ANNEXURE 11

Critical Moments, processes of social exclusion and inclusion: black student narratives

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In this paper, I explore an aspect of transformation within higher education institutions that is not always immediately visible or obvious in the dominant discourses of transforming the academy. This aspect, I argue, is however central to how we may begin to engage and change institutional cultures within much higher education settings, including an understanding of how racialization continues to be a foregrounding influencing factor in interaction amongst different raced bodies in the academy. In order to do this, I rely on the theoretical works and analyses of Pierre Bourdieu (particularly his notion of 'habitus' and the reproduction of 'doxa'), Nirwar Puwar's analysis of 'bodies out of place', and Sara Ahmed's emphasis on the 'emotional registers' of different bodies in place.

These different theorists engage the idea that relations of social reproduction (and inequalities) may be reproduced via real material practices of exclusion as well as within nuanced and intricate forms of representation, attachments and entrenched ways of being and acting within the social world. These ways of being and acting may in turn be influenced by particular emotional registers that inscribe how different bodies may occupy social place, enact identities within institutions and so on. The work of Bourdieu, for example, in his notion of 'habitus', engages the role of those unconscious ways of being, acting, thinking, feeling, interacting with others etc. that belong to particular class socializations.

These different 'habituses' inform and influence how members from different social classes may implicitly reproduce and sustain their already entrenched class divisions – by influencing how individuals and members of the group may behave, interact with each other, challenge the status quo, resist particular social practices etc. For Bourdieu, the habitus is most effective precisely because it is largely unconscious: it assumes a 'way of knowing' one's place in the world that becomes common-sense and very often unquestioned. It is such unproblematized internalizations of our different social habituses – whether gender, racial, class etc – that makes it possible to 'reproduce doxa' or the status quo (of social inequalities). What Bourdieu is alerting us to here is the important role of working with different social groups' socialized habituses in any transformative practice.

While Bourdieu fails to properly engage and analyse the implied emotive component of habitus, the works of Nirwar Puwar and Sara Ahmed have been very useful in allowing me to think about exactly *how* habitus works – how inequalities may be re/produced within different moments of encounter between the student body, between students and academic staff, and between students and other significant members within institutions of higher learning.

Both Puwar and Ahmed have argued for more focused analyses of the role and importance of emotions in how we may think about social relations of power more generally. Importantly, their works demonstrate the processes of exclusion that are influenced by the emotional registers of

individuals and members of social groups that are related to broader social inequalities and relations of power. For example, in her book 'Space Invaders: Theorising Bodies out of Place", Puwar attempts to theorize what it means to be a 'body out of place'. Part of her argument and analysis holds that when certain bodies enter spaces that are or were not originally designed with them in mind, there is very often a "collision of representations". These collisions of representations influence how these bodies both experience their occupation of that space and even how these experiences may be voiced and challenged. I have engaged this notion of collision of representation to think about the dominant discursive reproductions that tend to accompany notions of "students at risk", for example.

These reproductions often hide other invisible discursive reproductions related to race – in particular "the black student". Students entering many institutions of higher learning implicitly engage in different ways with these invisible constructs of race and academic citizenship.[2] More than this, I would also argue that students entering institutions of higher learning – and particularly historically white institutions of higher learning – experience different moments of racialization and re-racialization that influence their academic citizenship. I am particularly interested in how certain institutional cultures of practice, for example, may inadvertently and explicitly function in exclusionary (and inclusionary) ways for such students. Part of my argument is that such moments are held together by emotional registers that influence how many black students experience their occupation of social and academic spaces, as well as their sense of belonging within the institution. Part of my work therefore has been to grapple with those 'moments'—interactional moments with staff, other students, moments within the classrooms, moments of participating in different academic activities etc. It is very often within these moments that entrenched 'ways of knowing, being and engaging' one's social world come to the fore, informing how students work with race, and how students may experience exclusion. Elsewhere, I have argued that these different emotional registers are precisely what holds race in place, what sustains and reasserts practices of racialization (Kiguwa, 2015).

Debates on transformation within the higher education system continue to unfold but perhaps the most pertinent of these have centred on two key focal areas: structural and ideological issues of transformation (Soudien, 2010a; 2010b). Students entering the university field are uniquely located within matrices of power and subjectivity that tend to intersect with other categories of subjectivity. These intersections influence and frame the ways that they occupy social and academic spaces and subject positioning and interpellation within the field.

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[2] I would also argue that this holds true for academic staff. We implicitly work with racialized constructs that may inform our practices of engaging a community of practice.

My research reveals both positive and negative thematic patterns and often conflictual moments of belonging and alienation within the university space for many black students. This complexity is further heightened by embodiments of cultural capital and the influences of these attributes in influencing how students not only consciously navigate the field as black bodies but also how they are racialised by others within the field. The research further reveals dual processes of subjectification and resistance in students' academic enculturation processes. These processes of being *visible, invisible* and *hyper-visible* are not only racialised but also central to how racial embodiment comes to re/assert itself in social and academic spaces. Subjectification is evident in how blackness is differently made visible for some black students that are dependent on the currencies of cultural capital. And yet, the stories of negative experiences related to the institutional context are at times mediated by other stories of strategic interaction and resistance within the field that allow some students to obtain particular rewards and benefits related to their deployment of blackness.

The students' mediation of their field does not reveal a determinist passive reaction to the context but rather demonstrates moments of agency and resistance in how students deploy race to make sense of their positioning within diverse contexts in the institution. Despite this, these practices of resistance are not always void of relational configurations of power but may in fact reinforce and reproduce these configurations. Students' racial scripts do not always allow for active participation and enculturation of academic citizenship and instead produce passive forms of engagement and mediation within the institution. Engaging the subjective experiences of race and schooling requires that we adopt multiple layers of analysis that allow for critical interrogation of performative politics within higher education contexts (Kiguwa, 2014).

To this end, I want to think about transformation beyond the 'numbers game': to engage our current thinking of transformation to encompass the formal and informal institutional cultural practices that become sites for students' re/racialization as well as their functional role in reinforcing experiences of un-belonging and exclusion of black bodies. Part of this means critically understanding how racialization is imbued with emotive registers, such as shame and anxiety, amongst others – and how these registers further reinforce how students may choose to participate in these different institutional cultural practices.

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