and he was a South African from my class. It really scared me at first, because I did not know the language, I did not know anything. He spoke to me and threatened me in IsiZulu and I asked someone to translate for me. At that time, they were also asking us the body parts in IsiZulu, like the elbow and the knee. If you did not know it, they would do whatever they wanted to do to you. If they find you on the road, you will be stopped, and they would ask you the body parts.

Did this happen to you or in your community?

They used to do it to people, I never got the chance to be stopped, but they did it to other foreigners.

Do you know of anyone close to you who experienced this?

Yes, my friend, Joy. She was a Rwandese, she was stopped, somewhere in Addington, and they asked her what to say for an elbow in Zulu and she did not know and the man told her that they were going to come for her and the whole family had to move out of that area. They live in South beach, the beachfront area. She moved out and changed her school as well. Right now she moved out to Australia because there are these people who are taking away foreigners from the country to overseas, so she has moved. So that time when the boy threatened me, I was scared and made an effort to know the body parts so whenever they come and ask me, I already know, this is this and that is that. Yes, that was the incident and from there on, I used to try my best to learn Zulu and to know Zulu.

Would you say your learning of Zulu was because of fear?

It was partly because of fear. I would have learned IsiZulu because I would want to learn how to communicate with the Kids, because the kids do not like speaking English, they want to speak IsiZulu so in order for you to communicate with them, you have to know Zulu, because if you speak in English, then they don't really like to speak in English. They want you to speak in Zulu.

Are you trying to fit in?

It is not trying to fit in, but trying to adapt to the way of living. You are trying to so that you can understand each other because some of them, they do not understand. I would say that my English is quite better than theirs, because some of them, they mix English and Zulu, but when I speak English, I speak fluently. So it is a way of trying to understand each other, to speak the same language. With my little brothers at home, I do speak in English, but not with my parents.

Is it difficult code-switching?

No, it has become natural now. At first it was hard because, when you get home your mum speaks this language (Swahili and French), and it was difficult, but now, I am used to it.

I remember once, it was here at this school in grade 9 and we were sitting, and I was talking to my friend in class, and then one of the learners stood up and said, "Don't speak your language here". We were talking in Swahili when the learner told us this. To them, whenever

we speak our language, they think that we are swearing them or mocking them, I have to speak Zulu. A fight started. I understood them, but to my friends the comment was quite insulting. They wanted to know, “Why shouldn’t we speak our language?”, or “You don’t want us here?” The South Africans said that they did not want us here. They asked us, “Why don’t you stay in Congo?, What’s wrong with Congo?, Why do we come here?.” If we come here, it means that this is better than Congo, but then they don’t want us here and we should go back. There were three South Africans at the centre of the fight, but I could hear murmuring from the rest of the South Africans that were in the class and they all joined in.

Do they ever give a reason as to why they do not want you here?

They never give us a reason why they do not want us here. The kids just don’t want us and have no reason, but the adults, they say that we take their jobs away. I have been experiencing this from the time I came here. Before, I used to take it to heart, but now, it has become so obvious and it always happens and I don’t mind it anymore.

Another positive characteristic is my English. Most people tell me that my English is very good and my English marks are very good, since grade seven. I used to read a lot in order to improve, and I used to want to speak. When you come here, you do not understand, but I always wanted to speak, even when I did not know what I was saying, I just wanted to speak English. Even though people laughed at me, I did not care, I just wanted to speak the language.

What spurred you on or started the whole move?

I don’t remember at all. I think I found other refugees in the country that spoke English and when I came here I did not know how to. The other refugees motivated me by speaking English because they spoke it so nicely. At first, I would just stare at them and not know what they said. Their fluency motivated me. I also used to read a lot, but not so much now.

How else have the other foreigners motivated you in other aspects of your life?

Positively, well most of my foreign friends, they go through the same thing, like discrimination, they go through it, but the first time it happened to me was when I arrived in this school particularly (High School), my foreign friends advised me not to worry about them. This is how they react. Whenever you get into a conflict, they find a reason to say that you are wrong. They always fight the point that you are a refugee and that you should not be

here. My foreign friends advised me not to worry about them, so whenever I talked, I should not worry, I should always focus on the goals that I have and my mission.

As for negatively, some refugees just give up because they take what people say to heart. Some of the people I know and family members, they just give up because there is so much discrimination and they always think about where they are coming from and where they are right now and the discrimination demoralises them. My cousin has been through this, during the war, she came here with her mum. Her dad had died and she came with her mum and little sister. She came here and her mum enrolled her in school in grade four, that's where she started so then I became friends with her, but people didn't appreciate her because she wasn't speaking normal English fluently, she couldn't speak English. So whenever she would get into conflict with people, she would want to say something, but she can't say and when they ask questions she wants to answer, she knows the answer, but, then she cannot answer because of the language. So then people took the opportunity to laugh at her and to tease her and to mock her and she always used to cry whenever that happened and till today, she is negligent about English. She doesn't care about English. When I try to talk to her in English she is like, "No don't talk to me", and I have to talk to her in our normal language because she does not care about English anymore.

Is she still in South Africa?

Yes, she is, and she is in grade ten, just like me. She is very brilliant and clever, but then, she does not like talking in English, she can write, read and understand it, but does not want to speak it due to her negative experiences.

We were having Social Science with a teacher in grade seven. It was actually not my personal experience, but it hurt me. My social science teacher was speaking in Zulu, and I could understand a bit, but then the boy behind me who was a refugee like me, could not understand, so then he put up his hand and said, "English please Mam", and the teacher asked who said that? Everyone pointed at him and the teacher said that, "this South Africa and Zulu is the first language and if you do not understand, go back to your country, we didn't call you to come here". That is where she ended and everybody was silent, and he put his head down and kept quiet. He was an average student. The teacher spoke English when she taught, but at that time she spoke IsiZulu.



Do you recall what the teacher was saying?

Yes, she was talking about an incident that happened to one of the learners in her class and the boy wanted to know what happened, so then, he said “English please”, and then the teacher got angry.

How did you feel about this?

I felt bad, I actually put myself in his shoes and was wondering what I would have done. I would have cried because it was an embarrassment, because the whole class looked at him and it was so silent for the rest of the period.

What about high school?

There is not too much at this school. When you walk past someone they want to find out if you are Zulu or not. The name that they give to us is “Kwerekwere”, but now it has been shortened to “Kwe”. If you pass by they ask, “Is this a Kwe?” Then you know already what it means. They ask this in IsiZulu, and I understand it. When they ask that and you look, for me I just smile because it happens so many times that I have gotten used to it, but for another person they are going to look at them and they get angry instantly because of the name that they give us.

In this school particularly, I heard this name was when I was in grade nine, when I first came to this school. It was a learner, I think Neliswa, she called me that, a “Kwerekwere”. I got so angry. I was like, “I’m not a kwerekwere, you are a Kwerekwere, cause you don’t know who you are. I said many things that I did know. I said that I was a Congolese, She said that I was not a South African, but a Kwerekwere. I asked her why she called us “Kwerekweres”? I said that we are not Kwerekweres and Congo is better than S.A. I told her good things about Congo and said that the only problem is that Congo is not well developed, but South Africa is. We started arguing over which country was better than the other. There were many other Congolese in my class, then when they heard that we were arguing about our country, Congo, they took my side and the Zulus took their side. At the end, the teacher came in and we stopped and we never mentioned it again because we are kind of friends. At that time Neliswa was serious, but during the course of the day, we started talking to each other.

Any incidents at Hunt Road Secondary?

The same issue of name calling, but nothing more. Because some South Africans love our culture. That is the one thing I know, they love our culture, but they just hate that we come to our country.

What support and motivation have you received?

My parents. My mum has helped me with my homework from the time I started school. Well, when I started school here, I met my cousins who came here before me and had already started school, so they knew a little bit of English. In Congo we do study English, but people just neglect it. My mum knew this, from Congo we went to Kenya and then Tanzania. There, the people speak a lot of English. So then she knew English, so she would read and help me, if she did not understand, she would ask my cousins and they would help her. My dad was not very fluent in English, but now he does understand, he does electricity and he does.

In grade two, my teacher supported me the most because at that time, English was a bit of a problem for me. Reading was a problem for me. She used to stay back after school and teach me words one by one and then she would write a sentence and read it out and then I would have to read it out after her over and over again and from then on, I would go home and she would give me homework separately from everyone else had. She would give me reading books to take home and when everyone else were doing work, she would call me and ask me to read and I would read to her. It helped me a lot.

How well do you think you have coped here?

I have coped well enough, very well. Some people take things to heart and some of them would want to just go back to their country after the discrimination and the things that happen here. They just want to go back, but as for me, I have coped well and I am still coping. I cope by having a goal. My goal is to study, then finish my matric and then study at university and get my degree and then go back and work back home because if I have some knowledge and the knowledge that others have in Congo and if we put it together, we could develop the country. That's my goal and because I have a goal and know what I want, I go for it and carry on, no matter what people tell me because I know what I want and what they are saying will not impact or hamper me in any way. I just know that I have a goal, whatever people say I know what I want, I just carry on living.

Do you not receive support from others?

I do receive some from my friends, but not so much because we all go through the same thing, we give each other advice with my foreigner friends. I have a lot of South African friends, but am not really close. I have tried adapting to South African friends and it was hard for them to accept me. In primary school, we used to sit in groups and then my best friend left the school, Joy, she went to another school. So then, I had to sit with other people, so I saw this group of South Africans and I wanted to sit with them and join them, but then, whenever I used to come and sit there, all of them would be speaking Zulu and I would be the quiet one there. They never used to involve me in the conversation, I would just sit there. They would just carry on and laugh, and when you see them you also laugh, but you did not know what you were laughing for. It would just carry on like that. It made me feel very weird, because I don't do that. At that time, I was trying my best to fit in, it wasn't me and the kind of person I am. I don't like fitting in, I like standing out. At that time, I was trying my best to fit in and it just wasn't working out. They didn't give me a chance to fit in. This happened for about a year in grade four. Then I found other refugees who I could adapt to, I am mainly friends with refugees.

Why can you not adapt to South Africans?

Apart from the language, they just couldn't accept me. At this point, they can accept me, but before, they couldn't. I do not know why they could not accept us refugees. Maybe it is high school, therefore the problem is not so big, but I don't not know anyone in primary school that I could ask. Maybe because we are in high school, we can stand up for ourselves and we are more braver and all that, but I do not know. From grade five I have mainly been with foreign friends.

How has your relationship been with them?

It is very good, we understand each other, we have similar issues, similar problems and we understand each other better. I can talk to South Africans, I can understand their reply, but then to fit in as a South African, I still cannot, because we have our ways. Culturally, traditionally and morally, we are different. The way they are brought up, respect and all that is different from ours. We are taught that even if an elder person is wrong we should just keep quiet, just let them be, do not reply back, but for them, if someone is wrong, they have

to tell you if you are wrong. For example, a teacher was explaining in class, in high school about cultures and Zulu cultures. The teacher said that in the Zulu culture they do not have respect, she was trying to explain to them why. It was an Indian teacher who was trying to explain and the children took things offensively and the child replied back and said, "No Mam, you are wrong ", and it was kind of an argument. The other learners also were supporting that it was wrong. I didn't react because in some way she was right because they proved that she was right at that time. So I couldn't argue with them because if it was not right they would keep quiet, but at that time, they reacted disrespectfully and it proved that the teacher was right. The disrespect and arrogance are some of them there are many fights, they fight a lot. It always happens in school. For example, a learner from our class, it was a stupid fight, because they were fighting over the children who do pure Math and Math Literacy. It happened in the netball court when we were having netball. It happened between Zulus. One South African said to the other class, "At least we are winning. The; learners reacted by saying, "maybe your subjects help you better at getting physical and that is why we are winning and you are losing the game. It was this year. Then the other learners got angry and thought that she was saying that because we do pure Math and they do Math Literacy. So, we ended there and went for Life Science and then the second break, and I went to sit in Miss N's\* class where I normally sit with my friends, and then we saw a group of people running to this corner and then when I asked what was wrong they said that the learners were fighting. There was a stencil in her hand and she was about to poke someone. They said it was the fight that they had from the netball court, it was just continued. After a few hours, it still continued, they are too violent and take things close to their heart. I have never been in a fight and the one thing that I know how to control myself. If I know I am going to get in a fight, I walk away, because if I fight with someone, the anger, knowing that this person has discriminated, I get so physical, so I try my best to walk away. I just look at them and think, "You don't know what you are saying." and I just walk away. Other than that, we are still the same. We all are children, we like the same things, but the disrespect and arrogance is the only point.

How did you adapt to Afrikaans, a totally foreign language?

In grade eight, I did Zulu and I found it very hard. In primary school, we had to do Afrikaans and Zulu. In grade eight, I had to choose one language and I chose Zulu because it was more like my language. It was very hard and difficult and after that I tried Afrikaans and I could

adapt easily to Afrikaans. Afrikaans is not easy, but you can understand it bit by bit. My Afrikaans teacher, Miss N's\* helped me a lot. For example in Zulu, when they teach, they do not translate, but in Miss N's\* class, she reads the text for the comprehension in Afrikaans then she first asks you what it means. Now for me when she gives us meanings, I put it together, and when I see it again, I know. She translates the whole text into English thereafter and then I write down the new words in my vocabulary book. I then go home and practise everything. When you come to class and see a new word, you say that it is similar to something else, and then she Miss N\* helps you to put it all together. The translation helps, but in Zulu, they never translate for you. There is no way that you are going to learn, I would have chosen IsiZulu over Afrikaans, had it had translations.

## 5. Narrative of Susan

What are your experiences of schooling in South Africa?

Schooling in South Africa is exciting, it is fun, it is motivating, the people are very friendly in general. There are quite a few that will not accept you, but in general.

Who are those few who do not accept you?

People that find me different, like the bullies in general.

It was in a transport, I was being transported to school one morning, and I lost my colouring pencils, and when I asked who took them, everyone was acting as if they did not know and when I noticed it in someone else's bag and when I accused them, they started calling me all sorts of names and being all mean. Well, they used to call me Summer\*, which rhymed with my first name, which was Perseus, and in their accent it rhymed, so I was always called that and I was always standing in the taxi. This happened in Grade R to Grade one. And from then on, they always acted negatively towards me. I was never really happy in that combi and that is generally how I became so quiet in and around grade one and two. When I got to grade three, my two closest friends left and they didn't even say goodbye. They were South African. I don't even know why they had left. They had been absent for many days and I had to play by myself. Those were days that I felt really lonely inside and that was when I met a different group of friends.

Why do you think your friends did not tell you before leaving?

They left the area for another school, but they did not even send messages. I felt very disappointed, betrayed and lonely and I did not know why they did that. But then, I tried to ignore them and I found another group of Zulu friends who said that since I was all lonely, I could play with them, so I joined that group, but I never really fit in since they were always speaking in their own language and they didn't really fit me into the group.

Did they not understand that you were not a foreigner?

They understood that, but then, I just did not quite fit in.

Why do you say that?

I think it was mainly because of the language, they did not even try to speak to me in English, unless, it was something really important, like, if they were planning a picnic or something,

then maybe. I was playing with them for a while, and one of the friends were very close to me, and when she left the group to go play with another race group, mainly coloured girls, I sort of followed her around and then, we eventually left the group of black girls and joined the coloured group. The black group eventually saw us as racist because we chose the coloured girls over the black girls, and I did not really like that because I am not a choosy person. I played with these coloured girls till grade six.

Were your coloured friends more understanding than the African friends?

No, it was not really different, but they used to communicate with me. This continued from grade four to grade six. Then there was a split up in the group due to major fights.

What were the fights about?

They were about stories and things that children do, well they were playing some tennis games, and they said that one group was cheating and the other group was not. On that day I was absent, but when I came the following day, they told me that the group had split up because of those reasons. Then, we were no longer friends. One group, went to another class, and the other group stayed. In general the reason was that some girls were more mean and self-centred and showed off and the other girls were just followers and I was one of those followers in a way, so when that tennis game became a problem, this was a concrete reason that we should no longer be friends. The team broke up and we stopped playing with them. In grade six and seven, I was more of an independent person.

Did you not have friends?

No, I did not have friends. I wouldn't say I had close friends, because, I played with everyone in general, but I did have some friends who I spoke to more often than others. We got along in that way. My teachers were always kind and understanding.

Give me some incidents or examples of this?

From primary school, from grade one, I was always a student that did my work and I was quiet in class, so, my teachers always complimented me and at the end of the year, I used to get awards and certificates, and they generally accepted me and tolerated me in class.

Any specific teachers that motivated you?

I would say that my grade five teacher complimented me. She said that she would give her daughter my name because it reflects me because in a sense I am very quiet, understanding and clever. My name is Perseus. And it means the one that serves the Lord from the Bible, and she really like that name and my personality.

When I came to high school, everything seemed quite different, well, generally the pupils, my friends were much different from primary school. In primary school, there was a lot of speculation and stuff, and stupid stuff, but in high school, everyone was generally friendly.

So did you get along better with your friends in high school and did you have mainly foreign or South African friends?

Yes, I did, and I had both foreign and South African friends I did not really choose between them. When I first came to high school, there were certain students who were very much problematic and they sometimes used to manipulate me. These were South African students.

Can you provide me with an example of this?

There was a girl named Tanya in grade 8 and she was something else, she knew that I was very kind, so every time she wanted something, she would come and ask me to do it for her. And if I ever said no, she would raise her voice in class and say, "Oh Tsala this and Tshala that". But then, I didn't really care about her, since, I knew that she was just so irritating and she would get over it. There was no one else, except a few trouble makers, but, they never really troubled me. Well, in general, when I first came to high school, everything was really exciting, it was fun, but so far, I am just coping.

What are you still trying to cope with?

The amount of work. Nowadays, it is more work and less play. It is not like grade eight and nine. In grade eight and nine, I just never used to study that much, unlike grade ten, so I am still getting used to that. I am prepared to do better next year because, grade eleven is a very big year.

At the moment are there any problems that you have with your friends?

With my friends, our friendship has never really changed, it is still the same from the start of high school, there are not any problems. In general, everyone is a little more self-centred and



we have very little time. But they are drifting away slightly because of this book club that was started with other students from the other classes that we share classes with now. They mainly talk about books and movies, and I do not have much to say. I am not a part of the book club because I don't read such books. They generally read novels that are super natural and romance. I am slightly into super-natural, but I do not have the time to read books. But most of the time they are talking about romance and celebrity stories and I am not quite into that kind of thing. In general, we are still the same, but everyone has just gotten a little more self-centred.

And your teachers?

My teachers in High school are more of a motivation, than a demotivation. No incidents from my teachers.

I will never forget my Math teacher from grade seven. He is a very interesting and fun teacher, in the way he teaches. You always understand him. He uses one method of testing where early in the morning, the first thing you would do when you get into the Math class, you would do a five minute test and you had to get a total for that test or else those who did not get a total for that test, were considered the lower class or lower grade people and in this way, we were pushed to do better. Everyone always passed Maths because of the teacher who was a very good teacher. He is very motivating. When I finished Grade seven, he told me something that I can't forget. He said that I have the kind of brain that is able to get A's. I can get five awards at the end of grade eight, eight awards at the end of grade nine and ten awards at the end of grade ten. He told me that and I was actually quite shocked because at the beginning of my grade seven year, I was not that good, in Math at all, but then, because I was helped by him, at the end of the year, I was able to succeed.

Why do you say that you were not good? What were some of the challenges that you experienced at that time?

I was just not getting Math in general, I wasn't a very sharp student when I came to Grade seven, but then, everyone was not that sharp either, so I took it as normal.

So how did you get to this high-functioning level? What did you do to get good grades?

In grade seven, I sometimes used to compare myself to the excelling students in the class. We had a lot of competition going on to see who finished the work first, or to see who gets

total marks for this and that. In the next term, we would try to get all nineties to see who would be better or who would do worse. There was a lot of competitiveness.

Were the excelling students mainly South African or foreigners?

There was one foreigner, but there were another five South Africans.

So do you think you have coped well here in South Africa?

Yes, How does this make you feel knowing that you work so hard?

It doesn't really have much of an impact on me because if I do well, I know that I will be accepted at universities or colleges wherever, but I do feel sorry for most of the other students who come to school but they are sort of like wasting their time and their parent's money. And sometimes for Math, if they are struggling, they will ask me for help, it sometimes makes me feel better, as it will better my understanding, and my memory, but then, sometimes, it takes up a lot of my time. And I do not even receive payment for it so I am benefitting and losing at the same time. I am happy here in S.A and after matric, I would like to do pharmacy, but, I would also like to study further while doing my degree and maybe do astronomy. My parents are generally good parents and do what parents are supposed to do. They would tell me that I should do better next term or they could see that I have tried and they know that this is not my standard, when my results are not reflecting me. They are always there for me even when I try to excel or do better.

## 6. Narrative of Ayesha

What are your experiences of schooling in South Africa?

I came to South Africa in 2006 and I did not know English like I knew a few words , like, “what is your name and how are you”, so it was hard firstly to get into a school, so we struggled and we found a school in Sherwood, I think. It was a Muslim school, but it was not really a school, it was more like Islamic stuff that was taught there. They did not really teach Math, it was mostly Islamic education. So, I started of there, and then because I did know English, I got bullied. There were girls who were telling me, “If you want me to come to the tuck-shop, you have to give me a certain amount of money”. I tolerated this for a few days and people said that I had a strong personality, so I just got over it because; I told her that I could not give her money anymore.

\*Why do you think you were bullied?

I think because I was just a new student. I did not want to ask the teacher to help. That girl knew Hindi and I was able to communicate to her using the same language, so she just tried to take advantage of the fact that I needed her help in order for me to carry on in school so she tried her luck a few times, but I did not tell anyone and got over it myself. I told her that if she did not want to help me, I would go to the tuck shop by myself, speak however I can speak and maybe even point to what I wanted so that I could get my things done. I had my sister with me, even though she was very young and may not remember that we got bullied. None of us knew how to speak English, my brother, sister and I. We started from the bottom. My brother has left school already and my sister is in grade nine.

Since it was hard to travel from the Durban city centre to Sherwood, I left that school and found a school in the city centre called Anjuman Islamic School. In that school, everyone helped me out. There is a teacher who is still there, Mrs Gareeb. She knew Hindi, and so did I. My mother tongue is Gujarati, but I speak Hindi, so she started teaching me how to speak English. For exams, there would be teachers who would ask the questions in Hindi and I would give the answers. They would try and understand what I was saying and write down the exam. So, when I came here, I was in grade 6 but because I did not know English, they put me three years back, so they put me into grade three. So, I started there. In grade four, I was going fine; I knew and started learning English. Since I was not that old, I started picking up English much

faster. By the time I reached grade five, I knew English perfectly and then in grade five, my results were not that good, so I looked at people and saw that other people were getting trophies and I also wanted to get those trophies. In grade six, I told myself that I needed to work harder, and I did. I was placed third and after that I saw a girl going on stage and she was getting all the Dux awards and Math, English and Afrikaans trophies, so I said, okay Samira, "this can be you next year." So I worked hard and got my Dux in grade seven, I got awards for English, Math and other subjects, except for Afrikaans. I became the Islamic scholar and the Dux awardee and then got admission to this high school.

Whilst I was in the primary school phase, our financial circumstances were not that good. In 2007, my father started getting robbed. First, his car was stolen, and that was downfall because he still had the debt of us coming from India. It was too expensive and he still had to pay for the car and it was gone. Then, he got another car which also got stolen, he got robbed three times. He sells airtime as a business, and people found out and every time and almost every month, it started to happen. Three cars were stolen, he was robbed three to four times and we faced challenges and carried on in life.

\*Do you think this was an example of xenophobic attacks?

No I think it was just the high crime rate in South Africa. We were not really affected by xenophobic violence because we are living in a place where there are mostly white people in Smith Street, the building is owned by a white person. There were no racist attacks either. Where I live, no one talks, we all live independently. So that is how we progressed in life.

\*How did you adapt to making friends in school?

In primary school when I first started, there were a few people who knew Hindi and Urdu because with most of the Indians, they speak broken Gujarati or Hindi or Urdu due to their family background. So, it was not hard to make friends and children make friends easily, it is just no matter which language you are talking in, you make friends, so it was not that difficult. In high school, I had friends from grade eight and I still have them as friends now.

The only inspiration that I have is my friends and then my family also. My parents are my biggest inspiration because I want to change their lives. We are struggling from the beginning, so I want to change and break that cycle because I want to become successful and I want to give my parent a better life. There are some family members who try to demotivate you with

their old thinking. Like they say that, “you are a girl and that you must not study too much, you must just get married.” I do not believe in those things and thinking. I think it is, “how can you discriminate?” If you tell a man to look after children, he would never be able to do it, but then you get a woman, who will look after the house, will cook for her husband and will still go to work, earn money to support her family. Even if the husband stops working, the husband will not do the housework, but she will still do it. She can manage the whole family all together, so why is it that men are getting more priorities and privileges than women? I want to change that thinking. In my family, there are very few girls who have chosen careers, like some of them are doctors or accountants. The parents of those girls have an open thinking and they have been living in South Africa or London for a long period of time. Those who are in India, leave school at the age of sixteen. At eighteen, they are already married. Most of my friends from India are already married and they all have children. So it is like I am already an aunty at this age. One of my friends have a son who is three years already and she is the same age like me. So, they do not have an option. They are brought up with the thinking that as soon as you are mature enough, at fifteen or sixteen, you leave school and finish your Islamic studies course and get married. There is no such thing as going to work and following a career. So, I want to change that thinking, and prove that girls can become something. They should not say that girls should just stay at home and get married. Even though parents do get influenced, time and again, but I can handle them.

\*How have your friends become your inspiration?

Sometimes when these aunties come over and speak about these marriages, they demotivate you. When I come to school, I am so angry with them, my friends say, “you know Samira, we know that you have the potential am we know that you are going to become successful and we know that you can change this whole thing around. You can’t just get demotivated by these people.” So they boost my self-esteem and help me. Even if I am weak in any subjects, Amina and Ayesha are there to help me. We do group work and everything together.

I think my biggest inspiration in primary school is Mrs Gareeb. Even up till now, I still look up to her and thank her because if she wasn’t there, I don’t think I would learn English so fluently without any accent. I think she is the one who has made a big impact on my life. She has changed almost everything. If there were some students who came to me and troubled me,

and I would just have to go to her. I could not speak English, so I could only go to her, not any other teacher, because she knew Hindi. When I went to her, she would help me with anything. Imagine not knowing a single word in English, nothing at all, if someone asked what was my name, I would reply and how I was, to reply fine, etc. I did know more than that and she started from scratch, from zero, and now I know English perfectly. She used to sit with me during breaks. I used to go to school early in the mornings and after school, she would stay behind to teach me. I cannot remember the exact details of how these things happened. What was weird was when I went back to India in 2011, some of my best friends came up to me and started talking to me. I could not even remember them because I was so involved in starting my life here in South Africa. I started a different life in South African from what I had in India. The lifestyle in India is very different. In India I was very poor; we did not have everything of the best. I think my father earned about R1500 when we first came to S.A. Now the situations have changed and we have gotten used to living our lifestyle. I love both India and South Africa, but cannot see myself living in India for a long time.

In high school, no particular teacher has motivated me. All the teachers are specialists in their own field. In high school, there was a change, marks started to drop, for English, so as we got used to our new teachers, the marks started to boost up, even with Math.

Is there anything that has demotivated you?

Yes, the place that I am living in now has a lot of local Indian South Africans. They think that the Indians from India are very dirty for some reason. They tell us on our face that India people are very dirty, even though their background is from India. Their grandparents/ parents are from India, they speak Gujarati, yet they feel that people who came from India recently are filthy and do not have manners. I guess they feel that way because if something happens we do not keep it to ourselves, we are ready to discuss it and maybe they do not like that. They have their own thinking and do not try to understand your thinking or situation. They feel that if something is bothering you, then that is your own business and should not be shared with people. I think the problem was just about some building problem and another tenant who is in charge of cleanliness in the building, if we try to tell her something, she feels as if we are bullying her. She also spreads rumours to her family members that her neighbours are bad.

The only other thing that demotivated me is the high level of crime in S.A. Recently, my father was robbed again. I feel like whenever we are doing well, we always get robbed. I feel that I

have adapted well. I can improve on my English, it is good but not the best. My basic knowledge, about countries and what you learn when you are small, I do not have a background about that, because I was still in India. I am now learning about it in Life sciences, so my general knowledge and things about the past, like the apes, I am not so clued on. I know about South African history, so I need to go back and learn more things. My friend, Amina is a pro in general knowledge, so helps me in these things.

Almost my entire family is here in South Africa, we came in at different times. My uncle also started off from scratch. He used to carry the carts for the vendors, but now he has a business worth millions of rands. My dad also started from nothing, he was an Islamic studies teacher. He started teaching, but the hours were too long, and started his own business. We all started small, but now we are building ourselves slowly.

Have you had any confrontation with the local South Africans?

I did not really have that because when I first came to South Africa, I was in a school that had quite a few people who spoke Gujarati, Hindi and Urdu. At this school, I do not really get to chat to people. In the half hour break there is so much to do, but no one actually comments or knows that I am not from South African, unless I tell them when I have to fill out forms asking if I am a foreigner and my home language. There is no interference.

How do you cope with code-switching languages?

I speak Gujarati, I still remember how to write Gujarati, but not as good as English. With English, I write fluently, but with Gujarati, I have to think about what alphabet follows each other. I have to ask my mother and grandfather. With my parents I speak Gujarati and my mum understands just a little English. It hardly affected me. Except that when I went to work, the people there spoke Gujarati as well. If a customer came into the shop and they did not want to know what the customer was talking about, they would speak in Gujarati to me and then suddenly, I would start speaking to the customer in Gujarati, instead of English. There are few girls at this school who speak Gujarati and when I have to switch to English, there is a bit of confusion.

I would definitely like to change the crime rate in South Africa. When I sit on the bench, I think, imagine if I make this company where I hire secret people who would stand around and pretend that they are vendors, as soon as there is crime the person will be caught and put

into jail. If there is serious crime, hang till death. Maybe that will change the crime, but other than that, nothing at all. Poverty is also sad in S.A as well as India. People are exploited after working long hour shifts. They get paid minimum. If I earn enough I would like to build some factories or companies, where people do not work so much, but get paid well enough. In S.A. there are people who are so talented, but they bypassed because there is no space for them to work.



## **Appendix 8: Transcription of photo voice Interviews**

### 1. Photo voice of Michelle

#### Picture 1

Picture one is a picture of my friends. I took a picture because they inspire me in some way, when I feel down or happy or if I feel that my day can't get better they always do things to cheer me up. We have the best time together, especially during breaks at the tuck-shop area. We just talk about anything that makes us happy, such as what had happened in class. We share ideas and opinions on what we think about something. With them I feel as if I can act like myself because they understand me.

\*Give me examples of the happy moments that you shared with your friends.

Happy moments were for example at the end of the year, we all passed, we got together and we went out and we just talked about how we did and it was a happy moment because we all passed and we did well at the end of the year. For example when it was sports day and my friend ran and was placed first in the race, it was a happy moment because we all cheered her up and we all had fun together. We were happy because she was happy.

School inspires because when you leave school you can become someone from the knowledge that you get. The knowledge empowers you to. School is fun and exciting and you learn something new each day. The more you are educated, is better from day to day. School inspires me because I want to be someone one day in life and I do not just want to be that girl, but that lady. I want to be someone, I just do not want to walk on the streets with people saying, "that girl", I want to accomplish something in life. I want to be someone professional.

\*Who inspires you?

The women that I see these days. Many years ago, you would never see a women being a CEO or someone great, but these days, we are given so much of opportunities and there are women who are CEO's and the presidents of countries and they give you the assurance that you can accomplish anything, being a girl. My cousin is studying medicine, which is a good accomplishment, because she actually qualified to study it. She is a foreigner and she is studying in South Africa. It is her third year now and it inspires me because I knew her when she was still in grade eight and now, she has made something of herself and is studying

something big and will be someone great one day. This inspires me because I would like to become an accountant.

\*Describe some negative experiences that you have shared with your friends?

The time when one of our friends went to another country. Some of my friends were crying as she was leaving. I was not crying, not that I was not feeling sad, but I was not showing on the outside, what I was feeling on the inside. It was sad because they were crying and I wanted to cry as well. Luckily I am still in contact with this friend as she is now in Canada.

\*Are your friends mainly foreigners or South African or both?

I have a mixed group of friends, everyone basically. I have foreigners, South Africans, Indians and I get along well with everyone.

\*Do you have any problems with the language that you speak?

Not really, but sometimes when they spoke Isi-Zulu, like when I was in grade three, it was difficult. But now I understand Zulu better, I may not understand anything, but I can comprehend what they are saying. I catch on with a few words they speak and understand what they are trying to say. We always speak English because most of us understand English. There are changes this year because we are in a new class, in Grade eight and nine it was easier because we understood each other well. We are now in classes with new people and we are still getting to know them better, but so far so good.

## Picture 2

Picture two is a picture of the Bible. It gives strength. In life, there are times that you feel that there is no hope, like last year when my Maths mark was not improving, each year it was getting worse and worse, there is always some inspiring words from the Bible that renewed my strength. Just like a verse from the Bible that says, "Tears and pain last till the night, but joy comes in the morning", that shows even if you are hurt and give up hope, it only lasts for a short while, but all changes in the morning.

\*Tell me more about the story behind your Math mark.

My Math mark was bad. I think my teacher was the problem. In grade eight, I did not have a problem as I had another teacher. With my grade eight teacher, she explains the sections in more detail. She makes sure that we understand, but with my grade nine teacher, he goes so

fast, some things he does not teach as he said that we learnt it the previous year and everything goes just so fast, even though you did not understand something. He just goes on and does not care enough to stop and check if we understood or not. Last year was the worst year for Math and the marks were very bad. We tried having study groups to try and improve on our marks, but it still was not working. With study groups, we were not even studying. People would get into groups and do other things, instead of studying. So, that did not work. I tried working by myself, it did not work because I did not understand anything. I used to ask my brother for help when I did not understand anything, because he is good at Math. He is in grade twelve. He was helpful and if I did not understand certain sums, he would explain to me the methodology. But this became a problem, because my Math teacher would not use the same method to work out sums and wanted things to get done the way he wanted to. At home and at school, different methods had been used, so that caused lots of confusion. In both ways, we came up with the same answer, but the method was different. In the end, I did just wrote my final exam with the knowledge that I knew, hoping for the best.

\*How does religion help you in other aspects of your life?

It helps me to get along well with other people, because there are proverbs in the Bible that help. It teaches us to unite. There may be sometimes that we have problems, but it will not last forever because one day you will get over it and you will be happy. I go to church every Sunday. I go to a church that has mixed Nationals, like people from Ghana, as well as South Africa, all mixed. Going to church helps me to interact with other people and how to deal with people. Sometimes you may say something that is not offensive, but others may feel that way, you learn how to react and deal with other people.

### Picture 3

To be honest, I really do not know what it is about her, but she inspires me. She is my mum and she is always there for me in difficult times of my life. Like sometimes when you get your report and you are feeling down, she just reassures you that you can do better, just study harder and improve yourself. She is always there for you to truly believe that you should be motivated in a positive way. She makes me happy and by making me happy, she always brings out the best in me, every time.

\*Has your mum fitted in well with the South African society?

My mum speaks English, she does not speak Zulu, but can understand parts of it. My mum comes from a background where she had to stop school in grade eleven and she always tells me that I should finish school, and that motivates me because she wants me to become something that she was unable to accomplish and that inspires me because she motivates me to do so. My brother also motivates me because he has started school, and is now in matric, he is about to finish, that is something good, because not everyone started school when we started and is finishing this year. He was in grade two when he came here, and I had not even started school. My other brother is younger than me and is in grade nine and the other is in grade seven.

## 2. Photo voice of Jane

### Picture 1

I chose a picture of my brother because he would help me when I am reading and influence me in good ways, not in bad ways. He is like my role model. He helps me with my work if I did not understand it. He helped me to read because I could not pronounce the words properly. He helped with my work and he is a very creative person and he raps, which I like. He is not a bad person, even though you may think that he might be bad, but he is not. He helps me a lot that is why I chose a picture of my brother.

\*Give me examples of how he has helped you?

He has helped me with my Creative Arts drawings if I did not know how to do it, he would draw a poster or I would see him draw and then copy him as well as the moves that they use for drawing. He has helped me to read the hard words in story books. When I came to South Africa I was in grade 1 and I did not understand English. My brother was very attentive in school, so if he learnt something in school, he would come home and pronounce it to us and we would repeat what he said. We learnt new things from him because he was one grade ahead of me. He is now in grade 10, but he is having difficulties because he did not know that school would allow you to choose subjects, so he chose Zulu, but then he is not good at Zulu, so he is making sure that he works harder so that he can pass. I help him to do his homework and projects or his pamphlets for Zulu and he says that if he had another chance in life he would choose French because it is much more similar to what my mother speaks. I would also like to choose French because like learning new things and do not like staying with the same subject for the entire year. I like to choose different subjects each year.

\*Are you having difficulty with Isi-Zulu?

No this term I really made it, I passed. My results have improved from last year because last year students in my class would laugh every time I had to do Zulu or say Zulu words. Now, I practice on the weekend and the holidays and now I am improving on my work. I practice by reading in front of the mirror or I read to my sister and she would listen and tell me what I could do. She motivates me by telling me about how I read and the work that I do.

\*Tell me more about your brother?

He does not back down. He really likes playing basketball. Where I live in the Point in Durban, there is no place that they can use, but he still goes ahead with his playing, so that he can improve his talent. I also like playing with him because it is fun.

## Picture 2

I chose the picture of the street because since I came to Durban, I have been on the same street, we never moved to another place/street. We have been there for such a long time and we have good memories, like they used to have a park, but then they broke it down and made a huge parking area. I am used to the street and they have interesting places, like Ushaka Marine World close by. It is fun as you walk down the street because you can go to the beach and you can play soccer with your friends and enjoy a good time with your family on the same street that we live on.

\*Have you had any negative experiences in your area?

Yes, I have. On Sunday, there was police on the street, the Congolese were marching because they threw petrol on a man's body. But, I am not sure why, but they say it was the South African's who had thrown petrol on him and now he passed away. These incidents make me feel bad because I came to another country for a better lifestyle, but, it seem like the lifestyle is quite the same because people are abusing others because of their race and nationality. They are doing bad stuff to them and it does not feel right because as a foreigner, I feel that they are doing it to me, just because they did it to another foreigner. It makes people feel bad, it does not give a good impression because I have smaller sisters around me. If they had to see that they will feel that the people are treating us very badly in this country because we came here for a different lifestyle.

\*Did you participate in this march?

No I did not. My mum said that she was going to, she said that she would support them as a foreigner. She is also here for a better life, so she could not see burning someone down as being a good thing as it was for no reason. We did not know what he did, people said that he did not do anything and therefore we should join them in a march. That is why my mum joined in. I heard now that the police came to the street and they came to investigate, but, they did not find anything wrong. We also saw E TV news, but we did not know why they did not

broadcast this on the television because many people would like to know how foreign people are treated.

\*Do you have any other memories?

Yes, once when I went to Addington Primary School and the name brand Knorrox, sponsored my school with groceries and parcels for the school's birthday and it was quite fun because I went with my brother and had a great time and my small sisters. We played and then they showed us how to bake and they gave us a bag with some Knorrox products and groceries that we could use at home. We have a good relationship with the people in my area because we show respect for people who are older than us, they greet us as we go by and many of the people know us for a very long time now. Our relationship has become very good, unlike before when we first came here. When we first came, we did not really know anyone because my father did not have any family here, but then as the years went by, he found a Liberian community at South Beach, where they can meet and discuss ant financial issues or anything that they experience in South Africa. All of the children also hang around together and we celebrate holidays that we would observe in Liberia. When we celebrate, we make sure that we go out and have a braai, we call all the small children together and see that they play together. We discuss our dreams and desires, because we have come to South Africa to get a better life.

\*Are you apart of a church group in your community?

Yes, the church is right across from our home. We used to go to a church called Light Church, they came from the United States, but then, they moved and took some people to the States. We do not go all the time, but the church has community programmes, they also come to our schools during breaks and we have prayer sessions with them. Our church can also sponsor things that we need for school, such as stationery. They help us because we have lawyers and doctors in the church. My church is mixed, we have South Africans as well as Liberians, Kenyans and Zimbabweans.

\*At first, was it difficult adapting to the people from your area?

No, it was not difficult, because we used to go with our parents, so if we were having trouble maybe making friends, we made sure we were always together, because we would not speak the South African language. At first, we would hear, but then we did not know how to speak.

The South Africans were speaking Zulu and I did not understand that. My mum would ask them to pronounce the words that they spoke, so that she would know how to say it and what the word meant. I still have my Liberian friends. We meet up during the holidays and we go to the beach, because they also live around the same area. We meet up for parties and any occasions we have and we always include all of them.

\*Do you have any South African friends from your area?

Yes most of our neighbours are South African. When we first came we got along well with everyone, we did not have a major problem with anyone. We tried to get along well with them. The area that I live in, it is not that it is bad, but people give it a bad name. If you are asked where you live and you say South Beach, they say, "Wow", because they know that bad things happen in the South Beach. There are lots of deaths and children are influenced very easily by the bad things that happen there, such as small children smoke, which is not a good thing. But they are easily influenced and try this out because of their friends. People also get robbed, for example on Point Road, it is not a safe place to be on. It is not safe to walk around there, so from half past seven and eight onwards, it is very unsafe. You cannot walk on the street corners with your cell phones and people may rob you of your valuable items, so it is not quite safe to walk on the street at night. In Liberia, it is not safer, but because there was war, you could not walk around on the streets, Here, it is a bit better, because you can stay on the streets, as long as you have company, you know that people will not follow you. You need to make sure that you walk with someone. In Liberia, it is different because for walking around the street, a person will try to kill you, so you could not even walk on the street. In Liberia, if you did not speak or understand the language of a particular tribe, then you would be shot/killed. I don't think anything is as serious as that.

### Picture 3

My friend's name is Isabelle\*. I met her here at the school. I met her in March last year, 2014. I had no one to hang around with because we came from Addington Primary and we were new to high school. We thought that maybe we could get along with all the children from Addington Primary, but now they have changed and have found new friends. I used to walk around by myself. I used to ensure that I had a place to sit down during break time. Then, I met Isabelle, she was kind and she said that I could come and sit with her during the breaks. So, she had been the only one who had been kind to me in my first year at high school,



because I never met anyone else like her. She is very honest and loyal and I support her in everything that she does. She also helps me if I am having a difficulty in certain subjects.

\*How has she helped you over the past 2 year?

She encourages me and helps me if I did not understand anything. She would ask me to join her in the library during the breaks so that we would be able to do research and do our homework together. We would also go together to our teachers during the breaks and the teacher would explain to us if we did not understand something. Isabelle would tell me not to be afraid of the teachers at school, because they were kind and they would help if you did not understand something. Isabelle is a foreigner, she is from Zimbabwe. She has really been kind to me during the year.

\*Why do you think it was difficult for you to make friends when you first came to high school?

There were friends that I knew, but I did not know why they changed when we came to high school and they did not want to join me anymore. I do not think I did anything to them. I think they felt as though they were on top of the world that is why they left me. These friends were South African as well as foreigners. They made me feel as though school was so bad and I did not feel like going to school every day. They still talk about me as I walk past them. Even my new group of friends have noticed this and they ask me why certain people always talk about me, and I say that I do not know why, or maybe they find me special or something, I do not know. They feel that because they are in the 8A/9A class they are better than us, because I am in the 9C class. We told them that they never wrote the test and they were not graded according to their performance, but they do not like me at all. They have no explanation as to why they talk about me when I ask them.

\*Can you share other memories that you have had with Cythia?

Our friendship has been good, even though she was not here for half of the year because she went for an operation, we still shared a good relationship. I would go to the library alone when Isabelle was not here. I did not have any other friends, but this year, it has a changed, because many people want to be friends with me. It made me very sad when Isabelle was in hospital because no one really wanted to join me or sit next to me in my subject classes. I would try sitting near them, but then, they would move forward, they did not like sitting there with me. I would always sit alone when she went for the operation. I was happy when she

returned because she was well, some people go for operations and do not return alive. She went for a heart operation. When she is back now, she feels as if she is more active and now we can do more things together. I am not sure if she can play sport, because her heart is weak, but after school I walk her home and then I take my transport from her house. When we were in grade 8, she would see that the 9A class always made fun of me and she would always tell me to just ignore them and walk past them. We always walked together, so she would not leave me behind. If I was not there, she would come and fetch me and we would go to classes together.

### 3. Photo voice of Tina

#### Picture One

The first picture is about the people in our church. Every year, we always bring up, like a motto, or a name for our church. The name of our church is Faith Ministries and we always have a motto. Our motto is 'I am born to shine', for the year 2015, and we also have a theme that we will have to carry on for throughout the year. The theme is the year of taking possession, they say that we should buy shirts and we should wear it in the day and we have a special service. So, we bought our shirts and we had our caps, we all wore our shirts and we came to church. We had a special service.

\*What did you do?

I also wore my shirt and cap. We also bought bottles of water and the pastor prayed for the water and when we were leaving, we had to wash our legs. This was just after New Year's Day, the day that the motto was also introduced. The whole church was involved, from the young to old; however, the shirts of the younger children were just in brighter colours, than the shirts that we used. I am also a part of the Eglet-club and the church choir. In the Eglet club, they teach us about life and how we should handle ourselves as teenagers and not to rush ourselves through things. It is just like a youth meeting for thirteen to eighteen year olds. They are mainly Congolese members, but we can bring our friends from outside. I did bring my South African friends once, but then the club stopped due to the examinations and members had to study, so then people would not come. The numbers dropped from about twenty five to five, so we are trying now to re-launch it.

\*Does your church mainly comprise of foreigners or South Africans?

We have South African members, but mainly Congolese are members. I have been a member of this church for nine years, ever since I have been in this country, because when we came here, my dad had already been going to the church here, so we joined in as well.

\*Why did you take a liking to the church that contained many Congolese members?

I did feel more comfortable, because they speak the same language as myself, which is French. They then translate the sermon in English, so if you do not understand, they have a translator, so it is much better for me, because I can listen in French and in English, but it does not have

many South African members, as they may not feel too comfortable. I have not really been to a South African church. There is a church near South Beach, close to Point, a South African church, and whenever we pass there, we don't see preaching, all we see is them dancing and the church is full of people, but all we see them doing is dancing, so there is no point of dancing rather than preaching. I have never danced in the church before. Another problem is that they wash their hands in the same bucket when they enter the church, at the some South African churches. You can come from anywhere and wash your hands an when we pass there, the water looks brown. So everyone who came to pray just wash their hands and you do not know whether that person has bacteria or something. I do not see the purpose of that. We do dance at times, but we do preaching.

\*What motivation do you draw from the church and Eglet club?

Yes, my church does motivate me. It teaches me to be kind towards others, just like they say, two wrongs do not make a right, so when someone does the wrong thing, I do not wait for revenge, because there is no use fighting over something, because if a person is wrong, they why try to make them feel that something is right, while they think that it still is wrong?

How has church motivated and supported you as an immigrant learner in our country?

Well, the pastor and all the members of the church care, like, when my grandmother died, the church members came together, they visited, gave things, they came to our house and also prayed for us for about one week. With regards to my schooling, for example, if my dad could not make it for my meetings or to fetch my reports in primary school, our pastor would come and he would take the role of my dad. He would come to school and talk to the teachers and listen to what they had to say, fetch my reports and even the aunts and other members of the church would do the same. Most of the children from my school went to Addington Primary, so it would be really easy to do this.

In this picture that I have chosen, the fair lady is my aunty; this is my sister's boyfriend and thus is his brother and his cousin. They all are foreigners. These people motivate me because they are like my elder brothers and sister. So, they motivate me and they tell me not to abide to the rules of the world, but the rule of God, because they have been through all this and now they are trying to help me because I am their younger sister going through the bigger stages of life, so they direct me the right way.

## Picture Two

I chose picture two because it I thought it explains how my friends and I enjoy life. These are my friends, they are the most amazing people that I have ever met. We always stick together. If there is a problem, we do not leave our friends to deal with the problem, and we always walk together. Only if our parents come to fetch us, we will not walk together, otherwise, we are always together. We laugh on the road and we have fun, we do not make a noise, but we have fun and we laugh about things on the road. Most people call us “children”, and “immature”, but we do act maturely. We do not have to be serious in order for us to be mature. We are mature in the inside; we enjoy life while we can because you never know when your life can stop. But, some people who are in Sastri Secondary and who used to come to our school, complain. Other grade ten pupils who used to be in our primary school also complain. When I was chatting to me, he called my language, Lingala, stupid. Even though he knows the language, he pretends as though he does not know it, he does not like being Congolese and I always tell him that he does not have respect for others because that attitude will not take him anywhere. He says that he does not care, so I just leave him because there is no point in arguing. You should not argue with a stupid person because it makes you stupid too.

After school, go straight home, but mostly we take our time and enjoy it while we can because we are young, but most people do not like the way we are.

\*What do you normally do to enjoy yourselves?

Sometimes we sing, laugh and dance, we joke with each other. However, other people from other schools do not like what we do. They say that we are too forward. When we laugh at something else, they think that we were laughing at them. We actually do not mind what other people think about us, because we intend to enjoy life, we are thirteen, but don't act more than our age. We act our age and do not cross our borders. We do not act wild and just have fun. Some Congolese from other high schools make funny sounds at us when we are walking from school. I know about my religion and culture. I am not interested in rapping and stars, like Nicky Minaj. She is just a fake person; Chris Brown and Lil Wayne sing songs that have rude meanings, while listening to Christian music has a meaning. Some people also like copying other the styles of others, they are not individuals. They follow popular culture, such as the latest dances and just continue. When a pop star brings in the latest culture all people

want it, such as the crop top. These Congolese people do not care about their tradition and their background, even though they know that we are from the same culture. There are Congolese who don't like acting as though they are Congolese. They try to fit in with the South Africans and do what they do.

\*What does being a South African mean to you?

They are rude to you and they look for trouble, the foreigners hang out with South Africans and when they see you, they do not want to greet you. When they are not with their South African friends, they greet you. So, they are like two faced. For example, I am my class captain, if I tell them to stand in a line, or to be quiet, there will be those two girls who just be "ayyy, ayy ayy", and they will be screaming at you. You tell them that you are right here, but they scream at you. I ask them why they scream, but they cut you short. You cannot argue with a stupid person, so I just leave it and I sit down or walk away. The rest of the class will listen, but not them. But they will be the first ones to tell the class to be quiet when they do not want to be disturbed. When they speak in Zulu, our teacher tells them not to, because it is an English medium school. If one of the Congolese girls says something in Swahili, they say that we should not speak our language and then an argument begins. The entire class is then distracted. Everyone claps and cheers on as though it is a wrestling competition.

\*Are there any other incidents out of school where South Africans have been rude to you?

Yes. When we are walking on the roads and laughing, they say something in Zulu, I understand a bit of Zulu, and you know that they are talking about you. You know when they are talking about you. You also know that they are talking about you because they say, "Kwere Kwere". I do not react, I just look at them. I do not mind because I know that I am a foreigner. All my friends in this photo are foreigners.

\*Why do you always have foreigners in your group of friends?

I did have a few South African friends, but, we just separated. We were in the same group for Creative Arts and the South African never came for practice and as the group leader I asked them all to focus (there were 3 S.A and 3 foreigners) and the other 2 S.A coped, but the one did not. She did not contribute ideas and eventually she did the assessment. But thereafter, she left and found other friends. Most South Africans, not all of them have a negative attitude towards their school work and do not like doing it. They do not care about the work. For

example, we have an assignment due today and most of the Congolese have it ready, but some of the South Africans always ask for an extension. They also say we should not tell the teacher the correct due date for the task. He even gave a second extension, but it was still not good enough. I have also noticed that there are mostly foreigners who feature in the top 5 at school, because we are more dedicated to complete our work. We know that we did not come from the best place, because of the high levels of corruption, when we come here we work hard to get a living. Even though we work so hard we will not even get a job, like my dad. My dad is well qualified, he has got his Master's degree in Theology and is doing his doctorate this year, but his supervisor keeps extending the years, it was supposed to be 2 years initially. He has to translate documents and my mum has a catering business that is what supports us. My dad has also translated for a minister from Gabon, but when my dad asked for a job here, they said that there is no space for him because he is a foreigner. .My dad just laughed and walked away. South Africans feel that they are from the best country, but they do not know how to accept other people. They feel the foreigners are taking away their jobs. For example, the Somalian's, they would build up a place for business, but the South Africans will burn the place down and say that their jobs are being taken away. There is also a lot of racism here, people remind you daily that you are a foreigner. For example, the teachers, my Creative Arts teacher, we were doing a play, The Modern Day Romeo and Juliet and due to the lines being in Shakespearian, it is quite difficult and not everyone can understand. She has the assumption that all Congolese girls are excellent in speaking English, but that is not the case.

\*Do you not have any South African friends?

I do, but she is not fully South African, she is half Nigerian and South African. We are friends, but not close friends; we do not have any problems with her. It is not like we have a very close relationship, I did have South African friends last year, but we are not too close anymore.

### Picture Three

This is a picture with my sister and I. My sister is a wonderful person. She is always leading me the right way and correcting me when I am wrong. I chose this photo as well because she was about to go for her matric dance, so it was before we went to drop her off at the ICC. She was about to go for the matric dance and I was so happy and my mum told me that my turn would come in 4 years' time. We were just having fun because we were about to leave and

we would only see her later that night. My sister shows me that even if you are going through tough times, there is always hope.

\*What difficult experience has she had that has motivated her?

She had certain problems with her community. People always tend to have problems with my mum, sister and me, not my dad. They like gossiping, they feel that my mum is too much for them. If you have to look at my mum, she does not look her age, so most people find that it is wrong, they always look at the way she dresses on Sunday and wherever you go she is always talked about. They always talk about our attitude as we are straight forward people and speak up when there is something wrong. An example was when I was in a class with Teacher X, I was busy doing my work, and the class was making a noise, I was irritated telling the class to be quiet, and I told the teacher that he should tell the class to be quiet and maybe if he taught us more, the class would not make a noise. He got angry and asked me to leave and I said that was okay, I went to my form teacher and the class was stunned. I continued reading my book. Teacher X then called for me. I then left and went back to his class, and continued reading. It does not make me feel good when my name is passed around. Some people say that I show off or talk too much and act as if I know everything. This is by both South Africans and Congolese.

My sister is studying radiography through UNISA. When I was in grade seven and I was in three, she motivated me to work hard. She was a prefect and I wanted to do the same. She motivated me to keep going and even if I got low marks, she wanted me to push for the next term and I should not be satisfied with the mark I get, I must want to go higher. I must be determined to push and do better. She never used to give up and always used to work harder. She also received many academic awards. She was very good at History and got a distinction as well and this also motivated me to want to know more about the past. She did not have challenges with regards to friendship because her South African friends were very supportive and wanted to know more about her background. She was in the "A" class from grade 10 and they were so united, all of them. They all used to pray together in the mornings as well as sing. I wished that our class was like that. It seems as though we are falling apart. They also used some words in Lingala and she used some words in Zulu. I will feel better if my friends learn more about me.



#### 4. Photo voice of Ayesha

##### Picture One

This is a picture of my friends at school. This is Priya. I met her like four years ago when I came to this school. She supports me in everything. If I do not know something, for example, if I do not have a very good knowledge about incidents that happened in the past as well as extinctions in Life Sciences, and general knowledge, she knows a lot and helps me. Obviously she knows a lot because she watches a lot of English movies and I am more inclined to Indian movies and programmes. Indian programmes do not really give a lot of information on those issues, so she helps me in that. If I do not understand something at school, in any subject, she will help. And then when I come home from school and there are family members who are demotivating in the fact that they believe that girls should not study and that I should just get married and question why I am studying, then A\* encourages me and tells me, “you know what, let them say what they want to say, but I have faith in you that I am sure you are going to become someone in your life and prove all of them wrong.” She is my encouragement and inspiration for me. The other girl in this photo is Ayesha. I met Ayesha just about a year ago. She has been in this school for a long time, but I befriended her last year. We never really used to be together, but now, she is like my best friend. We also help each other, because like me, she is also an immigrant. We both are immigrants, so we understand each other.

\*How do you help each other as immigrants?

She does not understand some things in Math, which I am good at, so I help her in Math. And sometimes, I want to learn French from her, because she speaks French, so she teaches me some French words. I also teach her Hindi because she is fascinated about learning Hindi, so that is how we share the languages and share our culture. Because the three of us have different backgrounds, so it is like a collaboration of all three.

Do you also share a close bond with other South Africans from your class or school?

Well I do chat to my class mates about the Zulu culture, how they live and I have figured out that the Zulu culture, not Christianity, the Zulu culture, and the Islamic culture and the basic Islamic ways, like what they do when a person dies, when a baby is born, during marriage, those share a very close link. Our practices are similar. Zulu culture practices and Islam is very much similar, but the difference is the culture and religion.

I chose my Life Orientation class as a background for my photograph because it teaches us about general things about life and that was the best place I found to take out this photograph around school.

### Picture Two

This is Mrs B\*. The man standing next to her is Mr E\*, the school principal. When I came from India, the schools did not want to take us because obviously we did not know English and schools looked for academic learners. At that time we did not know English, so all the subjects are taught in English so obviously our results would be bad at the beginning. So my parents search for many schools, we tried to get admission into Jumma Masjid and some other schools, but it was difficult to get admission. I went to Sherwood because that school did not focus on academics, it mainly focused on Islamic knowledge, so I started there and left because it was too far, and then this school, it was just growing at that time, and it had fewer numbers of pupils and the principal decided that they would give us admission there. He was the one that helped me get into this school. He saw the potential in us that it did not matter whether we knew English or not. He knew that we were going to learn from gradually, because that is what school was for. He understood the meaning of school and the learning environment. Standing next to him is Mrs B\*. She taught me how to speak English. She taught me everything, like I cannot remember the exact process, that I went through, but she taught me how to speak in English, how to write. When I used to give exams, she would ask me questions in Hindi and I would reply in Hindi and she would translate it to English and try to help me to finish the exam, not just for English, but for almost all my subjects. I used to do oral examinations for my exams.

\*For how long did the oral exams last?

I think that went on for about one and a half years until I could read and write in English because I could speak a few words in English. Speak was a bit okay, but the spelling and the writing was not because I did not go to an English medium school in India because I belonged to a very poor background, so that is why I went to a Gujarati school. They did not teach us much of English, they taught, but not too much. They taught us the basics, like, "what is your name", but not the spelling. So I did all of the oral exams and that is how she helped me.

### Picture Three

This is my family, my mother, sister and aunty. Well, when we came here, none of knew English, so we all were illiterate people, in a way. From my three sisters, the last one was born in South Africa, so she is okay, but the second one she was in grade one, but they put her into grade R, which was not so bad because she was just put back one year. My brother was also put back a year. I think when we came he was in grade three and they put him into grade two, so that also was not so bad. My last sibling is my little sister; she is now in grade two and was born here. When my family first came here, we obviously had to make a fresh start. Everything was totally different. India and South Africa are different and adapting was difficult. People told my father that, "you know what, Samira is big, she is getting old, and she is getting mature; just get her married, instead of sending her to school." Education is of no use, but my father said, "No, she is sharp in school and I am sure she will do well." I told him that I did not want to get married or stay at home; I wanted to go to school. So he supported me everything I that I did. If I said that I wanted to study, he would let me study and send me to school. Then my mother, sometimes they do get influenced by the family members who say that they shouldn't let me study because it is of no use, at the end of the day, the girl will be in the kitchen and cook for her husband, but they still support me. Whatever happens, they still support me, they know that I have the potential to do it and even though they do not show it at times when my results are bad, or when I do not want to do certain chores, they still support me. They know that I am a person who will not listen to things easily and not accept things however they give it to me. They know that I want to change the fact and the mind-set of my family members that a girl must not study and they support me in that.

My aunt, my mum's cousin sister, she is the one who supports me, even though most of my other aunts are against me studying, because they think that I should get married, but she tells me that, "you cannot go anywhere without education, even if you get married, what are you going to teach your children?"

\*Is your family fluent in English?

My sisters are, my aunt was in London, she got married there and then she came to South Africa, so she knows English, because obviously things in London are different. If you do not know English, they offer free classes for immigrants to learn English; maybe they should have this in South Africa. My mum can speak English, but not so fluently. She understands English,

but does not speak fluent English, but we teach her so she is getting there. My baby sister is coping very well. Although she has been here longer than us, she still speaks Gujarati fluently. Because we came from India, I still remember that language very well, how to read and write, but they were small, so getting used to learning English and speaking and writing in English, made them forget about Gujarati. Both my brother and sister cannot read and write Gujarati. My sister is now so used to English that she cannot remember the numbers in Gujarati. My smaller sister actually speaks and writes better Gujarati than the older one. My father teaches her and she can write numbers in Gujarati and she is good in English also.

## 5. Photo voice of Susan

### Picture 1

I chose picture one because it reminds me of people that have helped me a lot and people who are quite similar to me and we went through similar problems together in the past. We used to take the same combi since we used to live in the same area and we both were foreign families. They came from Zimbabwe and had just recently come here to South Africa. When people used to bully us in the combi, we used to stand up for each other. When I used to go in the combi, the others used to just send me to the back seat to stand, while all the South African children would sit down, but especially this tall, old guy over here used to backup for me and used to tell them not to tease me or that I have the right to stand up against this or he used to send me to the front of the combi sometimes, We were like a team, like a group, all of us. The one time I was sent to the back and it was very full, and there was a certain smell at the back, and then they said that it was me, because I had been there. I then said that it could not be me. We almost started a fight and he stood up for me and he could see it was certainly not me, it was someone else. I do not think I will ever forget these people. They do not visit us anymore, they have moved to another area. The other people in this photo are also quite nice foreigners. We always spoke and advised each other. When we had problems going on, then we would share information. For example if there was a new attack going on or stopping foreigners from doing certain things, or getting g access to the bank. Then we would speak about it with each other.

### Picture 2

This is my grade 2 class. This is the only picture that I could get of my grade 2 teacher, Mrs A\*. I did not like her. She was the only teacher that I could look back and says that I did not enjoy that year. She used to pick on me and make feel like little children that did not understand anything. I used to always get low marks in her class and I wondered why. The following year when I went to grade three, my marks went very much higher. It was only wither that I did not do well. After that when I look back to my years with her, I feel that maybe I misunderstood her, maybe she was trying to sort me out because maybe I was just lazy. She was not actually a bad teacher as such. She used to pick on only some children. Other children sitting in the corner and doing their own things were treated as though they were the stupid ones and I was one of them and all of us used to get low marks. As my years went by in primary

school, it seemed as though she forgot about the whole incident because she used to greet me and was okay with me especially after I won awards. In grade seven she did congratulate me and she was nice.

### Picture 3

This is my mum and dad because they are always supportive towards me. Even though I may sometimes feel like I am degrading or my marks in any subject are lower, I feel as though I do not want to be alive anymore. But when I realise that they still have hope in me, and they are still paying for my education, even though they may shout at me today, their morals will still get me through and help me finish. It makes me want to work hard again, so in the future, I could support them as well. They are always there for me in any trouble that I have. I am afraid of the trouble and that there is not enough time to finish certain things. I know that I can't get myself out of this world so quickly after all that my parents have done to put me through to get up here, I can't. They are like my motivation. This was my graduation in pre-school I just like this picture, it is one of the few photos that I have of her holding me like that, I just remember it.

I chose this picture because this is what I want to do when I grow up. This is like a motto to me. If any trial comes my way, I must feel as though it is impossible. I must try to overcome all the problems that have come my way. This is the biggest motto in my life. It was actually in a sports magazine.

## 6. Photo voice of Ruth

### Picture One

This is the picture of my church altar, with the name Local Assembly of God. When I arrived in South Africa, this was the church I started in and started attending. The population of the church mainly comprises of refugees and many of them came here long ago, they studied here and we have a lecturer who is a refugee and who lectures at DUT. He graduated and got his PhD here in South Africa, so he is an inspiration in church. I find inspiration in church to persevere and work hard and get what I want in life. I draw motivation from the man who got his PhD because he came here he wanted to apply for his PhD, because he got his Master's degree in Congo, but when he arrived here he was discouraged because in his first year as a student, he had to restart his Masters and then do his PhD and today he has it. He did not mind because he had the knowledge. He got his PhD last year and is now a fully qualified lecturer at the DUT. He really inspires me daily. I want to be just like him, I want to get my Phd in internal auditing.

\*Is this church just for immigrants?

We have church every day, from Monday to Sunday. The church is mainly made up of immigrants, but there are a few South Africans who do attend the service. The population and the majority of them are immigrants, mainly Congolese. Going to this church gives me some kind of closure because the people that go there speak the same language that I do and I know them. I can adapt to them and can understand them better, because if I go to another church, with a majority of a South African population, I might not feel very comfortable there, because I don't know the language very well, first of all. I will not be able to interact with them. In my church; I am still much more comfortable because I can interact with the people. We speak our mother tongue language in church, but we have a person who interprets to people who do not understand in English to the other South Africans who come to my church.

\*What were your experiences at a South African church?

I have been to a South African church before. It was different, first of all with the language; the way they get along was different. For example, in my church, we are like family. My father and the priest are from Congo, so they used to love in the same community. When I go to other churches, I do not know anyone. I will not be able to interact with anyone, but in my

church, you will be able to because you grew up with most of these people. I have not experienced this bond with others in the other church that I went to.

How did the South Africans make you feel uncomfortable?

Well it was the Africans from South Africa who made me feel uncomfortable. When I went to the Cathedral church, I went there, and I was sitting next to an African lady and she was speaking in Zulu. At that time I did not understand Zulu that well, and I told her that I did not understand the language. She then asked me if I was a “Kwerekwere”. I said yes and she said, “oooh”, and then she turned away. Yes, it was an awkward moment, and I got to know that they did not like us and I knew that I had to change. The church that I go to now is opposite house. The church actually started in my house. The pastor and my father arranged for services at my home. We started at home and then opened the church. It’s now been ten years since I have been attending this church.

#### Picture Two

This is my brother and sister. They are the last borns. I have chosen them because they inspire me. They go to A Primary School and they both take IsiZulu and Afrikaans, but they love IsiZulu. One is in grade three and the other is in grade three and the other in grade four. At home they speak Zulu, not fluently, but better than I do. They are more interested in Zulu than Afrikaans. They inspire me because although they are children, they might not face the problems I did. Maybe when they reach higher grades, they may understand. Right now, they love Zulu and they want to learn more about it. They want to interact with South Africans. They do not have African friends who are Congolese, they have only South African friends. It is very different as when I was in school. They make me proud as an elder sister, because I know that they do not experience any negatives and that these children do not take anything to heart, that these South Africans do not like me.

\*How was your primary school career different from theirs?

It was not the same as theirs; I was closer to the Congolese. At the time there were groups at school, groups of South Africans, or groups of Congolese and racial groups. I was not really interacting with the South Africans; I was not really close to them.

Although these are not my own siblings, we share the same mum, but not the same father, but then we are very close. At the moment, their experiences are very positive. Their grades



are very good my sister is very good at English and so is my brother. They have no problem adapting to their friends.

### Picture Three

This is my mum. She inspires me a lot. She always tells me to never give up. She is a cleaner at Hyundai. At the moment they are trying their best to train her as a secretary as they do not have a secretary and she has a great bond with South Africans. She loves to interact with them and love to know more about them. At her work she does not face many troubles. She has not had anything major compared to what I was facing at school. She always encourages me and tells me even though there is discrimination; try to be friends with those who discriminate.

\*Do you isolate yourself from South Africans?

No, not recently. In primary school, I used to do that because of the language. I never used to understand Zulu and I never liked the language. I used to tell myself where I would go with the language because my future plans were that I would finish high school and leave for overseas to study. I would probably try to find a bursary to help me to study. So, I did not really care about the language. I did not want to know the language. So when they spoke to me in the language, I would try to find out what they were saying. The first thoughts that came to my mind were that they were swearing me. I always had negative ideas about this. My mother therefore encouraged me to be more positive around South Africans and to be more open minded. Now, after her advice only recently have I changed, just this year I have changed, I am more open towards South Africans and Zulu and I am close to them and they in turn have shown that they want to learn more about me and my background because I am showing an interest in them. It is better now; I am learning how to speak the language better now. I can now understand what they are saying in IsiZulu. Though sometimes they do not like teaching me because they do not want me to know what they are saying. I try my best to learn the language.

We left Tanzania with my mum. I was born in Tanzania, I came with her to South Africa, and she struggled a lot, coming to South Africa at that time.

\*What were some of the problems she experienced?

The paperwork, first of all, the language barrier, and the paperwork as she did not have an identity document. Your foreign Identity document also limits you. Going to school at that time was a problem with the paperwork. Going to school at that time and learning as a refugee was also a problem. We came here a few years after Apartheid had ended, so the law was not too kind towards immigrant coming into the country. It was a problem going to school and learning. My mum came here and she could not get the green identity document easily but she got the papers, the ones that were needed and she used to work day shift and night shift. She struggled a lot for me to go to school. I therefore want to work hard, just how she works hard and all her hope is on me and my dream is to make her proud and to not be like most of the Congolese who give up because they cannot get jobs and their paperwork sorted out. My dream is to never give up and just carry on and make their lives better. I also believe that we should be open minded and not think negatively about South Africa.