Introduction

Any discussion that seeks to delve into issues such as ‘community’, ‘integration’, ‘the nation’ and so on, cannot but begin with the caution that history and the broad social sciences constitute a constructed field. Whether one takes the approach of consensus and leans towards what has come to be understood as the ‘liberal’ view of society, namely, that of a presumptive sense of coherence (and asks what constitutes ‘the community’; how ‘the nation’ is imagined; what divisions and fractures exist within the nation, group or community; what is to be ‘integrated’ or unified) or the more critical approach of rights and justice (and asks how rights are to be distributed or redistributed) will always depend, as Carr (1964) would have said, on who the historian or the social commentator asking the question is.

Mindful of Carr’s injunction, this chapter seeks to provide an explanation of how South African schools are dealing with the challenge of integration. The broad argument that it will make is that the notion of ‘integration’ depends on how the concept of difference is defined. The chapter works mainly with the dominant approach to difference in South Africa, that of race. It tries to show, as an attempt to engage with the question of how education is contributing to social change in South Africa, that the most critical outcome of the process of integration has been that of assimilation. While there has been a flight of children out of the former black schools, there has been no movement whatsoever in the direction of black schools. It is also argued that children of colour have moved in large numbers towards the English-speaking sector of the former white school system. This clearly suggests that the social nature of the education system has changed quite dramatically. The change, however, has been complex and has made it possible for the expanded middle class, which now includes people of colour, to consolidate its position of privilege. Working-
class and poor people, conversely, continue to experience high degrees of vulnerability and even discrimination.

The chapter begins with a discussion of the different ways in which the field of difference has been conceptualised and understood in South Africa. It proceeds to suggest that there are difficulties that come with the conventional understandings of difference in South Africa and, using the notion of ‘scapes’, or ways of seeing, points to a more complex way of looking at how integration might be approached.

**Race, class and notions of difference**

One of the most important scholars of social difference in South Africa, Harold Wolpe (1988), argues that neither race nor class, by itself, is capable of explaining the nature of the South African social formation and the ways in which privilege, power and position are distributed. Neither is able to grasp the entire story of social division, the hierarchies that operate within society and, critically, how rights accrue or are denied. Explaining South Africa and seeking to resolve the injustices and inequalities would require more than working through issues of race and/or class. In his work he makes the crucial point that the formation and maintenance of racial groups and division in South Africa is a process that takes place in specific contexts that are subject to both centrifugal and centripetal pressures. Allied to these is the crucial element of politics, which operates often independently from other factors but always in some form of articulation with them. This combination of the instances of race, class and politics produces effects and outcomes that are, moreover, ongoing and always in flux. They produce differentiations within groups, fracturing their homogeneity. Privileging race, therefore, as a category of analysis, underplays the ways in which a whole range of conditions and processes influence the sense of cohesiveness and fragmentation within groups. Class analysis too, he continues to argue, suffers from a similar insularity and reductionism. As a result of this reductionism, little room is allowed for non-class effects. ‘It is clear,’ says Wolpe, ‘that this analysis provides no conceptual basis for an analysis of the specific conditions in which racial categorisations come to provide the content of class struggles and/or the basis of organisation of interests in a manner which both cuts across class divisions and yet may serve to sustain, change (for example, racialisation or deracialisation) or undermine them’ (1988: 15).
The value of Wolpe’s work is that it calls into question the ways in which discourses of race and class have been mobilised to understand South Africa. In his text, *Race, class and the apartheid state*, he implicitly argues against the dominant iconographic systems of South Africa, particularly those of race, and looks to more complex ways of understanding social difference in South Africa. In attempting to analyse post-apartheid South Africa there is much to work with. The racial discourse of apartheid has been sustained and carried into the new South Africa, even as the new state has struggled to assert itself. The new reform agenda has remained firmly within the discourse of race. This is manifest in policies of affirmative action, immigration and social renewal.

While recognising how and why the language of race retains its pertinence, of concern in thinking about questions of integration, is the question of how the theory we use is able to engage with and even displace the power/knowledge couplet of race (and even class). How do we write in ways that will subvert the power that comes with the language of race?

Part of an answer is recognising that our explanations of the realities we confront will always be grasping or incomplete. They construct and constitute the reality as we speak it. They hold versions or interpretations of what is out there and present these as the truth. They are unable to recognise the multiple social contingencies that enter our processes of making meaning. Instead, our statements of what reality is depend on unproblematised portmanteau theories that are allowed to define and to normalise what clearly is partial and incomplete. Forgotten are the stratagems and artifices of our representational modalities within these grand theories, forgotten are the multiple conscious and unconscious positions of privilege we call upon as we pronounce and enunciate.

**Towards a new space**

In attempting to move to a more self-conscious theoretical position, one which is aware of how we take position within the structures and narratives of our own social analyses, we need to develop a social criticism that is alert to the shifting relationship between cultural difference, social authority and political discrimination; one that can deal with the dominant rationalisations of self and other. Such an approach would need to be aware of how much the ways in which we speak, our theories and languages of description, can be
mobilised for the dominant project of race and class. It has the potential to open up ways of seeing that take us beyond the stereotypical ways in which difference is understood. Critically, it unmasksthe arbitrary ways in which the mark of the stereotype is assigned to each of us, particularly the racial, class, cultural and gender values that define who we are. It has the potential to help us work in new productive spaces where we can confront processes of social and individual meaning-making – culture – in our lives and recognise how those processes continually produce new forms of oppression and emancipation, and how each of us is implicated in these processes. From such a position we can develop a project of emancipation that is fundamentally conscious of the complex ways in which we are positioned and position ourselves. We can begin to see each other in our heterogeneity and to deal with, and not disavow, the proclivity within us to ‘other’ as we socially identify. The power of such an approach is to force us to realise the limitations of consensual and collusive theories of community embodied in notions of race, class, gender, culture and so on.

Taking this into thinking about the questions of unity or integration in South Africa, we clearly have a long way to go. Critically, therefore, if we are seeking to enter a new social space where notions of ‘unity’ and ‘integration’ drive social policy, what realities, we must ask, are we to unify and to integrate? Can it be any reality? All realities? And once we have unified or brought them together, what notions of self and group do we use that will remain just and fair, sensitive to the multiple ways in which individuals and groups seek to be represented, and yet at the same time, critical and alert to the political and ideological artifices that go with building polities?

**Working with notions of integration – integration-scapes**

In terms of the arguments above I want to suggest that there are two ways of proceeding. The first is to develop an approach that tries to work with the notion of multiplicity and brings together, as far as is possible, the range of factors that can be identified within a given context. The second is to work with the dominant languages of description in their attenuated form, or insofar as they attempt to articulate with other ways of seeing.

The first approach could be described as the contingent model and the second as the dominant factor model. Elements of both models were used in the
Education Inclusion and Exclusion in India and South Africa Project reported in an Institute of Development Studies (IDS) Bulletin (Subrahmanian, Sayed, Balagopalan & Soudien 2003). The contingent model clearly carries more possibilities in terms of its aims of uncovering the complex and multiple forms of identification and identity that would have to be revealed and would need to be mediated in a common social space. The second is more limited in so far as its logic tends to insulate the major factor, even when its dominance is in doubt.

For pragmatic purposes, however, I am electing to work with the dominant factor model simply because there is available material to work with. Attempting to work in an integrated factor framework, at this stage, is not viable, if only because the existing material on integration, as it has been understood and assembled, does not easily lend itself to thinking of complexity and contingency.

Having made the decision to use the dominant factor approach, I am proposing that a suitable way forward might be to work in a number of what one might call ‘scapes’ where the dominant factor can be seen to be at work. Scapes are used here as ways of seeing. They frame the objects that come into view in particular kinds of ways. Reality and an explanation of what reality constitutes are defined in relation to the dominant factor. Having assembled these scapes we might then see how we can reach towards a contingent model by articulating the different scapes in an integrated analysis.

Important about such an approach is that:

• It acknowledges, in its very genesis, its limitations and the possibilities for being recruited into use by the dominant project.
• It recognises its dependency on certain representational strategies, chief amongst which are reductionism and essentialism.
• It declares its culpability as a discursive framework for defining reality.

What are the scapes that we can describe? The most obvious are those of race, class and gender. Allied to these are cultural scapes, language scapes, religious scapes, age scapes, sexual orientation scapes, physical ability scapes, intellectual ability scapes, nationality scapes, health scapes (including HIV/AIDS) and a whole range of others that have yet to be specified.

Taking this approach is, of course, not without its difficulties. While it attempts to suggest a way through the thickets of the school integration
discussion, there are certain immediate challenges that it throws up. Predictably, the first and most important is that of attempting to develop a series of ways of seeing in an analytic space where particular perspectives have been privileged and others disallowed. Given this, we have to accept that some scapes will be considerably fuller, better-constructed and more accessible than others. Other scapes will be, in their turn, either darker or emptier. This clearly suggests opportunities for developing new lines of research and investigation. These are not pursued in this work. The next section of the chapter, therefore, seeks to work with the dominant scapes of race and class. The discussion draws on work carried out both by myself and colleagues as well as by a range of researchers working in the field.

The race scape

The race scape is, of course, dominant within the repertoire of school integration analyses and studies both in South Africa and elsewhere in the world. In many ways, the South African debate has depended on the discussion as it has unfolded in the United States and to a lesser degree in the United Kingdom. In the United States, where it has attracted both the best and the worst theorists of schooling and equality, the genre has literally exploded. In South Africa it has achieved prominence in a field that remains frustratingly slim, under-researched and heavily dependent on the terminology, the typologies and modes of analyses of North Americans.

Studies that take race explicitly as their focus in South Africa include the work of Lemmer and Squelch (1993), Dekker and Lemmer (1993), a landmark report conducted for the Human Rights Commission by Vally and Dalamba (1999), a forthcoming doctoral thesis by Tihanyi (2003), Zafar’s (1998) work on integrating public schools, and a study published by the Education Policy Unit at the University of Natal arising from a Master’s thesis by Naidoo (1996). A larger corpus of work which looks more generally at school relations rather than race only is also available in the work of Christie (1990), Gaganakis (1990), Carrim (1992), Soudien (1996, 1998a, 1998b), Carrim & Soudien (1999), Chisholm (1999), Dolby (2001) and Soudien & Sayed (2003). Other studies, such as that of Hofmeyr (2000), touch on the subject. There are undoubtedly many more studies and commentaries on the matter. These, however, represent the most significant in the field.
The dominant theoretical approach within this body of work is that of social construction. As is to be expected, no works in the South African literature explicitly approach race from the primordialist perspective (even though those beliefs may exist, and may parade as social constructionism). In relation to social construction, positions vary from the Marxist to those leaning towards what was earlier described as contingency theory.

The consequence of this approach is to understand integration, and its opposite, desegregation, in distinctive kinds of ways. As Naidoo says, integration ‘requires fundamental changes in ... personal attitudes and behaviour patterns. It requires major changes of deep-seated attitudes and behaviour patterns among learners and teachers of minority and majority groups’ (1996: 11). In this approach, integration is when groups with their cultures come together. The interesting thing for this discussion is not what happens when bodies meet, but that which occurs when the cultural auras or cultural universes around people come into contact with each other. People are assumed to be carrying their universes around them as they engage and negotiate with each other.

How they deal with each other, carrying these universes with them, is the interest of those who work with race. Following the work of sociologists and psychologists, integration occurs only when positive interaction occurs (see Rist 1979). What counts is not physical contact but how yielding and open to engagement the universes people are carrying around with them are. As Naidoo says, ‘the current ethos of a school, the nature of the interaction and existing patterns and institutional features and policies of school may limit or facilitate such integration’ (1996: 11). These orientations make possible, essentially, three different approaches to integration, namely, assimilation, multicultural education and anti-racist education. These approaches, from the perspective of equality and justice, represent a continuum of possibilities in which one can see degrees of accommodation and integration.

The least accommodative and integrative is the assimilationist position. In this position the values, traditions and customs of the dominant group frame the social and cultural context of the school. Quoting Gillborn, Naidoo explains that key to the assimilationist project are the presumptions that subordinate groups represent a threat to the standards of the dominant group and that the dominant group is culturally superior (1996: 12).
By contrast, the consequences of assimilationism for subordinate groups are dire. They are expected both to give up their own identities and cultures and, critically, to acknowledge the superiority of the culture, and by implication, the identities of the groups into whose social context they are moving.

In response to the oppressiveness of assimilationism, especially in the United States and the United Kingdom, a more accommodative policy was developed called multiculturalism. Central to multiculturalism was the idea that the school had to accommodate the different cultures brought into it. Arising in response to the demands of politically subordinate groups, it essentially sought to make the point that all cultures were equally valid and had to be respected in the school context.

Not unexpectedly, multiculturalism drew the ire of critics from both the right and the left. Right-wing critics, such as Hirsch (1987) and Ravitch (1990) in the United States, argued that it undermined the inclusivist nature of the great American culture and sought to infuse into it inferior standards. Critics on the left saw it, inter alia, as a weak, and in the end racist, alternative to real democracy in so far as it paid lip service to the rights of the subordinate, and was also a way of continuing to shore up half-baked and stereotypical notions of culture. They argue that the so-called respect for other cultures fails to engage with the complex ways in which individuals and groups develop attitudes to one another. While cultures are celebrated, the processes through which those cultures are delineated and then hierarchalised never come into view. They call, therefore, for a perspective that engages directly with processes that make meaning. Theirs, they argue, is an anti-racist programme that directly attacks the othering implicit and embedded in dominant culture.

These three approaches are evident and have been used in most studies working in the race scape in South Africa. Interestingly, most studies come to much the same conclusion, namely, that the integration process in South Africa has followed a decidedly assimilationist route.

In what follows an attempt is made to show how these studies come to this conclusion. Before this is done, a point of clarification about the empirical strength of the data available to us is necessary. As things stand, essentially because the new government has officially abolished racial categories (even though this policy is inconsistently followed), not all schools or provincial authorities collect statistics about their learners in terms of race. Where
information is collected in this way, it has happened, one hopes, as a result of individual decisions at schools, hopefully with the consent of parents and learners. Official statistics that reflect the racial demography of schools are not uniformly available. Annual reports of provincial governments, as a result, do not systematically include integration as an aspect of schooling experience. While the reports might make mention of racism and racial incidents at schools, they do not deal with race as a demographic factor. The result of this is that we do not know in a precise and accurate way what has happened in terms of racial integration in South African schools.

One source of empirical data is a research-led body of evidence on learner migration carried out by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) (Sekete, Shilubane & Moila 2001). Another is a set of statistics provided to the Human Rights Commission study (Vally & Dalamba 1999). Fleshing out this picture are a number of studies where estimations of integration have been made based on a number of sources.

The Sekete et al. study, based on a survey of 120 schools (79 returns) in five provinces, showed that enrolments had changed dramatically (2001: 33). In response to the question of the extent to which changes had occurred in their schools, respondents reported as shown in Table 3.1.

| Table 3.1 Extent of changes in selected schools in five provinces (percentages) |
|-------------------------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Enrolments have changed in terms of their racial composition | None  | Minor  | Moderate | Major  | n.a.    |
|                                                            | 6.8    | 16.1    | 31.2    | 29.3    | 16.2    |
| The schools admission policy has changed to accommodate learners from different residential backgrounds | 10.4   | 11.4    | 27.7    | 39.7    | 10.8    |
| The number of learners coming from other than the school's immediate neighbourhood has changed | 5.2    | 19.3    | 36.2    | 33.1    | 6.1     |

If one accepts that almost 75 per cent of schools are formerly designated as black and that, as is argued later, very little change would have happened in these schools in terms of demographics, the extent of the changes signalled in
the table is considerable. In response to all three questions about the extent of change, as is shown in Table 3.1, more than 60 per cent of the respondents acknowledged that either moderate or major changes had taken place in their schools.

The 1999 Vally and Dalamba study (see Table 3.2) shows that across the former House of Assembly (HoA) schools that served pupils classified white, the House of Representatives (HoR) system that served pupils classified coloured and the House of Delegates (HoD) system that served pupils classified Indian, all in the Gauteng region, the number of children classified African (black) was significant. What is clear is the strength of the movement into the former Indian and coloured schools.

Table 3.2 Percentage of Gauteng learners by race groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Ex-DT ‘African’</th>
<th>Ex-TED ‘white’</th>
<th>Ex-HoR ‘coloured’</th>
<th>Ex-HoD ‘Indian’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A  W  C  I</td>
<td>A  W  C  I</td>
<td>A  W  C  I</td>
<td>A  W  C  I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 1</td>
<td>100 0 0 0</td>
<td>16 75 2 6</td>
<td>9 0 91 0</td>
<td>61 0 22 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Grades</td>
<td>100 0 0 0</td>
<td>22 72 3 2</td>
<td>31 0 67 0</td>
<td>45 0 5 50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Tables 3.2 and 3.3 use the following abbreviations: A (African), W (white), C (coloured) and I (Indian).

These statistics need to be read in conjunction with those captured in Table 3.3 that show the breakdown of learners by race in the entire system for Gauteng.

Table 3.3 Total percentage of Gauteng learners by race groups in public and independent schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All public schools</th>
<th>Independent (subsidised)</th>
<th>Independent (non-subsidised)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A  W  C  I</td>
<td>A  W  C  I</td>
<td>A  W  C  I</td>
<td>A  W  C  I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 1</td>
<td>77 16 5 2</td>
<td>55 37 2 6</td>
<td>80 18 2 0</td>
<td>76 17 5 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Grades</td>
<td>71 21 5 2</td>
<td>57 35 2 5</td>
<td>86 12 1 0</td>
<td>70 22 5 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Studies examining other provinces support the trends noted in Gauteng. The Inclusion and Exclusion Project (Soudien & Sayed 2003) looked at 14 schools (fictitious names provided) located in the provinces of KwaZulu-Natal, the Eastern Cape and the Western Cape. Based on estimates provided by school principals, the schools’ demographic profiles are shown in Table 3.4.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of school (fictitious)</th>
<th>Ex-department</th>
<th>Enrolment (%)</th>
<th>Medium of instruction</th>
<th>Social context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruby Primer</td>
<td>HoR</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lagaan Primary</td>
<td>HoD</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bass Secondary</td>
<td>HoD</td>
<td>1200</td>
<td>80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dover High School</td>
<td>HoD</td>
<td>+/-900</td>
<td>80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amazon Secondary</td>
<td>HoD</td>
<td>+/-1000</td>
<td>80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marula Primary</td>
<td>HoD</td>
<td>520</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basildon Primary</td>
<td>DET</td>
<td>414</td>
<td>90</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divinity Technical</td>
<td>DET</td>
<td>+/-700</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bongalethu Secondary</td>
<td>DET</td>
<td>1001</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siyafika Secondary</td>
<td>DET</td>
<td>1020</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastdale Primary</td>
<td>HoA</td>
<td>+/-600</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oasis Senior Primary</td>
<td>HoA</td>
<td>+/-700</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valley Primary</td>
<td>HoA</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North City High</td>
<td>HoA</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What is interesting about this set of data is how complex schools’ population mixes have become. While the national evidence, as argued earlier, of the nature and the extent of the movement of South African boys and girls across their apartheid divides is not available, the assumption that the strongest movements have occurred from black to white schools is open to question. It would appear that the movement from formerly black schools to Indian and coloured schools has been as strong as, if not stronger than, that of black people into formerly white schools. Black students have been migrating into Indian and coloured schools closest to their homes and convenient for
purposes of travel. In the Cape Town area, for example, former Indian and
coloured schools located on bus and train routes from the townships have
been the recipients of considerable numbers of black students. While anec-
dotal evidence seems to suggest also that there has been a domino effect in this
process with coloured and Indian students moving further up the transport
line to former white schools, the reality seems to be that the demographic pro-
files of former coloured and Indian schools have changed significantly with
some schools’ pupil rolls being up to 50 per cent black.

This evidence is supported by Naidoo’s work in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) which
shows that the percentages of children classified black in former Indian
schools are more than twice those in the former white schools from the for-
mer Natal Education Department (NED) (see Table 3.5).

Table 3.5 Percentage of black learners in selected KZN schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ex-Department</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Medium of instruction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Prim</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex-NED</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex-HoD</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interesting about the Naidoo study is the suggestion that the levels of integra-
tion in smaller towns are lower than those in the metropolitan areas. Evident
in both smaller towns and the metropolitan areas is the large enrolment of
children classified black in former HoD schools.

Hofmeyr’s study in the Carletonville area, carried out over three years, shows
evidence of large movements from former Department of Education and
Training (DET) schools (2000). Interesting about this study, and also suggest-
ed in the Soudien and Sayed (2003) and Tihanyi (2003) studies, is that former
white schools have not uniformly become majority black. While this is cer-
tainly not the basis for making definitive statements, it appears that
English-speaking former HoA schools are more popular amongst black
learners and parents.
The actual patterns of migration are important to track and understand. Fiske and Ladd (in this volume) use Western Cape data to show how learners are migrating from black to Indian and white schools. The evidence provided by Tihanyi, as well as Gauteng data, shows a different pattern. Learners and their families are making important decisions about what they perceive to be in their best interests. Noteworthy are the following:

- The flight of students out of former black schools. There has been no parallel movement whatsoever of children classified coloured, white and Indian into former black schools. The schools that are integrating, therefore, are all the non-former DET schools.
- Children classified black appear to constitute a larger proportion of the total school population in former Indian and coloured schools than in former white schools.
- Children classified black, it would appear, are not entering Afrikaans-speaking former white schools in significant numbers.

Why these particular patterns are arising deserves more detailed study than is possible here. Briefly, however, it is clear that the flight of black children out of the former DET system has much to do with the recent history of turbulence within that system and the perception, as many commentators suggest, of higher standards in the other systems (see, for example, Sekete et al. 2001). This is especially the case with regard to the former HoD schools. While former white schools are regarded in the same light, the perception that they are expensive has limited the movement of students into them. Following these comments, it is true to say then that particular kinds of schools are not attracting large numbers of previously disqualified learners. Why this is so undoubtedly has to do with issues of physical, financial and linguistic access. These issues were explored in the Soudien and Sayed (2003) study and will not be pursued here.

A further point to note before looking at the outcomes of the studies is the degree to which the schools retain the racial profiles of their former authorities as far as teachers are concerned. Former Indian schools remain largely Indian with respect to their teachers, former white schools largely white and former coloured largely coloured (Soudien & Sayed 2003).

Having outlined the patterns of movement in the system, it is now necessary, on the basis of the existing research, to make some comments about what is happening in these schools.
In none of the studies is there evidence of what the literature calls the anti-racist school. Instead, all the studies concur on the distinct tendency towards assimilationism. This is even the case in the examples of the politically conscious schools my own work has looked at (see Soudien 1996). This is an important point around which to pause because it talks to the issue of those individual teachers and schools in the system who deliberately and consciously work for and project themselves as subverters of the dominant order (see Weider 2001a, 2001b and 2002). There remains a strong tradition in the country of individuals who have valiantly sought to make what they teach the subject of their own, and their pupils', interrogation. In many instances, however, these individuals, unless they were supported by organisations, such as was the case with the Teachers League of South Africa, burned themselves out in their efforts. The schools which presented themselves as radical schools were also, and still are, complex and contradictory places. While these schools promote a strong non-racial ethos, and present themselves as ‘schools for people’ and not ‘schools for coloureds’ or ‘schools for black’, they do not have the analytic sophistication to engage with issues of identity. Much of their engagement with race is polemical rather than substantial and interrogative. They end up, as a result, working with notions of identity that young people are simply required to take on. Following this, Naidoo says explicitly that all the schools in his study followed an assimilationist approach (1996: 28). The Vally and Dalamba study comes to a similar conclusion: ‘the predominant trend in school desegregation is the assimilationist approach, or as one student emphasised: “I feel that if pupils from other races want to come to our school then they must adjust to the culture and norms of the school.”’ (1999: 24).

Vally and Dalamba suggest that some schools have begun to espouse a multicultural perspective (1999: 32). Providing evidence for this statement they quote teachers in schools who make comments such as the following:

We are fortunate to have a rich diversity of cultures in our school. We respect and recognise the different cultures and ethnic groups and promote tolerance and understanding amongst them. In the beginning we had problems, mainly due to preconceived perceptions and judgements amongst different cultures, a general insecurity in the community and a lack of experience of how to deal with problems.
Testimony like this is certainly not in short supply in all the studies and, clearly, it is important to recognise that multiculturalism, as described earlier, enjoys a great deal of respect in schools and might even be practised. Tihanyi (2003: 15), for example, chose to place two of her schools in a category she referred to as ‘deracialised multiculturalism’. She comments: ‘Two former Model C schools and the private school I visited (Acacia and Main Street High and Table Mountain Grammar School) use the language of multiculturalism and inclusivity to describe the process of racial integration.’ Quoting a personal interview with the principal of Table Mountain Grammar School, as follows:

It is important that everyone celebrates ... diversity and be proud of being ‘coloured’ or black, and these are the things from my culture that I’m proud of and not feel inferior to any culture in any way, and not sort of think that this one is better than the other. It isn’t that at all ... they’re different, and one should be proud of the differences.

Tihanyi (2003: 15) goes on to say:

My first impressions, indeed, validate this statement: I saw faces of many colors among the well-dressed and seemingly cheerful students, who, as they chatted and laughed with one another, gave a picture of relaxed race relations. Unlike Mountain Side, which had no whites, in these schools white students are the majority, usually followed by a sizeable group of ‘coloured,’ and a few black students.

Most white students say that race relations are good at their school – even that race does not ‘exist’. Some students of colour share this opinion, while others notice subtle signs of what they see as racial discrimination on the part of teachers and fellow students. When it comes to recess, a look at the school yard showed me the clear lines of separation that keep students in racially divided groups. However, students insist that this has nothing to do with race; it is cultural, they say, people who share the same culture feel comfortable with one another.

Without denying the existence of these forms of address to race in many schools, many forms of multiculturalism are in effect variations of assimilationism. They are rooted in the presumption that the dominant culture is an
unquestionable good. The incoming children might be allowed to perform in
their so-called native guises for special occasions, but they operate under the
protection of the dominant culture. A principal makes the point very clear: ‘I
wish South Africa could visit us and see how things should be done ... We are
a veritable United Nations. You have taught us about your cultures ... we thank
you that you have lead (sic) us unscathed into the new South Africa’ (Vally &

In closing my discussion of this scape I want to suggest that assimilationism
is overwhelmingly hegemonic as a practice of integration in schools. In
attempting to develop a framework for understanding schools under this
rubric we can begin to identify the different kinds of assimilationism that
might present themselves in schools. Towards such a typology, it is possible
to identify assimilationism as it plays itself out in a variety of ways in the
complex environment of former Indian and coloured schools, in English-
speaking former white schools that have remained largely white, in
English-speaking schools that have become majority black schools and in
Afrikaans-speaking former white schools. Former black schools, because they
have not experienced the movement of new constituencies into their class-
rooms, clearly fall outside the scope of the discussion in this scape (racial as
this reality might be, of course).

As the work of Tihanyi (2003), my own work on so-called black children in a
so-called coloured school (1996), the work of Naidoo (1996), Vally and
Dalamba (1999) and Soudien and Sayed (2003) suggest, there is a deep resent-
ment in many schools of the so-called newcomers. This manifests itself in the
ways children play, formal ceremony at school and pedagogical practice and
amounts to what I call aggressive assimilationism. This kind of assimilationism
is brusque, characterised by high degrees of intolerance and often violence.

Less aggressive are the forms of assimilationism evident in schools with polit-
ical histories, such as former Indian and coloured schools, where issues of race
are seldom addressed. This form of assimilationism I refer to as assimilation-
ism by stealth. My own study of a high profile former coloured school with a
strong political pedigree (see Soudien 1998c) describes the particular conceits
that circulate in schools such as these where the incoming so-called black
children are recruited into new ‘non-racial’ identities that have never been
opened up to inspection.
The final form of assimilationism is most evident in former white English-speaking schools and is what I call benign assimilationism. This form of assimilationism looks like multiculturalism because there is an attempt to acknowledge the cultural diversity of the school’s learners. The schools in this category deliberately have cultural evenings, unlike the schools in the two previous categories, and present themselves as self-consciously inclusive. The intent of this policy, in so far as it leaves the dominant relationships in the school untouched, is an assimilationist one.

The class scape

Untangling race from class in the South African context is clearly undesirable. There are, however, distinct ways in which schools behave that can be perceived to be, and understood to be, the actions of class agents rather than simply those of race agents.

Few studies on school integration (or desegregation), or schools as a site for social cohesion, approach the matter from an explicitly class perspective. This is essentially because class has been used in education, following the work of theorists such as Bowles and Gintis (1976), for making sense of the school as a medium for social differentiation. In this explanation, school allocates people to specific class positions. It is a sorting agency rather than an integrative agency. While this use of class makes sense, there are critical ways in which perspectives based on class underestimate how class structures and class influences work to maintain, in an integrating way, the cohesion of society. The work of Althusser is crucial here. He tried to explain how ideology worked in society through what he called ‘ideological state apparatuses’; they transmit ruling class ideology and maintain the subject class in its subordinate position.

Moving from this point of departure, class provides an important framework for understanding how integration is being conceptualised and effected in South Africa. Central to the race scape I argued earlier, was the project of assimilationism into the cultural universe of the dominant order. What the class scape offers is a way of understanding how domination is being rearticulated in an extra-race way around integration. Integration in this approach is decidedly not unity and social harmony. It is not the assertion of the cultural values of the dominant group that is important to understand, but the modalities of the dominant group as it seeks to maintain its hold on the social order. For this
order to survive, it is important that the dominant group wins people over to the class project. Critical, therefore, is its attempt to construct a social consensus in which classes occupy and accept their places. Social cohesion is important. Based on the dominance of the socially privileged or the elite class, the social objective of the class project is the shaping and reconfiguration of society. This dominance, however, is not that of the so-called whites, but a new elite comprising the core of the old white elite and selected elements from amongst the former subordinate black groups. School in this project is about nurturing this class and its interests, in the face of threats to the hegemony of the class.

In the racial scape it was possible to show the dimensions of the integration process amongst different racial groups. How integration manifests itself in terms of class is less obvious. What one can say, however, is that a distinct realignment of socio-economic groups is taking place in the schools, with the large-scale exodus of middle-class black parents and their children out of the former DET and HoD and HoR systems into the former white system. A domino effect appears to be playing itself out within the school system (Soudien & Sayed 2003). When the apartheid system began breaking down, the flow of children within the system took place in fairly predictable ways. Previously-excluded black, coloured and Indian children moved in large numbers into the formerly white schools. Black children began to move into formerly Indian and coloured schools. For black schools, significantly, this amounted to a flight of the more economically stable elements within their midst, leaving those schools largely with the poorest members of the community. This is about class following its own interests. Naidoo’s work supports this line of thinking. He suggests that the process of integration followed distinct socio-economic paths in KwaZulu-Natal in both ex-NED and ex-HoD schools (1996).

Important to understand here are the complex ways in which class supplants and displaces race as a means of determining the social character of schools. The relatively low numbers of black students entering elite schools, and the high numbers entering poor schools reflect, one might argue, the objective and ideological situations in which the different classes find themselves. It is not possible, for reasons that are explored later, for poorer children to move into wealthier schools in large numbers, even if the system is supposed to admit any child if a place exists for him or her. Many things happen in wealthy schools that conspire to keep out the poor child. What this suggests is the bedding
down of new class processes or new social alignments within the schooling system that are producing new and distinctive class forms. It is out of these that one can say that there is a reconstituting of the class.

How this process is happening is important to understand. It happens around what Marxists call the ‘objective’ forces that are active in society and around the ideological mechanisms the middle class has at its disposal.

In terms of objective forces, the social and economic resources families have access to is a major structural determinant in where they send their children. While it is true that the flight from township schools has, as Sekete et al. (2001) say, a great deal to do with the search for better education, it also has to do with costs and with what parents know. Black parents are choosing to send their children away from the township, but invariably they send their children to modest former white, coloured and Indian schools. School fees are a major determinant in guiding parents’ decisions. In all of the schools in the Soudien and Sayed (2003) study, finances prove to be either exclusionary or inhibitory. A whole range of filtering mechanisms is used in these schools. Before children are admitted, even in the elite black schools, parents are often required to pay a deposit of 50 per cent of the annual fee. Where parents are tardy in paying, a variety of shaming devices are used. In places school reports are withheld until fees are paid. Aside from these mechanisms, often fees are pitched at extremely high levels. In the case of Eastdale College, an elite Eastern Cape school, parents have to ‘be able to afford it’ in order for their young ones to be part of the school.

Parents also depend a great deal on their own children for making these decisions (Sekete et al. 2001: 60). Their children would have heard about the class devices at schools and would have urged them not to risk the kinds of embarrassments that went with being poor in a more wealthy school. These factors do not operate for middle-class parents, by contrast. Middle-class parents spare no costs in the decisions they make. In the 1990s, people classified black became the largest constituency in both subsidised and non-subsidised independent schools in the Gauteng province (Vally & Dalamba 1999). While there may be a flight of people classified white into the independent school sector, one could similarly say that there has been a rapid increase of black, middle-class numbers in non-DET schools. This increase has been facilitated by the abolition of the Group Areas Act. Middle-class, former-white areas have experienced significant increases in inflows of black people. In the case of at least
one private school in the Johannesburg area, the governors actively encouraged black parents to buy property in the area of the school. In all the former black schools virtually every single teacher had his or her children in a former white or coloured or Indian school. At the Bongalethu School in Mdantsane, Eastern Cape, teachers spoke explicitly of the class decisions they had made for their children. They could not be expected, they argued, to keep their children in the conditions that existed in the townships (Soudien & Sayed 2003).

The drift towards a new middle-class alignment has also been facilitated by the direction being taken in the policy domain. Central in this large body of legislation and policy directives is the *South African Schools Act* (SASA), which was passed in 1996. By the time the new government came into power in 1994, governance infrastructures in black schools had all but collapsed. As part of the process of rebuilding the school system, the government passed the Act as an attempt to give parents the responsibility of managing the schools their children attend and of officially legitimating parental participation in the life of the school. The Act required that schools establish school governing bodies (SGBs), which were to be composed of parents, teachers, students (in the case of secondary schools) and members of the school support staff. This structure was required to develop school policy across a whole host of areas and to ensure that the school managers would carry out this policy. Achieving this, however, was compromised by the way in which the new legislation framed identities in the schools, particularly parental identities. The Act projected parental identity around a restrictive middle-class notion of who parents were and how they functioned. Central to this notion were particular understandings of how time is used, what domestic resources are available for the schooling process, how much cultural capital parents can draw on in relating to school and so on. The upshot of the practice, as a result, was that in black schools, SGBs continued to be dominated by their principals or their teachers. In formerly white schools, middle-class white parents dominated.

This approach of the state was complemented by practices that were emerging in schools, especially in the governance of schools. Soudien and Sayed (2003) documented many instances where the schools not only retained but nurtured practices that effectively sidelined poorer people. Valley Primary in Cape Town maintained its middle-class character through the invocation of gender and the deployment of gender identities within the school. These allowed the school to draw on existent and strongly encoded social structures
within the school, many of which were not as familiar and accessible to parents who were not white and middle class. For example, The Mother Programme and The Catering Committee were exclusively run by women. This assumed that most mothers who had children at the school were not working or should not be working. Projecting these approaches as ‘family orientated’ allowed the school to assimilate newer parents, and even non-middle-class parents into its social project. Poorer parents thus had access and rights of way in the school, but decidedly so on the school’s terms.

The situation at Eastdale College in the Eastern Cape was similar. The school had effectively assimilated parents into a middle-class settlement based on a particular image of what the school stood for. This was particularly clear in the consistent and seamless representations of parents of their ‘responsible parent’ identities. At a former white primary school in Durban, parents were convinced by the school that they were buying into a way of doing things that was in their children’s interests. The school convinced them that the package – effectively a commodity – it was offering was what their children needed to succeed in the world of work (Soudien & Sayed 2003).

This discussion suggests that a particular kind of class settlement is taking place in schools that is being actively driven by the middle class. Conscious of its position within the new South Africa this class is constructing a new concept of integration and even a new concept of its identity around the notion of ‘good schooling’. Largely led by the old white middle class, this class operates on the basis of buy-in of the new middle classes into the new settlement. This buy-in comes with the acquiescence of the new elite. Soudien and Sayed (2003: 39) describe the situation at a former middle-class, white primary school in Durban called Oasis, where the settlement pivoted on the maintenance of ‘standards’: ‘At Oasis in 1991, the school accepted the first persons of colour, 22 “Indian” and 3 African learners. These learners were carefully selected; “We took the cream of the crop,” said a teacher. Though parents’ and learners’ racial identities, religious and cultural backgrounds were different, their socio-economic status was very much the same. There was amongst parents an agreement about what constituted ‘good’ education and where ‘good’ education could be obtained. For the class the priority would be to preserve the character and traditions of the ‘good’ schools for the maintenance of what they perceived to be quality.
Important also about this new settlement is the way in which the position of the poor and their schools is fixed. Given the stipulations of the South African Schools Act, particularly its discursive constructions of the ideal parent, and the ways in which the wealthy have erected barriers to entry for the disadvantaged, poor schools have, by and large, accepted the modus operandi of the new system. Driven, therefore, as the new settlement has been by the new and enlarged middle class, the poor have, one could suggest, also bought into the way in which the system operates.

Other scapes

Clearly, as this chapter has sought to argue, one can delineate difference in a number of other ways in South Africa. The most immediate of these are gender, language and religion, but include also region and geographical location (urban and rural) and a number of other less obvious ways. Important about these are the complex ways in which they determine and configure access to rights and opportunities. Clear examples which demonstrate these realities are rural schools and boys’ or girls’ schools. Less clear but equally if not more powerful is the medium of instruction of a school. Medium of instruction, particularly English, defines, for large numbers of children in South Africa, the degree to which, epistemologically, they have access to and understand what they are being taught. For many, because their English language competence is so poor, exclusion is a structural experience.

Conclusion

I have tried to argue in this chapter that we are constrained by the dominant languages of description that exist within our sociological repertoires. These dominant languages predefine what can and can’t be seen. The argument of this contribution is that there exist multiple ways in which society experiences difference but that within these, certain ways are privileged. As they are elevated in importance they become normative and so come to condition how social differentiation in everyday discourse is approached. Race, as a result, becomes the almost unchallenged lens through which South African difference is understood. By using scapes this essay has sought to work with a recognition of this form of discoursing and to point out some of its limitations.
Reality, however, does not operate in scapes. It exists out there in a swirl of events and phenomena which language seeks to tame or call to order. Language, in this sense, is a device which seeks to approximate the ‘facts’ of experience. Recognising this, the challenge is how we might begin to talk to encompass, as efficaciously as we can, the complexity of this swirl that surrounds us and that is who we are.

In attempting to make a comment about the social reconstruction process taking place in South African education, it is necessary to say that, while our languages will always be inadequate and while we might demur at the reductive and essentialising discourses of race, class and gender, we cannot but acknowledge the large role these forces play in our everyday lives. Displace complexity as these discourses do, there are ways in which we can see patterns of what one might call *contingency* emerging. One can argue that race, class, gender and language in South Africa are implicated in a complex of signs that are part of a process of profound social realignment in the country. This realignment is not simply a racial or a class or a gender realignment but is pivoted on the contingencies of the new post-apartheid landscape in which dominance is reinterpreting itself and is being reinterpreted. These contingencies are forcing groups and individuals to re-evaluate and reposition themselves in relation to the range of social differences which surround them and in relation to the problem of having to work out new positions of power and authority. Emerging out of this is a reconfiguration and, in some instances, a reworking of hegemonic practices.

Critical in working through the scapes is recognising how much dominant practices in each of them have essentially remained as they were and how apposite the notion of assimilationism is, whether one is talking of race, class, language or gender, for understanding the social processes underway in each. The story of education in the new South Africa is, in these terms, essentially a story of the reconfiguration of dominance in relation to race, class, gender and language dominance. Dominant practices have adjusted to the contingencies, but the presumptions upon which they have been premised have remained unchanged. The existing ways in which things are done are ‘virtuous’, in and of themselves. Dominant racial groups, dominant classes, dominant genders and dominant languages have had to make space for new constituencies but they have done so on their own terms. Important in understanding the contingencies here are recognising the political dynamics, the strategic
occupation of space – agency – by groups, particularly previously excluded groups, and the strategic yielding of space by others. The continuation of domination is always a contingent moment.

Using this argument, integration in education in South Africa can be argued to be a process of accommodation in which subordinate groups or elements of subordinate groups have been recruited or have promoted themselves into the hegemonic social, cultural and economic regime at the cost of subordinate ways of being, speaking, and conducting their everyday lives.

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