



Coloniality, Bordering and Childhood on the Lesotho-South Africa Border: Representations and Narratives of School Children and Students from Lesotho

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Abstract

Drawing on oral, written, and art-based testimonies collected in 2021 under the NIHSS-funded UFS Borderlands Project, this paper examines the border representations and narratives of school pupils and students who commute daily from Lesotho to attend schools in South African border towns. Situated within the decolonial tradition and drawing on the concept of the coloniality of power, it interrogates the Lesotho-South Africa border as a colonial artefact that continues to produce violence, suffering, criminality, sexual harassment and rape, and subalternity long after the formal end of colonialism and apartheid. Deploying an art-based draw-and-write methodology – an innovative approach that privileges ‘voices from below’, the paper captures the border experiences of a peripheral and understudied demographic – cross-border school-going children and students. The paper argues that the Lesotho-South Africa border is not merely a geopolitical line, but a colonial matrix of power that structures asymmetrical relations of race, class, age and nationality. It further argues that children, as meaning-producing agents, constitute a critical but neglected epistemological resource in border studies. The voices of pupils reveal the border as simultaneously a zone of violence, racial discrimination, family rupture, educational aspiration, and decolonial consciousness. The paper concludes with an unambiguous call for the decolonization of African borders and their eventual deborderization in the spirit of African continental integration.

Keywords: Coloniality, bordering, borderlands, Lesotho-South Africa border, school children, draw-and-write, decoloniality, paqama gates