

Born in Limbo, Living in Limbo and Probably Will Die in Limbo

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Abstract : The subject of second-generation migrant youth is under-researched in the context of South Africa. Thus, their opinions and views have been marginalised in social science research. This paper addresses this gap by exploring the complexities of second-generation Mozambican migrant youth's lived experiences in how they construct their identities and develop a sense of belonging in post-apartheid South Africa, specifically in Bushbuckridge. Bushbuckridge was among the earliest districts to accommodate Mozambican refugees to South Africa in the 1970s and remains associated with large numbers of Mozambicans. Drawing on Crenshaw's (1989) intersectionality approach, the study contributes to knowledge on South-to-South migration by demonstrating how this approach is operationalised to understand the complex lived experiences of a disadvantaged group in life and possibly in death. In conceptualising the notion of identity among second-generation migrant youth, this paper explores the history and present of first and second-generation Mozambican migrants in South Africa to reveal how being born to migrant parents and raised in a hosting country poses life-long complications in one's identity and sense of belonging. In the quest to form their identities and construct a sense of belonging, migrant youth employ precariously means to navigate the terrain. This is a case study informed by semi-structured interviews and narrative data gathered from 22 second-generation Mozambican migrant youth between 18 and 34 years who were born to at least one Mozambican parent living in Bushbuckridge and raised in South Africa. Views of two key informants from the South African Department of Home Affairs and the local tribal authority provided additional perspectives on second-generation migrant youth's lived experiences in Bushbuckridge, which were explored thematically and narratively through Braun and Clarke's (2012) six-step framework for analysing qualitative data. In exploring the interdependency and interconnectedness of social categories and social systems in Bushbuckridge, the findings revealed that participants' experiences of identity formation and development of a sense of belonging were marginalised in complex, intersectional and precarious ways where they constantly (re)negotiated their daily experiences, which were largely shaped by their paradoxical migrant status in a host country. This study found that, in the quest for belonging, migrant youths were not a perfectly integrated category but evolved from almost daily lived experiences of creating a living that gave them an identity and a sense of belonging in South Africa. The majority of them shared feelings of living in limbo since childhood and fear of possibly dying in limbo with no clear (solid) sense of belonging to either South Africa or Mozambique. This study concludes that there is a strong association between feelings of identity, sense of belonging and levels of social integration. It recommends the development and adoption of a multilayer comprehensive model for understanding second-generation migrant youth identity and belonging in South Africa which encourages a collaborative effort among individual migrant youth, their family members, neighbours, society, and regional and national institutional structures for migrants to enhance and harness their capabilities and improve their wellbeing in South Africa.

Keywords : bushbuckridge, limbo, mozambican migrants, second-generation

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