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CONTEXTUALISING EXPERIENCES OF IDENTITY AND BELONGING IN THE WORKPLACE: SOUTH AFRICAN IMMIGRANTS IN THE UNITED STATES

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A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Science, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Johannesburg, August 2020

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other University.



Danielle K. Allen

11 August 2020

A paper based on this research has been submitted as a manuscript for publication to a peer-reviewed journal: Journal of Cultural Geography. The paper is entitled *Situating Experiences of Immigrant Belonging in the Workplace: South Africans in the United States.*

ABSTRACT

This qualitative study aimed to contribute to the cultural geography literature on migration in two ways: to enhance the limited knowledge of the South African immigrant experience in the United States (U.S.), and to further the understanding of the role and significance of the work setting as a social context for migration by situating and contextualising migrant experiences of identity and belonging in the workplace. Rich, qualitative data was gathered through in-depth interviewing with 18 South African immigrants living and working in the Northeast region of the U.S. The interviews allowed for an exploration of the subjective meanings and experiences of individuals in relation to immigrant identity and belonging, while staying attentive to articulations of context. This approach was informed by a recognition of the interrelatedness of place, identity, and belonging, the understanding of migrant belonging as relational, contextual, contingent, and dynamic, and through applying a place-based perspective of migration consistent with contemporary cultural geography literature.

The study extends existing knowledge of South Africans as an immigrant group in the U.S. and brings more nuanced insight into their differential experiences. In particular, the findings indicate that South African immigrants' advantageous positioning in the U.S. immigrant hierarchy and a relatively high level of social belonging may not equate with a strong personal sense of belonging. The study suggests that the workplace is a significant source of feelings of belonging for South African immigrants in America, providing meaning, identity, purpose, and connection. The findings of the study also enhance an understanding of the ways in which, and the circumstances under which, South African immigrant employees experience belonging in the American workplace. These include how intersecting dimensions of difference interact with workplace structures and discourses to position South Africans within their respective organisations; the workplace characteristics that enable or inhibit a sense of belonging for South African immigrant employees; and various strategies they may use to manage their difference and negotiate belonging at work.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Rationale

As geographers embraced postmodernism and the 'cultural turn' in the late 20th century, studies in migration moved from a largely traditional quantitative focus on spatial patterns, socio-economic processes, population movement, and demography, to a more qualitative approach emphasising the cultural production and expression of migration, migrant identity and belonging, and the subjective, lived experience of migrants (Gilmartin, 2008; King, 2012). Over the last two decades, various perspectives such as poststructuralism, feminism, transnationalism, and postcolonialism have contributed to a rich diversity of interest areas in geographic migration research (Blunt, 2007; Gilmartin, 2008; Silvey, 2013). However, in response to an overemphasis on hypermobility and deterritorialisation in early studies in the transnationalism paradigm, geographers have worked to reassert the centrality of place in the study of migration (Collyer & King, 2015; Gielis, 2009; King, 2012; O'Conner, 2010). Focusing on place aims to contextualise the migrant experience, exploring how particular spaces are implicated in the formation of identity and the experience of community. Studies embracing a place-based perspective have thus emphasised the materiality of migrant identity and experiences, as well as the inherently geographical nature of belonging (Mee & Wright, 2009; Richter, 2015).

Belonging has emerged as a significant theme in much migration research. Ralph (2012) defines belonging as "the intersection of personal feelings of being 'at home' *and* broader social definitions that discursively construct one as belonging (or not) to a particular place, people, and nation" (p. 447). This conceptualisation draws attention to how migrants experience a sense of belonging as well as the ways in which migrants are categorised and demarcated as Other by social norms, criteria, and discourses within the host country. In other words, both the subjective, emotional dimensions of belonging as well as the politics of belonging have been highlighted within the migration literature (Tomaney, 2015; Yuval-Davis, 2011). Belonging and identity are interrelated: questions of 'where we belong' cannot be separated from questions of 'who we are' (Antonsich, 2010).

Immigrants' narratives of identity are understood as articulations of self and other, drawing from dominant discourses related to dimensions such as gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, religion, class, and nationality (Ybema, Keenoy, Oswick, Beverungen, Ellis, & Sabelis, 2009). The relational, contextual, and dynamic nature of both identity and belonging has been emphasised in the migration literature.

Exploring identity and belonging can contribute significantly to insight into migrants' lived experiences. The possibility and ability of immigrants to feel part of and integrate into a new country or society is mediated by existing norms that signal who belongs and who does not (Fenster, 2005; Yuval-Davis, 2011). Within particular spaces and localities, an immigrant may experience inclusion or marginalisation depending on the extent to which his or her identity and difference is accepted and valued. Dynamics of inclusion and exclusion therefore influence the subjective experiences of migrants, highlighting the need to interrogate the circumstances under which a migrant or migrant group is understood to belong or not (Ralph, 2012). Migration studies also highlight the significance of human agency in understanding the immigrant experience. Chacko (2015), for example, discusses how migrants use different strategies to manage their identities and counteract negative stereotypes others attribute to them. Moreover, Wright (2015) argues that what is important about belonging is how it is felt, used, lived, and practised.

The literature on migrant identity and belonging reaffirms the interrelatedness of place, identity, and belonging, drawing attention to both the structure-agency and space-subjectivity dialectics. Using a qualitative approach to analyse immigrants' articulations of "sameness and difference" (Ralph, 2012, p. 447), group membership, and experiences of belonging within a particular context, has the potential to bring further insight into the lived experience of immigrants. The utility of an intersectional frame in exploring the differential experiences of migrants has also been advocated in the literature as it focuses on the way intersecting categories of difference (e.g., race, gender, language, religion, age,

class, and nationality) position migrants within specific places (Anthias, 2002; Bürkner, 2012; Plüss & Kwok-bun, 2012; Valentine, 2007).

Empirical studies of different migrant groups in various destination countries have explored immigrant experiences as they relate to issues of identity, belonging, citizenship, and integration. O'Connor (2010), for example, examined the transnational practices of Irish immigrants in Australia; den Besten (2010) explored immigrant children's experiences of their neighbourhoods in Paris and Berlin; and Platts-Fowler and Robinson (2015) compared the integration experiences of Iraqi refugees in two different English cities. The paucity of research on the experiences of South African migrants abroad has been noted within the migration literature (Trlin, 2012). Their increasing settlement in countries such as the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom since the 1980s, however, presents an opportunity for further exploration into their migration experiences. Patterns of immigration to these countries have corresponded to periods of political, economic, and racial turmoil in South Africa (Louw & Mersham, 2001; Marrow, 2007). A number of different factors such as political instability, concerns over violence, crime, and safety, and a perceived drop in the educational standards, employment, and infrastructure in South Africa have been cited as reasons for emigrating (Cain, Meares, & Read, 2015; Crush, 2011; Philipp & Ho, 2010; Sonn, Ivey, Baker, & Meyer, 2017), as well as the attraction of perceived personal and professional opportunities abroad.

In the United States (referred to as 'U.S.' or 'America' in this thesis), South Africans constitute just a small portion of the immigrant population, accounting for only .002% of the 39.9 million immigrants in the country in 2012 (Camarota, 2012). A significant number of South African immigrants in America have relocated under employment-based visas, suggesting a tendency for South African immigrants to be skilled professionals with high levels of tertiary education (Gambino, Trevelyan, & Fitzwater, 2014; Marrow, 2007; OECD, 2015). While U.S. immigrants from South Africa are a heterogeneous group, a large majority are white South Africans (Capps et al., 2012; Marrow, 2007; Weeber, 2005). These characteristics suggest that South African immigrants represent a more

atypical group in the U.S. (Weeber, 2005) when compared with other immigrant populations (e.g., from Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America), who may struggle with English as a second language and experience difficulties with cultural and economic integration due to a lack of skills or due to being refugees and asylum seekers. This assertion invites an exploration of the distinctiveness of the South African immigrant narrative.

Existing empirical research on South African immigrants within the social sciences include studies with a focus on acculturation and adjustment difficulties in the U.S. and the United Arab Emirates (e.g., Long, 2010; Segel, 1995; Wood, 2005), as well as studies that examine aspects of identity and race in the immigration experience of South Africans in Canada, Australia, and the U.S. (e.g., Barkley, 1998; Sonn et al., 2017; Weeber, 2005). Empirical studies in geography-oriented publications include Philipp and Ho's (2010) exploration of the home-making experiences of South African women in New Zealand, and Cain, Meares, and Read's (2015) study of the affective dimensions of migration for South Africans in New Zealand. Only two studies that relate to South African immigrants' employment and work experiences were identified, although neither was based in the U.S. nor focused in-depth on experiences of identity and belonging.

The study by van Tonder and Soontiens (2014) probed the relative importance of work-related issues in the migration experiences of South Africans in Australia, and Trlin (2012) examined initial employment and social engagement experiences of South Africans in New Zealand. Examples of themes emerging from these studies include challenges in securing employment and re-establishing careers, employer preference for host country work experience, and difficulties adapting to different and novel work environments. Van Tonder and Soontiens (2014) argue that the role and importance of the work setting in migrant acculturation has been under-acknowledged and understudied compared to other social contexts. Cook, Dwyer, and Waite (2011) similarly maintain that the workplace is overlooked as a significant site where migrants' diverse encounters with established individuals can influence the social relations between groups.

The lack of research on South African immigrants' workplace experiences in the U.S., the limited attention to the workplace as a key arena for immigrant identity negotiation and an anchor for a sense of belonging, and a theoretical interest in how identity, belonging, and geographic notions of place intersect encouraged my choice of topic for the present study.

1.2 Purpose and Aims of the Study

The aim of the study was to address the knowledge gap in the cultural geography literature on migration in two ways. Firstly, the study focuses on South African immigrants in the U.S., who have been identified as an understudied migrant group whose workplace experiences in the U.S. have not been explored in depth before. The immigrant experience for South Africans is likely to be qualitatively different to those of other immigrant groups due to the unique social, historical, cultural, and political context of South Africa as a country of origin. South Africans' experience of the amplified black-white dichotomy under apartheid, for example, differs from those immigrants coming to the U.S. from predominantly Middle Eastern or Asian countries. In addition, the tendency for South African immigrants to be well-educated, skilled professionals with access to the resources needed to voluntarily emigrate distinguishes them from more visible and less privileged migrant groups in the U.S., such as refugees or asylum seekers. However, in an effort to avoid homogenising South African immigrants, one of the goals of this study was to gain insight into how immigration is differentially experienced by a heterogeneous group of participants. This meant paying attention to the salience and dynamics of various categories of difference such as race, gender, age, educational attainment, and language.

Secondly, the study sought to further the understanding of the role and significance of the work setting as a social context for migration by situating and contextualising the migrant experience in the workplace. Intentionally interviewing South Africans across a variety of organisations and professions enabled an exploration of the ways in which different workplace contexts intersect with the unique characteristics of individuals to differentially influence experiences of identity and belonging. In recognising the complex and contingent

interrelations connecting identity, belonging, and place, the study hoped to bring insight into how South African immigrants experience and negotiate identity and belonging in the workplace, and interrogate the terms and conditions under which this occurs.

1.3 Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative study was to contextualise South African immigrants' experiences of identity and belonging within the U.S. workplace, with the aim of contributing to knowledge about South African immigrants in America and the role and significance of the work setting as a social context for the immigrant experience.

The following research questions framed the study:

a) How do South African immigrants' experiences of sameness and difference in the U.S. workplace influence their sense of identity and belonging?
b) How do experiences in the workplace inform the identity practices of South African immigrants as they re-evaluate and re-negotiate their sense of self, identity, and group membership?
c) How do these experiences affect South African immigrants' perceptions of their integration and feelings of belonging in the U.S.?

1.4 Scope and Delimitations

My research topic arose from an interest in the cultural geography literature on identity, culture, and place, as well as from my own experiences as a South African living in the U.S. An initial review of the interdisciplinary migration literature revealed the prominence of an interest in migrant acculturation and adjustment difficulties, as well as the diversity of empirical studies with different immigrant groups. The relative lack of research on South Africans abroad was, however, also apparent, especially in relation to workplace experiences in the U.S. Therefore, my goal in the present study was to gather in-depth, qualitative data from an information-rich, heterogeneous group of South African immigrants in America in order to develop a more nuanced theoretical understanding of their

experiences of identity and belonging in the U.S. workplace. Collecting participant narratives through interviews allowed me to explore the subjective meanings and experiences of individuals in relation to immigrant identity and belonging, while staying attentive to articulations of context.

The following delimitations were applied to the target sample: participants were all South African-born, currently residing in the U.S.; participants were in the country on immigrant or employment-based visas (not as students or tourists); participants were employed, or previously employed, in the U.S.; and due to travel, financial, and time constraints, participants were selected from states in the Northeast region to which I had reasonable access. Participant selection was purposive in order to ensure a degree of variation in age, gender, language, race, years since immigration, and profession. Reasons for immigration, type of employment (part-time, full-time), route to immigration, and permanence of immigration were not used as selection criteria.

1.5 Significance of the Study

A plethora of interdisciplinary studies in the migration literature have focused on migrant settlement and adjustment in destination countries. Although objective indicators like labour market performance and psychological measures of acculturation are useful in investigating migrant integration, Philipp and Ho (2010) argue that examining the subjective experiences of migrants is equally vital. Dutta (2016) similarly calls for more attention to be paid to the lived experience of migrants and the social contexts within which they are situated. The present study embraces such an integrated approach by exploring the subjective, lived experiences of immigrants while foregrounding 'place' and remaining contextually sensitive. This research thus contributes to insights into the subjective and social dimensions of belonging, as well as the ways in which migrant identity and belonging are dynamic, relational, and contingent.

A variety of contemporary studies that advocate a 'place-based' perspective of migration have highlighted the importance of local contexts in the formation and expression of immigrant identity, the social interactions and integration of

migrants, and their experiences of community and belonging (e.g., Kaplan & Chacko, 2015; Phillips & Robinson, 2015; Platts-Fowler & Robinson, 2015; Valentine & Sporton, 2009). My focus on the relatively under-studied context of the workplace, compared to other localities such as the home, neighbourhood, city, and public spaces, adds to the richness of cultural geography research on migration.

Although generalisation was not the aim of this qualitative study, it does address the ways in which the South African immigrant experience is unique by exploring emergent patterns and themes in the differential experiences of a group of South Africans. Therefore, as a case study of South African immigrants in the U.S., this project furthers the knowledge of South African immigrants and of the workplace as a social context for the immigrant experience. In addition to this study's contribution to the cultural geography literature, the findings may have some practical value to immigrants (and the people supporting them) seeking to understand the challenges that immigrants face in the U.S. and the significance of the workplace in immigrant acculturation and integration.

1.6 Defining Key Concepts

Belonging is defined as "the intersection of personal feelings of being 'at home' *and* broader social definitions that discursively construct one as belonging (or not) to a particular place, people, and nation" (Ralph, 2012, p. 447). Belonging is "an inherently geographical concept" (Mee & Wright, 2009, p. 772) and intertwined with issues of identity as well as processes of inclusion and exclusion (Antonsich, 2010).

Identity is conceptualised as the narratives that people use to tell stories about who they are and who they are not, both in terms of personal and collective identity (Yuval-Davis, 2011). Identity emerges "through the articulation of similarities and differences" (Ybema et al., 2009, p. 306) as people discursively position themselves relative to others. Identities are constructed, dynamic, situated, and contingent (Valentine, 2007).

Place is simultaneously a point in space, a material setting with structure and form, and a locus of identity, meaning, and attachment (Cresswell, 2009). Place is not a container for social life but produced by (and recursively shapes) the social relations within it (Herod, 2012). It is therefore conceptualised as dynamic, constructed, and relational (Phillips & Robinson, 2015).

Intersectionality looks at how multiple categories or dimensions of difference (such as race, gender, ethnicity, and class) interrelate and intersect in a mutually-constitutive way to produce particular subjectivities and differentially locate and position individuals (Christensen & Jensen, 2012; Johansson & Śliwa, 2014; Yuval-Davis, 2011).

Immigrant hierarchy: Within the cultural, political, and historical context of a destination country, a migrant hierarchy is formed by the intersection of prevalent value judgements which position immigrants within differently valued categories (Koskela, 2014). An immigrant hierarchy can be used as a framework to understand the ways in which different immigrants are constructed and perceived within a host society. Immigrants' positions within such "hierarchies of preference" (Ford, 2011, p. 1018) or "topographies of value" (Haynes & Hickel, 2016, p. 5) may influence the lived experience of migrants.

Otherness is defined as "the result of a discursive process by which an in-group ('Us', the Self) constructs one or more dominated out-groups ('Them', Other), stigmatizing real or imagined differences" (Pio & Essers, 2014, p. 253). Migrants may be constructed or demarcated as Other when they are perceived to fall outside of the normative structures, rules, and expectations of society as defined by those in power (Norton & Walton-Roberts, 2014).

Cultural capital is the unique combination of characteristics and resources such as educational qualifications, skills, age, language, values, and ideologies, that migrants possess and attempt to convert into desired assets to signal 'legitimate competence' within their new environments (Bourdieu, 1986; Plüss & Kwok-bun, 2012).

Integration essentially means the process through which migrants become an integral part of society in their host country. The OECD/European Union (2015) identifies various indicators of migrant integration, including participation in the labour market, social inclusion, and civic engagement. Integration is important in promoting social cohesion and allowing migrants "to become self-reliant, productive citizens" (p. 15).

1.7 Thesis Structure

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. Following the current introduction in chapter one, the literature review is presented in two parts in the second chapter. Part one provides a theoretical framework for the study, beginning with an introduction to belonging and identity as a central theme in migration research and followed by a discussion of various perspectives and approaches that have contributed to insights and knowledge of migration and the migrant experience. I also explain how a place-based perspective embraces geographic notions of space and place and the implications for the conceptualisation of the workplace. Part two of the literature review provides more detail on South Africans as an immigrant group, including a brief history of emigration from South Africa, the composition and characteristics of the South African diaspora, and a review of empirical research on South Africans abroad. As knowledge of the U.S. context is vital in understanding how different immigrant groups experience issues related to identity and belonging, I also discuss America as an immigrant-receiving nation.

Chapter three focuses on the study's methodology. A constructionist framework and qualitative research design was well-suited to the goals of the study: to explore the lived experiences of a group of immigrants and how they understand and interpret their experiences within specific social and cultural contexts. I reflect on my choice of topic for the study and explain the use of qualitative, in-depth interviewing as my research method. After describing sampling procedures and the participants, I turn to a discussion and reflection on the interviews and my interaction with the participants, followed by an explanation of the data analysis process. In addition, I address issues related to quality and credibility, researcher reflexivity, and ethical considerations.

My findings are presented and discussed in three chapters. Chapter four introduces three central themes that were identified during data analysis as foundational in understanding participant experiences of identity and belonging in the American workplace: the dimensions of difference that appear most salient to the participants' experiences of sameness and difference; the positionality of South Africans in the U.S. immigrant hierarchy; and the significance of context in considering immigrant experiences of belonging.

In chapter five, the focus moves to the context of the workplace. I explore the role of workplace characteristics and cultures in the way participants' "difference" may be perceived and interpreted, and how this may shape their sense of belonging. Various challenges participants identified as stemming from the fact that they are South African immigrants in the American workplace are also discussed, as well as the ways in which they perceive their foreignness to be beneficial. After addressing the ways in which participants experience connection and inclusion in the workplace, the chapter concludes with examining participant agency and the strategies they employ to increase their belonging and manage their difference at work.

The interviews also produced a large amount of data related to identity and belonging beyond the context of the workplace. Thus, in addition to discussing the significance of work and work life relative to other social contexts for participants' acculturation and perceptions of belonging, chapter six focuses on themes representing broader issues of South African immigrants' integration in the U.S. These include the ways in which they have found connection and a sense of community, the influence of politics and political discourse in participants' experiences of identity and belonging in America, questions around the salience of their South African identities, and participants' articulations of belonging and home in the U.S.

Chapter seven concludes the thesis. After providing a brief overview of the study, I synthesise and discuss the findings and contributions of the study as they relate to the central aims of the study. The chapter also addresses the study's limitations and opportunities for further research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This study is located within cultural geography research on migration, focusing on migrant identity, belonging, and place. With influences from a variety of paradigms and perspectives, such as postmodernism, feminism, and transnationalism, migration studies within geography have moved away from traditional quantitative, economic approaches toward new theorising that embraces deeper, more nuanced accounts of the migrant experience. Over the last two decades, the complex, interrelated, and co-constitutive nature of the relationship between place, identity, and belonging has been highlighted. This includes the understanding that subjectivity is formed in and through space, and that identity formation is relational and contingent across contexts. Belonging is viewed as inherently social and geographical, as well as dynamic and negotiated across space. In addition, place is seen as socially and culturally produced, while simultaneously producing social action. Keeping this complexity in mind, my aim in this review is to highlight and discuss various concepts and theorising from the literature as they relate to migration and the migrant experience.

Part one provides a theoretical framework for the present study, drawing from a vast interdisciplinary and interrelated body of research and theory. It is divided into four sections, beginning with an introduction to belonging and identity as a central theme in migration research. In section two I expand on the discussion by presenting concepts, theories, and approaches from a variety of perspectives that have contributed to insights and knowledge of migration and the migrant experience. Section three presents a place-based perspective which 'grounds' migration studies, where I discuss how geographic notions of space and place can be applied to the workplace, and in section four I briefly review existing literature on work and migrants.

Part two of the literature review is presented in five sections. The first section gives a brief overview of emigration from South Africa and the empirical research that has focused on South Africans living abroad. I provide more information on the composition and characteristics of the South African diaspora in section two, focusing on apparent patterns as well as heterogeneity. Knowledge of the

American context is vital in understanding how different immigrant groups experience issues related to identity and belonging. Therefore, in section three I discuss the United States as an immigrant-receiving nation, including changes in policy, perceptions, and attitudes toward immigration and their consequences for different immigrant groups. Section four presents more detail on South Africans in the U.S., and the ways in which they are atypical as an immigrant group. I conclude part two by discussing the ways in which the America may be divided into regions and the characteristics of the Northeastern U.S.

2.1 Part One: Theoretical Framework

2.1.1 Migrant belonging and identity

Belonging is a central theme in much of the sociological and geographical literature on migration. Ralph (2012) argues that the concept of belonging is "best understood as the intersection of personal feelings of being 'at home' *and* broader social definitions that discursively construct one as belonging (or not) to a particular place, people, and nation" (p. 447). The focus at the individual level is on understanding a migrant's self-assessment of belonging and his or her subjective experience of a sense of belonging to a place. 'Place-belongingness' or a 'sense of belonging' implies feelings of security, familiarity, rootedness, and emotional attachment (Antonsich, 2010), and highlights the affective dimension of belonging (Mee & Wright, 2009). Belonging can also be conceptualised as more broadly social and political. For instance, forms of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion are created by processes, structures, and discourses that construct, justify, and reproduce particular boundaries and collectivities in the social world (Wright, 2015; Yuval-Davis, 2011). Migrant belonging is defined, for example, through hegemonic discourse (e.g., mainstream beliefs about American identity and values), formalised immigration policies (e.g., creation of visa categories and the requirements to qualify for them), and the creation of physical and symbolic borders that exclude certain people (e.g., immigration checkpoints at airports). Recognising power relations and control is thus important in the understanding of belonging as socially defined (Fenster, 2005).

The present study heeds both of these dimensions of belonging (personal, subjective, emotional; and social, intersubjective, political) in order to avoid "a socially de-contextualized individualism or an all-encompassing socializing discourse" (Antonsich, 2010, p. 644). However, exploring the intersection of these two dimensions of belonging is challenging as the migrant experience is not homogeneous. It is complicated by a variety of personal, social, cultural, economic, legal, and relational factors (Antonsich, 2010). For example, a migrant can claim belonging when he or she obtains legal citizenship (social, legal belonging), yet have no sense of belonging or feelings of attachment (personal, subjective belonging). The complexity and multidimensionality of belonging is evident not only in the plural and hybrid forms that belonging takes, but also in the way belonging can be experienced at various scales (such as global, local, and national), and in different places (e.g., city, neighbourhood, or home; Antonsich, 2010; Wright, 2015).

Since an exploration of migrant belonging highlights the "interplay of sameness and difference" (Ralph, 2012, p. 447), it becomes necessary to pay attention to social norms, criteria, and discourses that work to categorise and demarcate migrants as Other (different, deviant, or outsider) and influence their experiences of inclusion and exclusion. Individuals or groups are constructed as Other when they are perceived to fall outside of the normative structures, rules, and expectations of society as defined by those in power, often based on the identification of forms of (real or imagined) difference (Norton & Walton-Roberts, 2014; Pio & Essers, 2014; Ralph, 2012). This process of Othering inevitably involves boundary construction. Guetzkow and Fast (2016) define symbolic boundaries as "the conceptual distinctions used to demarcate in-groups and out-groups" (p. 150), which may be based on lines of class, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, and nationality (among others), and involve stereotypical judgments. Certain differences may become amplified in specific contexts, which can result in increased stigmatisation and a solidification of symbolic and physical boundaries against a specific group (Guetzkow & Fast, 2016). Applying such theorising in the present study, with its focus on immigrant belonging in the workplace, means exploring how differences are symbolically constructed within

a place, how meanings are ascribed to such differences, and how they may influence the lived experience of my participants within that space.

Migrants are not discursively positioned as Other in a host population in a homogeneous or unproblematic way. This means that some migrants have a higher capacity to belong to or in a place than others (Ralph, 2012). People's experiences of, and responses to, exclusion will differ depending on the basis on which their marginalisation is predicated, and how they are positioned in a specific context as various categories of difference intersect (Guetzkow & Fast, 2016). In addition, belonging is situated within specific domains and everyday spaces where migrants can be marked as Other in often conflicting or contrasting ways. The norms of inclusion and exclusion, which signal who belongs and who does not, can also "change according to the needs and goals of the hegemony" (Fenster, 2005, p. 249). Boundaries are therefore not fixed, and can be contested, negotiated, and managed by individuals and groups.

These varying practices and processes that differentiate belonging, as well as changing criteria for social membership, result in "shifting geographies of belonging" (Mee & Wright, 2009, p.772), where belonging becomes an ongoing process that is not necessarily achievable or final. Belonging is thus conceptualised as a process of becoming rather than as a status (Antonsich, 2010). Ralph (2012) highlights the role of agency as migrants internalise dominant notions of sameness and difference, and also contest the ascriptions imposed on them. The present study thus embraces the conceptualisation of belonging as a dynamic, contingent, and relational process that migrants manage as they "move between ascriptions of sameness and belonging, at once blending with and challenging cultural norms set by the dominant group" (Ralph, 2012, p. 447). Migrants actively create and maintain a sense of belonging (Mee & Wright, 2009), and position themselves to challenge stereotypes, resist exclusion, and negotiate belonging (Ralph, 2012).

The interrelatedness of identity and belonging is emphasised when we recognise that questions of 'where we belong' cannot be separated from questions of 'who we are' (Antonsich, 2010). Yuval-Davis (2011) conceives of identities as

narratives that people use to tell stories about who they are and who they are not, both in terms of personal and collective identity. Identities are thus related to perceptions of self and other and are articulations of similarities and differences. This "self-other identity talk" (Ybema et al., 2009, p. 307) draws from dominant discourses often related to gender, race, class, ethnicity, and nationality. The structure-agency dialectic in identity formation is made evident in the way that narratives of identity are produced within, and constrained by, socially available and hegemonic discourses and practices (Anthias, 2002; Ybema et al., 2009). Examples of identity dimensions that individuals use to express themselves (and through which others perceive them) include race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, age, disability, nationality, citizenship status, religion, language, education, and profession (Norton & Walton-Roberts, 2014). These dimensions may become highlighted or prioritised in particular contexts, whether ascribed and imposed by others or emphasised by individuals themselves. They can be valued or deemed undesirable depending on how they are given meaning.

While identity involves how we think about and describe ourselves (and how others see us), subjectivity is about how we are constituted as subjects and how we experience ourselves (Barker, 2012). The interrelated and co-constitutive nature of space and subjectivity is evident in processes of identity formation and exclusion because "our bodies and our sense of ourselves are in constant interaction with how and where we are placed" (Probyn, 2003, p. 290). Longhurst (2003) affirms that subjectivity "cannot be plucked from the spatial relations that constitute it" (p. 284). Applying these conceptualisations to the migrant experience illuminates the way in which migrant identities and subjectivities are grounded in the materiality of the body and are constructed or produced in relation to others. It also foregrounds the centrality of place in the production of subjectivities. Probyn (2003) argues that we are produced by the spaces and places we inhabit, but also that "how we inhabit those spaces is an interactive affair" (p. 294). As migrants move across different places and contexts, subjectivity and identity become a process of negotiating sameness and difference, where the configuration and performance of particular subjectivities are differentially enabled.

This understanding of migrant identity as embodied and emplaced (Longhurst, 2003) draws the focus of analysis to how boundaries between groups are (re)created, maintained, and contested, and how migrant identity and belonging are embedded in specific power relations. Ralph (2012) reinforces that belonging is a relational process at the intersection of societal norms and subjective experiences: a "messy micro-politics of social membership" (p. 457) that is situated within specific spaces and contexts. Conceptualising identity as a dynamic, continuous process (rather than a possessive property of an individual) and as constructed within historical, cultural, and political contexts, highlights how migrant identity is relational, evolving, and situated (Anthias, 2002; Chacko, 2015; Ybema et al., 2009). Mee and Wright (2009) also underscore the need to explore how belonging is actively practised to understand how a sense of belonging is (re)created, negotiated, and maintained.

Belonging and identity are central to exploring the subjective experiences of migrants. In addition to recognising its complex and multidimensional nature, Wright (2015) argues that what is important about belonging is how it is felt, used, lived, and practised. The opposite of belonging does not only mean exclusion, but can encompass "isolation, alienation, loneliness, dis-placement, uprootedness, disconnection, disenfranchisement, or marginalization" (p. 395). It becomes necessary to understand when, how, and why belonging (and not-belonging) is experienced. In order to bring insight into the complexity of the politics of belonging, Ralph (2012) calls for an interrogation of the terms and conditions whereby a migrant or migrant group is understood to belong or not. My hope is that the present study contributes toward such insight.

2.1.2 Perspectives on migration

Given its interdisciplinary nature, the boundaries between various conceptualisations and theorising in the broader migration literature are often blurred. However, this section aims to review different perspectives on migration and the migrant experience that are relevant to the present study's focus on immigrant identity and belonging.

Intersectionality and positionality

Intersectionality looks at how multiple categories of difference (such as race, gender, ethnicity, and class) interrelate and intersect in a mutually constitutive way to produce particular subjectivities and differentially locate and position individuals (Christensen & Jensen, 2012; Johansson & Śliwa, 2014; Yuval-Davis, 2011). Since its introduction by civil rights activist and legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) to describe how African American women experience multiple oppressions and are marginalised by discrimination law, intersectionality has been widely used to address the "complexity and interconnectedness of identity and divisions in contemporary society" (Johansson & Śliwa, 2014, p. 19). An intersectional approach explores the ways in which intersections of dimensions of inequality result in discrimination and exclusion of individuals and groups (Bürkner, 2012). Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall (2013) explain the utility of intersectionality in examining the "dynamics of difference and sameness" (p. 787) in relation to social justice, anti-discrimination, and social inequality.

Valentine (2007) describes intersectionality as a "situated accomplishment" (p. 14). This highlights how place is central to understanding the contingent nature of intersectionality and the need to pay attention to the economic, social, political, and cultural contexts within which differences are constructed. Categories of difference are measured and evaluated according to social norms and hegemonic discourses: a certain difference may become more or less salient in particular moments and spaces, carry positive or negative attributions, be more or less valued, and thus produce advantage or disadvantage in its situated context (Johansson & Śliwa, 2014; Tatli & Özbilgin, 2012; Valentine, 2007). The positionality of immigrants therefore influences their lived experience, including the degree to which they may feel a sense of belonging.

Boogaard and Roggeband (2010) note the importance of both structure and agency within an intersectional perspective. Analysing intersectionality therefore involves focusing on the interplay between the "structures and institutions at the macro-level, and identities and lived lives at the micro-level" (Christensen & Jensen, 2012, p. 111). The structural dimension of intersectionality incorporates

discursive and material structures that serve as rules and resources for people to draw on in everyday interaction, and which produce and maintain inequalities (Boogaard & Roggeband, 2010). This includes macro-level processes and structures such as ideology, culture, law, politics, economics, and social institutions, as well as social discourse in which racialised and gendered ideals and assumptions are embedded and reproduced (Tatli & Özbilgin, 2012).

A micro-level approach to intersectionality pays more attention to identity construction, meaning creation, processes of identification and positioning, and human agency (Boogaard & Roggeband, 2010; Christensen & Jensen, 2012; Tatli & Özbilgin, 2012). The circumstances under which certain social categories are mobilised is an example of such a focus of interest: an individual may use an identity or position as a resource to achieve a desired aim, stress particular positions or affiliations to negotiate belonging, or disidentify with a particular social category or identity to combat exclusion (Johansson & Śliwa, 2014; Valentine, 2007). At the same time, individuals may be unable to enact particular identities or experience inclusion due to how they are ascribed as same or different by others. Although I explore participants' subjective experiences in this study (which may be regarded as more micro-level), the macro-level structures and processes as discussed above are equally relevant in understanding such experiences within a specific context. Micro-level meaning making is therefore read in relation to the macro-level structures.

Intersectionality is not only useful in exploring how disadvantaged groups are marginalised and face unique challenges and inequalities in their everyday lives (traditionally the focus of intersectionality research), but also in understanding the experiences of privileged groups and how powerful identities are contingent and contextual (Christensen & Jensen, 2012; Valentine, 2007). Intersectionality recognises the interrelatedness of multiple categories of difference, and that individuals have several group memberships and complex, multiple identity positions (Atewologun & Sealy, 2014). The way people position themselves and are positioned by others is influenced by the meanings associated with various categories of difference such as race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality. As a

specific social identity may act as a marker for privilege or disadvantage depending on context, individuals are seen to move in and out of privilege.

An intersectional perspective on privilege therefore shifts from simple binary categorisations to a more nuanced understanding of the ways in which privilege is fluid and multifaceted, experienced in relation to specific intersections and positionality. Atewologun and Sealy (2014) reflect that privilege is negotiated and pursued, and that people engage in identity work to construct and maintain a sense of personal significance and credibility. An intersectionality framework is thus useful in exploring how "privilege is contextual, conferred and contested at the nexus of disadvantage and advantage, evoking dynamic responses from individuals in their conscious attempts to manage it" (p. 424). This is relevant to the present study on South Africans where race and socio-economic status are associated with privilege (part two provides a detailed discussion of South Africans as an immigrant group in the U.S. and abroad).

In terms of migration, intersectionality offers a more holistic, integrated approach to understanding migrant experiences, as both structuralist and individualist positions are taken into account (Bürkner, 2012). Ehrkamp and Leitner (2006) argue against the homogenisation of migrants, highlighting differences such as nationality of origin, race, gender, class, socio-economic status, age, education, language, religion, legal status, family ties, and ethnicity. They also point to differences in migration contexts, such as whether migrants are regarded as refugees, asylum seekers, seasonal migrants, skilled immigrants, or sojourners). Intersectionality facilitates an exploration of how the intersection of these differences socially locate migrants within specific contexts, and how the disadvantages or privileges associated with these differences may shape their lived experiences (Norton & Walton-Roberts, 2014). The positionalities of migrants in specific contexts may, for example, increase or decrease their access to resources, employment, and social spaces, their social and political rights and practices, and their experiences of mobility and citizenship (Dunn, 2010; Ehrkamp & Leitner, 2006).

Plüss and Kwok-bun (2012) draw on Bourdieu's (1986) theorisation of capital conversion in their exploration of migrant identities, experiences, and outcomes. They explain that analysing intersectionality within the context of migration can illuminate how "a multitude of factors such as race, gender, social class, location, skills, culture, network positions, and age influence each other to worsen, or sometimes improve, people's access to desired resources" (Plüss & Kwok-bun, 2012, p. 1). Migrants possess a unique combination of cultural capital (such as educational qualifications, skills, and values), social capital (such as social networks and connections) and economic capital (such as financial assets and investments) (Bourdieu, 1986; Kelly & Lusis, 2006; Plüss & Kwok-bun, 2012). They attempt to convert these into new cultural capital to access desired resources, decrease exclusion, gain upward mobility, and increase acceptance in the new host society. This, however, is contingent upon how their forms of capital are evaluated within a specific social and spatial context (Kelly & Lusis, 2006). Positive intersectionality is experienced when a migrant can successfully convert these diverse forms of capital into assets and capabilities that are desired or judged as "legitimate competence" (Plüss & Kwok-bun, 2012, p. 11) in the new environment. The failure to construct new cultural capital is experienced as negative intersectionality, and often occurs when the migrant's characteristics are devalued or not recognised in the new context.

Valentine (2007) argues that examining intersectionality as lived experience is a useful way to explore how and when people become emotionally invested in particular subject positions, and how their sense of self constantly emerges and unfolds across contexts. As well as considering the intersection of structure (social effects) and agency (meaning and practice), intersectionality incorporates both the spatial and contextual dimensions of belonging (Anthias, 2002). It therefore brings about further insight into how migrants understand and interpret their place in the world. Bürkner (2012) warns against an essentialist view of social categories, encouraging instead a focus on complex and dynamic social processes, group formation, inclusion and exclusion, and identity production and performativity. At the same time, the pitfalls of "structurally unbound, free-floating constructivism" (p. 185) can be avoided by recognising that

intersectionality is context-specific, and that axes of differences and inequality interweave at a variety of scales. If intersectionality explores how the production and experience of identity and belonging is dependent on how people are located or positioned as subjects, it becomes prudent to recognise the central role bodies play in this process, as well as the material contexts within which they are placed.

Embodiment, materiality, and emotions

A focus on embodiment in recent research on migrant identity and belonging arose with the criticism of the disembodied approach of structuralist perspectives (Bürkner, 2012). Embracing embodiment means not just focusing on corporeality, but also on the "social and spatial construction of our embodied identities" (Jackson, 2003, p. 41). The body is always situated and relational, given meaning by its interaction with others and perceived, interpreted, and given value within context (Cain et al., 2015; Silvey, 2013). Bodily characteristics and embodied attributes (such as height, skin colour, age, accent, clothing, or physical and mental ability) contribute to identity construction and boundary formation between self and other (Norton & Walton-Roberts, 2014; O'Connor, 2010; Valentine & Sporton, 2009).

A migrant may embody a desirable characteristic that affords some privilege in a given context or may experience an embodied difference that is disadvantageous. Specific qualities or characteristics of the body can therefore "become discriminative features that, among others, regulate access to social positions, resources, and income" (Bürkner, 2012, p. 185). Migrants will be unequally empowered or disadvantaged to access space, cross borders, and adapt to new environments, depending on how they are located within configurations of space and power by the intersections of their embodied difference (Dunn, 2010). Embodiment is therefore an interest in the present study as it complicates the ability of migrants to belong, acts as a barrier to integration, and influences individual migrant trajectory paths (Butcher, 2010; O'Connor, 2010; Silvey, 2013).

Geographers have foregrounded the importance of place in the theorisation of embodiment: "a focus on lived experience through spatiality grounds investigations of the body in the everyday, bringing abstract subjects/bodies into the materiality of life in specific spaces and locations" (Moss & Dyck, 2003, p. 62). Materiality is concerned with things of physical substance; with that which is tangible, concrete, and grounded as opposed to abstract, metaphorical, or imaginative. Ho and Hatfield (2011) contend that investigating the everyday is useful in moving beyond the general and the discursive to gain a more nuanced understanding of how migrants experience daily life in different spaces and localities. The everyday social and material aspects of migration bring insight to, for example, the barriers and stressors encountered by migrants, the resources they need to establish themselves and adjust to new lifestyles, and the way they create and negotiate new social relationships.

It is important to recognise materiality in the present study because, as Probyn (2003) emphasises, subjectivities are not abstract entities but conducted *in situ*. Thus, the material contexts within which migrants find themselves (the American workplace in this study) can enable or limit the enactment of a specific identity and may accentuate categories of embodied difference such as race, class, and gender. In turn, the gendered, classed, and racialised identities of migrants within these contexts will influence how migrants are received by others and how they will be able to integrate in a particular locality (Kaplan & Chacko, 2015). This perspective reinforces that places cannot be separated from human experiences of them (Ho & Hatfield, 2011). Materiality and corporeality can be recognised without falling into biological essentialism if the body is seen as "simultaneously and mutually constituted as corporeal and discursive" (Moss & Dyck, 2003, p. 67). Bodies are sites of inscription while at the same time productive of identity, social relations, and day-to-day lived geographies (Gregson, 2003).

With regard to the present study's focus on South African immigrants' sense of belonging, emotion becomes important to consider as it enables migrants to "situate themselves in the world through meaning and feeling" (Waite & Cook, 2011, p. 238). In contrast to the sidelining of emotions in earlier rationalist

economic and political approaches, contemporary perspectives assert that an exploration of emotional experiences is central to an embodied approach to migration, and that emotions are a constitutive part of the migration experience (Boccagni & Baldassar, 2015; Skrbiš, 2008; Walsh, 2012). Silvey (2013) describes migration as an emotionally-charged experience, and this sentiment is echoed by Skrbiš (2008) who observes that "migrant stories are linked with the experiences of adjustment, settlement, nostalgia, a shattered sense of belonging, renewal, loss, discrimination, abrupt endings, new beginnings and new opportunities" (p. 236). Migration is thus a source of change and transformation in the emotional lives of migrants as they renegotiate self and other in novel settings, learn how to cultivate and manage emotions in different ways, and reconfigure networks, routines, attachments, and referents (Boccagni & Baldassar, 2015; Skrbiš, 2008).

Emotional processes do not only occur in the minds and bodies of migrants, but emerge during social interaction (Richter, 2015; Svašek, 2010; Wright, 2015). Emotions are thus conceived of as intra-personal, subjective, and physiological, as well as interpersonal, social, and constructed. Ahmed (2004) draws attention to the zone of contact between self and others, which are shaped by histories of contact and repeated associations that allow people to perceive and react to objects, places, and others. In this way, emotions "work, in concrete and particular ways, to mediate the relationship between the psychic and the social" (p. 27). An immigrant in a new country, for example, may develop a sense of belonging when emotions originating within a zone of contact (interactions with locals) leads to connectivity, attachment, and shared sentiment (Wright, 2015). If such encounters are instead characterised by fear and mistrust, immigrants are more likely to feel alienated as they struggle to identify with or become emotionally attached to their new surroundings (Svašek, 2010; Sonn et al., 2017). Boccagni and Baldassar (2015) state that the simultaneous embodiedness and embeddedness of emotions is indicative of how emotions and social reality are mutually constitutive. It also highlights that emotions are discursive, enacted, relational, and situated (Walsh, 2012).

Changes in conceptualisations of migration and migrant identity, including increasing interest and exploration of dimensions of migration such as embodiment and emotions, have been facilitated and fuelled by the move from an assimilationist perspective (prevalent in classical migration scholarship) to a transnational paradigm.

Transnationalism and migrant identity practices

Traditional conceptualisations of migration view it as a unilinear process whereby immigrants adopt the culture, practices, values, and identity of the new host country, while discarding that of their country of origin (Lazar, 2011). Transnationalism, however, posits that migrants can settle into new locations while simultaneously maintaining various kinds of social relationships with the place of origin (Dahinden, 2012). Such enduring transnational attachments mean migrants are seen to identify with, and be embedded in, more than one nation-state. In contrast to an essentialist approach that reifies ethnicity, sees identities as fixed, and views culture as rigid, transnationalism "emphasises plurality, mobility, hybridity, and in-betweenness" (Ernste, van Houtum, & Zoomers, 2009, p. 580). Furthermore, transnationalism regards identity as dynamic, variable, and dependant on socio-cultural context, and explores social practice as situated and contextual (Giordano, 2010; Lazar, 2011). This is indicative of how transnationalism draws from post-positivist, post-structuralist, and post-nationalist epistemologies (King, 2012).

The adoption of a transnational lens or perspective in much contemporary migration research informs the current study's interest in identity, identity practices, and belonging. Butcher (2010) proposes that "relocation to a new cultural context instigates a process of identity re-evaluation as individuals face difference that challenges former cultural frames of reference and subsequent subjectivity" (p. 24). The process can be accompanied by feelings of discomfort, displacement, loss, anxiety, vulnerability, fear, and insecurity. Migrant identities and practices evolve as migrants (re)define themselves and negotiate membership within new environments, which are complicated by contextual factors such as "prevailing ethnic and racial stereotypes, socioeconomic class opportunity

structures … and the pressure for assimilation" (Chacko, 2015, p. 117). Migrants may adopt a variety of strategies in their attempt to manage the changes and challenges to their identities, negotiate new positions, counteract Othering by mainstream groups, and re-establish cultural fit (Butcher, 2010; Sonn et al., 2017). These strategies and experiences are complicated, contextual, contingent, and highly variable among migrants. To combat a sense of fragmentation, for example, migrants may more firmly express their national identity, embedding their sense of belonging and group identity in their homeland rather than the host society. Attempting to maintain connections to their homeland may involve various ways of reproducing their social life in the new host country, such as consumption patterns, social activity, ritual events, clothing, and food (Boccagni & Baldassar, 2015; Chacko, 2015).

Conversely, migrants may experience a strong sense of dis-identification with aspects of their identity such as their nationality or choose to purposefully distance themselves from their national identity "and all the baggage that comes with it" (Clark, 2008, p. 170). These migrants may be able to feel more rooted in their new country of residence and claim a stronger host country identity (Waite & Cook, 2011). They may also actively pursue integration by participating in, and becoming embedded in, the culture and social life of the new country (e.g., learning the language, participating in leisure and sport activities, eating local foods, volunteering and community involvement; Dunn 2010). Under different circumstances, some migrants may express feelings of loss, homelessness, and non-belonging due to a lack of identification and belonging with both country of origin and destination (Staeheli & Nagel, 2006; Waite & Cook, 2011). This may lead to a strategy of turning to new forms of place-based identities (e.g., a New Yorker), where a feeling of belonging is pursued through the redefining of a sense of place and home, and adopting practices in everyday life that construct, maintain, and reinforce the identity connected with that sense of place (Butcher, 2010).

A more common discourse among migrants is of a dual, mixed, and mutable identity: a "more nuanced articulation of multiple identities and straddling

belongings" (Waite & Cook, 2011, p. 244). By retaining or forging multiple ties to home and destination countries simultaneously, migrants can develop a transnational identity that is hybrid and flexible enough to more effectively manage positions of difference and maintain a sense of belongingness in multiple places (Butcher, 2010; Dunn, 2010). Migrants may express, assert, or enact certain elements or characteristics of identity to differing degrees across spatio-temporal contexts (Chacko, 2015; Waite & Cook, 2011). As identity markers serve as "resources that are deployed contextually and situationally" (Anthias, 2002, p. 498), migrants can draw attention to those identity dimensions that may signify inclusion and belonging, such as legal citizenship, educational attainment, or socio-economic status. In this way, acculturation is seen as selective in specific circumstances, where migrants offer "assertions of sameness, individual merit, and universality to counter their construction as 'the other'" (Chacko, 2015, p. 117).

The strategies or choices about identity or self-identification are not straightforward or unproblematic. Staeheli and Nagel (2006) describe that, for migrants, the "biggest challenge is how to be different and similar at the same time" (p. 19). A tension may thus develop between the need to assimilate and not wanting to lose their sense of heritage culture and identity. The agency of migrants in self-identifying and negotiating their identities may also not be enough to protect them against prevailing prejudice, alienation, and marginalising discourse, or overcome entrenched power structures that result in exclusion (Chacko, 2015). Giordano (2010) urges against the temptation to "overestimate individual flexibility and to deem multiple and changeable identities as something universal and decontextualized" (p. 20). Due attention must be paid to society's role in identity construction and the political, historical, and economic contexts within which identities are formed (Chacko, 2015; Mitchell, 2003; Valentine & Sporton, 2009). An important example to explore is how citizenship and the identity of 'citizen' may shape the migrant experience in a host country.

Citizenship and belonging

Across the social sciences, research on migration often equates belonging with national identity and with the notion of citizenship (Antonsich, 2010). Gilmartin (2008) discusses how nation-states use citizenship as a tool of inclusion and exclusion. Citizenship becomes "a marker of belonging, a way of rearticulating national identity through the exclusion of those who are not citizens" (p. 1843). Fenster (2005) asserts that citizenship is a question of exclusion more than it is about inclusion as it concerns legitimising boundaries between 'us' and 'them' to exclude certain identities from the hegemonic community. Citizenship not only concerns the rights and responsibilities conferred by laws and policies, but also the ways in which opportunities and resources are made available (or denied) to individuals and groups at particular moments and in particular spaces (Staeheli, Ehrkamp, Leitner, & Nagel, 2012).

The positionality of migrants as inside or outside of national belonging therefore impacts their everyday lives (Mee & Wright, 2009). Citizenship, as a formal expression of belonging (Fenster, 2005), grants migrants the same legal rights as native-born citizens but does not guarantee the experience of a sense of belongingness or protect migrants from other "discourses and practices of socio-spatial exclusion" (Antonsich, 2010, p. 650). Citizenship therefore involves not only legal definitions but the symbolic inclusion in an imagined community (Guetzkow & Fast, 2016) which is mediated by "social relations and cultural meanings, values and practices" (Blunt, 2007, p. 688). It also draws attention to how states aim to control and regulate migrant mobility and behaviours through both physical and discursive practices (Collyer & King, 2015).

The transnational perspective has renewed theorising on the relationship between society and the nation, the forming of national identity, and the experience of citizenship (Lazar, 2011; Mitchell, 2003). Ernste et al. (2009) describe how transnationalism is "increasingly loosening and dynamising the classic triangle of territory-identity-citizenship" (p. 578) resulting in a spatiality of citizenship that is no longer based on one nation but grounded in multiple places and the relationships within those places (Staeheli & Nagel, 2006). The term

‘transnational citizenship’ is therefore widely used within contemporary migration studies. Transnational studies have explored how migrants draw on various aspects of their transnational identity (other than their nationality) to negotiate, articulate, or assert their membership in the receiving country (Chacko, 2015). Belonging may also be expressed in terms of class, gender, religion, or profession (Dahinden, 2012), showing that migrants have powerful emotional investments in subject positions besides nationality (Valentine & Sporton, 2009).

Citizenship studies have contributed to the understanding that citizenship and belonging are complex, ambiguous, and negotiated. ‘Citizens’ are not only constructed at a state level but also in everyday life at multiple scales (Gilmartin, 2008). Citizenship is not merely a status, but something felt, practiced, and enacted (Staeheli et al., 2012). Debates around national identity and national citizenship continue to be very relevant at a time when “the fortification of national-security discourses” (Lazar, 2011, p. 78) and anti-immigrant sentiments are apparent, and migrant differences are stigmatised and seen as a threat to national cultural integrity. Exclusionary nationalist politics facilitate the construction of the ‘idealised migrant’ based on class, race, gender, and sexuality, which is consequential for migrant mobility and belonging (Gilmartin, 2008). This highlights the need to understand the positioning and production of migrants as Other.

Immigrant Otherness

A postcolonial perspective on migration asserts that colonial ideology and the hegemony of Westernness continue to inform definitions of self and other, shape the politics and practice of inclusion and exclusion, and impact everyday practices and migrant experiences (Pio & Essers, 2014; Yeoh, 2003). Migration studies within a postcolonial framework explore migrant experiences as Other to understand how systems of hierarchy such as gender, class, nationality, and race influence the perception, reception, and integration of migrants (Ku, 2012). Pio and Essers (2014) define Otherness as “the result of a discursive process by which an in-group (‘Us’, the Self) constructs one or more dominated out-groups (‘Them’, Other), stigmatizing real or imagined differences” (p. 253). In this way

migrants are positioned relative to the Western self as "precarious outsiders" (Ku, 2012, p. 36).

Bhatia and Ram (2009) use the example of Indian immigrants in the U.S. post-9/11 to illustrate the tenuous, dynamic, contingent, and unstable nature of migrant identity and acculturation, and how structural, socio-political, and historical forces may shape migrant integration. They discuss how the racial identity of South-Asian immigrants became more visible after 9/11, highlighting their difference and constructing them as non-American and as a threat. Even those who had gained citizenship and integrated quite successfully as highly educated professionals reported increased feelings of vulnerability and experiences of prejudice. Bhatia and Ram's study thus supports the notion of migrant identity as relational and situated, created by cultural discourses, power, and history, and as a positioning instead of an essence. Ku (2012) focuses on the paradoxical construction of migrants in Canada: they are stigmatised for their difference, while simultaneously desired for their labour and capital. Migrants are accepted and even celebrated when their difference is perceived as needed and containable, allowing some to "commodify or trade their difference to accumulate capital, financial or social resources in order to successfully integrate into the society" (p. 37). Such an understanding also leads to an interest in how migrants may challenge such discourses and norms, counter or compensate for their differences, embrace or reject certain identities, and resist or decentre their Otherness to negotiate their belonging (Ku, 2012; Pio & Essers, 2014).

Postcolonial studies thus focus on the power of institutions and the role of discourse in the production of the 'Immigrant Other' as well as migrant agency. In addition, an understanding of migrant experiences and identity as hybrid and fluid is mediated by the recognition of their materiality and situatedness (Pio & Essers, 2014; Yeoh, 2003). Applying the postcolonial conceptualisation of Otherness in the present study means exploring the degree to which South African immigrants experience being Othered, as well as the ways in which they deploy discourses of Other in their narratives about immigrants, identity, and belonging in the U.S.

2.1.3 A place-based perspective: Grounding migration studies

A recurring theme evident in the preceding sections is the fundamental role of place and context, and the situated nature of migration and migrant experiences. In his review of geography and migration studies, King (2012) discusses the shift toward respatialising and regrounding migration in response to an overemphasis on hypermobility and deterritorialisation in early transnational studies in the 1990s. A re-emphasis on place challenged the claims of a borderless, despatialised, and delocalised world emerging from increased globalisation and transnational processes (O'Connor, 2010). Gielis (2009) refers to this as the "placial turn" (p. 273) in migration studies. The contestation of the immaterial view of space and marginalisation of the importance of place is also noted by other authors such as Collyer and King (2015), Dunn (2010), Gilmartin (2008), and Tomaney (2015).

In addition, Gielis (2009) proposes using place as a lens through which to understand migration to avoid the problems inherent in methodological nationalism (the tendency to equate society with the nation-state and view the nation and its boundaries as the focus of study). Methodological nationalism ignores subnational or non-national social processes and networks as relevant foundations of cultural and social life, failing to adequately capture the complexity of migration (Gielis, 2009; Lazar, 2011). A place-based perspective does not involve dismissing the continued importance of the nation-state, national structures, or national identity with regard to migration and the migrant experience but disrupts the local-global binary by recognising that the local and the global are constitutive in the construction of place (Gielis, 2009; Lazar, 2011).

The present study draws on insights from a variety of contemporary studies that advocate a place-based perspective of migration. Kaplan and Chacko (2015) state that the local context is just as vital as the national context when considering migration and transnationalism, and that the "unique properties of the places that immigrants enter are overlooked" (p. 130). The local milieu, socio-cultural structures, and mix of people in particular cities, towns, and neighbourhoods differentially influence the reception and integration of immigrants (who

themselves differ in terms of race, gender, socio-economic class, legal status, culture, religion, and education). This perspective affirms the centrality of place in the formation of immigrant identity (Kaplan & Chacko, 2015).

Platts-Fowler and Robinson (2015) similarly argue for the need to recognise and appreciate the role of local context in order to understand and analyse migrant integration in different places. The unique combination of contextual features (social and physical environment), compositional features (profile and characteristics of local and newly arrived populations), and collective features (socio-cultural and historical dimensions) in any given place can, for example, foster specific types of inter-group relations, influence how migrants understand their social membership, and create conditions of isolation and harassment or support and encouragement. Migration research focusing on the national context may overlook the ways in which migration manifests and impacts locally. Phillips and Robinson (2015) call for the contextualising of migrant experiences across local places of social encounter to better understand the relationship between migration, community, and places, and the spatial variability, contradictions, and ambiguities in migrant experiences. Places are "key sites of arrival, settlement, encounter, and attachment" (p. 412) and are important contexts for migrants' social interactions and integration, identity formation, and experiences of belonging and community.

Valentine and Sporton (2009) recognise that specific spatial contexts mediate identity practices and the salience or irrelevance of particular subject positions. Spatial norms in different places are powerful in regulating meanings and positioning of certain identities, and therefore the experience of belonging or feeling out of place. An awareness of power relations, prejudice, and socio-spatial inequalities is needed as encounters between different groups "never take place in a space free from history, material conditions, and power" (Valentine, 2008, p. 333). Richter (2015) stresses the centrality of place in exploring how differences are situated in the concrete spaces and specific locations of everyday interaction, paying attention to how migrant experiences are embodied, material, and emotional. She describes place as "the locus where social action takes place and

is, in turn, contextualised in the specific social structure, norms, and values inscribed into this place" (p. 143). Experiences of belonging and exclusion do not occur in the abstract, but manifest in the "here and now" (p. 146). Den Besten (2010) explores how migrants' sense of belonging is formed through their emotional relationships with the immediate geographical environment and their attachment to particular places. Understanding belonging as an inherently geographical concept is echoed by Wright (2015), who discusses how belonging is experienced and expressed across multiple scales and sites.

Within these studies a multitude of localities and places are considered, including the home, street, neighbourhood, park, village, city, and nation, as well as institutional spaces, community centres, libraries, churches, festivals, detention centres, cafes, shopping centres and gyms. Van Tonder and Soontiens (2014) argue that the role and importance of the work setting in migrant acculturation has been under-acknowledged and understudied compared to other social contexts such as the neighbourhood and community. Exploring how the workplace may be a supportive or constraining social context for migrant integration can contribute to an understanding of factors that can impact the pace and direction of migrant adaptation. Cook et al. (2011) similarly maintain that the workplace is overlooked as a significant site where migrants' diverse encounters with established individuals can influence the social relations between groups. Workplaces "clearly have the potential to foster meaningful everyday encounters" (p. 737) between migrants and established employees.

Work is central to identity formation and a sense of well-being, a source of engagement and interaction, and a way for migrants to access and enact citizenship (Delaney, 2014; Flum & Cinamon, 2011). Valenta (2008) argues that, within certain contexts and conditions, employment gives migrants opportunities to access social networks, build social ties with locals, adapt to new cultural patterns and values, and enhance their integration. Following these authors, the present study views the workplace as a relevant and important context within which to explore the "situatedness of migration within everyday life" and migrants' "grounded experiences of interactions" (Cook et al., 2011, p. 729).

Understanding the workplace as 'place'

It is important to address how place is theorised and conceptualised within the geographic literature on space and place to show how the workplace is understood in the present study. Humanistic geography emphasises the experiential and subjective nature of place, and the way that places are lived and used (Norton & Walton-Roberts, 2014). More critical approaches focus on the role of social processes in the construction, reproduction, and contestation of places and their meanings, and how places are shaped by institutional forces, social relations, and arrangements of power (Cresswell, 2009; Hubbard & Kitchin, 2011). Feminist perspectives have engaged with issues of power and difference in viewing place as political and pluralistic, exploring how different groups or individuals may experience place (Agnew, 2011; Norton & Walton-Roberts, 2014). Post-structural theorisation sees place as subjective and practised, and "created and re-created by its users and their interactions" (Phillips & Robinson, 2015, p. 410). Common to such varying theoretical positions is the understanding that places are constructed through social practices, and are dynamic, permeable, and internally diverse (Agnew, 2011).

Cresswell (2009) describes place as "a meaningful site that combines location, locale, and sense of place" (p. 169). This means that any given place is at once a point in space, a material setting with structure and form, and associated with meaning (both personal and shared). Place therefore is not merely a distinct point on the earth, but a locale in which everyday life is played out, as well as a locus for personal and collective identity and a focus for emotional attachment (Herod, 2012). As places are not isolated, bounded entities, but rather relational and embedded in broader socio-spatial structures, their characteristics arise from both their own internal features and qualities as well as from their relationships with other places (Agnew, 2011; Herod, 2012). The dialectic relationship between the social and spatial is central to conceptualising place as more than a closed, neutral container for human action. Space is produced by social relations and at the same time recursively shapes how social relations develop within it. Halford (2008) succinctly explains that "space is both a cause and effect of social life" (p. 935).

Lefebvre's (1991) theorising on the production of space has also been influential in understanding place as social and lived. He proposes a dialectically interrelated "perceived-conceived-lived triad" (p. 40): space is at once perceived (material reality, grasped by the senses - material production), conceived (mental constructs, ideology, symbols and codifications - the production of knowledge), and lived (world as experienced through the practice of everyday life - the production of meaning; Herod, 2012; Hubbard and Kitchin, 2011; Lefebvre, 1991). Place is therefore conceptualised in diverse and complex ways. Anderson (2010) argues that a cultural geographic approach to place highlights the multidimensional, contingent, dynamic, lively, experienced, politicised, contested, and exclusionary nature of place. It investigates how a place and its borders are defined, and "who and what is granted belonging as a consequence" (p. 177). This involves taking into consideration materialities, structures, meanings, social practices, emotions, identities, power relations, borders, and agency in the ongoing composition of places.

Applying these key ideas from the space and place literature to the workplace leads to a conceptualisation that workplaces are *places* that are "occupied, inhabited, meaningful, and lived-in" (Delaney, 2014, p. 244). They are spaces that are produced through specific social relations, and in turn generate social relations and distinct spatialities that include human relationships and affective dynamics; they are sites of "social, psychological and affective *lived* relationships" (p. 12). Watkins (2005) applies a Lefebvrian perspective in discussing the constructed nature of organisational space as social, physical, and mental, and how space is the locus of lived experience that both enables and constrains action. I liken the workplace to how Staeheli and Nagel (2006) describe the home: as material, emotional, and concerned with processes of inclusion and exclusion. The workplace is "a site rich with meaningful relationships and power politics that directly affects the material experiences of its participants" (Reitman, 2006, p. 268), where the complex positioning of employees influences their experiences of belonging or exclusion. Delaney (2014) argues that in order to explore the lived experiences of people within a place, it is vital to consider "what kinds of spaces

are produced, how they are arranged, how they are rendered meaningful, [and] how they are invested with power" (p. 239).

The structure-agency dialectic is also important in understanding the construction and experience of the workplace. Halford (2008) discusses how the material, built environment (including architecture and organisation of space) plays a role in constructing working identities, communicating corporate culture, and producing expectations regarding appropriate behaviour and ways of doing work. Workplace structures and discourses therefore shape "who we are at work and how we understand our working selves" (p. 932). However, human agency is equally important in how employees interpret and respond to the work environment, use space, and negotiate identity in the workplace. Ekinsmyth (2013) emphasises that the "specificities of place make a difference" (p. 528), and that people's choices and actions are enacted through their adaptation to these specificities.

If it is accepted that places are "constituted by, but also constitutive of, social relations and practices" (Herod, 2012, p. 342), it becomes necessary to interrogate how a workplace is continuously made and unmade. This is done by considering how broader social and historical relations and processes interrelate with local and everyday practices (Halford, 2008). A multiscalar, multidimensional approach avoids binary oppositions such as structure/agency, local/global, or material/discursive. A focus on the discursive construction of identities, daily social relations, and everyday practices in a workplace, and a focus on macro-economic issues, global economic change, and structures of regulation should not be seen as mutually exclusive (McDowell, 2008). Identity can be understood as relational, dynamic, and contingent on the particularities of social relations and practices in a space, while acknowledging that these patterns of engagement are embedded within, and shaped by, broader structures and conditions.

2.1.4 Existing literature on work and migrants

Although the workplace as a key arena for migrant identity negotiation and an anchor for a sense of belonging has received limited attention in place-based migration studies, research across multiple disciplines has contributed to

knowledge about migrants and employment. For the purposes of the present review, three prevalent areas of research will be briefly discussed.

Numerous studies in the management, human resources, communication, and business literature attest to the growing interest in migrant acculturation in organisations as the workforce becomes more diverse due to increased global migration. Much of this work involves using quantitative methods, surveys, and psychometric scales to measure and theorise acculturation and associated variables. Topics include, for example, the influence of differences in national culture and cultural values of immigrant employees in organisations (e.g., Alkhazraji, Gardner, Martin & Paolillo, 1997); the process of cultural change during work-related acculturation (e.g., Taras, Rowney, & Steel, 2013); immigrant acculturation and work-related well-being (e.g., Aycan & Berry, 1996; Peeters & Oerlemans, 2009); the relationship between acculturation and job-outcome variables such as job satisfaction and affective workgroup commitment (e.g., Emerson, Griffin, L'Eplattenier, & Fitzpatrick, 2008; Lu, Samaratunge, & Härtel, 2013); the relationship between immigrant characteristics (such as language, age, education, gender, and ethnicity) and employment experiences (such as pay, working conditions, type of work, discrimination) (e.g., Dean & Wilson, 2009; Hwang, Xi, & Cao, 2010); and workplace relationships, interaction, communication, and intergroup relations between immigrants and established employees (e.g., Jian, 2012; Lin & Kwantes, 2014; Holmes, 2015). I was particularly encouraged by Metcalfe and Woodhams (2012) who advocate for the integration of organisation studies, geographies of space and place, and transnationalism to redirect attention towards the dynamic and political nature of the construction of difference in organisations.

Labour geography, a sub-discipline of economic geography, focuses on how worker behaviour and the organisation of labour shapes, and is shaped by, the geography of capitalism. It foregrounds worker agency in understanding labour's response to capital and state (Dutta, 2016), examining for example, the struggles of workers to organise across different localities, the social reproduction of labour power, and the development of different labour control regimes (Rutherford,

2010). Castree (2007) notes that "labour geographers operate with some version … of Marxian, feminist, anti-racist or institutionalist approaches to work and employment wherein power and social relations get central attention" (p. 856). The influence of postmodern, poststructural, and feminist theorising is evident in the exploration of social, racial, and ethnic difference in the analysis of work and workplaces, the intersection of class with other identities such as gender and race, the establishment of gendered and racialised workplace cultures and economic sectors, the construction of worker subjectivities, and the performativity and embodiment of labour (Johnson, 2011; McDowell, 2003; Rutherford, 2010).

Along with the traditional focus of economic geography on macro spatial and economic processes, a more micro-level focus has also been pursued to understand workplaces and the "lives lived" within them (Halford, 2008, p. 927). There are examples of such a focus in relation to migration and migrant workers. McDowell (2008) prefaces her discussion of migrant identity and intersectionality in the workplace by emphasising that broader migration patterns and flows are not produced in a neutral or random way. The types and number of migrants are restricted by immigration policies, where "labour is differentiated by age, skill, skin colour and gender… and directed into particular slots in the labour markets of receiving countries" (p. 495). Nations attempt to attract particular categories of migrants, including well-educated, highly skilled migrants who are seen to have valuable social capital, as well as those migrants who will enter unskilled, low-status, and low-paying work. This highlights the socio-cultural and political nature of migration, which is highly differentiated and segregated along the lines of race, class, gender, and nationality. How migrants are received and socialised in the host country will in part depend on their positionality within such hierarchies.

McDowell (2008) applies this understanding to the scale of the workplace, where the construction of difference positions migrants as "workers… of differential worth" (p. 496). Intersectionality is a key concept in understanding how workers are produced as subjects and how complex identities are constructed. Noting that these processes are highly variable and spatially contingent, McDowell suggests that a comparative approach is useful in revealing how "intersectionality works

out in different ways in different places" (p. 504). This is a particular focus in the present study. In her review of labour geography, Dutta (2016) encourages a focus on the lived experiences of workers to "develop a more grounded understanding of worker's agency and actions" (p. 1). Such an approach emphasises the co-constituting effects of imposed workplace restrictions and the agency to remake work and identity through everyday practice.

Several migration studies have focused attention on migrants' labour market integration experiences, drawing on the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1984, 1986, 1989). Bourdieu asserts that individuals are positioned within 'fields' of social space (social realms such as education, economic, and political fields) by their accumulated combination of economic capital (financial assets), social capital (networks, relationships, group membership), and cultural capital (symbolic assets such as language, education, titles, art). Such capital can be converted to symbolic capital within a field when particular forms of capital are viewed as legitimate (Bourdieu, 1986, 1989; Khanchel & Ben Kahla, 2013), a process which is socially defined. The set of shared, agreed upon 'rules of the game', which serves as the framework within which capital and practices are valued within a field, is known as 'habitus' (Bourdieu, 1984; Kelly & Lusis, 2006; Wiegmann, 2017). Individuals internalise social expectations and value systems such that "habitus is embodied or deposited within individual social actors" and "will function like unconscious principles of action, perception and reflection" (Khanchel & Ben Kahla, 2013, p. 88). Habitus is therefore a personal and social phenomenon (Kelly & Lusis, 2006). Bourdieu's triad of capital, field, and habitus represent how individuals are relatively positioned and in constant competition for resources and power, and the ways in which social hierarchies and inequalities are reproduced in the social world (Bourdieu, 1989; Erel, 2010; Weigmann, 2017).

Many of the studies applying a Bourdieuian framework explore migrant capital and the ways in which it is transferable, convertible, validated, and mobilised in labour markets of destination countries. Al Ariss and Syed (2011), for example, discuss how the accumulation and deployment of various forms of capital affect the career choices of Lebanese migrants in Paris. Social capital, in the form of

established personal and professional networks, was identified to be a key resource for enrolment in European universities as a first step to relocation, as well as securing better career prospects. Plüss (2012) explains how the racial and ethnic differences of Chinese-Singaporean migrant women in the U.K. become appreciated cultural capital as they are seen as exotic and interesting by potential employers. However, the women realise the need to adjust their English pronunciation in order to convert their English skills into new cultural capital.

Akkaymak (2017) highlights how migrants' distinct cultural capital and habitus create challenges in labour market integration. She describes how highly educated Turkish migrants in Canada experience a devaluing of their institutionalized cultural capital due to a preference for Canadian qualifications and work experience. For Canadian employers, "foreign educational credentials and work experiences are associated with foreign cultural practices that do not fit into the Canadian workplace" (p. 14). Turkish migrants often resort to acquiring Canadian credentials to overcome employer prejudice. Nowicka (2014) explores how educated Polish migrants in the U.K., who may lack English language skills, employ "symbolic survival tactics" (p. 16) in competitive job markets by discursively constructing themselves as intelligent, hard-working, and flexible in order to distinguish themselves from other immigrant groups in the labour market. Polish migrants thus actively give new value to, and mobilise, particular embodied attributes. These studies, drawing on Bourdieu's emphasis on the dynamics of structure and agency, reinforce the necessity to pay attention to individuals and context in an exploration of South African immigrants' experiences in the U.S. workplace.

2.2 Part Two: South African Immigrants in the United States

2.2.1 Emigration from South Africa

Estimates of the number of South African emigrants vary due to the lack of adequate tracking of migration from the country (Weeber, 2005), but the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2015) reports that 569 300 South Africans were settled abroad in OECD countries in 2011 (a

rise from 361 000 in 2000). The majority of these are located in the 'top 5' destinations of Australia, the United Kingdom (U.K.), the United States (U.S.), New Zealand, and Canada (Barkley, 1998; Crush, 2011; Louw & Mersham, 2001).

Patterns of emigration from South Africa have corresponded to periods of intense political, economic, and racial turmoil (Marrow, 2007). Between the 1950s and 1980s, moderate and liberal South Africans of all races emigrated from the country or went into exile due to the apartheid system of segregation and the political unrest in the country (Crush, 2011; Segel, 1995). A further wave of emigration (which included many conservative whites) occurred during the post-apartheid socio-political transformations in the 1990s after the unbanning of political organisations, the release of Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners, and the first democratic elections in 1994 (Louw & Mersham, 2001; Wood, 2005). Post-2000 emigration has included a growing number of "skilled people and professionals of all races pushed by concerns about crime and safety" (Crush, 2011, p. 66) and attracted by immigration opportunities offered by other nations such as the U.K., the U.S., and Australia. Further cited reasons for emigration include 'push' factors such as political instability, a volatile economy, a perceived drop in the educational standards, employment, and infrastructure in South Africa, as well as 'pull' factors like the perception of economic, personal, and professional opportunities abroad, and high standards of living (Cain et al., 2015; Crush, 2011; Marchetti-Mercer, 2012; Marrow, 2007; Philipp & Ho, 2010; Sonn et al., 2017).

The growing population of South African immigrants in other countries has been referred to as an emerging global South African diaspora (Crush, 2011; Louw & Mersham, 2001). Diaspora broadly refers to a dispersed population that has moved out of a homeland, but due to its complexity and widely contested definition (Safran, 2016) it is unclear whether South Africans living abroad should be categorised as such. Merely being located outside of a homeland does not qualify an immigrant group as a diaspora (Weeber, 2005). Crush (2013) does refer to a South African diaspora but describes them as "deeply disengaged" (p. 189)

even as they continue to express a strong personal South African identity. He argues that diasporic engagement is most likely to be evident within post-2000 South African migrants, who "retain the strongest personal ties with South Africa and are generally less enamored with their countries of destination" (Crush, 2011, p. 70). This includes return visits, continued voting in South African elections, social networking, and participation in South African cultural events, sports clubs, and social gatherings in the destination country.

South Africans abroad therefore do meet some of the criteria for definition as a diaspora, including attempts to "maintain (real and/or imagined) connections and commitments to their homeland" (Bhatia & Ram, 2009, p. 141) and having "some orientation, memory, nostalgia, cultural connection, or family ties to an anterior homeland or a continuing interest in it" (Safran, 2016, p. 6). Louw and Mersham (2001) suggest that a South African diaspora may not be sustainable as a distinct subculture over multiple generations as South Africans tend to easily blend and integrate with host communities. This is examined further below.

2.2.2 Research on South Africans abroad

Limited empirical research has been undertaken on South Africans abroad, especially in comparison to studies on 'visible' migrants who are more clearly and easily distinguished by markers of difference such as race, ethnicity, religion, or culture (Marrow, 2007; Trlin, 2012; Wood, 2005). The heterogeneity of South Africans living in the U.S. compared to, for example, larger immigrant populations from West African countries like Ghana and Nigeria (Capps, McCabe, & Fix, 2012), makes South African immigrants less distinct and therefore more difficult to imagine as a single community. Table 2.1 summarises the empirical studies I identified from various disciplines that have focused on South Africans living in other countries.

Table 2.1 Empirical studies on South African immigrants

Author/date	**Destination country**	**Focus**
Segel (1995)	United States	Quantitative study that used Berry's model of acculturation to investigate the relationship between acculturation experience, anxiety, and depression.
Wood (2005)	United States	Qualitative, psychological study exploring acculturation experiences
Long (2010)	United Arab Emirates	Understanding adjustment difficulties with the aim of informing therapeutic practice
Barkley (1998)	Canada	Sociological, ethnographic analysis of identity in the immigrant experience
Weeber (2005)	United States	Anthropological, phenomenological study examining the immigration experiences of white English- and Afrikaans-speaking South Africans
Philipp and Ho (2010)	New Zealand	Transnational identity and the subjective home-making experiences of South African women
Cain, Meares, and Read (2015)	New Zealand	The affective dimensions of migration for South African migrants
Trlin (2012)	New Zealand	Initial employment and social engagement experiences of South African immigrants
Van Tonder and Soontiens (2014)	Australia	The role and importance of the workplace in migrant acculturation
Sonn, Ivey, Baker, and Meyer (2017)	Australia	Identity disruption, challenges of home making, and belonging in South African immigrants' migration experiences

Although the global South African diaspora is comprised of multiple race groups, migration statistics and studies such as those listed above have shown that the majority of South African emigrants are white. However, career opportunities in other countries are leading to an increase in the number of black professionals

relocating abroad (Marchetti-Mercer, 2012). In keeping with the strict entry requirements of destination-countries that seek to attract individuals with skill and capital, South African immigrants tend to be highly educated, skilled, proficient in the English language, and able to enter well-paying jobs (Louw & Mersham, 2001; Sonn et al., 2017). These factors have contributed to the apparent ability of many South African immigrants to become well-integrated in their new countries and to obtain citizenship (Crush, 2011; Louw & Mersham, 2001; Segel, 1995).

Heterogeneity

Despite these demographic patterns, Wood (2005) and Long (2010) affirm that the expatriate adjustment process and migration experience is not homogeneous, and that it is important to recognise the unique social, cultural, and political context of each immigrant's personal experience. Louw and Mersham (2001), for example, suggest that subcultures exist within South African diasporic communities in Australia based on the timing and reasons for migration: those who emigrated as a result of the rise of the Afrikaner Nationalist hegemony may embrace different political and social values compared to those who left South Africa due to fears about the coming to power of the ANC and the perceived threats posed by black empowerment and affirmative action. They also suggest that, compared to English-speaking South Africans, the adjustment for Afrikaans-speaking immigrants may be more difficult due to language barriers and the loss of a sense of Afrikaner identity and community. In comparison, Barkley (1998) notes that a Chinese-South African in Canada expressed the relative ease of integration due to the large, established Chinese immigrant population in Canada which provided an immediate sense of community and belonging. Segel (1995) discusses differences based on gender, theorising that women (who accompany their spouses and are in many cases restricted from paid employment by visa requirements), experience more integration difficulties due to feelings of isolation and a lack of social support, while their husbands benefit from increased exposure to, and involvement in, American culture in the workplace.

Long (2010) asserts that the difficulties in adjustment faced by South African immigrants will vary depending on factors such as the ability to adjust to cultural

differences and the physical environment, the availability of social and emotional support structures, level of communication skills, and even personality characteristics. As successful settlement or integration cannot only be measured by 'objective' indicators such as labour market outcomes or income level, more attention needs to be paid to the subjective migration experiences of South African immigrants (Philipp & Ho, 2010). In their analysis of the narratives of newly arrived South African immigrants in New Zealand, Cain et al. (2015) discuss the role of emotion and memory in the participants' development of attachment to the adopted homeland, and in how they actively reconstitute a sense of belonging. Despite the relative ease of economic integration compared to other visible minorities, their participants expressed, in strongly emotional terms, their difficulties in adapting to, integrating with, and negotiating a new life in a foreign country. This includes experiences of non-belonging in particular places where their outsider status was amplified. Accent-related discrimination was reported more by Afrikaans-speaking participants, indicative of how a sense of Otherness can be experienced along various axes of difference.

Wood (2005) discusses how her participants' identity narratives were characterised by meaning-making, not only relative to their life in the U.S. but also in their attempts to make sense of their previous life and experiences in South Africa. Common themes that arose include struggling with the apparent ambivalence, ambiguity, and duality inherent in their experiences of adaptation and acculturation, missing an ease in communication and a sense of belonging that comes from shared experience and a shared history, and frustration with being misunderstood and judged. Despite being viewed as 'invisible' migrants, Trlin (2012) argues that "South Africans have not escaped the manifold stresses of migration and settlement, and that they serve to moderate conclusions drawn from the experience of 'visible' groups" (p. 59). In addition, it is important to emphasise that even 'invisibility' is relational and dependent on context and the positionality of an individual.

Race and racial identity

Considering South Africa's history of apartheid and the entrenchment of race as a social category of identity in the country, it seems inevitable that race and racial identity becomes an analytic focus in studies on South African immigrants. Despite intentions of interviewing South Africans of all races in Colorado, Weeber (2005) reported her difficulty in locating participants of colour which resulted in a majority white sample. Although this prompted her to focus more on language and generational differences instead of differences in race, her analysis nevertheless includes a discussion of her participants' experiences of whiteness and white privilege in their migration context. In particular, Weeber states that "being white in South Africa carried with it social, cultural, symbolic, and economic capital" (p. 20), which in turn enabled successful emigration. White South African migrants thus represent the "construction of an embodied transnational whiteness" (Andrucki, 2010, p. 358), whose transnational mobility serves as an example of "whiteness-as-materiality" (p. 360).

Wood (2005) similarly identifies racial identity and white privilege as important in her exploration of how South Africans re-evaluate their cultural, ethnic, and racial identity, while integrating and internalising elements of both old and new cultures. Barkley (1998) highlights the heterogeneity in the experiences of her white participants, some of whom faced challenges due to place-based notions of whiteness: "South African Whiteness was distanced as fundamentally different from imaginings of Canadian Whiteness as liberal and racially tolerant" (p. 114). This echoes Weeber's (2005) findings about the consequences of identifying as a white South African (traditionally seen as a highly politicised identity) and emphasises the need to recognise the wider context within which race may become salient or hidden, and the role of public discourse about South Africa.

Sonn (2010) focuses on the ways in which South African immigrants of other ethnic and race groups (black, Indian, and coloured) have had to renegotiate "apartheid-imposed identities" (p. 435) within new contexts and systems that carry different implications for racial identity, belonging, and citizenship. He speaks of his own personal experience as a 'coloured' South African immigrant in

Australia, where he became positioned as 'black' in relation to the dominant Anglo population. Sonn notes that people of colour may encounter a less overt form of racism in countries like Australia and be able to claim belonging within wider discourses of multiculturalism. However, as the normativity of whiteness persists in Australia, people of colour continue to be identified as Other (Sonn, 2010; Sonn et al., 2017). The complex social and political contexts of both countries of origin and destination are relevant to exploring the ways in which immigrant identity is "contingent on understandings of history, culture, race and ethnicity" (p. 439).

In a theoretical paper which draws on previous ethnographic research on South African Indian emigrants, Singh (2008) explores the emergence of a 'triple identity' in the transnational experience and identity renegotiation of these migrants. Triple identity is "developed through association based on strong political ties and emotional bonds with three countries" (p. 7) – country of ancestral origin, country of adoption or birth, and a new destination country. Singh cautions against the homogenisation of Indian emigrants and their experiences which can hide variations in relation to ethnic, regional, cultural, and linguistic differences. As an example, Singh notes that while "common ancestral origin serves as a point of convergence and reason for common association" (p. 14), Indians from India may distinguish themselves from Indians migrating from former colonies, and Muslim Indians may choose to associate themselves more with Muslims from the Middle East. Singh states that whichever identity immigrants use as a reference (e.g., 'Indian South African', 'South African Indian', or 'Indian American'), "they are usually making a statement about how they wish to be seen in the context of their personal beliefs and identity formation" (p. 5). These studies reinforce the need to view identity as socially constructed, relational, dynamic, and situationally defined; a complex, contextual process that is embedded in relationships and power relations; and as a positioning which influences the lived experience of migrants' sense of self and belonging.

2.2.3 The United States as an immigrant-receiving nation

U.S. Census Bureau data from 2010 and 2011 show that over 50 million immigrants and their dependent children account for nearly 17% of the U.S. population (Camarota, 2012), and immigration is "very likely to be a continuing influence on the size, shape, and composition of the American population for the foreseeable future" (Hirschman & Massey, 2008, p. 2). Constant and Zimmerman (2012) describe the U.S. as a prototypical immigrant nation, comprised of diverse immigrant groups from all regions of the world. The metaphor of America as a melting pot "symbolizes the blending of cultures, languages, religions, ideals, beliefs and ideologies" (p. 12) into a single nation by a unifying national identity and an allegiance to common democratic political values. Bloemraad (2015) argues that the U.S. has been more successful than many European countries in (re)defining a national identity that celebrates diversity, but that "Americans' relatively high support for cultural pluralism co-exists with deep ambivalence about immigration" (p. 75). There is a substantial body of literature examining U.S. migration demographics and patterns, economic and fiscal consequences of immigration, the effectiveness of immigration policies, the impact on American society, and the social, economic, and political incorporation of immigrants (Bean & Stevens, 2005). Interest in immigration and its consequences continues "precisely because immigration engenders so much ambivalence, social tension, and contradictory responses" (p. 13), and provokes anxieties about sociocultural identity changes.

Developments since 1965

Despite evidence of a net positive effect of immigration on the country, its negative consequences fuel anti-immigrant sentiment and expressions of nativism and nationalism (Bean & Stevens, 2005). Immigration has significantly contributed to population change and growth in the U.S., resulting in increasing levels of ethnic and cultural diversity. Prior to 1960, the vast majority of immigrants originated from Europe and Canada. Amendments to the Immigration and Nationality Act in 1965 led to distinct changes in the national origin of migrants, and by the 1980s nearly 85% of immigrants came from Asian and Latin

American countries (Bean & Stevens, 2005). The number of immigrants in the U.S. more than doubled between 1990 and 2010 (19.8 to 40 million; Camarota, 2012), an increase that has led to first-generation immigrants now constituting approximately 15% of the total population (Turper, Iyengar, Aarts, & van Gerven, 2015). Traditionally, immigrants in the U.S. have settled in large coastal metropolitan cities (gateway cities) which have dynamic labour markets, a high demand for informal-sector service jobs, and well-established immigrant communities (Hirschman & Massey, 2008). Increasing geographic diversity has resulted in more encounters between foreigners and the native-born population, and "new questions about ethnic diversity and assimilation are confronting American communities" (p. 11) in small cities and towns throughout the country.

Muste (2013) posits that public attitudes and opinions on immigration follow a pattern of event-driven change. Anti-immigrant sentiment and a push for restrictionist policies, for example, increased after the significant political shifts of the 1994 election and after the terror attacks in 2001. Following 9/11, concerns over national security intensified, and discourses of fear and threats posed by immigrant Others who are perceived as unable or unwilling to assimilate became pervasive (Bean & Stevens, 2005). Public attitudes to immigration have included indifference, acceptance, paternalism, suspicion, exploitation, xenophobia, and even overt hostility. Hirschman and Massey (2008) note that even when native-born communities respond positively, the overall expectation is that immigrants assimilate and conform to American culture, values, and preferences. Antagonism between and within groups, as well as intolerance and a lack of sympathy for the struggles of immigrants can arise during periods of increased nativism.

After national-origin and ethnic quotas were ended by the 1965 amendments to immigration law, family reunification and occupational merit became criteria for determining immigrant access (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014). Employment-related immigration has increased the number of highly skilled immigrant workers in the U.S., many of whom are professionals with advanced degrees. As an example, Portes and Rumbaut state that 59% of H-1B (employer-sponsored, speciality occupation) visa holders in 2009 entered the U.S. with existing professional or

postgraduate degrees. Professional immigrants tend to find it less challenging to culturally and linguistically assimilate, and are less likely to experience widespread discrimination as they "seldom create visible, culturally distinct concentrations that elicit opposition among the native-born" (p. 211). They often have the means to partake in transnational activities and practices, allowing them to maintain connections with their home country while investing in building a life and career in their new country.

Educated migrants with high levels of human capital who are better established in the U.S. are also more likely to naturalise and gain citizenship. However, relative to the total number of legal immigrants coming into the country, employment-related immigration represents only 14% (the remainder is comprised of family-based immigration; refugees, asylees, and other vulnerable populations; and immigrants from the Diversity Visa program) (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014; United States Department of Homeland Security, 2014). The Center for Immigration Studies indicates that while an estimated 12% of post-2000 immigrants arrived in the U.S. with professional or postgraduate degrees (on par with native-born population), over 28% had not completed high school (Camarota, 2012). This has swelled the size of the nation's low-income population, and these immigrants are less likely than the native-born population to own homes, have health insurance, and access to the welfare system.

During campaigning for the 2018 U.S. elections, and in the years since Donald Trump was elected as President, immigration has again become a prominent, controversial, and divisive issue in America's political climate. The Trump presidency has ushered in formal policy changes as well as shifts in narratives and discourse about immigrants and their place in America. The current administration's adoption of a restrictionist philosophy regarding immigration policies and enforcement impacts both illegal and legal immigration to the U.S. (Chishti, Pierce, & Bolter, 2018). The targeting and removal of unauthorised immigrants (including the separation of children from parents who cross the border illegally), the attempts to terminate deferred action programs, the 'Muslim-ban', and the reduction in refugee admissions have drawn widespread criticism.

Trump's 'America First' policy also aims to curtail legal immigration, significantly slowing family- and employment-based immigration (Goel, 2017; Rosenberg, 2018).

State-level narratives around immigration have embraced a more nationalist orientation. For example, in addition to dropping the words 'a nation of immigrants' from its mission statement, the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service has added titles on its website such as *Buy American and Hire American: Putting American Workers First*, advocating for the preservation of jobs for U.S. workers and combating the abuse of the H1-B visa program (United States Citizenship and Immigration Service, 2018). This apparent resurgence of nativism and anti-immigrant sentiment influences the lived experience of immigrants. Politics and political beliefs can thus be seen as salient to issues of identity and belonging in the U.S., and therefore relevant to the present study.

The American context

Reed-Danahay and Brettell (2008) state that "the particular history of a country and its historical relationship to the immigrant populations entering its borders affects the modes of belonging possible for immigrants" (p. 19). While immigrants actively negotiate belonging, the dominant society has the power to undermine their ability to do so. Discourses around U.S. citizenship generate criteria of worth along lines of race, gender, class, and sexuality (among others), which renders some bodies worthier and more acceptable than others (Morrissey, 2015).

Ethnic and racial difference continue to be prominent and durable factors in the shaping of American society (Price, 2012), including how immigrants experience incorporation and integration. Citizenship continues to be conflated with white racial identity (Hughey, 2012), and "belonging to the national and local community is conditional on immigrants conforming to white American values and norms" (Leitner, 2012, p. 828). The U.S., despite claims of a liberal and progressive stance on race, "is still dominated (politically and culturally) by

whiteness, and protected by racism and antiracialism" (Morrissey, 2015, p. 128). The tendency toward a "post-civil rights common sense of colour-blindness" (Lewis, 2004, p. 623), along with a deeply-held belief in meritocracy, has worked to conceal the material and symbolic dimensions of race, naturalise racial inequality, and refute claims of racism, bigotry, or discrimination. Whitehead and Lerner (2009) reinforce that while colour-blindness may arise from attempts to move beyond race, it ignores the ways in which race shapes people's lives, experiences, and opportunities. The invisibility of whiteness that underpins and enables a colour-blind ideology "serves to support a system of white privilege, and the accompanying disadvantages for people of color" (p. 617) and immigrants.

Liu (2000) notes that the heterogeneity of migrant groups disrupts the predominant black-white binary model in the U.S. and argues against the oversimplified models and colour- and gender-blind views presented through hegemonic state nationalism. Increasing immigrant diversity "could function as a social force to stimulate a reconceptualization of race and ethnicity away from the traditional black-white dichotomy toward a more nuanced conceptualization of race as a continuum intertwined with social class" (Hirschman & Massey, 2008, p. 14). Demo (2006) also draws attention to the intersection of class and race, explaining that by the beginning of the twentieth century the ability of immigrants to assimilate "was measured less by race, religion, or ethnic identification than by ascension to the middle class" (p. 247). The American Dream discourse advocates that anyone (regardless of race, ethnicity, or gender) can be successful through hard work and perseverance, the achievement of which is measured by class mobility. A unifying class ideology thus underpins a multicultural America, and "promotes a normative model of economic assimilation" (p. 248). Ideas of pluralism and meritocracy, however, conceal unequal opportunities, economic inequalities, and barriers to the class mobility of immigrants.

The general perception of immigrants among the native-born population is "not grounded in an understanding of the historical linkages between the United States and the countries of origin or by knowledge of the economic and social forces

driving the phenomenon" (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014, p. 373). Fear, discontent, and anxiety about immigrants is driven by the perceived threats to national unity and political and economic control, competition in the labour market and the displacement of native workers, and views of cultural Others as incompatible with American values and way of life. Keyes (2012) describes how societal discourse on immigration shows the polarisation of two narratives that pervade American society: "the hard-working immigrant who comes in search of the American Dream" (p. 216) versus the threat posed by "the poor or troubled or criminal immigrant" (p. 217).

Quinsaat (2014) focuses on how media narratives construct immigrants as subjects in specific ways that appeal to or trigger certain emotions about immigration, which in turn work to "normalize dominant ways of thinking and talking about immigration" (p. 575). For example, immigrants may be portrayed as dangerous criminals or invaders who seek to harm the native population; as a burden to the welfare state and competition in the labour market; as unable or unwilling to assimilate and embrace American culture; and as a threat to the social, cultural, and political fabric of the nation due to their growing numbers. A competing representation of immigration includes the construction of America as a nation of immigrants and a land of opportunity, where immigrants assimilate, work hard, and contribute to building a strong, modern, and multicultural society. These studies emphasise that oversimplified narratives conceal the complexities inherent in immigration and reproduce systems of power by failing to "challenge long-held beliefs on nationhood, national ethos, and minorities" (Quinsaat, 2014, p. 593).

Public perceptions of immigration influence how immigrants are received: Turper et al. (2015) found higher levels of support for those immigrants with strong economic credentials (high educational and occupational skills) who are viewed as able to contribute to the national economy; less support for unskilled immigrants with dependents who are perceived to be more likely to require welfare and government assistance; and more negative attitudes to immigrants

from countries perceived to be more culturally distinctive (e.g., Middle Eastern immigrants).

Empirical research on immigrant identity and incorporation has revealed the process to be more complex and contingent. Showers (2015) for example, questions the assertion in immigration literature that black African immigrants in the U.S. are shielded by their ethnicity and regarded more favourably by employers than native-born African Americans. Despite their relatively high levels of human capital (well-educated and proficient in English), black African immigrants are underemployed, earn less, and face more prejudice and discrimination in comparison to the native-born population (Capps et al., 2012; Porter, 2011). This is in part due to the positioning of African immigrants in America's racialised society, where identity and belonging is shaped by, and framed around, issues of race and ethnicity (Clark, 2008). They are often ascribed as 'African' before their ethnicity or nationality is recognised, and it is questioned whether "any African living in America would automatically be an African American" (p. 172). Porter (2011) discusses how African immigrants may "experience double jeopardy in the sense that they are treated with discrimination and prejudice by the dominant white population in the United States, and are also distrusted and perceived as inferior by the native-born blacks" (p. 64).

As the largest racial minority in the country, Latino/a immigrants have changed the demographic profile of U.S. regions and cities. Price (2012) discusses how Latino/a immigrants are constructed as Other in America in both racial and cultural terms. With anti-Latino/a sentiment fuelled by racialised anxieties and stereotypes of illegality and criminality, Latino/a immigrants are "placed irrevocably outside spaces of belonging at all scales" (p. 805). Nelson and Hiemstra (2008) discuss how the increasing correlation between race and class since the 1980s has inhibited the class mobility of Hispanic immigrants in small town America. They argue that the naturalisation and reproduction of hierarchies, based on classifications of race, class, and legality, maintain socio-spatial segregation and exclusion, impedes cross-cultural interaction, and prevents the development of a sense of community and belonging for Hispanic immigrants.

Reitman (2006) reinforces the complexity within the experiences of immigrants of colour by exploring how Asian-Americans are uniquely positioned in U.S. racial dynamics: they simultaneously combat stereotypes as 'perpetual foreigners' and 'model minorities' within the white hegemony. Hsu and Wu (2015) discuss how Asian Americans have evolved from being ineligible for citizenship to 'model minorities' in the time after World War II by being increasingly regarded by Americans as hard-working, self-sufficient, intelligent, educated, and assimilable. In this way, persons of Asian ancestry have experienced more opportunities for social mobility and political participation than other racial minority group in the U.S. Hsu and Wu highlight the "intertwined restructurings of immigration law and the national racial order" (p. 46) in the development of such "conditional inclusion" (p. 47).

The role of race and class as it relates to migrant incorporation into the national mainstream is also evident in the example of white immigrant groups in the U.S. European immigrants constitute approximately 11% of the total immigrant population, with the largest numbers immigrating from the U.K., Germany, Poland, Russia, and Italy (Zong & Batalova, 2015). Although these immigrants represent a variety of linguistic, religious, and cultural backgrounds, they are more likely than non-European immigrants to be English-proficient, have high educational attainment and median household income, and high rates of naturalisation. In the U.S., where national identity and belonging is historically conflated with whiteness (Hughey, 2012; Morrissey, 2015), these immigrants may benefit from their "access to the symbolic capital of whiteness" (Lewis, 2004, p. 628) in ways that lessen barriers to incorporation and belonging in comparison to other immigrant groups.

It is, however, important to recognise the heterogeneity of whiteness, its relational and contingent nature, and its nuances, particularities, and localisations (Green, Sonn, & Matsebula, 2007; Hoops, 2014; Leitner, 2012). Wimmer (2009) discusses how, prior to World War 1, Irish Catholics and Eastern European Jews entering the U.S. found it more difficult to cross the boundary into the "acceptable nonblack ethnic group" (p. 256) compared to British and Scandinavian

immigrants. Liu (2000) explains how class politics in that time "promoted the processes of 'whitening' for those European immigrants who were seen as racially different" (p. 173). This is indicative of how whiteness is context-dependent, and how its meaning and boundaries are constantly under negotiation (Green et al., 2007). The experiences of 'white' immigrants in the U.S. will be influenced by how they are differently positioned through intersections of gender, class, age, language, and culture (among others).

It is also important to highlight the active role played by migrants in negotiating identity and belonging. Morrissey (2015) for example, analysed immigrant narratives to explore how they discursively construct themselves using core national values to access national inclusion and claim belonging as post-racial citizens of the U.S. By highlighting their educational attainment, professional goals, family values, and commitment to hard-work and self-sufficiency, migrants distance themselves from negative cultural attitudes and perceptions of migrants and other stigmatised U.S. minorities as transient, irresponsible, and burdensome, and demonstrate their value and commitment to the country. Although framing their intersectional identities in this way may help to increase their cultural capital and their credibility as worthy citizens, such narratives work to "reproduce and protect whiteness and devalue other U.S. minority identities" (p. 130).

Liu (2000) posits that, in addition to understanding the racial composition of immigrants and how they are differentially impacted by national and state policies, it is vital to explore "how the construction of space, place and scale overlaps with the construction of racial-ethnic and immigrant identities and with racism itself" (p. 169). Latino/a immigrants in northern states or on the east and west coasts, for example, may be constructed or perceived differently from those in southern regions, resulting in differing experiences of adaptation and incorporation. Bonnett and Nayak (2003) highlight the "racialized nature of particular places and landscapes" (p. 301), mentioning how inner cities in the U.S. are often associated with immigrants, the poor, and racially marginalised. They contend that this is not dependent on the presence or absence of white people, but due to "explicit interaction of discourses of class and race" (p. 305).

The interrelatedness of race and space are important to understanding identity formation and expression, and how race is contextual and localised (Hoops, 2014). Space is racialised and contains racial histories that shape how a place is defined and experienced, but this process is dynamic and contested. As an example, Hoops describes how identity tension is invoked in rural farming communities in the U.S. as symbolic and cultural boundaries are created within the same physical space. The marking of space along racial lines is "a critical component of cementing of white privilege, enabling racial surveillance, and segmenting social realities" (p. 200). As residents are socially and spatially positioned in a farm town, where one lives becomes a marker of identity. Hoops highlights how whiteness discourse serves to dismiss such racialisation of space, using issues of language, economics, and class to explain such segregation instead. In addition, and in line with a colour-blind ideology, white residents use examples of integrated spaces to claim homogeneity and deny segregation.

Critical race theory moves beyond simplistic binary notions of race to recognise the diversity and plurality of subjectivities and identities, interrogating categories such as 'blackness' and 'whiteness' to understand how racial categories and demarcations are reproduced and maintained (Bonnett & Nayak, 2003). Whiteness, for example, is seen to have a history and a geography, is "reified as a racial and cultural norm" (p. 309), and is constructed, enacted, and reproduced across different scales and in particular places.

The U.S. workplace

Dicker (1998) notes that the increasing heterogeneity of the immigrant population after 1965 was not accompanied by "universal acceptance of cultural and linguistic diversity" in the American workplace (p. 283). Mirroring wider societal attitudes, corporate America has tended to expect immigrants to adopt and conform to the established norms and ways of doing business, including being expected to learn and function effectively in English. Such expectations vary across regions and even industries. Dicker reports more positive attitudes towards immigrants who come to the U.S. under the employer-sponsored specialty occupation H1-B visa, as they are regarded as highly skilled, often proficient in

English, and seen to fill a real need in certain sectors such as the information technology field. But even immigrant professionals face challenges in adapting to the U.S. workplace, which are often "exacerbated by accents and appearances, dietary restrictions, strong national culture stereotypes, general bias against specific countries by U.S. Americans, and positive stereotypes that threaten existing status quo, among other preconceived notions against foreigners" (Shenoy-Packer, 2015, p. 258). Immigrant employees may experience less overt encounters of prejudice or discrimination through micro-aggressions (intentional or unintentional words and actions that, although subtle and disguised, are aggressive, derogatory, insensitive, invalidating, or excluding), and "render the workplace a hostile and ambiguous space for nonnative workers" (p. 258).

Workplace social and political norms, unequal power relations, and a lack of sociocultural capital compared to cultural insiders may have negative consequences for an immigrant professional's integration efforts. In her research on black African immigrant women working as nurses in U.S. hospitals, Showers (2015) notes that negative associations and stereotypes related to Africa as economically and culturally backward, stigmatised the nurses and negatively influenced their interactions with patients, co-workers, supervisors, and others. Further, "being black women from Africa placed them at the bottom of stratified racial systems at work" (p. 1817), impacting their income, status, and career advancement opportunities. While her study affirms that the intersection of ethnicity, race, and gender can create disadvantage for the immigrant employees, Showers also underlines the importance of recognising the "professional context and the particularities of specific occupations" (p. 1827), as well as the social organisation and composition of the workforce, in the shaping of employee identity formation and workplace experiences.

Puwar's (2004) discussion of race and gender in political spaces in the U.K. can be applied to an investigation of immigrants in the U.S. workplace. She describes how social and cultural places are built by and for certain social groups to the exclusion of others; a racialised process that results in the white male body becoming the somatic norm. This situates different bodies (such as women or

persons of colour) as Other and out of place. A "protectionist attitude to space" (p. 72) works to exclude women and racial minorities, and also decreases the likelihood of their moving into positions of leadership and authority. In a workplace where norms are based on whiteness and masculinity, women and racial minorities are more likely to be labelled as incompetent, and therefore may experience increased surveillance and pressure to prove their capability. Puwar also notes that assimilation is "often an unspoken requirement of entry into … white spaces" (p. 76), where signs of cultural difference such as dress and bodily gestures are expected to be denied or erased in favour of adopting hegemonic norms and culture. Reitman (2006) argues that privileged groups play an active role in 'whitewashing' the workplace, in which a dominant (invisible) white culture is imposed, racial dynamics are naturalised, and inequalities are buried by "the promotion of a repressive type of multiculturalism" (p. 268) that is supported by a discourse of colour-blindness.

2.2.4 South African immigrants in the U.S.

The OECD (2015) states that, by 2011, 83 400 South African immigrants were located in the United States, making it the third most popular immigrant destination country after the U.K. (190 200) and Australia (128 900). South African immigrants constitute just a small portion of the U.S. immigrant population, accounting for only .002% of the 39.9 million immigrants in the country in 2012 (Camarota, 2012). The United States Department of Homeland Security (2014) estimates that just over 43 000 South Africans obtained lawful permanent residence between 2000 and 2013, and that about 27 500 became naturalised U.S. citizens between 2004 and 2013. The assertion that a vast majority of South African immigrants in the U.S. are white (Marrow, 2007; Weeber, 2005) seems supported by the findings of The Migration Policy Institute, which estimates that, for the years 2008-2009, only 14% of South African immigrants in the U.S. were black (Capps et al., 2012).

South Africans have settled across regions in the U.S. Camarota and McArdle (2003) list California, Florida, Texas, New York, Georgia, Illinois, and Maryland as the top seven states of settlement for South African immigrants in the year

2000. I also surveyed websites, expat forums, and social media about South African social clubs (e.g., brandsouthafrica.com, Sausa.org, Facebook) which indicate South African immigrant presence in areas such as Wisconsin, New Jersey, Washington, North Carolina, and Massachusetts. Although no precise, statistical information regarding the predominant form of employment is readily available, it can be surmised that a large percentage of South African immigrants are skilled professionals, taking into consideration the significant proportion of South African immigrants in the U.S. relocated under employment-based visas, and who show high levels of tertiary education (Marrow, 2007; OECD, 2015). For the years 2008-2012, the U.S. Census Bureau reported that 57.3% of the South African-born population (25 years and older) in the U.S. had a bachelor's degree or higher (Gambino, Trevelyan, & Fitzwater, 2014).

Weeber (2005) suggests that South African immigrants in the U.S. may represent a more atypical group when compared with other immigrant populations from Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America who are more likely to become members of a racial minority group, struggle with English as a second language, and experience difficulties with cultural and economic integration due to a lack of skills or due to being refugees and asylum seekers. This assertion invites an exploration of the distinctiveness of the South African immigrant narrative. In addition, South Africa does not differ as sharply as some other countries in terms of compatibility with the Western culture and worldview of America (Segel, 1995). Overall, South African immigrants in the U.S. could therefore be described as more privileged and less visible than a large majority of other immigrants, as well as possessing more cultural capital than many. However, this does not necessarily imply that South African immigrants escape struggles with negotiating identity, or that a sense of belonging in the U.S. is inevitable. Each participant's immigration experience will be influenced and shaped by the way intersectionality along various dimensions of difference (e.g., gender, race, language, education, age, sexuality, class, political and religious beliefs) uniquely positions them in ways that may benefit or disadvantage them in various contexts.

2.2.5 The Northeastern U.S.

The U.S. can be divided into regions in multiple ways, with various governmental agencies forming regions based on different factors. The U.S. Census Bureau map, for example, shows four statistical regions; the Bureau of Economic Analysis uses economic data to create eight regions; and the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare have adopted the Office of Management and Budget's ten administrative region map (Abadi, 2018). Woodard (2011) argues that the country can be divided into eleven cultural regions, each shaped by patterns and influences of colonialism and settlement patterns. Another study by Rentfrow et al. (2013) distinguishes three distinct U.S. regions not based on traditional economic and social indicators, but rather through measuring psychological characteristics to map the psychological typography of the country. Social, historical, and political differences have sometimes produced problematic, oversimplified divides such as the North-South dichotomy, 'blue' and 'red' states, and stereotypes of West and East coast cultures.

Wallace et al. (2020) argue that interregional differences are often subtle, with traditional cultural area distinction being diluted by communication, mobility, immigration, and other social and economic forces in the 20th century. Further, Wallace et al. note that different political and cultural areas and characteristics may be found within a region, highlighting the dangers of overgeneralising. However, regionalism is deeply rooted in American discourse and constructions of identity, place, and belonging, and regions continue to influence social and political life in the U.S. (Ayers, Limerick, Nissenbaum, & Onuf, 1996). Therefore, because my participants all reside and work in states in the Northeastern U.S., it is prudent to include a broad description of the Northeast region. My aim is not to homogenise the Northeast or stereotype its inhabitants or cultures, nor do I claim that the experience of the participants in my study would be the same as those South Africans living in another region of the U.S. Immigration patterns, demographics, and various social, political, and economic factors within different regions may indeed influence the immigrant experience.

Simultaneously, due to the heterogeneity within the states that comprise the Northeast, it is not possible to claim a unique "northeastern" immigrant experience. As a South African immigrant who has lived in different states in America, I recognise the diversity of the immigrant experience across regions, but also can attest to stark contrasts in experiences even within different neighbourhoods of the same city.

Following organisations such as the Association of American Geographers and the Geological Society of America, the present study defines the Northeast region as being comprised of the 11 states of Connecticut, New Hampshire, Maine, Vermont, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Delaware, as well as the District of Columbia. Based on U.S. Census Bureau (2018) data, the population of this region (just over 64 million people), compared to the national average, shows higher levels of tertiary educational attainment and median household income. Eighty-one and a half percent of the population in the Northeast is US-born, and 66% are white (Statistical Atlas, 2018). For comparison, the population of the Western region is 51.2% white and 79.1% US-born, and the Midwest is 76.6% white and 92.3% US-born. Within the Northeast region, states vary greatly in size (e.g., Pennsylvania versus Rhode Island), diversity (e.g., New York versus Maine), and levels of urbanisation (e.g., New Jersey versus Vermont) (Haider-Markel, 2009). The Northeast contributes about 20% of the nation's GDP (Lauriat, 2018), although differences in economic activities, types of industries, and economic disparities are evident across the region. Several urban nodes and metro areas, rich in history, diversity, and cultural and political life, are located in the Northeast (e.g., New York City, Boston, Philadelphia, and Washington D.C.; Wallace et al. 2020).

The Pew Research Center (2020) reports relatively even distributions in political ideology among adults in the Northeast (30% conservative; 35% moderate; and 29% liberal), with conservatism being more prevalent in the over 50 years of age category. Historically a "bastion on Republican politics" (Haider-Markel, 2009, p. 37), the Northeast has shifted toward supporting the Democratic Party since the mid-1960s. Sixty-five percent of adults in the Northeast classify themselves as

Christian (Pew Research Center, 2020), although religiosity has been found to be lower within the Northeast states compared to those in the middle and southern areas of the country (Newport, 2009).

Woodard (2011) criticises the division of the U.S. into regions such as the 'Northeast', the 'West', or the 'South', arguing that any regional patterns in modern politics and culture in the U.S. are rooted in the influence of the founding European colonial cultures and the settlement history of the country. The New England states in the north of the region, colonised by English Puritans, developed a moralistic political culture that prioritised education, social improvement, and citizen involvement; while the Mid-Atlantic states, with its English Quaker and Dutch influences, embraced an individualistic political culture and valued equality and cultural and religious pluralism (Haider-Markel, 2009; Woodard, 2011). Both subregions exhibited a "strong reform impulse and a willingness to use government to solve public problems" (Haider-Markel, 2009, p. 36). While the Northeast lacks a unified cultural identity in the present day, these social norms and values still carry some influence. The heterogeneity of the Northeastern U.S. reveals how one region, or even a single state within a region, can be simultaneously under the influence of multiple cultures (Woodard, 2011) and how initially distinct identities of states may become diluted by subsequent economic and political forces (Wallace et al., 2018).

2.3 Summary

In part one of this literature review I introduced belonging and identity as a key focus of migration research and reviewed relevant theorising and conceptualisations from various perspectives that inform the present study. Multiple authors have noted how migrants' lived experiences are shaped by the intersection of various categories of difference that position migrants within specific contexts.. Analysing intersectionality and positionality involves recognising structure and agency, as well as the spatial and contextual elements of belonging. Research has also focused on the embodied, material, and emotional dimensions of immigrant identity and belonging, emphasising how it is relational and situated.

A transnationalism perspective regards migrant identity as hybrid, plural, and dynamic, where immigrants are seen to maintain social relations and emotional attachments with both the host country and their country of origin. A review of transnational studies revealed an interest in the strategies and identity practices migrants use when faced with the challenge of adapting to new cultural environments and negotiating belonging. A focus on citizenship in research has highlighted the ways in which it has been used to legitimise 'us/them' boundaries and exclude specific identities and immigrants from national or hegemonic belonging. The concept of immigrant Otherness calls attention to how migrants are discursively positioned as outsiders, a process shaped by cultural discourses and the power of institutions, and which influences immigrants' lived experience. I also presented the arguments made for a place-based perspective which better contextualises and 'grounds' an exploration of the migrant experience. Experiences of identity and belonging do not occur in abstract but are shaped by social norms and power relations within specific contexts. Geographic concepts of space and place can be applied to the workplace with an aim to explore it as a social context for the immigrant experience.

In the second part of the literature review, I focused on South Africans in the U.S. as the immigrant population of interest in the present study. This included an overview of emigration from South Africa and the growing South African diaspora. South African immigrants have been described in the literature as generally well-educated, skilled, and proficient in English, often immigrating on employment-sponsored visas and able to integrate easily into countries like Australia, New Zealand, the U.K, and the U.S. South Africans are, however, not a homogeneous group, and differing immigrant experiences may reflect their diversity in relation to factors such as race, language, age, religion, and ethnicity. Part two also included a discussion of the American context, the literature regarding the experiences of different immigrant groups within the U.S., the ways in which South Africans may be regarded as an 'atypical' immigrant group in America, and discussed some of the historical, social, and political characteristics of the Northeastern U.S. In the following chapter I present a detailed discussion of the methodology used for this study.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The philosophical assumptions and interpretive frameworks of a study influence the direction and goals of the inquiry, the choice of theories that guide the research, and the research strategies and methods (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Norton and Walton-Roberts (2014) explain how various perspectives have been infused into cultural geography, stating that "the current philosophical and theoretical background that underpins cultural geographic research is multifaceted, complex, and dynamic" (p. 86). This has been consequential for how cultural geographers view reality and knowledge, as well as how their research is focused.

Cultural geography studies on power, inequality, oppression, and social, economic, and political structures, for example, have embraced a Marxist understanding of culture as inherently political (Shurmer-Smith, 2002). A humanistic approach has directed cultural geographers to emphasise human phenomena, lived experience, shared meaning, and the forming and experience of place (Peters, 2017). Much contemporary cultural geography follows poststructuralism's critique of essentialist and deterministic perspectives by focusing on difference and deconstruction in examining issues such as the relationship between power and knowledge, the forming of place, and the production of meaning through language (Norton & Walton-Roberts, 2014; Shurmer-Smith, 2002). Clarke (2006) explains postmodernism's rejection of metanarratives and an "overriding belief in the power of knowledge to grant privileged access to truth" (p. 110). This has led cultural geographers to view the world as complex and multiple, and encouraged an increased sensitivity to difference and the diverse ways in which people experience and engage with space (Peters, 2017).

Feminism has provided a radical critique of the fundamental masculism of geography as a discipline (Norton & Walton-Roberts, 2014). With much overlap with postmodern and poststructuralist thought, a feminist perspective in

geography has emphasised the social construction of knowledge, conceptualised human identity as multiple, complex, dynamic, embodied, and contextual, and explored how power relations produce, and are expressed in, space and place (Shurmer-Smith, 2002). Feminism also carries implications for research methodology, including an understanding that knowledge is partial and situated, and that researchers must consider positionality and embrace reflexivity (Peters, 2017). It is against this background of the myriad of philosophical and theoretical influences within the discipline that I describe the present study's constructionist approach and qualitative research design.

3.2 Constructionism as an Inquiry Framework

Common to several of the perspectives mentioned above, such as feminism and postmodernism, is the questioning of essentialism and universal truth, and a view that reality and knowledge are socially constructed (Norton & Walton-Roberts, 2014). Social constructionism understands reality as being constructed interpersonally and intersubjectively through social interaction. The aim of research based on such a premise is to "study the multiple realities constructed by different groups of people and the implications of those constructions for their lives and interactions with others" (Patton, 2015, p. 121). In order to explore the human world of social and lived experience, constructionists are concerned with the creation and negotiation of meaning, shared understanding, and the cultural lenses people use to interpret events and situations (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). As I hoped to develop a more nuanced understanding of the immigrant experiences of South Africans in the U.S., I gravitated to such a perspective.

Although the terms 'constructivism' and 'constructionism' are sometimes used interchangeably, the latter emphasises the significant role culture plays in how people view the world and their experiences (Patton, 2015). As knowledge is viewed as created through human interaction and transmitted within social contexts, social constructionists pay attention to the influence of social, political, cultural, and economic contexts in understanding social constructions of reality, as well as the ways in which power differentials shape perceptions and constructions (Patton, 2015). This is accomplished by drawing inspiration from

ethnomethodology's focus on how everyday life is accomplished through interaction, and Foucault's interest in how people and their worlds are constructed by and through systems of power and knowledge (Holstein, 2018). Thus, a constructionist approach views reality as constructed at "the crossroads of institutions, culture, and social interaction" (p. 399). Considering the present study's aims to explore and understand how South African immigrants experience identity and belonging within the contexts of their workplaces, a constructionist stance that emphasises the interrelation of subjective experience and social context seemed particularly appropriate.

3.3 A Qualitative Research Design

3.3.1 Characteristics of qualitative inquiry

As Anderson (2010) notes, much research in cultural geography embraces qualitative methods to explore and investigate the ways in which the cultural world is constructed and understood. Qualitative studies are often characterised by an emergent design, idiographic interpretation that eschews generalisations, and a focus on participants' perceptions, experiences, and realities (Creswell, 2014). Cultural geographers thus tend to frame their topics in a way that places "emphasis on understanding the particular rather than the general, the subjective in preference to the objective" (Shurmer-Smith, 2002, p. 87). Patton (2015) highlights the contextual sensitivity needed in qualitative analysis and interpretation of how people construct and attach meanings to their experiences. Value is placed on context and depth as qualitative researchers investigate the complexity and "messiness of the lived world" (Rossman & Rallis, 2012, p. 8). These characteristics made a qualitative research design well suited to the focus and objectives of my study.

In contrast to quantitative approaches that tend to favour positivist assumptions, the scientific method, and deduction, a qualitative approach focuses on generating theoretical ideas inductively about social phenomena rather than proving or disproving theories (Creswell, 2014; Peters, 2017). Feminist thought strongly critiques perceptions of a neutral, objective research process, instead advocating

that it is partial and biased as it is shaped by the author (Peters, 2017). As researchers do not observe the world from a detached, objective location, they need to consider how their own positionality (the ways in which factors such as age, gender, race, class, and experiences shape their social positions) informs their perspectives and understanding. Embracing subjectivity therefore means recognising that the researcher's self is an integral part of the interpretive work (Glesne, 2016).

A qualitative approach emphasises that researchers contribute to the joint construction of the meaning of lived experience. They do not merely 'discover' knowledge but are co-creators of it, leading Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba (2018) to describe researchers as "passionate participants" (p. 124) in their aim to further knowledge about their study and subjects. In addition, adopting a constructionist stance implies that different authors or analysts may develop differing perspectives of the same data. Being reflexive involves practicing critical self-engagement and reflection, which produces knowledge that is situated and therefore more credible (Norton & Walton-Roberts, 2014; Peters, 2017). It also calls for authors to understand and own their perspective and voice (Patton, 2015). In this chapter, I integrate discussions of subjectivity and reflexivity in various sections by reflecting on my choice of topic, my decisions regarding method, my experiences within interviews, and my reflection on the analysis and interpretation. These sections are written in the first-person active voice. Being reflexive means not overlooking or disregarding my role in the study and considering the ways in which my experiences, perspectives, and background may influence the research process and its findings (Shurmer-Smith, 2002).

3.3.2 Reflecting on topic choice

My interest in experiences of identity and belonging stems from my own immigrant journey as a South African living in the U.S. I can trace the origins of my research back to the day I walked my children to the bus stop on the first day of school. Halfway down the block I noticed a group of five or six women, speaking with distinct Indian accents, and a white American woman standing alone to their left. I was confronted by an unexpected choice about who to walk

toward. I felt strongly drawn to the Indian women because I felt that, as an immigrant, I would be able to relate to them. Surely, I would have more in common with other immigrants who speak with an accent and understand what it is like to feel so out of place and lost in a new country? I recall, however, being intensely aware of my white skin in that moment, and unsure of whether approaching this tight-knit group would perhaps be viewed as inappropriate or unwelcome. On the other hand, interacting with an American with whom I felt I had little in common was perhaps even more anxiety-provoking, due in part to my own worries of being perceived as an outsider or intruder by locals. It was a moment in which I experienced my racial and foreign identity in a visceral way, and truly felt the loss of the sense of belonging I took for granted in South Africa.

The centrality of identity and belonging in an immigrant's experience has continued to be affirmed in my everyday life and in my interactions with other immigrants. Doubts about our choices, loss and guilt about what we left behind, anxiety and decisions about the future, confusion about who we are and what our purpose is in this new place, and feelings of loneliness and isolation quickly replace the excitement and energy that many of us had when we stepped off the plane. Yet, as a white South African, I have become keenly aware of my privilege: an American friend who does not think of me as an 'immigrant' because I did not cross the Mexican border; the seemingly insurmountable challenges that many immigrants of colour face in a country with established biases related to race, language, and culture; and the success many South African immigrant families have had with increasing their socio-economic status within relatively short periods of time compared to others.

My interest was also piqued by discussions with South African acquaintances about work-related experiences. As my visa did not allow me to work, I was left with a distinct impression that many of them who were employed seemed more adjusted and acculturated than I was. This led me to start looking for literature on South African immigrants and how their experiences may differ from other immigrant groups, as well as the role that the workplace may play in facilitating a sense of identity and belonging for immigrants. Research and information on

these specific topics seemed limited. In addition, being able to combine my love for cultural geography with its focus on place and space, my personal experiences as an immigrant, and a theoretical interest in identity, culture, and dimensions of difference such as race and gender, affirmed my decision to pursue this topic for my thesis.

3.4 Interviewing as a Research Method

Interviews are used when the aim is to gather rich qualitative data to explore the complexity of unique experiences. Anderson (2010) describes the qualitative interview as a dialogue through which to discern people's thoughts, feelings, and experiences, as well as how they give meaning to and interpret their worlds. Qualitative interviewing focuses on depth over breadth, explores multiple perspectives, and "creates portraits of complicated processes" (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 3). As a research method, interviewing produces rich data for interpretive inquiry through an in-depth exploration of a topic or experience (Charmaz, 2006).

My selection of in-depth interviews as a research method was guided by the aims of the study and the type of data required to achieve them. Collecting participant narratives through interviews would allow me to explore the subjective meanings and experiences of individuals in relation to immigrant identity and belonging, while staying attentive to articulations of context. The suitability and utility of analysing interview narratives has been demonstrated in previous migrant studies, such as Hickman and Mai's (2015) exploration of dominant narratives of belonging and social cohesion in local settings, and Johansson and Śliwa's (2014) study on how particular migrant subjectivities are produced by relational and situated categories of difference. I chose to conduct in-depth interviews with South African immigrants living and working in the U.S. to gain rich, individualised, and contextually sensitive descriptions of their experiences of identity and belonging in the workplace. A semi-structured interview format using an interview guide offered me a way to introduce and focus on relevant topics for discussion while maintaining adaptability and flexibility to allow for impromptu lines of inquiry (Glesne, 2016). Less structured interview formats are also more conversational and informal, which allowed me to build rapport with the

participants, and enabled them to communicate about what they deemed relevant and important in their experience as immigrants.

As the purpose of in-depth qualitative interviewing is to gather detailed narratives and stories about experiences, I avoided yes-no answers by using open-ended questions and probing questions (Rubin & Rubin, 2012) when constructing my interview guide. My aim was to focus my questions on participants' day to day interactions and experiences in the workplace to elicit in-depth answers about their experiences and perceptions rather than prompting abstract or hypothetical thinking. As Christensen and Jensen (2012) explain, using everyday life as an entry point offers a way to explore complex issues as well as inquire indirectly about experiences related to gender, race, or ethnicity. For example, instead of asking directly about how race or gender influenced their experiences as immigrant employees, a question about the ways in which they have experienced being treated differently than their colleagues might offer more insight into when, how, and why they have experienced exclusion in the workplace. Thinking back to and talking about an example related to a specific experience prompts a discussion of emotions, behaviours, and interactions as well as the contexts within which these occur. Some questions also included an aspect of time to explore the influence and consequences of events or experiences.

I created my interview guide with four parts (Appendix A). The first part focused on introducing myself and the topic of the study, affirming the confidentiality and anonymity of participation, and addressing any queries or concerns. I proceeded with some questions about participants' backgrounds and why they chose to immigrate to the U.S. This allowed me to build rapport and make connections with each participant as it created an informal space for chatting about the immigration journey. The remaining parts were broadly based on my three research questions. The questions in part two were aimed at gathering information about participants' experiences of sameness and difference and how they articulated self and other in the workplace. Part three was focused more on exploring the role of the workplace in their experiences and negotiation of identity, social membership, and belonging. In part four I asked questions about

their adjustment and integration in America to explore issues related to identity, home, and belonging, and the relevance of work and their work life in this regard. Although these sections were created to guide the interview and focus on relevant topics, in reality most interviews did not follow the sections or questions in order, and I had to learn to adapt to the unpredictability of conversation direction and discreetly make notes to ensure a return to any issues that were not covered.

3.5 Data Collection

3.5.1 Sampling strategy and criteria

My aim was to collect cases, through a purposeful sampling strategy, to create a specific, information-rich group that could illuminate the identity and belonging experiences of South African immigrants employed in the U.S. Patton (2015) states that a heterogeneous sample allows for the exploration of uniqueness and diversity as well as finding central themes or common patterns across cases. I also employed analytically-focused sampling during later stages of analysis to select additional cases to deepen my analysis and the interpretation of patterns and themes (Patton, 2015). All the participants in this study were South African-born, living and working in the U.S. Due to limitations imposed by the cost of travel, I focused on finding individuals who were located in states in the Northeast region of the U.S. To ensure variation in my sample, I purposefully sought out individuals who represented diversity across age, race, gender, education, career or type of industry, and length of time in the U.S. Reasons for immigration, type of employment, route to immigration, and permanence of immigration were not used as selection criteria.

Locating and contacting South African immigrants in the U.S. was a challenge: they are comparatively small in number, scattered across various states, with no readily available list or directory for South Africans to consult. I planned to begin with personal contacts and social media searches and use snowball sampling to find further potential participants. This method became problematic after my first interview as I realised the challenges it would pose in terms of ensuring anonymity and confidentiality. Friends and colleagues could potentially recognise

elements of someone's story or examples. I decided to contact individuals I identified through online expat groups (such as Facebook), but this was hampered by limited contact details and a lack of information about employment, and the response rate for my requests was poor. My greatest success in recruiting participants was through using LinkedIn (a professional networking service). The advantage of LinkedIn was its utility in narrowing a search focus to South Africans who are based in the U.S., the availability of employment information and contact details connected to profiles, and the ability to email individuals directly without using an employer-connected email address (confidentiality). My impression is that receiving an email through LinkedIn was viewed as more credible and legitimate by participants than compared to other forms of social media, especially as they could learn a bit more about me and verify that I was indeed a fellow South African and a PhD student doing research.

The question of sample size for this study was also a challenge. My study did not strictly equate to the types of approaches written about in many research texts: narrative research often involves sample sizes of one or two people, phenomenological studies have between one and ten participants, grounded theory tends to require between twenty and thirty, and case studies usually limit samples to four or five at most (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I expected that my sample size would be determined by a balance between a need for in-depth data and the desire for heterogeneity (Glesne, 2016; Patton, 2015).

As the research process progressed, I found that my sampling strategy was influenced by a need to increase the variation in my sample (e.g., too few participants of colour or multiple participants working in a particular field), as well as the need to verify and extend my understanding of a certain emerging category or theme (e.g., how do Afrikaans- and English-speakers differ in their experience of accent as beneficial or problematic?). In this way my sample size remained emergent in nature, and I continued to sample with the aim of ensuring multiple perspectives from both men and women, black and white participants, different language speakers, those who have recently immigrated and those who have been in the U.S. for over twenty years, and so on. I did, however, refrain

from altering the questions I asked in subsequent interviews to avoid narrowing or limiting my focus. For example, although I was curious to know if race was as influential in the immigrant experience for a new participant as it seemed to have been in a previous interview, I wanted such salient experiences and relevant categories to come from the participants' own stories and words and not be due to my prompting questions.

After completing and analysing 18 interviews, using concurrent data collection and analysis, I felt that my themes had reached saturation. Saturation is described by various authors as the point at which no new information or themes are emerging from the interview data, and the codes, categories, and patterns identified are well-supported by the existing data (Creswell, 2014; Patton, 2015; Saldaña, 2016). This size for a purposeful sample in qualitative research is supported in the literature. Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) for example, in their study on thematic codebook development over the course of sixty interviews, found that saturation occurred within the first twelve interviews of a thematic analysis, with basic elements for meta-themes present as early as six interviews. To avoid "quick and dirty" (p. 79) research however, they suggest that sample size would increase depending on heterogeneity and the need to correlate among multiple variables. Given my research aims and parameters, the large amount of data I had already collected through 18 interviews, and the well-supported categories and themes formed through my analysis, I felt comfortable with moving onto interpreting and presenting my findings to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of South African immigrants' experiences of identity and belonging in the U.S.

3.5.2 The participants

My description of the sample is presented in broad, general terms, purposefully excluding any personal or identifying information that would threaten confidentiality and anonymity. Details about participants' location and employers, for example, are omitted. Table 3.1 provides information on participants' gender, race, job role, employment field, approximate years in the U.S., age range, and education level; Table 3.2 summarises the sample's composition.

Table 3.1 Participant information

Pseudonym	Gender	Race	Job/Employment	Years in U.S.	Age	Education level
Karen	Woman	White	Executive assistant (Brokerage services)	1-3	20-29	Bachelor's degree
Reena	Woman	Indian	Accounts coordinator (Management company)	1-3	30-39	Matric +
Graham	Man	White	Professor (University)	1-3	40-49	Postgraduate
Daniel	Man	White	Manager (Retail company)	1-3	30-39	Postgraduate
Conrad	Man	White	Account manager (Advertising company)	1-3	20-29	Bachelor's degree
Mandla	Man	Black	Senior associate (Financial consulting)	1-3	30-39	Postgraduate
Lerato	Woman	Black	Family advocate (Social services)	4-6	30-39	Postgraduate
Kaya	Woman	Black	Technology consultant (Management consulting)	4-6	20-29	Postgraduate
Naledi	Woman	Black	Senior associate (Actuarial services)	4-6	30-39	Postgraduate
Yvonne	Woman	Black	Professor (University)	4-6	30-39	Postgraduate
Thabani	Man	Black	Sales/marketing associate (Construction company)	4-6	30-39	Matric +
Sean	Man	White	Professor (University)	7-10	40-49	Postgraduate
Riaan	Man	White	Pharmacist (Pharmacy)	11-15	40-49	Postgraduate
Sonja	Woman	White	Teaching assistant (Preschool)	16-20	40-49	Bachelor's degree
Lindiwe	Woman	Black	Nurse (Independent)	16-20	30-39	Bachelor's degree
Michael	Man	White	Realtor (Realty company)	16-20	40-49	Bachelor's degree
Sheryl	Woman	White	Real Estate Title Closer (Independent)	20+	40-49	Matric +
David	Man	White	Doctor (Hospital)	20+	50-59	Postgraduate

Table 3.2 Sample composition

Gender	Age	Race	Years in U.S.	Educational level
Men (9)	20-29 years (3)	Black (7)	1-3 (6)	Bachelor's degree (5)
Women (9)	30-39 years (8)	Indian (1)	4-6 (5)	Post-graduate degree (10)
	40-49 years (6)	White (10)	7-10 (1)	Some post-secondary (3)
	50-59 years (1)		11-15 (1)	
			16-20 (3)	
			20 + (2)	

The participants in this study immigrated to the U.S. under different visa categories. Seven were granted employer-sponsored H1-B visas; three came to the U.S. as intra-company transferees (L1 visas); three received green cards through marriage after an initial period as students (F1 visas) or temporary workers (B1 visas); three participants married individuals who were U.S. citizens; and two others had green cards due to parents who had obtained U.S. citizenship.

3.5.3 Interviewing

I completed interviews with 18 South Africans living and working in the U.S., between February 2017 and April 2018. They were located across seven states in the Northeast, all living and working within metropolitan areas. Participants were provided with information about the interview's purpose and process, assured of confidentiality and anonymity, given contact information for the researcher and her supervisors, and asked to submit signed consent forms (information sheet and consent form in Appendices B and C). Seven interviews were in-person, two via phone, and nine using Skype video calling. The interviews ranged from one hour and fifteen minutes to just over two hours. Two of the participants requested the interview be spread over two sessions. I created an interview diary by recording my thoughts and impressions after each interview for future reference. Interviews were recorded for transcription, with the participants' consent. I deleted interview recordings after transcription as agreed to in the participant information sheet and

stored all data and personal information in a secure, password protected computer which only I could access.

Location and form

As described by Anderson (2010), the location and context of interviews may influence the degree to which participants feel comfortable and safe in sharing about their experiences, impacting the quality of information gathered. I deferred to the participants' needs regarding dates, times, and locations for the interview. On a few occasions these were adjusted due to changes in the participants' schedules, and one potential participant cancelled an interview due to work demands. Most of the in-person interviews took place in the participants' homes, a location in which they seemed to feel comfortable and which assured privacy. One participant asked me to meet him at his workplace as it was the most convenient in terms of timing and travel. Although we met in a private meeting area, I wondered if many of his seemingly cautious answers were due to a concern about being overheard by his co-workers. In comparison to home-based interviews, the workplace environment resulted in a more formal and less intimate interview context. Two other participants chose to meet me at a coffee shop, perhaps because it represented a convenient and neutral space. Noise and privacy were slightly problematic in such a social environment, but the participants did not seem intimidated or appear to self-censor their discussion for fear of being overheard.

Skype was used for interviews with participants to whom I could not travel to or who expressed a preference for video calling. With advances in technology, researchers have increasingly turned to communication tools like Skype to conduct interviews (Peeters, 2017). The participants who met with me via Skype video calling did so from the privacy of their own homes and at times that were convenient for them. Despite not being in-person, it was essentially a face-to-face meeting: we could make eye contact and see each other's body language and facial expressions. One participant even gave me a tour of his home, carrying his laptop around the house, and another introduced me to her daughter. In contrast to the awkwardness I expected with Skype video calling, participants seemed to feel

relaxed and at ease. This could perhaps be attributed to a sense of safety and control brought about by the physical distance and separation, or due to a lack of apprehension about speaking with another South African. The two interviews by phone call were the most challenging. Relying only on a person's voice, with no access to non-verbal communication, did result in some uncomfortable pauses and it took longer to build a personal connection. As both calls were made in the privacy of their homes, these participants did feel free to speak openly and at length.

Interviewing style and interaction with participants

I was quite aware of how I presented myself as I interacted with participants. Glesne (2016) notes that this relates not only to decisions about outward appearance but also behaviour, non-verbal communication, and the level of sharing or confiding personal thoughts and experiences. Other important interviewer qualities include humility, respect, building rapport, reassuring participants, expressing gratitude, and being ethical (Glesne, 2016; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). My goal as an interviewer was to be open, friendly, and non-judgmental to ensure a conversational style and encourage participants to speak freely and feel safe to talk about issues that may be sensitive or personal. This required me to share some of my own stories and respond to participants' questions to develop a connection, and also to relinquish a fair degree of control over the conversation to avoid dominating the interview. The semi-structured format of the interviews helped in this regard, allowing me to remain open and responsive to new or divergent avenues the participants introduced.

It was important to me that I establish a degree of trust and rapport with my participants and avoid an overly formal, inhibited, and one-sided 'question and answer' session. I was pleasantly surprised, in most of the interviews, by how quickly we fell into comfortable conversation, a rapport that was obviously facilitated by the recognition of shared experience as South Africans away from home. Chatting about what we miss about South Africa or what the weather was like in the state we lived in, for example, created a sense of comradery, a personal connection that resulted in the use of words like 'we' and 'us' in conversation

within the first few minutes of the interview. I was not wholly prepared for the level of intimacy and connection I experienced in many of the interviews, and it was indeed challenging to stay focused when conversation was so engaging. Participants often had me laughing or blinking back tears. It was also a significant and sobering realisation that the ways in which I was identifying and emotionally connecting with participants, while being beneficial to rapport-building and in-depth dialogue, had real consequences for how I perceived and interpreted the interactions and the information I would collect. As many of the participants' experiences resonated with my own, there was a danger that I could make assumptions based on my own experiences.

Effective listening was key in ensuring I remained open to and focused on participant views, perspectives, and experiences without jumping to conclusions or imposing my own understanding. I used probing questions to gain detail or clarification about an issue, experience, or context. As the interviews proceeded, I became more comfortable with holding back during moments of silence which opened up a space for participants to say more, and I adapted to the unpredictability of avenues of discussion. Noting questions and thoughts during the interview was very helpful in being able to return to issues or gaps in information. Inevitably, it was impossible to ask questions in the same order or with the same wording in every interview because each interview went in a unique direction within the first few minutes. Some participants spoke at length while others were not as talkative or as comfortable sharing their feelings. Knowing when to ask probing questions and when to refrain from further discussion was important in gathering information and maintaining flow of dialogue while keeping trust intact. I learned that there was no 'good' or 'bad' interview - each interview brought relevant and unique information. I did, however, delete a few questions from the interview guide that proved to be unclear or confusing to participants.

Reflexivity and positionality

Interviews are inherently infused with issues of power and control, depending on the structural inequalities and personal differences between interviewer and

interviewees (Shurmer-Smith, 2002). Researchers need to be aware of their powerful roles in shaping and influencing the research and interview process. Factors such as gender, age, race, class, educational attainment, professional status, ideologies, and language, for example, can affect the direction and context of an interview (Charmaz, 2006). Anderson (2010) thus encourages researchers to acknowledge issues of positionality in terms of the physical context and location of the interview as well as how their own "metaphorical place" (p. 170) influences their interaction with respondents.

Being reflexive and considering positionality required me to be aware of how I was contributing to creating the interview context and how my own experiences and perspectives may influence my interpretation of participants' narratives. One example that illustrates this challenge during interviews was learning to be aware of my own emotions and controlling my verbal and nonverbal responses to certain views and opinions participants shared. Although there was not an interview I would label as unpleasant, and I tended to get along with participants, there were times when participants made a political statement or expressed an opinion that conflicted with my own views and beliefs. I was taken aback, for example, by one participant's repeated use of the word 'we' when discussing politics, indicating an assumption that I held similar views. I surmised that her assumption of shared experiences and ways of viewing the world may have been based on the fact that I was a white South African woman who could speak Afrikaans.

I did not find that differences in age negatively affected my interactions with participants. Being in my early forties, I was still able to relate to people in their late twenties and thirties, and being married and the mother of two teenagers allowed me to appreciate the life experiences of those older than I. In general, my experiences in the interviews did not justify any concerns that men would be less likely to talk about their experiences because I was a woman; there were just as many men as women who spoke about sensitive issues, shared emotions, or chose to remain more private and restrained in their choice of words. Being white, I was aware of the potential influence of racial dynamics in interviews with participants of colour. I realised that my initial sense of anxiety was perhaps provoked by

having lived in the U.S. for nearly a decade where talking about race or any racial issues is a taboo. However, I was soon reminded that South Africans are quite different in this regard and were open to discussing their experiences and viewpoints on race (when the topic arose). In addition, the sense of camaraderie based on being South Africans in the U.S. was very powerful in the interview context in facilitating a sense of shared understanding.

The influence of personality factors became evident to me in my interactions with participants. Being an introvert enabled me to recognise when a participant needed some encouragement and reassurance to feel comfortable to be open about their experiences and views. The times that I needed to be outgoing and verbal when interacting with a more extroverted participant were more challenging for me. However, due to my tendency to avoid conflict and the nature and goals of my study, there was no concern about personality clashes. The other factor that I became keenly aware of as having the potential to impact my interactions and influence my perceptions or interpretations of participants' words was the issue of political beliefs. This was partially due to a divergence between my own perspectives and beliefs and those of conservative Republicans in the U.S. This meant that I found it easier to relate to those participants with more liberal, left-leaning perspectives, and less comfortable speaking with a participant with strong conservative viewpoints. I had to be aware of the potential consequences of this personal bias throughout the research process.

3.6 Data Analysis

3.6.1 Overview of approach

Although my approach to data analysis adapted certain elements of the coding procedures of a grounded theory model (Charmaz, 2006), the objective of the present study was not to generate a formal theory about identity and belonging. A thematic analysis of a case study of South African immigrants, with the aim of developing a more nuanced understanding of their differential experiences of identity and belonging in the American workplace, is a more suitable description of this study.

Thematic analysis entails a search for thematic ideas from codes and categories, with the goal of developing a deeper understanding of a social phenomenon (Glesne, 2016). In common with a grounded theory coding approach, however, was the development of a framework of themes emerging inductively from the data rather than top-down coding using a framework constructed from the literature, as well as the use of constant comparison as a key process (Urquhart, 2013). Where a deductive approach would impose existing or preconceived analytical categories and conceptualisations during analysis, I used an inductive method to find categories, concepts, and themes that emerged from the data. Such an approach preserves the participants' worldview and perspectives (Patton, 2015). In thematic analysis, comparison is used to identify patterns, make analytical connections, and reveal underlying complexities (Glesne, 2016). Interpreting the findings thus means "explaining the findings, answering 'why' questions, attaching significance to particular results, and putting patterns into an analytic framework" (Patton, 2015, p. 534). My interpretations were formed through the analysis of individual participants' narratives as well as cross-case, comparative analysis.

I began working with my data after the first two interviews and proceeded with further data collection, transcription, and analysis simultaneously. This facilitated analytical connections early in the research process while maintaining an openness to new information and perspectives. In addition, taking regular notes about my preliminary thoughts, questions, and analytic considerations through memo writing helped me to look at the data and possible categories in new ways. I found transcribing the interviews to be an invaluable process, allowing me to get closer to the data and creating opportunities for analytic reflection. I could listen in a different way than in the face to face meetings, view conversations and interactions from a different perspective, and notice new details.

Although I had intended to transition to data analysis software at some point in the early stage of my analysis, I decided against it as working traditionally with paper and pen allowed me to effectively delve into detail while staying engaged with the 'big picture' presented within the data. My previous experience with analysis

software left me feeling somewhat distanced from the raw data and did not necessarily aid in managing and organising my research material. Being able to return continuously to printed transcripts and written documents, using coloured pens, highlighters, and notecards, and writing notes and memos as I worked, enabled me to keep my analysis grounded in the data.

3.6.2 Coding

Coding occurs in stages with the aim of developing categories of information, finding links between the categories, and specifying possible relationships between them, and is a process that needs to be systematic and rigorous to ensure credibility (Peters, 2017). Charmaz (2006) explains coding as "naming segments of data with a label that simultaneously categorizes, summarizes, and accounts for each piece of data" (p. 43). Concepts and themes are identified as the level of abstraction increases in the analysis, progressing from empirical data to more abstract constructs (Urquhart, 2013). While I aimed to categorise the data, I did not intend to reduce the data to the point of losing the unique voices of participants and the heterogeneity of their experiences.

I began with an initial phase of detailed line by line coding which produced a provisional set of codes focused on actions, events, contexts, and the experiences of the participants. Such a close, critical reading of the data helped me to avoid conceptual leaps or the imposition of preconceived notions (Charmaz, 2006). This was followed by focused coding where I identified those codes which were most significant and useful in proceeding with sorting and categorising the large amount of data from the interviews. I then used theoretical coding to explore how the substantive analytic codes relate to each other, to develop conceptual categories, and to create a more integrated view of what the data analysis was revealing (Charmaz, 2006; Saldaña, 2016).

Although coding is seen as a progressive process of sorting and defining collected data, it is not a linear one (Glesne, 2016; Creswell, 2014). I used the constant comparison technique to compare data with data within and between interviews, with the aim of looking explicitly for patterns, differences, and variations, and

checking for consistency and accuracy in my coding (Patton, 2015). As I made new discoveries and connections through further data collection and analysis, I reworded, reorganised, and reconfigured my codes and categories in an iterative cycle as I moved back and forth between data (Creswell, 2014; Rossman & Rallis, 2012). I then worked to identify possible links and relationships between categories, taking note of emerging patterns and themes and how they may interrelate. This intensive, iterative process allowed me to develop additional layers of analysis, and eventually produced the foundations from which I could interpret and present my research findings.

3.6.3 Reflecting on analysis and interpretation

I felt overwhelmed by the sheer volume of data I gathered from just 18 interviews, as well as the tension created by the need to report on relevant findings while heeding the length and practical constraints of a thesis. In writing up my findings, my aim was to retain as much of the meaning and context of participants' experiences and stories, which played a big part in shaping my chapters and the 'story' I was in turn telling. For Charmaz (2006), this means ensuring that participants' accounts remain visible in the text and that their voices are embedded in the research outcome. I was confronted with some ethical dilemmas regarding what to include when reporting on participants' sincerely-held beliefs in ways that did not cast them in a negative light or result in them feeling betrayed by the process. Taking someone's words out of context, for example, could unfairly and inaccurately portray a participant as prejudiced.

Another significant challenge was producing meaningful findings about the 'South African' immigrant experience when over-generalising is problematic and undesirable. Identifying commonality or patterns seemed to stand in contradiction with the unique experiences and journeys of South African immigrants in the U.S. I struggled with the level of abstraction that was required during the analysis process and interpretation, and often worried that I was not doing justice to participants and the stories they told. Keeping the research questions and objectives in mind when analysis the data helped me move forward: the purpose of the study was not to identify the 'essence' of the South African immigrant

experience but to bring insight to participants' differential experiences of identity and belonging in the American workplace. In other words, rather than reduce or average the data to create a metanarrative, my aim was to identify and explore patterns and themes that would generate a more nuanced understanding of their experiences. This reinforced the need to be diligent in the analysis of individual narratives as well as across cases.

Contrary to my expectations (given the seemingly endless rounds of deconstruction, re-assembling, and configuration of my data in a variety of ways), my analysis led to a presentation structure that broadly reflects the goals of my original research questions: a) an exploration of how South African immigrants in the U.S. experience sameness and difference, and identifying dimensions of difference that are salient to their immigrant experience; b) examining the role and impact of the workplace as a social context for the participants' experiences of identity and belonging, as well as how participants manage their difference and negotiate belonging within these places; and c) understanding the significance of workplace experiences in participant acculturation in the U.S., and exploring broader issues related to identity, belonging, and home. My findings are presented in chapters four, five, and six.

3.7 Quality and Credibility

As the focus of qualitative research does not involve pursuing causal explanations, linear predictions, and singular truths, issues of validity and reliability differ from those associated with quantitative research (Creswell, 2014; Glesne, 2016; Patton, 2015). This section describes the strategies I employed to demonstrate the credibility and trustworthiness of my findings, drawing on the best practices of qualitative research represented in the literature.

Rubin and Rubin (2012) state that high-quality interview studies involve an exploration of issues or phenomena through the words of individuals who have first-hand experience and knowledge. All the participants in this study were South Africans who had immigrated to the U.S. and were willing to talk about their own immigrant experiences. As building sound relationships contributes to more

trustworthy data (Glesne, 2016), I made sure to work toward developing trust and rapport with each participant. This was one of the reasons I chose in-depth interviews over a survey-type research method – it allowed me to personally interact at length with participants. Another reason was that interviewing facilitates the capturing of nuance, complexity, and a variety of meanings, where thick, detailed description produces findings that are richer and more realistic (Creswell, 2014).

In-depth answers and extended descriptions gathered from participants allowed me to move beyond superficial understanding and explore different perspectives and experiences of identity and belonging. Since a constructionist stance regards reality as constructed and multiple, and meaning as contextual and interpreted, qualitative work is evaluated not by its generalisability but by its ability to uncover new themes or explanations (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). My aim in this study was not to inappropriately generalise or extrapolate my findings, but to work with purposefully selected information-rich cases within a specific context to explore how South African immigrants differentially experience identity and belonging in the U.S. Creswell (2014) emphasises that a qualitative study is therefore judged by its believability, coherence, and insight rather than traditional validity and reliability measures.

Patton (2015) adds that the dependability of a study is based on a researcher's ability to show that the inquiry process was "logical, traceable, and documented" (p. 685). In order to ensure accuracy and thoroughness in data collection and analysis, I used a recording device during interviews, kept a research diary, personally transcribed the interviews, and used memo writing to record and keep track of my thought process. My approach to data analysis was systematic and conscientious to enhance its credibility (Patton, 2015). I used an inductive approach to develop codes and categories, and continuously compared and contrasted data to verify the meaningfulness and accuracy of my codes and categories. I ensured consistency in coding by maintaining a code book, which was regularly updated (Creswell, 2014). As a further quality-assurance strategy, I searched for disconfirming instances and information during data analysis that

might not support emerging patterns or my initial interpretations (Glesne, 2016). Patton (2015) describes how questions regarding the accuracy or fit between the respondents' views and the researcher's reconstruction of them can impact the credibility of the findings. In writing up my findings, I purposefully used direct quotes as a way to present actual data to readers as empirical support for my analysis and interpretation.

As previously described, being reflexive means understanding how personal characteristics, values, experiences, beliefs, and positions influence the research process and knowledge production. Practicing reflexivity contributes to the authenticity and trustworthiness of a study (Patton, 2015). Therefore, I was mindful of acknowledging subjectivity and positionality during the various stages of my research. In this chapter I discussed and reflected on the ways in which I impacted the direction and goals of study, the methods I chose, my sampling strategy and access to participants, my interaction with participants, and my analysis and interpretation. Rossman and Rallis (2012) add that an important element of a study's trustworthiness is whether it has been ethically conducted.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Researchers must consider ethical issues throughout the research process, including the need to protect participants, ensure the integrity of the research, and guard against misconduct (Creswell, 2014). This section discusses the steps I took regarding information and consent, participant recruitment, and protecting data security and participant privacy.

The research proposal was reviewed and approved by the institutional review board regarding ethical standards and conduct during the research process (clearance number H16/06/01; Appendix D). I introduced myself and my study in an information sheet sent to each potential participant, describing the topic, research purpose, interview process and procedures, risks and benefits, and contact information. This document also included the assurance of confidentiality and anonymity, an explanation of how the study's results would be used, the ability to withdraw from the study at any point, and the availability of a summary

of the study's findings. Respondents who were interested in participating signed a consent form to indicate their understanding and agreement, as well as their consent for the interview to be recorded for transcription.

I did not wish to be intrusive or place undue pressure on individuals during my efforts to contact and find participants. I sent short, friendly introductory communications via LinkedIn or email in hopes of receiving replies. I sent further information and detail upon request and sent a single follow-up email if I heard nothing further. In a few cases, individuals showed interest and signed consent forms but then chose to withdraw or ceased communication. I met with the participants at times and locations of their choice. I remained committed to showing respect during the interviews and focused on developing rapport and trust with my participants.

Data was securely stored in a password-protected computer to which only I had access. Interview recordings were deleted after transcription as stated in the information sheet. To ensure participant anonymity and confidentiality, pseudonyms were used for the participants, and any personal-identifying information was omitted. This included the state and cities or towns in which they lived and worked, the name of their employers, where they lived in South Africa, their exact age, and their date of immigration. In addition, I did choose to exclude certain sensitive information from my discussions and findings when I felt it may threaten a participant's privacy or dignity.

3.9 Conclusion

In this chapter I presented the study's constructionist approach and qualitative research design, as well as my choice of in-depth interviewing as a research method. I described the participants in the study, provided details about data collection and analysis, and integrated a discussion on reflexivity and my role as the researcher. The chapter concluded by addressing issues of quality and credibility, and ethical considerations. The following three chapters of the thesis constitute the findings of the study, followed by the conclusion chapter.

CHAPTER 4: FOUNDATIONS

4.1 Introduction

The findings of the study are presented and discussed in three chapters. Chapter four introduces three central themes that were identified during data analysis as foundational in understanding South African immigrants' experiences of identity and belonging. In chapter five, I focus on the context of the workplace, including examining the significance of workplace characteristics and culture, discussing the participants' positive and negative workplace experiences, and identifying strategies and identity practices they use to manage their difference and increase their belonging in the workplace. Chapter six encompasses broader issues of belonging, including participants' perceptions of their adjustment and integration in the U.S., the role and relative significance of work in their acculturation, their perspectives on politics, and their feelings about identity, home, and belonging.

Please note that in the three findings chapters, my presentation of the findings (written in the present tense) is followed by a detailed discussion of the findings (written in the past tense) at the end of each chapter. In addition, please note that I have foregone the citation convention for direct quotes from interviews (Name, personal communication, date of interview), and instead use only the pseudonym after the quote or in the signal phrase of the sentence containing the quote. All interviews were completed between February 2017 and April 2018.

In this current chapter, I identify the dimensions of difference that appear most salient to the participants' experiences of sameness and difference, examine how participants articulate what it means to be a 'South African' immigrant in the U.S., and highlight how participant experiences are contextual and vary across space and in scale. I chose to foreground these three thematic areas as 'foundational' because they relate to the immigrant experience beyond just the workplace, yet are necessary to understand in order to explore and interpret the participants' workplace experiences. I present my findings on the three themes below, followed by a more detailed discussion.

4.2 Salient Dimensions of Difference

As an exploration of migrant belonging highlights the "interplay of sameness and difference" (Ralph, 2012, p. 447), one of my aims in analysis was to pay attention to participants' perceptions of self and other, and how they articulate similarities and differences with others. Wanting salient dimensions of difference to emerge from participants' own descriptions and experiences, I purposefully avoided asking direct questions about types of difference in the interviews. Understanding which types of difference are salient in the participants' subjective experience as immigrants brings insight into how their difference is evaluated and given meaning, how boundaries are constructed to demarcate in- and out-groups, and the ways in which participants may be constructed as Other. While the dimensions of difference identified through data analysis are presented and discussed under separate headings below, participants' words and descriptions clearly convey how these differences overlap and intersect to influence their immigrant experience.

4.2.1 Foreignness

From the interviews it is evident that the majority of participants, as immigrants in America, find their identity as foreigners to be salient in many social interactions, including those within the work environment. Most often signalled by their accent, their foreignness is the first thing people notice and ask about. Lerato explains that "Americans are quick to ask where you are from when you meet them." Yvonne describes how conversations undoubtedly turn to her nationality because "they are curious and just have a need to know where you are from." Graham reports mixed feelings about constantly being asked about his origins: "It's nice being a bit different, but to be completely honest, in day to day interactions I would prefer to just sound American and not always have to say who I am and where I come from." Other participants similarly mention how continuously having to explain themselves can be wearisome, and how frustrating it can be to always be defined by where you come from. It seems that the salience of their foreignness may limit or constrain the availability of other personal and social identities in interactions. Being so easily identified as 'foreign' is a way in which participants' difference and Otherness is constantly affirmed.

In addition to being ascribed as 'different' by other people, some participants recognise a persistent self-awareness of their own foreignness:

> . . . you are very aware that you are in an American situation, and that consciousness never goes away: you are always very aware that you are different. But I think that's probably something held more internally than something that other people are aware of or that gets communicated (Sean).

> You don't escape the fact that you are from another country - you are the outsider. Yes, I am fitting in in my own weird way, and I don't stick out like a sore thumb, but I am still out of place (Daniel).

Although people's responses upon learning of the participants' nationality vary, the consensus among participants is that a large majority of Americans have limited and superficial knowledge about South Africa. Others are therefore more likely to react with indifference, confusion, or curiosity rather than any form of hostility. Karen points out that people "do not know the difference between South Africa and Africa. It's one place to them. They have no idea where South Africa is and they have no idea who lives there and what language we speak." This is echoed by Thabani, who states that "easily half of Americans don't know anything. When I say I'm from South Africa they say 'But where? Which country?' And then I think well at least they know there are multiple countries in Africa." Lindiwe observes that "many identify South Africa with Nelson Mandela; others might know about sports or nature and sharks or something. That's the only thing they can relate to." David pointedly remarks that

> . . . per unit education, Americans are the most geographically ignorant people I have ever come across. Only the most sophisticated and informed three percent viscerally relate to the fact that Africa is a continent with 53 countries and that there are many different people who live there.

Most participants report being commonly misidentified by others as British and Australian, but a few also mention Russian and Jamaican as surprising guesses from people. White, black, and Indian participants all share stories about looks of surprise or incomprehension when they explain they are South African. While some participants appear more critical of what they perceive as ignorance, others explain it as merely a reflection of a lack of focus on Africa in American

education and perhaps the fact that South Africa is not really relevant to the lives of many Americans.

A common theme that arises from the interviews is how this general lack of knowledge about South Africa becomes beneficial for the participants. Daniel, for example, maintains that coming to the U.S. was an easy adjustment because "labels are not as sticky and in your face." Sean reflects on his interactions with Americans in the first few months:

> I realised that being South African was probably more of an empty space than an occupied space in the sense that people didn't have a whole lot to attach to that. I think it was more a bit of a silhouette than actually something that people really understood.

Mandla similarly observes that "they know the name but have no connotations to it or to people from it. Not like Mexico where people have an implicit assumption, or an emotional or memory bank tied to that place." The lack of knowledge or preconceptions from which to draw may thus protect South African immigrants from being readily stereotyped by Americans compared to other groups of immigrants.

Americans' reactions to, and interactions with, South African immigrants are clearly contingent on their perceptions of South Africa. While participants report that most conversations with Americans about South Africa can be quite restricted or superficial due to their lack of information about the country, some do recount experiences with a few individuals who are more knowledgeable. Conrad describes his co-workers as more "savvy and well educated", who know a bit about South African cities and are receptive to learning more. Naledi mentions a co-worker who was able to identify her accent as South African and was "easy to talk to because he knew a bit about our politics and the country." Riaan was introduced to someone who liked South African food and knew a few Afrikaans phrases, which made conversation easier. Sheryl and Michael both comment that, compared to when they immigrated in the 1990s, more Americans now know of South Africans or South African culture as the number of South African

immigrants increase and well-known individuals like Elon Musk, Trevor Noah, and Charlize Theron draw attention to the country.

4.2.2 Accent

In general, the participants report that their South African accent is well liked and is an asset in their interactions with others because they can use it to encourage conversation and create a point of connection. Sheryl stresses that her accent is "a plus and not a hindrance in this business" because people's curiosity about her accent leads to potential sales meetings. Sonja notes how her accent "often becomes a conversation starter" and Reena also explains that people are drawn to her and enjoy speaking to her because of her accent. Thabani reflects that it is a useful way "to warm up to people and a way to try to get along with them - to humanise yourself, especially when it's over the phone." Conrad speaks of the confidence he has gained from positive reactions to his accent during job interviews: "As soon as I speak, they are intrigued and I'm able to speak in a way, from my accent and the way I talk, that they find intriguing." Daniel provides another example of how his accent is beneficial at work:

> Something cool that I picked up with most of my customers is that people really love the accent. And it comes in handy when you need to resolve conflict or have an unhappy customer. The accent is something foreign, strange and unique to them, and I think it makes them feel like they are on holiday or something - it's hard to explain. But I often get called to the floor if there is a problem because the customer responds well to me and the way I speak.

In addition, because others often cannot identify the South African accent, many participants describe how they have benefitted from the positive stereotypes Americans associate with a British-sounding accent. Karen articulates this in the following excerpt:

> They said that I make them sound much more sophisticated than the company really is. They do love our accent which is good because if you don't have a good accent you can be classified as stupid pretty easily, without anyone knowing anything about your intelligence. So, our accent is actually helping me to get a job. They say it sounds like an English-British accent, and everyone thinks the British are intelligent people.

Sean mentions that "people like the accent, they make assumptions that you are from Australia, New Zealand, or Britain and that sort of gives you favour." David admits that even though he does not exploit it, his accent works to his advantage as people have commented that he sounds so intelligent: "Americans love the accent. They happen to think I'm much smarter than I am, in much the same way that I assumed Americans were bright and intelligent and sophisticated when I lived in South Africa and heard an American accent."

Several black participants highlight the influence of their accent on how others react upon meeting them:

> When I speak, they don't know where I come from. Our accent is a bit different from the rest of Africa. They'll think I'm from the U.K. until I tell them. And then they are like "Oh, are you sure?" Then the questions start: How is your accent like this? Where did you learn to speak English? (Kaya).

> One lady assumed I had gone to school in Europe. I don't know where she got that perception. When I said no, I had gone to school in South Africa, she seemed surprised. I think they just don't expect Africans to be able to speak English properly or to have an education (Lerato).

> My accent sounding so English is less threatening and less negative. If I had a thick 'African' accent, like the kind of accent portrayed in movies, I think they would have different assumptions about me or treat me differently. If anything, I feel like in a social context, people are amused by the difference, and want to know more. They are full of questions (Mandla).

These examples show how accent, race, and nationality intersect to mediate the way black South Africans are perceived in the U.S., where they do not fit the stereotypical images or assumptions many Americans have of 'Africans'. Race as a salient dimension is further addressed under the next heading.

Although the consensus among participants is that Americans seem to like the South African accent, they also discuss instances that illustrate how language can be a barrier in the workplace. Naledi shares about her discomfort with communicating with clients: "My struggle is more with people not understanding me. I have a stronger accent. I don't know what happens when I speak to

Americans – I feel awkward about it because I feel like I sound different." Graham notes that

> When I begin interacting with someone who's not expecting a non-American way of speaking, they often don't understand me and I have to repeat myself which can be frustrating. . . . Often, I do wish I could be like a young child who can assimilate the accent - and it's not that I idealise America or because I just want to fit in. I want to be able to communicate without the added problems

Sheryl brings attention to how different accents are received by Americans:

> Thank goodness I didn't have an accent that people didn't like. I know an Indian lady who had a tough time because people could not understand her. So, we've had very different experiences in the same industry. I am grateful than my first language is English – I'm not sure if it wouldn't have been harder if I was Afrikaans. . . . I have an Afrikaans friend who I struggle to understand sometimes.

Comments by a couple of Afrikaans-speaking participants lend some support to her view. Riaan discloses that although most customers are interested in his accent and ask him questions, they often struggle to understand him: "I have a much stronger accent than English-speaking South Africans. You guys sound more British than I do." Similarly, Sonja mentions difficulties with elderly clients in particular: "They couldn't understand me because of my accent, and they would get irritated and mad and refuse to talk to me. They would ask to speak to someone else."

The South African accent therefore produces both advantages and disadvantages. From the preceding, it is evident that the accent that sounds closest to British English has positive associations whereas Afrikaans and 'African' accents are less valorised. However, communication can become a burden for any South African as misunderstanding and the pressure to engage sometimes result in weariness and fatigue.

4.2.3 Race

With a few exceptions, the majority of white participants do not directly bring up their race in discussions about their identity and personal experiences in the U.S.

This may indicate a reluctance to speak about race or may suggest that race is not salient in their subjective experience as immigrants. Instead, many speak of how their accent consistently signifies their difference and sets them apart from Americans. In the few instances when white participants do mention or imply something about their race, the context within which whiteness is interpreted or given meaning becomes highlighted:

> Being a white male in South Africa is contested, whereas here the only thing that is contested about me, most of the time, is my accent (Sean).

> The worst I've experienced was years ago in Dublin, where they asked me if I was a 'boer' and accused me of being an oppressor. It doesn't happen here at work. . . (Graham).

> When people are knowledgeable about the politics of South Africa, like apartheid and those sorts of things, some people will stereotype you because you are white. They think you left South Africa because you didn't want to live there anymore. . . (Riaan).

Ironically, while some white immigrants may have escaped the weight of South African history by moving elsewhere, it appears to occasionally re-emerge with accusatory tones that hint at the history of white South African racism.

Multiple participants do recount Americans' surprise at them being white, although none describe negative consequences of such reactions:

> . . . when I moved here, my supervisor expected me to be black. He came to my store and asked for me and he was looking for an African man. And he was surprised; he did not expect me to look like this (Riaan).

> People were interested in him, but also confused and a bit sceptical. After a few weeks they had the courage to ask him if his wife was black, because they didn't understand how he was white and from Africa (Karen).

> When I first moved here there were not many South Africans and people did not understand how I could be white and from South Africa (Sheryl).

Although being white is not a significant theme within the white participants' narratives about their own identity and belonging, it can be seen as a factor that increases their capacity to belong. Some examples of white privilege can be

inferred from the narratives of white participants as support for this assertion. White participants report that their foreignness only becomes evident when they have to speak. Karen remarks that "we also look American. People seeing us sitting here would think we are American because we don't have a darker skin tone - so that helps. You are not easily spotted unless you open your mouth." Sonja echoes this sentiment when she states that "we look like Americans, but we don't talk like them." In contrast, race is often an immediate identifier of difference for the participants of colour in the U.S. White participants also do not talk about negative experiences that are based on their racial identity. Only one participant recalls an occasion in which his race became the focus within a professional setting. After giving a presentation about famine in Africa, David explains that

> . . . apparently there was an African American woman in the audience that knew from my accent that I was South African and had complained to some of the organisers that my berating of African leaders was axiomatic of my white supremacy.

In addition, white participants do not voice any concern about feeling uncomfortable or out of place in public spaces due to the colour of their skin, and are not prone to using the term 'white' as a qualifying adjective when describing themselves or their identity (e.g., 'as a white woman'). White participants also have a tendency to refer to other white South Africans when making 'we' or 'us' statements. Their narratives do not offer many examples of the racial heterogeneity of South African immigrants in the U.S. or how the immigrant experiences of black or Indian South Africans may differ to their own.

In contrast, every participant who is a person of colour mentions their race when talking about their own identity and immigrant experience, suggesting that it is a significant embodied difference that is salient to how they view themselves and how they are perceived by others.

> Some people may wonder if I am a Muslim or not, or how I dress. I do occasionally worry a bit about that because I am a person of colour here and there are many ignorant people in this country (Reena).

> But the thing is I do feel more comfortable here because I am African and there are a lot of Africans here than on the West Coast. So, there is more of a balance here and more of a familiar feeling with an African community (Naledi).

Examples in their narratives especially highlight the importance of context in how race may be constructed, perceived, and experienced, as well as how this may influence their sense of belonging:

> I worked in marketing first, which was difficult – it's hard being black and trying to speak to people in white neighbourhoods. . . . Actually, there were times when people saw me standing there and didn't even come to the door, or shouted from the second floor window "what do you want?". So, I moved into the sales department, which was telephone based, and it was good because then you are talking to people over the phone and not face to face (Thabani).

> I also live in a very white area which doesn't help either because people are not used to having those colour differences. In my neighbourhood it took me a long time to even see black people, and I only really saw more once I was working (Lerato).

> Where I went to college was less urban and more rural and traditional, and that was different. Some of those people have never been beyond their county, so that was all they knew. They would respond to me, not offensively, but would be surprised and interested in this foreign black girl. You could tell they did not see this a lot and it's fascinating to them. So, it depends what area you are in (Lindiwe).

A few participants describe how being a person of colour, in conjunction with being a foreigner, has created challenges in their work lives:

> For me, as a black woman, it became hard in interviews because you are seen as a black American. And that built barriers for me. There is a stigma attached to that. . . . So you have to deal with the stigma attached to being from Africa, and the perceptions that people also have of young black Americans (Lerato).

> Americans are used to their own and what they know, so when someone else looks or sounds different they may ask to speak to another person because they assume that someone else may understand more or relate better to them. I have had experiences like that when people assume I am not the nurse or assume that I will not be able to help them with a problem. They ask for the 'real nurse'. . . . And that often happens with

> foreign staff or people of colour, as opposed to people they are used to (Lindiwe).

From Lerato's preceding account, it appears that black South Africans in the U.S. may have to navigate both the stereotypes attributed to African Americans, based on the mistaken assumption that they are of this group, and the stereotypes that are associated with Africans. Unlike white South Africans, they are not shielded by race and sometimes encounter racism in the U.S. From the discussion about accent, however, it is evident that black South Africans often do not fit the preconceptions Americans have of African immigrants. Several black participants also note the ways in which they are clearly differentiated from African Americans. In the following excerpt, Mandla discusses his interactions with white Americans:

> I often don't fit into a narrative of an African immigrant or their idea of an African immigrant because I'm educated and have working experience; and even culturally - I don't have a heavy accent. If I said I was born in London they would believe it. So, I have no doubt that some people have connotations to Africa and people from Africa, but when they meet me, they don't associate me with that group. I see that in the way I get treated by white Americans here, especially as I have travelled around the country. People see that clearly, I'm black, but I'm not African American and they treat me differently. They treat me better than they would an African American person, because I'm not Tyrone. Someone might have a stereotype of a violent, lazy, entitled African American person; when they meet me, I may look like them but as soon as they engage with me then they realise I'm not like that. There have been a few times when I have realised this person doesn't like African American people, but he's ok with me.

Mandla's account suggests that Africans in the U.S. are treated more humanly than African Americans. In addition to the negative stereotypes that white Americans have of African Americans (derisively coded as Tyrone), such hostility may also be informed by historical guilt borne of having enslaved this group. Thabani expresses a sentiment similar to that of Mandla about the benefits of not fitting existing stereotypes: "Sometimes people find it interesting that I am not American. I am like, 'the different black guy'. I'm not what they're used to. Sometimes that is actually helpful. . ."

Reena, an Indian South African, speaks of how others are unable to reconcile her race and nationality:

> One thing they did find interesting is that I am Indian and from South Africa. Especially people who are from India - they just don't get it and people just assume I was born in India (Reena).

Reena's account of the confusion that people experience when she tells them that she is from South Africa is similar to that experienced by white South Africans when they say that they are from Africa. In people's imagination, Africa only has black people.

4.2.4 Other dimensions

While foreignness, accent, and race are very salient within the subjective experiences of all the participants, other dimensions of difference are mentioned in brief by a few of the participants that may mediate their experiences of belonging in America.

Age and position

Age emerges as a factor, mainly in relation to who participants tend to relate to at work. Age may relate to belonging as it leads to the formation of different social groups who may not often interact. Riaan, for example, when discussing interaction with his co-workers, explains that "we don't socialise that much because I am older than most of them and it would be a bit awkward if we were hanging out together at this point." Sonja talks about how younger people tend to be more sociable at work, Lerato and Reena mention that they get along with employees who are about their age, and Naledi points out that younger people are often more tolerant and open to difference. With regards to position or title, Graham feels that his seniority at work has contributed to his experience of being included and welcomed in his department. Mandla notes how his age intersects with other factors like his position or job title to shape how others perceive him:

> Sometimes I think in the workplace I may be discounted because I am young, but once you have worked with them for a while, they realise you are not an idiot. There are just so many factors in this: age, nationality, but also the fact that I am a consultant.

Education

Some of the participants identify their education and experience as important contributing factors in being accepted or respected in the workplace. Sean, for example, feels that he is taken seriously and respected in the workplace because of his postgraduate degrees. Daniel remarks that his education and expertise in his field have helped to establish him as an integral member of his team at work. Yvonne explains the effects of being an educated foreigner:

> It has been insulating because then people kind of treat you like you know your stuff. . . . I also had good international references from highly respected people, and that helped my case. I think if I didn't have good references, I would've been a question mark.

Yvonne further describes how her experience, reputation in her field, and the legitimacy of her position at her university has led to several requests for collaboration on writing and research.

Socio-economic class

Only one participant speaks directly about socio-economic class as a dimension of difference that is consequential for her experience as an immigrant. Karen asserts that in South Africa she did not care how big her house was or what car she drove, but in the U.S. "those things tell them something about you." She states that

> the type of people you find that are in the same type of profession as you - I would say white, educated Americans that are kind of like us - are all middle and upper class. So now you have to become friends with these professionals who earn good money and who live in the suburbs with the homes and the cars, and you are not there.

Here, Karen is addressing the consequences of the high financial costs of immigration, where immigrants may find themselves (relative to their U.S.-born counterparts of the same age) experiencing a decreased socio-economic class positioning. She alludes to the difficulties this may cause in forming relationships with her American co-workers.

Religion

While the dominance of Christian beliefs and culture in the U.S. is identified by some participants, only a few mention the role of religion or faith in their subjective experiences of sameness and difference. Karen comments on how the intersection of foreignness and religion emphasises her difference: "Many people here are also Catholic - so if you are not Catholic it doesn't help. You're already weird because you are not Catholic, never mind being a foreigner." Daniel, who shares how faith and his job are key aspects of his identity, explains that Christian values were an influential consideration in his choice of employer. A large majority of his social circle is comprised of Christian friends from work and church, indicating how his faith helps create a sense of belonging.

Gender

Gender does not emerge as a salient dimension of difference in terms of participants' experiences of sameness and difference. None of the participants talk about how their experiences within places of work are affected by gender nor do they identify ways in which it has been a basis for exclusion or discrimination. In addition, both men and women in the study describe how work and their work lives are important and relevant to their experiences of acculturation and integration as immigrants (addressed in chapter 6). However, there are some work-related issues that four of the women discuss in the interviews that are not mentioned by the men in the study. Although not falling squarely within the realm of 'experiences of belonging' (which is the focus of this study), these themes speak to the gendered nature of immigration and the challenges that women immigrants (particularly married women in the present study) may face in their work life.

Karen, a qualified teacher who immigrated to the U.S. based on her husbands' intra-company transfer visa, had to abandon her career in teaching as she could not legally take a teaching post in America. In addition, Karen's employment and presence in the U.S. is contingent upon the continued employment of her spouse.

She shares her feelings about the differential experiences of husbands and wives related to work and career issues:

> Giving up on what I thought I was going to do for the rest of my life is still hard. . . . My husband earns more money and gets to do what he wants to. What did I get out of this deal? You can't hate him or blame him for it, but it's hard because it feels so unfair. I want him to realise the sacrifice that I made. And I see that with a lot of my friends - they have to follow their husbands around the world with his job. People don't realise how much women have to sacrifice for their husbands so that they can realise their dreams. But then again, I will never earn what he earns, so we go where his job takes us and we will earn good money.

Lerato similarly had to leave behind a successful career as an HR manager in South Africa to join her husband in the U.S.:

> I had a very concrete plan to get back into HR when I got here, but it didn't work out that way. I struggled a lot to find work and get on my feet. I'm still struggling now but I had to give up on what I was doing in South Africa and restart myself with something new. Because I was so independent in South Africa I could not handle just staying at home, but I have had to start over with entry level jobs to get back into work.

Lerato eventually decided to pursue a new career path and is completing a post-graduate degree. Some women, like Sonja, who by law was not allowed to partake in any form of paid employment while her husband was on an H1B visa (approximately five years), have to postpone building a career and find creative ways in which to keep their resumes current (e.g., volunteering). Karen, Lerato, and Sonja's experiences serve as examples of how immigration can directly shape a woman's career direction and progression. It is not always possible to transplant or recreate a career from South Africa in the U.S., especially if a woman's immigration is based on her spouse's visa.

Multiple women also discuss their struggle with the lack of work-life balance in the U.S. In addition to long working hours and inadequate time off (which the men also mention), women find it especially challenging to work a full week and also find time to maintain a household, do the shopping and cooking, and meet social obligations. The absence of domestic help, the high costs of childcare, not having the support of extended family members in the country, and the lack of

paid parental leave places an increased burden on women who enter the workforce in the U.S. Reena recounts why, after having her child, she probably will not be pursuing full-time employment in the near future:

> They wanted me to come back as full-time staff but the cost of childcare, the travelling back and forth, and the long workdays were just too much. Here there is no help, so I also need to cook and clean and spend time with my family. Maybe when she goes to school I would consider returning. I think it is easier working part-time in the U.S. and you can earn a decent amount of money compared to South Africa.

These work-related challenges can create barriers to securing and keeping a full-time permanent position, interrupt a woman's career development path, prevent a woman from being financially independent, and negatively impact an immigrant family's financial health.

Through exploring the salient dimensions of difference in the participants' narratives, two further areas were highlighted during data analysis as foundational to understanding their experiences of identity and belonging: a) how issues of identity and belonging are interpreted and experienced through perceptions of the relative positionality of South Africans within an immigrant hierarchy in the U.S.; and b) how experiences of identity and belonging are inherently contextual and contingent. Both will be discussed before moving onto examining participant experiences within the context of the workplace in chapter five.

4.3 South Africans' Place in the U.S. Immigrant Hierarchy

A common finding in the narratives is the difficulty that participants have in articulating their South African identity. The following excerpts show how they struggle to explain what 'South African' means, and their tendency to point out how other immigrant groups are more readily identifiable:

> But what does being a South African mean? I don't really know. People understand German or Russian, they don't really have a sense of what South African is (Sean).

> Well what is a South African identity? I only know you are South African because of the way you talk, not because you act a certain way. I think we are all individuals. Maybe with Indian immigrants you can see the way

> they dress or the kind of foods they eat, and the places they worship at. They stand out more than South Africans do. We wear the same clothes Americans wear. Nothing really distinguishes us from them except for our accent (Sonja).

> Well what do you mean by South African identity? Because there are many people who came here years ago who I think do not have any South African identity other than on paper. . . . I know what it means in the Indian community where they hang out together, go to church [sic] together, they celebrate Indian holidays, and they hold onto their culture with the things they have in their houses and the food they eat. You can see a Greek or Italian person holding onto their identity. What does it mean for a South African? What does it mean to practice South Africanism outside of South Africa? I don't know what that means exactly (Mandla).

Participants therefore often rely on how South Africans differ from others when discussing their identity and experience as immigrants in the U.S.: their descriptions are based not on 'who we are', but on 'who we are *not*'. Statements such as "I'm not a Mexican", "We don't need a mat at noon", "We don't speak with heavy accents", "We are not here illegally", and "We do not live in communities like the Chinese" indicate how participants seem to adopt a framework that defines their 'South Africanness' through a process of negation. These examples suggest that South African identity and culture is poorly defined until comparisons are made.

This process of inter-group comparison in the relational and contingent nature of South African immigrant identity is also relevant in the variable way that migrants are discursively constructed and positioned as Other in a host country. McDowell (2008) argues that migrants are highly differentiated and segregated along the lines of race, class, gender, and nationality, and Morrissey (2015) describes how discourses around U.S. citizenship, based on various categories of difference, generate criteria of worth which render some individuals more acceptable or desirable than others. As social categories are made inherently hierarchical through value judgements (Koskela, 2014), I chose to use the concept of an 'immigrant hierarchy' as a frame through which to explore the positionality of South African immigrants in the U.S.

An immigrant hierarchy is formed, within the cultural, political, and historical context of a destination country, by the intersection of prevalent value judgements which position immigrants within differently valued categories, and which influences migrants' lived experiences (Koskela, 2014). As a result, one of my aims during data analysis was to focus on participants' talk of sameness and difference to understand how South Africans perceive themselves (and are perceived by others) within an immigrant hierarchy in the U.S. This would bring insight to how participants view and situate themselves relative to others, how they understand, interpret, and navigate social boundaries and exclusion, and how this allows them to negotiate a sense of identity and belonging in America. The majority of the participants seem to share the opinion that South Africans are often better off than many other immigrant groups in America. In general, they express this in terms of South African immigrants struggling less with integrating into American culture and being less vulnerable to prejudice or discrimination than other immigrants. I expand this discussion under the next three headings.

4.3.1 Language, communication, and cultural fit

Michael focuses on how South Africans seem more able to communicate with Americans than other immigrant groups:

> Someone from Haiti who speaks French and ok English, for example, may find it more difficult to speak to Americans - based on language and culture. . . . South Africans may relate more to Americans than other immigrants. And our accents are easier for Americans to understand compared to some European countries, who have a very strong accent.

He continues by discussing his perception of the apparent ease of adjustment for South African immigrants:

> It's a smoother ride. I've heard about more positive workplace experiences than negative ones from South Africans. They seem to be more desirable, and also talented. It seems like South Africans have done well even in big companies. . . . For the most part we seem to be a better match than some other countries.

David alludes to how Americans may evaluate and categorise immigrants according to perceptions of cultural fit:

> There are foreigners and there are ‘foreigners’. There are those with a language problem and those without. Sometimes there will be a cultural problem - people from India or China and Southeast Asia and Japan tend to be incredibly shy. It’s a cultural stereotype but they seem to have a disproportionate incidence of very shy people.

Sean contrasts his own experience to that of another immigrant colleague:

> There is an immigrant who I work with who is Muslim and has a very distinctive accent, and sometimes he's hard to understand, and soft-spoken; and I don't think it helps him. He seems quite withdrawn and the fact that he is a Muslim makes him very unusual in this particular workplace. And just the way he speaks - you sometimes have to ask him what he said - those kinds of things. Whereas I've never felt that way.

Graham discusses the difficulties his Italian colleague has had with American culture even after several years in the country:

> There were times that he criticised Americans and America's culture for being too uptight about certain things and being so politically correct. The same happened with a colleague whose husband is Greek. Both of them didn’t seem to get it. . . . So I think there was a mismatch with both of those guys, and I don't know if it's got to do with the continental-European, more laid-back, less politically correct thing.

Sonja highlights the role of culture and race in immigrants’ experience of integration:

> I think Asians have it hard here. There are less of them here and the kids are struggling in school. It's easier if you are white and you do sports. It’s harder for them to be included in school when you come from a different culture and you don’t play football. But for us, because we are white, it is easier because you don’t stand out as much.

In the above excerpts, participants point out the ways in which other immigrants (e.g., Asians and Muslims) are less likely than South Africans to meet normative expectations in America regarding language, communication, and cultural fit. South African immigrants, however, are seen as less culturally distinct and therefore less of a ‘threat’. Contextual considerations are clearly significant in this regard, and South Africans who have immigrated to other countries in Asia or Europe, for example, are likely to face a different set of challenges.

4.3.2 Anti-immigration sentiment in America

With immigration being such a central, controversial, and divisive topic in the U.S. currently, participants often turn to discussing how South Africans compare with other immigrants to explain why they do not always feel particularly threatened by current anti-immigration sentiment. Some indicate the salience of immigrants' legal status:

> The families I work with - some of them are illegal - and they were very scared and refused to share any information about themselves. So, it's real for them. I don't know any South Africans who felt that way or were scared (Lerato).

> I do feel that people from South American countries would have more trouble and are under a lot of stress and strain as immigrants. . . For South Africans it's not that bad because they [U.S. government] don't really have a conflict with us. Most of us have come here legally and done everything right, so there is nothing for us to worry about (Reena).

Naledi similarly explains that "South Africans are not on their radar", and that "people who are not properly documented will feel very uncomfortable". Yvonne compares South African immigrants with immigrants from Mexico, who "are more vulnerable than we are. They are essentially a target here, and they are also more of a threat in terms of numbers crossing borders."

Others emphasise the significance of educational attainment, language, and religion, as well as embodied characteristics such as skin colour and accent when discussing the bases upon which foreigners are evaluated as 'acceptable' or welcome:

> It is kind of scary knowing that there is an element of America that is unwelcoming and rejects foreigners. But in the spectrum of who they are likely to reject, we are probably on the positive side because of our high level of education, speaking English and being from a British background. We are better off than someone who has black or brown skin, who is Hispanic, or who speaks with an accent that is associated with prejudice. Even being Asian or Chinese could be to your disadvantage. I have a number of colleagues who are from India or Pakistan and the risk for them is whether they are associated with being Muslim (Sean).

David concisely explains the views of conservative Americans on the subject of immigrants:

> You look as white as them, you are educated, you're not jumping the line on them in terms of what they perceive as getting welfare benefits. . . . and you are not Muslim. So, I don't think there's any gripe with you and me. In fact, their only wish would be that the country would be more like you and me (David).

From these excerpts, it is clear that the participants are cognisant of the advantageous position South African immigrants hold relative to other immigrant groups who have been targeted by anti-immigrant sentiment in the U.S. The examples they discuss show how certain differences, like religion, legal status, ethnicity, and race, are notable signifiers of Other in American society. Likewise, being white, being perceived as British, or being identified as a Christian, for example, are specific social identities that are associated with privilege.

The participants' explanations illustrate not only how Americans perceive immigrants as Other, but also how they themselves interpret their experience in terms of perceived boundaries between 'Us' (South African immigrants) and 'Them' (other immigrant groups). In fact, expressions of solidarity with other immigrant groups are largely absent within the participant narratives, perhaps indicative of a strong subjective sense of difference and separateness.

4.3.3 Immigration discourse

In a few instances, a couple of participants engage in the type of discourse that echoes more conservative American beliefs when discussing immigration and integration in the U.S.:

> Well we adapt easier because we come to a country and don't expect the country to fit our beliefs or our culture. If you are Muslim, you cannot expect everyone to follow your religious views. If this is the way you are used to it in your country and America does not change for you, you won't be happy. As South Africans it is easier to adapt because America is mostly Christian. But if I was a Hindu or Muslim it will be harder because the schools are not like I'm used to, there are no mosques - then I will feel 'why don't they accommodate me for my beliefs and my culture'. . . . And the problem is when you start staying in your own community and with

> your own beliefs then you're never going to integrate into the society. You have to make the choice to fit in or not (Sonja).

> I think South Africans are not the worst immigrants. We came as educated professionals and that makes a big difference to them. I don't think there are millions of us over here; it's not like 'oh another Mexican - you're stealing our stuff or you have to work in the garden.' There is no stereotype to us as much as others. So, we fit in better because we did not flood the country, taking over. We are also not like, maybe the Indian immigrants, who work for less money and who companies would then hire more than Americans. We deserve our salary and getting what everyone else is paid. We are not cheap labour (Karen).

Such rhetoric, with its inherent comparisons to other immigrant groups, seems to function as a way to obtain distance from 'problem immigrants' and highlight 'sameness' with Americans, thereby legitimising a favoured position in the U.S. immigrant hierarchy. A consequence of this type of discourse is that it discourages any contemplation of the role of structural issues such as systemic racism and inequality by focusing on the choices, actions, and qualities of immigrants themselves. It does not consider the privileged position that derives from a shared culture and religious sensibility with the host country. Calls made for equality and acceptance in American society by Muslim immigrants, as per the above example, may thus be seen as unreasonable or invalid.

From the narratives it seems evident that participants perceive themselves, and are often perceived by others, as being favourably positioned within the immigrant hierarchy in the U.S. Moreover, they appear aware of the additional disadvantages that other immigrant groups face in their immigration experiences. However, South African immigrants are heterogeneous group, and therefore one of my aims was to gain a more nuanced understanding of the participants' differential experiences of identity and belonging related to how their intersecting dimensions of difference locates them within their new environments. The way differences are constructed and evaluated will vary across spaces and locations. In addition, forms of hierarchy are dynamic and complex (Anthias, 2012), and individuals often simultaneously hold multiple group memberships (Atewologun & Sealy, 2014) that is consequential for how and when they experience inclusion and

exclusion in different contexts. The next section focuses on the importance of context as the third and final foundational issue that emerged from my analysis.

4.4 The Significance of Context

The U.S. is not a homogeneous context for immigrants. Demographics, class, culture, attitudes, beliefs, and lifestyles vary across space at multiple scales. America is diverse, but as Sean remarks, "not as united as you might imagine." American society is fragmented by clear social, political, and religious divides, and social and spatial segregation is evident along lines of race, culture, and socio-economic status. The experiences of immigrants are in part shaped by the beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes of Americans about immigration. This is relevant in both their personal and work lives. From participants' narratives, the importance of context is always apparent as they discuss their experiences of identity and belonging. Many speak of how their experiences as immigrants change in different contexts, and how others' interactions with them vary in different places. Participants' stories illustrate the relationship between spatial variation in levels of diversity and attitudes toward difference (at both the macro- and micro-scale) and how immigrants are perceived and received by others.

4.4.1 Macro-scale

Spatial variation at the macro-scale includes examples of differences across states and regions of the U.S., between cities, and between urban and rural areas. As Sonja explains, "in America when you move to a different state it's a different culture." Participants' examples show how broader social, cultural, and historical factors shape certain demographic and spatial patterns:

> We don't find a lot of immigrant patients in the population here. That could be different from somebody on the West Coast where there are many Mexican or Spanish people because of different immigration patterns (Lindiwe).

> On the West Coast there were a lot of foreign workers because there was a high need for skills, and it was easier to make friends through work. Here it is more difficult because people already have their groups of friends. . . . It is also more suburban and residential, and people are here to settle and have families (Naledi).

> In other areas there may be more black real estate agents, but most are white. In general, in this city there are more white than black people. America is not as integrated as you think (Michael).

Beliefs, social values, and attitudes to difference are thus significant in the migration experience:

> This city is by far the most socially conservative place we've lived, in terms of people doing what they are expected to do and speak like they're expected to speak. . . . This is also a very Christian country; in between the coasts it's very Christian and way more conservative than (S.A. city) ever was (David).

> If you go to other big cities like (U.S. city) it's different cause they are used to expats, they know how to work with them. It seems people here are a bit afraid of strange people from different countries (Karen).

> I think this city is very accepting of different people and cultures. I wonder what it would be like if I lived in the Mid-West somewhere? (Conrad).

Sean, who has lived and worked in multiple U.S. states, shares his insight on the differing cultural profiles of each city he has lived in:

> In (East Coast city) there were a lot of different people and groups from different countries, and many African Americans, and in (West Coast city) there were a lot more Hispanic students and Hispanic people. . . . And then in (Northeast city) suburbs it's very white, and at work the only diversity probably was working with more foreign faculty.

He goes on to describe the consequences of this diversity, or a lack thereof, for his sense of comfort:

> . . . where there's a lot more diversity you feel more at home… you can be yourself, whereas when you are traveling through the hinterlands of America you are more concerned about encountering unwelcome attitudes, so you try not to be a problem.

Lindiwe notes that people are more open-minded about difference in the Northeast compared to the Central U.S., especially in metropolitan cities. Naledi reinforces this view when she discusses challenges regarding attitudes to difference outside of cities:

> I do think it is more difficult if you don't live in a diverse city. People won't recognise you and you have nothing in common with them. They don't understand you and have no interest in you, and they are not willing to learn - especially if they are Americans who have never set foot outside America.

Mandla highlights his awareness of his Otherness as he travels outside of urban areas:

> Outside of the cities it is a very monolithic place; everyone kind of comes from the same general area and went to the same kind of schools and it is all very white. There is a different pace than in the city, and more of a family focus, and people tend to be more personal and friendly. . . . The fact that I'm not from here is definitely clearer as soon as I leave this city - without a doubt.

Riaan mentions the presence of other South Africans as well as diversity in being able to feel a sense of belonging:

> Well (Western U.S. city) was definitely more diverse. There were a lot of different nationalities, from all over the world. Asia, Europe, Africa, South America, Canada. Here there are a few people from Asia, very few from Africa - mostly American and white. (Western U.S. city) was easy for me to fit in because there were lots of South Africans I knew. There were get-togethers with 200 other South Africans for a braai or a potjie. I've been here since 2008 and I've never been to something like that.

The implication from the above excerpts is that, in general, cities and larger urban areas and states located on the western and eastern coasts are viewed as more tolerant and accepting of difference than smaller towns, rural areas, and more central states which may be dominated by white, conservative culture and fewer immigrants.

4.4.2 Micro-scale

Participants also share stories and examples of experiences in spaces they frequent in their daily lives (spatial variation at a more micro-scale), often illuminating the subjective and emotional nature of the experience of place. Kaya, for example, talks about social interactions in public spaces:

> Now and then people may treat you differently because of your skin colour or your accent. A typical example will be in Starbucks or in a shop

> or restaurant. It may not be every day, but it happens often. Airlines are the worst. Especially customer service – they treat an American or person of a different skin colour in a different way than from what you are receiving.

Lerato and Reena also point out others' attitudes or perspectives within particular places:

> It also depends on the place. I am interacting with some new people at university because I am studying right now, and I can see how close-minded some people are about diversity in that environment (Lerato).

> It's hard when you move to a new place but having kids does help. I have also met a few people at the gym. But where you live does make a difference. In my last neighbourhood everyone was very snobby and snooty and not friendly. But here everyone is really nice; people say hi and there are no dirty looks. They are more likely to talk to you than where we were (Reena).

Some excerpts reveal how participants may experience a heightened sense of being an 'outsider' in specific situations and places, leaving them feeling insecure, uncomfortable, or unwelcome.

> The only times I have felt it was in certain situations where I didn't have my ID yet and I had to use my passport - like when I had to go and buy a car. . . . That makes me feel insecure (Naledi).

> Occasionally you may feel a little bit like the Other when you deal with government departments for example, and you have to go up to a counter and you sort of feel a bit on the back foot, like you are vulnerable in that situation. . . . Sometimes you imagine or you are concerned, for example when walking around Walmart, that your kids are making too much noise and people will pick up that you are a foreigner and you will draw attention to yourself because you do not sound like everyone else. So, you sort of contain yourself a bit more because of that (Sean).

In other circumstances an individual's difference may be hidden, or even accepted and welcomed. In this way an immigrant's sense of belonging can vary even within the space of a single day. Graham articulates his experience in this regard:

> But feeling comfortable can work out in so many different ways with different people. . . . You could do almost a tracking of one's social location over a day: from being very comfortable in my own home and at my workplace; to a slightly anonymous position I take during the

> commute where I also feel quite comfortable, or like at the library - it's a part of America where I am familiar and I have a place and I don't feel particularly threatened. . . . ; to spaces like the basketball games where I feel ill-equipped to deal with it if I am asked to socialise. It often seems mediated by other people. . . (Graham).

The participants' experiences at the micro- and macro-level highlight the contingent and dynamic nature of belonging, where an immigrant's difference is interpreted and valued differently in varying contexts. Participants seem keenly aware of this process, learning to read other people's reactions as they navigate through different situations. If their difference is seen as negative, they may have to find ways to change perceptions or combat the effects; at other times they can leverage their difference to their benefit. However, participants' agency and the amount of control they have over how they are perceived is constrained by the strength of existing attitudes, beliefs, and social norms. In addition to the spaces and places the participants describe in the above examples, the workplace is a social context within which immigrants may spend a significant amount of their time. This is the focus of chapter five.

4.5 Discussion

Morrissey (2015) states that narratives and discourse about immigration and citizenship in the U.S. generate criteria of worth, based on various categories of difference, that render some bodies worthier and more acceptable than others. Different groups of immigrants will thus experience various degrees of exclusion due to the ways in which they are positioned relative to constructions of 'us' and 'them' (Fenster, 2005; Mee & Wright, 2009). In paying attention to participants' articulations of sameness and difference, I hoped to gain insight into which differences are salient in the immigrant experience of South Africans in America, and the consequences for their belonging.

Dimensions of difference

For the South Africans in the present study, the three dimensions of difference that stood out as more salient than others were foreignness, accent, and race. Although these were presented under subheadings for the purpose of discussion,

participants' narratives revealed ways in which these differences intersect and interact to influence their lived experience as immigrants in the U.S.

Participants spoke of how their foreignness is an obvious and often inescapable way in which their Otherness (Pio & Essers, 2014) is highlighted. Being identified as a 'foreigner' in many daily encounters and having to respond to questions about their origin and nationality seemed to affirm their difference even after being in America for several years. Although participants mentioned how Americans' lack of knowledge about South Africa can be limiting for conversation, a more positive outcome became apparent during data analysis: many Americans do not have readily available associations or preconceptions from which to draw when interacting with South Africans. In contrast, the consequences of negative stereotypes and associations for other immigrant groups has been the focus of a multitude of studies. Nelson and Hiemstra (2008), for example, discuss how Mexican immigrants are often subject to anti-immigrant rhetoric that constructs them as 'criminals' and 'parasites', which inhibits their social and spatial inclusion as well as their class mobility. This places Latino/a immigrants at an "extreme disadvantage for enacting a sense of social membership and belonging" (p. 320) in the communities within which they reside. The participant narratives in the present study reveal how South African immigrants experience a degree of protection from the impact of negative immigrant stereotypes in the U.S.

Accent was identified as salient for participants because it is primarily through their accent that they are identified as foreign-born. However, despite some challenges in communication, participants emphasised that their South African accent is an asset in most situations. Participants explained that they benefit from the positive 'British' stereotypes with which Americans seem to associate the South African accent. This again shows how limited knowledge about South Africa is advantageous for South African immigrants in the U.S., compared to other immigrant groups who may be faced with more entrenched prejudiced attitudes. The positive reception of the South African accent has also been reported in other migration studies. Cain et al. (2015), for example, found that

South Africans in New Zealand generally experience less language-related discrimination than their Chinese, Indian, and Korean participants. Similar to the present study, they note that Afrikaans-speakers may have more difficulties in this regard. For black participants in this study, accent was a significant mediating factor in their interaction with Americans. As Mandla pointed out, Americans seem to connotate more negative assumptions with a "thick 'African' accent" than with his British-sounding accent, which he understood to be perceived as "less threatening." Baratta (2018) affirms that such accentism means that certain individuals will experience stigmatisation due to accent prejudice, while others benefit from accent privilege.

Race as a dimension of difference was salient in the immigrant experiences of black and white participants in qualitatively different ways. Although race did not appear to be salient in the personal, subjective experiences of identity for the white participants, it becomes salient when examined from a more critical perspective. Leitner (2012) points to how white privilege and advantage is rooted within America's immigration history, and that whiteness is integral to the American national identity. She argues that processes of Othering and the racialisation of immigrants in the U.S. serves to limit belonging for immigrants of colour, making it conditional upon the adoption of white norms and culture. In the present study, white privilege can be seen to increase the white participants' "capacity to belong" (Ralph, 2012, p. 446) by providing more access to an 'American' identity. White South Africans would most likely not encounter the same physical and symbolic boundaries that socially and spatially segregate immigrants of colour (Liu, 2000), and would be largely exempt from the types of marginalising discourses that immigrants of colour face in America (Chacko, 2015). The social, cultural, and economic capital inherent in whiteness (Lewis, 2004; Weeber, 2005) also provides more opportunities for social and class mobility.

Paying attention to social context is central when considering constructions of whiteness (Hoops, 2014; Lewis, 2004). The white participants in this study did not speak about negative experiences in the U.S. due to their race. In contrast,

some of the white participants in Wood's (2005) study reported hostile reactions from Americans about being South African (the assumption being that white South Africans are racist). She describes her participants as being not only resistant to racial labelling in the research process, but also admitting to being reluctant and evasive about their nationality with others. This suggests that 'white South African' was regarded as a stigmatised, negative identity – something that did not emerge as a significant factor in the present study. This apparent difference in the experiences of white participants could be due to timing: perhaps there was more media coverage and a greater awareness of South Africa's political, social, and historical context in the early 2000s than there is today. Although it is unclear where the participants in Wood's sample were located, it may also be that the local population in that state or city was more liberal and politically aware, attaching specific meanings to racial identities as they pertain to South Africa's history of apartheid. This notion is supported by Barkley's (1998) research on South Africans in Vancouver, where she asserts that "South African Whiteness was distanced as fundamentally different from imaginings of Canadian Whiteness as liberal and 'racially tolerant'" (p. 114). Alternatively, white, conservative identities may have merely been rendered less problematic in the current political climate in America.

While race was seen to facilitate the 'blending' and integration of the white participants in this study, it worked to signify Otherness for participants of colour. The significance of race and ethnicity in the construction of immigrant identities has been addressed in previous studies on South African immigrants by authors like Singh (2008) and Sonn (2010), who highlight how belonging is conditional upon the positioning of cultural identities in host countries. The continued salience of ethnic and racial difference in the U.S. (Price, 2012) and the persistent conflation of citizenship with white racial identity (Hughey, 2012) continues to shape incorporation and belonging for immigrants of colour.

In the context of the present study, race was a salient embodied difference (Dunn, 2010; O'Connor, 2010) for all the participants of colour, both in terms of their identity and their perceptions of belonging. Black participants spoke of how their

difference is highlighted in spaces where whiteness is the norm, whether it is within the neighbourhoods they live or at their places of employment. However, they also described how being South African mediates the impact of racial Othering by distinguishing them from African Americans and other black African immigrants who are often associated with specific negative stereotypes (e.g., uneducated or aggressive; Nsangou & Dundes, 2018). In contrast to assertions that African immigrants face more prejudice than African Americans (Capps et al., 2012; Porter, 2011), some of the black participants in the present study expressed that they are viewed more positively and treated more favourably than African Americans. Several ascribed this to how the combination of education, professional achievement, and the South African accent distances them from existing negative stereotypes of people of colour in the U.S.

In addition to examining these three salient dimensions of difference, it may be pertinent to reflect on why other categories of difference were not as strongly identified as significant in participants' subjective experiences of belonging. Personal religious beliefs, for example, was only discussed by a couple of participants. The majority of the participants did not speak of or identify their own faith (if any). Some of the participants, however, recognised and highlighted religion as a significant organising feature in American society (e.g., identifying Muslims or immigrants from Middle Eastern countries as facing more prejudice in a Christian-majority country). While the U.S. may represent a melting pot of different cultures and religions (Constant & Zimmerman, 2012), and Americans are regarded as being more tolerant of diversity than Europeans (Bloemraad, 2015), the events of 9/11 saw an increase in prejudice and xenophobia based on religion (specifically anti-Islamic sentiment; Chacko, 2015). The participants in this study, however, did not perceive that South Africans would be likely to be viewed as a religious Other (the assumption being that many South Africans are not of the Muslim faith).

Similarly, only one participant commented on socio-economic class in relation to their personal experiences of belonging. The lack of participants' focus on class can most likely be attributed to the fact that many South African immigrants tend

to possess relatively high levels of cultural and economic capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Therefore, compared to others who immigrate with a distinct lack of resources such as asylum seekers or refugees, South Africans are more likely to be able to mobilise their forms of capital to facilitate their integration in the U.S. (e.g., finding well-paid jobs and the ability to afford housing in middle- to upper-class neighbourhoods). As Chacko (2015) posits, immigrants' educational credentials and socio-economic standing are a "means to inclusion" (p. 124). This may directly contribute to participants' not perceiving a significant distinction between themselves and their American counterparts in terms of socio-economic class, and therefore it did not present as a dimension of difference salient to their subjective experiences.

However, socio-economic class is widely recognised in the literature as a category of difference through which immigrants are constructed and differentiated as acceptable or undesirable (Kaplan & Chacko, 2015; Morrissey, 2015; Turper et al., 2015) and as contributing to forms of social and spatial segregation of immigrants and non-immigrants (Bonnet & Nayak, 2003; Leitner, 2012; Nelson & Hiemstra, 2008). Class distinctions thus play a role in the social positioning of migrants in destination countries (Oliver & O'Reilly, 2010). In the U.S., for example, there is a tendency to view a lack of integration of non-Western migrants as being due to low levels of education and economic participation, as well as incompatible socio-cultural norms and values (Demo, 2006; Quinsaat, 2014; Turper et al., 2015). This is indicative of how "representations of Self and Other are inevitably classed" (Bonjour & Chauvin, 2018, p. 6), and how class ideals can shape migration discourse (e.g., conceptions of desirability and worthiness are related to income and education level).

As it relates to perceptions of sameness and difference, gender also did not emerge as a significant dimension during data analysis. However, I chose to include a section on some of the women's work-related experiences (especially those of married women) because they were issues that were absent from the narratives of men in the study. Barriers to pursuing a chosen career, a lack of security and permanence due to dependence on a visa-holding spouse, and legal

limitations regarding the type of work for certain spousal visas were identified by the women as impacting their career path and earning potential. In addition, these participants explained that full-time, permanent employment became challenging due to the high cost of childcare, the lack of parental leave and protections for working mothers, and the absence of extended family and a social support network. Although these challenges and obstacles were not seen to affect women's personal experiences of belonging in the present study, they can be viewed as inhibiting women immigrants' belonging (in the broader sense) within the labour market, which may have implications for a woman's immigration and integration experiences. Indeed, gender has been a central focus in a myriad of immigration research examining women immigrants' experiences of mobility, identity, employment and income, among others (Bürkner, 2012; Johansson & Śliwa, 2014; Philipp & Ho, 2010; Pio & Essers, 2014).

Participants' discussions of their experiences showed how dimensions of difference are not equally salient to all participants, and that certain differences, such as being young or not being a Catholic, become amplified in particular situations (Guetzkow & Fast, 2016). They also demonstrated that some differences (such as education level and experience) carry more weight in terms of being perceived as legitimate cultural capital (Plüss & Kwok-bun, 2012) in specific environments. This affirms the utility of an intersectional approach in revealing how immigrants may be differentially located and positioned within particular contexts (Christensen & Jensen, 2012; Johansson & Śliwa, 2014; Yuval-Davis, 2011). One of the participants provided a good example:

> My experience in my field is that class and race and nationality will all play together. For example, in a professional environment a person from Jamaica who went to Harvard Business School and spent two years getting work experience at Morgan Stanley would be seen and treated differently to others in the Caribbean community who they might hold different stereotypes for. And that's because they would have a different class and social capital that differentiates them from the group (Mandla).

Mandla's example is illustrative of how an intersectional approach highlights a relational process, where bodies and identities are always situated and interpreted through interaction with others (Cain et al., 2015; Probyn, 2003; Silvey, 2013).

For the South Africans in the present study, nationality, race, accent, age, profession, education, socio-economic class, and religion were identified as relevant intersecting dimensions of difference. In particular, accent and race were clear examples of embodied differences that were salient in how others perceived them, as well as in the participants' articulations of self and other.

South Africans' positioning in the immigrant hierarchy

The participants in this study tended to articulate their identity and experiences as South African immigrants in the U.S. through a process of comparison and negation. Seemingly due to a difficulty in clearly defining South African culture and what it means to be a 'South African', participants used many examples of characteristics and attributes of the culture and identity of other immigrant groups when trying to explain the South African immigrant experience. An 'immigrant hierarchy' was identified as an appropriate concept to adopt in exploring differential attitudes to immigrants and the bases upon which they may be positively valued or deemed undesirable. Immigrants' positions within such "hierarchies of preference" (Ford, 2011, p. 1018) or "topographies of value" (Haynes & Hickel, 2016, p. 5) may influence their lived experience in host countries.

From the excerpts it was clear that participants viewed themselves as holding a more favourable position in the U.S. immigrant hierarchy compared to other immigrant groups. As in previous research focused on South African immigrants (Crush, 2011; Louw & Mersham, 2001; Marrow, 2007; Segel, 1995; Trlin, 2012), the participants in this sample were generally well-educated and skilled, proficient in English, and in the country legally. Participants discussed how other immigrants face higher levels of prejudice and barriers to inclusion in America due to negative attributions related to their language, race, culture, religion, and ethnicity. Certain differences, such as identifying as Muslim, become amplified in the current U.S. socio-political context, resulting in an increase in stigmatisation and a solidification of boundaries against these immigrant groups (Guetzkow & Fast, 2016). Other social identities, including being Christian or being white, act

as markers of privilege (Atewologun & Sealy, 2014) and increase an immigrant's "capacity to belong" (Ralph, 2012, p. 446).

Participants highlighted the difficulties faced by other immigrant groups in terms of cultural fit and ease of adaptation (examples mentioned include Asians and Mexicans), and how the anti-immigrant sentiment within current hegemonic discourses around immigration in the U.S. is generally less applicable to South African immigrants. Thus, when making comparisons to other immigrant groups, they perceive themselves (and report being perceived by others) as immigrants who are able to successfully contribute to and integrate with American society. In this way, South African immigrants can be seen to experience "positive intersectionality" (Plüss & Kwok-bun, 2012) as their forms of cultural capital are viewed as 'legitimate' and 'valuable' in the American context. This understanding is in line with existing U.S. migration literature that describes more favourable attitudes to immigrants who come to the U.S. under employer-sponsored specialty occupation visas (Dicker, 1998), have high economic credentials (Turper et al., 2015), and are perceived to be able to culturally and linguistically assimilate (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014).

Using an intersectional frame to explore South Africans' migration experiences in the U.S. draws attention to macro-level processes and structures (ideology, culture, institutions, social discourse) as well as identity construction, meaning, lived experience, and human agency at the micro-level (Christensen & Jensen, 2012; Tatli & Özbilgin, 2012). Analysing the narratives revealed the way South African immigrants may be considered, relative to other immigrants, a privileged group: they are often constructed and perceived as unproblematic and easily tolerated. High levels of cultural capital shield them from those existing negative immigrant discourses in the U.S. which can adversely impact the belonging experiences of foreigners (e.g., immigrants constructed as 'poor', 'criminals', 'a burden', 'invaders'; Keyes, 2012; Quinsaat, 2014). Protection against negative stereotyping is further enhanced by a general absence of knowledge of South Africa and its peoples. Simultaneously, the South African accent becomes central in how the vacuum created by this lack of knowledge is filled by the application

of positive stereotypes that many Americans seem to associate with a 'British-sounding' accent. Of course, experiences of privilege are more complex and nuanced (Atewologun & Sealy, 2014), and the narratives of this heterogeneous group brought insight into how intersections of various dimensions of difference (e.g., race and education) can lead to differences in individuals' lived experiences.

In addition to the ways in which South African immigrants are discursively constructed by others, the agency of participants became apparent in how they constructed and expressed their identities. Several examples show how participants "internalize and reiterate dominant notions of sameness and difference" (Ralph, 2012, p. 449). Sonja, for example, asserted sameness with a Christian-majority America in her explanation of Muslim immigrants' struggle with integration, and Karen's description of how she "looks like" an American indicates her equation of whiteness and sameness. Representing these identities as 'normal' and legitimate in the U.S. context is indicative of the dominance of constructions of religion (Christianity) and race (whiteness), and the ways in which they mediate how immigrants perceive and present themselves. Other instances exemplify the way immigrants can challenge negative discourse or constructions of Other (Ehrkamp & Leitner, 2006; Ku, 2012; Ralph, 2012). Multiple participants emphasised their educational attainment, skill, and work-ethic in the interviews, effectively countering Americans' constructions of immigrants as uneducated and burdensome on the economy.

Contextual and contingent

While the first two themes in the foundations chapter introduced salient dimensions of difference and how South Africans are positioned within the immigrant hierarchy, the third theme emphasised context as integral to understanding differential experiences of belonging. The presentation of the findings under this theme affirm the centrality of place: experiences of identity and belonging are not only relational but situated in specific spaces and contexts (Mee & Wright, 2009; Richter, 2015).

This perspective emphasises the co-constitutive nature of space and subjectivity, where "our bodies and our sense of ourselves are in constant interaction with how and where we are placed" (Probyn, 2003, p. 290). The participants gave examples of how various regions and cities in the U.S. differ in terms of demographics, culture, lifestyle, immigration patterns, economics, and political and social values, and how these can shape the perceptions of, and attitudes to, foreigners. In turn, this heightened the participants' awareness of their own difference as well as their interactions with others. Participants often focused on the importance of the presence or level of diversity: in an area with many immigrants their difference does not stand out as much; others are more likely to misunderstand them in a part of the country where people are not accustomed to hearing foreign accents; and in a diverse city people are more accepting and welcoming of their difference. Embodied differences such as accent and skin colour were reinforced through these examples to be most salient to participants' experiences. However, while diverse cities have been described as often open and tolerant of forms of diversity, they are also noted to be spaces of boundaries and exclusionary practices that limit immigrants' experiences of belonging (Fenster, 2004; Tomaney, 2015).

In addition to broader social, political, economic, and cultural contexts (macro-level), participants discussed their everyday lived experiences and social relations within localities at the micro-level. Social norms and expectations within a place, whether in public spaces like coffee shops and classrooms or power-laden spaces like government offices (participant examples), contributes to the degree to which an immigrant feels "out of place" (Valentine & Sporton, 2009, p. 748). Participants' descriptions illustrated how social encounters in these places emphasised their difference, reinforcing a sense of Otherness or exclusion. As Platts-Fowler and Robinson (2015) assert, the compositional, contextual, and collective aspects of places impact migrant integration, where the "cultures and identities that dominate a place" (p. 478) mediate the extent to which immigrants experience a sense of belonging or are categorised as Other. The narratives illustrated how participants' sense of belonging could vary as they moved across space, feeling comfortable and secure in some places, and vulnerable, unwelcome,

or out of place in others. This reinforces the view of belonging as relational and inherently geographical (Den Besten, 2010; Richter, 2015; Wright, 2015).

4.6 Summary

In chapter four I presented three themes that emerged from data analysis as foundational to understanding the immigrant experience of South Africans in the U.S., both within and beyond the workplace. The narratives revealed foreignness, accent, and race to be three dimensions of difference most salient in participants' personal, subjective experiences as immigrants in this study. The meanings attached to these intersecting dimensions of difference illuminated how the participants are perceived by others and how their sense of belonging may be encouraged or constrained.

The second central theme discussed in the chapter placed emphasis on the immigrant hierarchy as a concept through which South African immigrants' experiences could be viewed, highlighting the relational and contingent nature of identity and belonging. Participants struggled to define South African identity and culture, tending instead to adopt a framework that defined 'South Africanness' through a process of comparison and negation. In this way, participants' articulations of sameness and difference revealed how they perceive themselves, and are perceived by others, within an immigrant hierarchy in the U.S. Overall, participants expressed that South African immigrants' favourable positioning within the U.S. immigrant hierarchy made them less vulnerable to prejudice, discrimination, and exclusion compared to other immigrant groups.

The final foundational theme affirmed the centrality of place in exploring immigrant experiences. Participant stories included examples of spaces at both the micro- and macro-scale that revealed how experiences of identity and belonging are situated and contextualised. Spatial variation in levels of diversity and attitudes toward difference seemed to play a significant role in social interactions and the degree to which participants perceived their difference to be salient and accepted. In the next chapter, the focus moves to the workplace as a social context for the participants' experiences of identity and belonging.

CHAPTER 5: THE WORKPLACE AS CONTEXT

5.1 Introduction

The aim of my study was to explore South African immigrants' experiences of identity and belonging within the context of the U.S. workplace. As such, my interest lay in understanding how participants are positioned within their organisations and the conditions under which they experience a sense of belonging (or not). As each organisation or workplace is unique, what allows a participant to belong in one situation may be what excludes him or her in a different context.

I explore the interrelatedness of context and participant belonging in four sections in chapter five: 1) the role of workplace characteristics and culture in how participants' difference may be perceived and interpreted, and how this may shape their sense of belonging; 2) various challenges participants identify as stemming from the fact that they are South African immigrants in the American workplace; 3) the ways in which the participants' foreignness can be beneficial, and how they experience connection and inclusion in the workplace; and 4) participant agency and the strategies they employ to increase their belonging and manage their difference at work. A discussion of the findings and a summary concludes the chapter.

Introducing themes such as 'workplace culture and characteristics' needs to be preceded with a re-emphasis on the socially constructed nature of place. An organisation is not an empty, static, neutral container for social life, but a dynamic social and lived space, simultaneously experienced as physical, mental, and social (Watkins, 2005). It is produced by social relations and at the same time recursively shapes how social relations develop within it (Halford, 2008; Herod, 2012). While workplace structures, practices, and discourses of organisations are not fixed or given, they do bring insight into how a workplace is produced, arranged, made meaningful, and invested with power (Delaney, 2014). A cultural geographic approach to place embraces the meanings, structures, social practices,

power relations, and materialities (Anderson, 2010) of a workplace in how it is constructed and experienced.

5.2 Workplace Characteristics and Culture

Several themes related to the characteristics and culture of a workplace or organisation emerged during data analysis. From the narratives, participants' experiences of belonging or exclusion within the American work setting appear to be primarily related to perceptions of social boundaries and their membership of in- and out-groups, as well as the values and norms in their organisations that influence how employees interact and how the company approaches issues of diversity and difference. These issues are expanded under the next six headings.

5.2.1 Power and social boundaries

Participant narratives offer some examples of how dominant cultures and the distribution of power in an organisation signify what is valued and respected in the workplace, as well as who is more likely to find themselves in positions of privilege. Sean talks about how Muslim and Hindu university employees and faculty may feel like outsiders on a campus where these religions are not the norm: "As with much of the American workplace, the holidays and celebrations are generally defined around Christian identity and Christian calendars." Kaya's statement about the lack of diversity in the top tiers of leadership in her company is indicative of the persistence of white, male privilege: ". . . even though we have good cultural and racial diversity, most of the top senior management roles are still white males. They may not all be from America, but they are still Caucasian men."

While Sean and Kaya's examples reflect racial, religious, and gender privilege in U.S. workplaces, Sonja describes how the dynamics in the family-owned business she works in increases her sense of being an outsider:

> Oh yes, they have favourites. Some of the employees are their personal friends. So, if there is a problem the manager will take their side and you will get into trouble. So, if you don't have power you get walked all over, and you are on your own.

Being located outside of the 'in-group' creates feelings of powerlessness and vulnerability for Sonja and some of her co-workers. David similarly identifies a stigma that foreign medical students face during residency and fellowship selection due to many hospitals' preference for American graduates:

> The fact that you are an international medical graduate means that you are a third-class passenger. Because your mother tongue is English and you have done research and you are published, you may be riding in the front row of the third class - but you are still third class. . . . There is a huge emphasis placed on where you are from, and professionally on where you are last from.

David explains that nationality becomes much less relevant once an international medical student completes a fellowship or residency with a highly regarded American health organisation. This shows how the salience of dimensions of difference can vary within the same industry or at different times within a career path, as well as the differential capacities of foreign employees to access positions of status, power, and privilege.

Yvonne discusses the challenges that foreign and lower-ranking university faculty can face in the academic workplace:

> If you came in and you were quite senior in your field, then it's not so bad. But the younger you are, the harder you have to work to prove yourself. You are dealing with graduates from top U.S. universities and they are prepared to take even lower salaries than you, so why should you get chosen over them?

Yvonne's description alludes to a high level of competitiveness in the tertiary education field in the U.S. and an accompanying vulnerability for immigrant faculty. Thabani's termination from a previous employer provides a more striking example of the disadvantage an immigrant may face in an organisation that has a distinct dominant group and workplace culture. He describes the construction company he worked for as mostly American-born, 90% white, 70% male, and as having a 'fraternity' atmosphere. Thabani also notes that most employees avoid voicing any disagreement or criticism of the company because "they are scared they will be fired or do not want to be the odd one out or say something that you shouldn't." In contrast, he views himself as nonconforming, preferring to put his

South Africanness at the forefront, and not shy away from controversial or taboo topics. He feels that cultural differences contributed significantly to his negative experiences at work and his termination.

These examples draw attention to how dimensions of difference such as gender, race, religion, or education can signify who belongs and who does not within a specific context. In American workplaces that have strong, dominant cultures, immigrant employees may find that their difference is viewed as deviating too far from the 'norm'. These workplaces often have a distinct lack of diversity.

5.2.2 Diversity

Participants who work in diverse organisations tend to explain that their difference (whether based on nationality, appearance, accent, or another factor) does not stand out among the variety of nationalities, cultures, languages, and ethnicities in the workplace:

> Luckily within the company most people are used to hearing foreign accents. International firms are just more diverse. It has exposed me to other African countries and European ones. You are not limited to Americans, and Americans do not overpower the culture of the company. I am lucky in that way (Naledi).

> Otherwise we are a real mix; we have African Americans and second-generation Indian immigrants. It's a 'smartie box' and maybe that's why it is so nice working there (Daniel).

> I wasn't treated differently by my co-workers because we were all from different countries. My manager was Jewish, and another lady was from India. So that made it easier because we were all different from a variety of nationalities, and I wasn't the only one with the accent (Sonja).

These participants report not feeling like outsiders and do not perceive that others see or treat them as such. A few are able to make comparisons between the different American organisations in which they have worked to show how their experiences differed:

> I'd say (U.S. entertainment company) was much better. They had people from everywhere working there. German, French, Chinese, Italian. I lived with all those people. We were all from somewhere else; we were all

> different. . . . So, the most comfortable environments are the ones that are cross-cultural. And (U.S. construction company) was not like that (Thabani).

> It was a huge culture shock for me in my current job. In my first part-time position the company was very diverse, and you don't feel that you are that different. It was a nice environment. And even when I worked for (U.S. company) there were many young people my age, and people who were not very judgmental and who would go with the flow. But here I had to get used to the 'average American' (Lerato).

Thabani and Lerato's sense of belonging is heightened in diverse and cross-cultural work settings where difference is regarded as 'normal', compared to organisations in which the majority of employees are white and local-born ("average American"). Some participants discuss how high levels of diversity extend beyond their organisations to the industries they work in:

> I think there is almost an expectation within the academic environment that being from elsewhere is good, or that it is normal (Sean).

> Many are used to hearing different accents with all the immigrants in the country. In the hospitals now many MDs are foreign-born. People are not alarmed by a different accent in the healthcare industry (Lindiwe).

> My company is about 50% non U.S.-born - which is very typical in finance, and about 85% of people in finance firms here have parents who are not U.S.-born (Mandla).

A couple of participants speak about the benefit of having had a foreign-born supervisor or manager as a mentor, who supported and helped them cope as new immigrant employees in the U.S.:

> Well something that actually helped was that my manager at the first company was a first-generation American – she was raised in Taiwan – and I really think that was good for me because she, as my first boss, understood that I was in this new space and she was supportive (Conrad).

> One of my project leads who is at a management level has been here for 15 years, but he is from Spain originally and still has his full-on Spanish accent, and even he still struggles with his English. He still misses home a lot and complains how things are done here. I would go to him first if I am struggling with something because he understands (Kaya).

In Kaya's company, the high number of foreigners can be seen to form an in-group to which she can belong:

> In terms of culturally, it was not a big cultural shock within the company because it turns out that most employees in the company here are foreign. We are all from different parts of the world. . . . It's nice because we can relate to each other about our American struggles and how it's different from other countries.

These participants' descriptions suggest that their foreignness and nationality are not a signal for Otherness in their workplaces or that it is easier to negotiate Otherness and belonging in diverse environments. A dominant culture of diversity in an American organisation may offer immigrants more opportunities for inclusion and a sense of belonging.

5.2.3 Openness to difference

The attitude and approach to difference and diverse others in an organisation is just as significant as the presence of diversity. An openness to, and appreciation of, all types of people and diversity may contribute to immigrant employees' perceptions of an inclusive and welcoming workplace. The following extracts contrast the experiences of two participants in this regard:

> Everyone has been welcoming and receptive within the company. That's why I like this company. Because we are so diverse, they don't disregard their employees. It has not been a struggle for us coming into and adjusting to the company. We have employee groups, like a Latino group and an African American group – just to help employees feel like they have a community. . . . The company knows we are diverse, so they also acknowledge different religions and the different holidays. We have employees who practice Islamic faith and the company knows that they don't work on Fridays and take that into consideration when planning projects. It seems the company is willing to listen and learn. . . . For me, being female, black, and foreign has not been an issue (Kaya).

> The thing that pissed me off is that the company advertises itself as a very social environment, which I interpreted to mean a social environment where people are open to cultures and understanding other people. . . . The company did have programs that were focused on diversity in an attempt, I guess, to improve inclusion and what not. But like I and some Asian colleagues discussed, they did not attempt to bring in people who are from

> different groups or backgrounds. They did not seem open to listening (Thabani).

The comparison above reveals the significance of an organisation's approach to difference in employees' affective perception of the workplace and their place within it.

Several other participants focus on the attitudes to difference in their workplaces. Conrad talks about how his employer brought about positive change in employees' views of difference through unconscious bias training. He enthusiastically states that it was introspective and informative, and that "everyone enjoyed the course and realised that we need a country that is more open to opportunity for all." Yvonne points out that the focus on diversity in many organisations is reflective of America's difficult history regarding civil rights. Her experience is that being aware of the dangers and consequences of exclusion and discrimination shapes her employer's and co-workers' attitudes and actions:

> I think because the campus has this drive toward diversity and inclusion, they almost go the other way in trying to get people to feel included. You sometimes find yourself wanting to hide and not say anything, but others pick up on that you are quiet. So, they try hard to get everyone to feel included and at home. . . . There is actually an HR diversity person just for that, and there is a multi-cultural office. Tonight was heritage night so we celebrated different cultures like Irish, African American, and African with music and dance.

Yvonne's comment implies that although a focus on diversity is fundamental for an inclusive workplace, the constant focus on her nationality or cultural difference can sometimes become tiresome or intrusive. Sean indicates how attitudes to difference might be constrained as he discusses his university's approach to diverse others:

> But there is pressure for foreigners who are generally in the minority… there is a dominance of American culture and expectations which people will try to fit into. For instance, there are not a lot of people who would wear their cultural dress and they would only do that only on special occasions. There are more expectations around American ways of speaking and dressing. I've heard people complain about faculty who cook food that smells strong, for example. But it's more passive than active- no one is going to attack you or directly say that you should or shouldn't

> behave in a certain way. Some employees have office decorations from their country that may be very distinctive or culturally meaningful to them, but it doesn't go beyond that particular space.

Sean's experience thus shows how the existence of social norms within an organisation's culture may serve to shape or limit the expression of diversity even while it hires employees of various nationalities. Karen is similarly aware of the limitations on expressing cultural differences in her workplace: "I also think that if you go to work on 'casual day' it's ok to wear an African hat, but you can't be stupid and bring all the weird food you eat that they might not like."

A diverse organisation in the U.S., although increasing immigrant employees' capacity to belong, does not guarantee inclusion, and particular workplace norms and expectations continue to make belonging dynamic and conditional.

5.2.4 Level of social interaction

One aspect of American workplace culture that surfaces in participant narratives is the focus on social interaction in the organisation and its implications for their feelings of inclusion. Some participants speak with enthusiasm about how their organisations encourage interaction, team building, and connection:

> The company is great because they realise that people are important and care about their well-being. . . . They have to make sure that employees interact in a positive way because they are stuck together for long periods of time. Better relationships mean better quality work (Naledi).

> So, what we are also doing at work is having more meetings so that we are not so isolated. We can catch up with our colleagues and see how they are doing. We have meals together and exchange ideas and travel together (Yvonne).

Several participants draw attention to the importance of the relationships they have formed with others at work:

> There are two co-workers that I consider real friends. We have lunch together almost every day, we have dinner parties at each other's houses. . . . I really connect with them. It's the first time in a workplace that I feel that I have connected with people over and above work. . . . You can form bonds much quicker in a small company. When things get tough at work

> people collaborate and hustle together. It's just that small agency vibe (Conrad).

> We have a very unique family environment here which we are very protective over. . . . In South Africa there is such a separation between management and employees - you did not interact at a social level besides some company events. You would never go to someone's house on a Sunday night and have a beer and watch football like you do here. Here everybody is friends with everybody. A huge part of my social circle comes out of my work environment (Daniel).

> It helps that the pharmacy is a small group of people - like a family kind of thing. We are friends. At all the pharmacies I've worked in we basically get together out of work sometimes because we know each other - like for birthdays or when someone leaves - we go for dinner and everyone gets together. This year they took me out for my birthday, and it was nice. It feels nice to be accepted (Riaan).

Words such as "family", "connection", and "bonds" in these excerpts emphasise how this type of organisational culture may encourage stronger feelings of inclusion and attachment for immigrant employees. In contrast, other participants describe a more formal or business-like work environment in which personal conversation and socialising is not the norm. They do not feel that they got to know their colleagues or form bonds with anyone at work. In certain cases, participants can identify specific work structures and workplace dynamics that impede interaction and a sense of connection.

> They were very professional and didn't really want to do anything social like celebrate birthdays or get-togethers. Everyone worked as part-time employees, so we had to work hard in our hours to get the job done, and so there was no real time for socialising. . . . So I didn't have a lot of interaction with other employees and they didn't really want to have that family-feel at work (Sonja).

> . . . it is difficult to define the culture of my company in a general way because 80% of the employees are always away on projects. The office culture and dynamics are hard to read and difficult to be integrated in because you are physically often not around (Mandla).

Reena explains that

> In the places I have worked there just was not time or a focus on that sort of thing or to get personal. . . . Maybe at other companies there may be

> more time to socialise but where I was, my work life was very rigid and concrete. . . . In South Africa the company I worked for was more like family, and we went out on Friday nights and had a fun year-end party, and even went away for a weekend. For me it has not been the same experience here in the U.S.

This aspect of workplace culture can be seen as an especially important factor for immigrant employees' experiences of belonging and inclusion in the American workplace as it is through social interaction that others get to know them, and without which relationship-building is unlikely.

5.2.5 Valuing employees

Another aspect of workplace culture mentioned by participants that seems to foster feelings of belonging in the workplace is the extent to which they feel valued as employees:

> . . . I feel like I have a place at (U.S. University); that they want me, and I get nice affirmations at work. . . . If there wasn't a job that I liked and I got some respect for and that I was invested in, I would find America very difficult (Graham).

> I've been accepted as a very integral part of the management team; my opinion is weighed on heavily. Overall, I feel like, in the management side, I'm standing my ground (Daniel).

> The company I work for is very invested in their employees. It is also a very transparent company. You can go to your manager with problems. I am very blessed to work with great people here, and I think many of my colleagues feel the same (Conrad).

These excerpts indicate that participants feel included, appreciated, and respected by their co-workers and employers. Reena, however, is one of the participants who did not feel a sense of belonging at work, and her description portrays the consequences of not feeling valued or treated fairly by her employer:

> I just don't feel I was treated equally. For instance, while they wanted me to work more, they never made it official in writing whereas the relative of an American employee got an official offer, even though she didn't do half of what I did. I felt I contributed a lot more to how things worked there and I worked hard, and yet I didn't feel respected (Reena).

Perceptions of respect, acknowledgement, and appreciation speak to the affective dimension of belonging. Participants who feel valued seem more likely to have a sense of purpose and belonging in their organisation. In comparison, Reena, who had relayed her workplace experiences in this regard with some resentment, eventually left her place of employment.

5.2.6 Person-organisation fit

A few participants discuss the relationship between the degree of compatibility or fit between their own values and perspectives and those of their co-workers or organisation, and their sense of belonging at work. Graham explains that all the professors in his department share a common perspective and focus in their teaching in the field, which "helps me feel at home here because the work I do fits well and articulates with their approach." Lindiwe highlights the unifying influence of goals inherent in the nursing field when she explains that "we are helping people who are vulnerable. The mind-set is to go in there and help and do your job. . . . Healthcare is focused on a teamwork approach; it's a supportive system rather than a negative one." Yvonne discusses the fit between her love for people, her chosen academic area of expertise, and the diversity of her workplace:

> My field requires that I work with all kinds of people, from China to Ireland - all these amazing cultures. I work with super people. Everyone takes themselves very seriously, so I was right at home. My department is very diverse and international, and we have people from almost every continent.

Michael appreciates how his workplace is supportive and collaborative even in a competitive industry and offers an environment in which to interact with colleagues while providing independence and freedom to achieve his goals. Sean's reflection, in contrast, illustrates how a lack of fit may hinder becoming emotionally invested in a job:

> . . . it won't be difficult for me to leave. There may be institutions where it's possible to be more invested in their mission. I felt a bit more like that in (U.S. city) where I identified more strongly with the institution's mission; the type of education they were delivering was more consistent with my own values. Whereas now it's not all that challenging - it's just work and volume, there isn't a clear connection.

Daniel emphasises the importance of the fit between personal religious beliefs and the workplace: he reveals that he chose to work at a small family-owned business because "the first question they asked me was if I was a believer - meaning a Christian - and I thought if they could ask me that in an interview then this is my kind of place." Sonja explains that her goal is to work at a "Christian preschool so that I can actually say things like Merry Christmas and things like that. It's just a more comfortable fit with my religion and is more me." Although issues of person-organisation fit could be applied to any employee, American or foreign, it is relevant in this discussion because it reveals the ways in which immigrant employees find and negotiate ways to belong when their identity as outsiders are inescapable in the work setting.

One of my aims in this study was to gain more insight into the South African immigrant experience in America. I chose to do a qualitative study to gather rich, in-depth data which would allow me to develop a more nuanced understanding of the differential experiences of South Africans who live and work in the U.S. The following two sections focus on what it means to be a South African immigrant in the American workplace, including the challenges that participants discuss as well as any advantages or benefits they perceive.

5.3 The Challenges of Being a South African Immigrant in the American Workplace

Immigrant employees are likely to face unique challenges in U.S. organisations, especially when faced with issues of cultural difference. This section explores the practical and relational challenges South African immigrants encounter in the workplace, and how these may relate to a sense of belonging.

5.3.1 Attitudes and biases

In general, participants do not seem to get offended by Americans' stereotypes and misconceptions about them because they view them as based on ignorance rather than hostility. Thabani talks of how his HR manager thought South Africans have pet lions; Reena remarks that someone once asked if she knew how to use a salad spinner; and Naledi recalls a person's surprise upon learning that

South Africa had roads. However, having to continuously explain to others about South Africa, its people, history, language, and culture can become tiring. Kaya gives an example of an interaction with a client:

> In one state I was working in, the client commented that I should be used to this heat because it is so damn hot in Africa. Then you have to educate them. They are interested, you just realise they don't know a lot.

When faced with questions about her accent, she has to "explain how we were colonised by the British- blah blah blah- and tell them the history." Lerato also relates how

> it is constant, even my own friends, people who are close to me, say things that show how little they know. Sometimes I am tired and just laugh it off but sometimes I will take the time to explain how it really is.

Mandla suggests that South African immigrants "should make cue cards: Yes, there is wine, diamonds and the Big Five, now go Google the rest please."

Being a foreigner, for some participants, was challenging when it came to seeking employment and job applications. Karen's experience with job searches and interviews in the U.S. reveals how potential employers' can be hesitant in hiring an immigrant for a position:

> Almost all my interviews led to being invited for a second interview, so people were interested in hiring me, but just when I was sure I would get the job they seemed unsure because I could not guarantee I could be there for many years. . . . Another guy said that he was not sure whether his clients would understand my accent - so I got that a few times. A lot of people also didn't understand how my visa worked. They seemed confused about what it would mean for them, like how many hours I could work or if it would cost them money in some way. . . . I think when they see a resume from a foreigner, they just disregard it, thinking that this person will have bad English and it will be too much admin.

Other participants note an underlying preference for American qualifications, and even a bias against foreign applicants in certain industries:

> There was one job that I was a perfect fit for. My work experience in South Africa in HR was very strong, and I met all the criteria in the job spec. I got through many rounds of the interview process and things were going well, but when I got to the final stages and met with the HR

> director, I could tell he was disappointed that I didn't go to university in the U.S. . . . There is a cultural stigma and a doubt about whether you know what you are talking about (Lerato).

> Then there is also an unwritten but well-known concept within American residencies that if a residency is taking international medical graduates it's almost certainly because they couldn't get Americans (David).

A couple of participants talk about the potential for colleagues and employees to see them as a threat or question their legitimacy. Daniel discusses the challenge of working to overcome his staff's suspicions and build trust, while Sean conveys his preference for avoiding conflict, being controversial or drawing too much attention to himself, at least until he secured a green card and therefore some security:

> You know when you bring in a manager from halfway across the planet and there are cultural differences - yes they understand that there is no American that can do the job, they get that - but they do feel threatened by it. And to remove that sword hanging over their heads you need to get personal with them and make them understand that you are a normal human being, that you are going to make mistakes, but they also need to understand that you are part of the team. That still is probably the biggest challenge for me even though I've almost been there for three years. It's still a difficult thing for them to adjust to (Daniel).

> So I was always careful to avoid controversy and political situations, just trying to get to the point of having a green card so that I wouldn't ever be forced to leave the country. . . . I may have been perceived as a threat on a professional level where people may worry about who would get promoted or move ahead. Professional academia can be very competitive, so if one person gets some kudos then you are generally taking it away from someone else (Sean).

Whether others respond in ignorance or with hesitancy, feel threatened or show bias, the participants' identity as 'foreigner' remains salient and more relevant than other identity dimension in these contexts. There are some participants, however, who assert that their nationality is much less relevant in their workplace. David explains that the healthcare facility he works in

> is only interested in what you give them - which is how much money you are making, how many patients you are seeing, are any patients

> complaining about you or applauding you, how much research grants have you brought in. They care about that far more than your national origin.

Similarly, Michael states that the real estate industry doesn't care which country you are from, and that his South Africanness has not come up as an issue in any way:

> I don't think it's about where you come from but how long you've been in the job. Whether you are a South African or an American it's more about your track record in the business.

These comments are directed at the way in which the employer perceives the immigrant employee, but as will be shown later in the chapter, nationality is still salient for both David and Michael in their interactions with clients.

5.3.2 Workplace expectations

As a new immigrant employee there is a steep learning curve in the U.S. workplace in understanding expectations related to issues such as communication, workplace etiquette, and policies and procedures:

> Certain things I had to learn – like in the workplace there is a certain way to phrase things in emails. Sometimes I am not sure if people are being rude or are annoyed with me because they just say what they say and don't end the email with 'Kind Regards' - they just end it. Another thing besides emails is etiquette in the workplace. Like should you eat at your desk or can you read an article at your desk? When is the appropriate time to arrive and leave? Is it ok to not shave in this environment? So, my difficulties included trying to figure things out. Another issue is about the level of engagement they expect; like the expectation that you should always be available on email, even things that could wait till the next day (Mandla).

Although any newcomer to an organisation would face adjustment challenges, participant narratives highlight examples that reveal a certain amount of anxiety that South Africans may face as they attempt to figure out what is acceptable in the American workplace (things that U.S.-born employees may take for granted):

> One of the biggest things for me was with spelling and the metric system, but also the time zones and daylight savings. . . . It was a bit difficult for me at the office because I had to work it out on my own. You can't go sit

> in the director's office to ask for help. You kind of have to fake it till you make it. So, I Google a lot and figure stuff out (Karen).

> The U.S. company has different laws, on-boarding, paperwork and processes than South Africa, and I could only speak to someone online or send an email. So there was no one to explain things to me which was very difficult because we don't know all the American terms or processes. . . . It's such a self-sufficient country they just expect everyone to just know how it all functions. . . . I will say that one thing I have and still am battling with is work-life balance. People in the U.S. just don't rest. Especially in consulting companies - even though your contract says nine to five, it's just a myth. There is no work-life balance. You work until the wee hours of the morning sometimes. It's just work, work, work all the time (Kaya).

> So initially I remember my tendency to bring in some of my British-English/ South African-English into my grading and work, and then having to learn different grammar and patterns of word usage. I had to double-check myself all the time, use Google to check meanings, and had to get used to the standards of this particular institution in terms of what was expected of students and faculty (Sean).

Descriptions like these reveal that immigrant employees often lack support and guidance or feel hesitant in asking for help. Although a few participants mention having a mentor or a friendly, helpful colleague for guidance and support, many found themselves left to figure things out on their own.

5.3.3 Cross-cultural differences

While a few participants mention ways in which South Africa and America are similar, the differences between the two countries are more frequently discussed. Understanding these differences, and the tensions they sometimes create, seems to be a significant challenge that participants have to face in the U.S. workplace. Cross-cultural differences relate to South African immigrants' experiences at work in a number of areas.

Language and communication style

Several participants note language differences despite both countries speaking English, including vocabulary, expressions, and pronunciation. As Sheryl succinctly states: "Language can be an asset or a barrier - we don't understand a

lot of subtext of language here because it's different." Language is inherently contextual and cultural, which can complicate participants' interactions with colleagues and clients. The following excerpts provide examples:

> It's different when you are talking to a South African who knows where you are coming from. But when you send an email to an American in the Mid-West who has never communicated with a South African before, you can't say 'Could you take a quick squiz at this and get back to us?'. They don't know what that means. You have to think about it more. So, I think I've become much better in speaking in a way that gets my point across. We are all speaking English at the end of the day but the way I get there is just a bit different to the way an American would (Conrad).

> Language is not something you really think about, and things get lost in translation. Like I often reply 'ta' in an email reply when someone does something for me, and apparently my team was having a whole debate about what I mean when I say that. And I had to explain that it means 'thank you'. Another expression that confuses Americans is 'now' – they do not understand that it is just an expression that means 'I'll be back' but does not mean you will be back immediately (Naledi).

Daniel describes how cultural differences can lead to his words being taken out of context or misunderstood. Although this can often be amusing to him, he explains that it has real implications for his job as a manager:

> . . . when you are managing people, you must understand that people take it very personally when you say something wrong. And they will go directly to your supervisor and complain about it, who in my case is the CEO because it's a small family-owned business. The incidents have been few and far between, but they are there and I'm constantly aware of the cultural differences.

Riaan also reflects on how language differences impact his effectiveness at work:

> Now I've learnt to say water with the 'a' the American way, and also learnt different words - like faucet instead of tap. And it's difficult when you are trying to counsel a customer about their medication. I sometimes had to get an American person to tell the customer what I said because they had been working with me for a while and got my accent more. So that's a problem in the job. So there have been many words I've had to learn because my vocabulary was so small, and especially words I use often in my job.

Some participants focus on how communication styles of South Africans and Americans differ:

> Language barriers can exist even though we all speak English because we speak somehow differently - our use of words and ways of expression. For example, Americans are more casual in their dealings so especially for someone like me, whose native language is Zulu, my communication style will always be a bit more formal than the average American (Lindiwe).

Graham, Sonja, and David talk about what they have learned about the ways in which communication style differences influence how they are perceived by Americans:

> . . . people do seem to have a more abrupt way of doing things - not quite the same level of pretend politeness and formality that you had in the U.K. or even in South Africa. . . . Another problem, and it's one that I've had to be aware of myself, is you can't be overly hesitant. It's a very un-American way to be - to be hesitant instead of more forthright and assertive, and speaking in a loud voice. . . . If you are more circumspect and quiet the way I am you run the risk of being too anodyne or quiet or not noticeable, and then Americans don't know what to do with you. The standard American person is someone who will speak their mind and quite loudly state their viewpoint (Graham).

> I think South Africans don't learn how to be assertive or speak their own opinions. I find it hard to say no or to disagree with my boss, and I don't complain, because you are scared of what they would think. . . . But you have to stand up for yourself. In America it's a skill you have to learn. I think Americans are very strong-willed and they know what they want, and they don't always see other ways or that other people might not be the same as them (Sonja).

> In South Africa if you blow your own horn you are regarded as boastful and a jerk, and no one wants to have anything to do with you. But in America I discovered that you absolutely have to blow your own horn. . . . Basically, shameless self-promotion is the name of the game in America (David).

Analysing the narratives has shown that participants become more aware of what and how they communicate, pay more attention to how their words may be interpreted, and adjust their communication to manage how they are perceived by others. For immigrants, language and communication is not only important in

becoming efficient communicators and being understood, but also in being able to understand Americans and interpret their communication.

Interpersonal warmth and connection in workplace

Some participants find Americans to be less welcoming, inclusive, and friendly than South Africans. This extends to the workplace environment, which is described as less social, open, and relaxed than South African workplaces. Various examples are provided by participants as they reflect on this cultural difference in their workplaces:

> Advertising is often loud and fun, but Americans can be quite reserved. I'm pretty loud – not overbearingly loud – but I enjoy a good time, like most South Africans do. We enjoy talking to people and being around people, we are more engaged than Americans often are. They like to stick to their own (Conrad).

> But what I struggled with, with some of my academic colleagues, was knowing what passes for a joke or humour here. There was an embarrassing occasion when an American colleague found a story I told totally inappropriate and not funny - which was kind of humiliating. So I still battle with that (Graham).

> In the workplace here, people tend to be more independent - there are not many opportunities to collaborate, and it's much more individualistic. Even students don't like group-work activities and faculty members prefer to work on their own. That may be true to some degree even in South Africa, but there are challenges of relying on other people here. I just think that there's a very distinctive individualistic element that you wouldn't know about. People can be out for themselves (Sean).

This apparent lack of camaraderie or connection can lead to a sense of isolation, as Karen expresses in the following excerpt:

> I was caught off guard by how difficult it was to make friends. I would invite colleagues over to my house, and they would enjoy themselves, but never invited me to their house. They don't go out of their way to invite you to their homes. South Africans are much more welcoming to new people in a way. . . . In general South Africans are friendly people, outgoing people, we like to share stuff, whereas Americans aren't like that.

The continued onus on immigrants to reach out and build relationships, and the lack of success or progress that some experience, may lead to feelings of demotivation and dissatisfaction. Of course, participants' recollections of South Africa may in part be informed by some nostalgia for a familiar past. This tends to be coloured by elements of idealisation of the past.

Societal values and norms

Some participants identify broader cultural beliefs and values in American society that create challenges when interacting with and relating to others in a work environment. David, for example, recalls how he inadvertently offended a patient's parents with his 'bad' language in front of their child:

> So, some words we use in South Africa which are not considered rude are seen as extremely rude here; and the word I had used in that situation was 'hell'. Now that is a word I say often - like 'hell of a time' or 'come hell or high water' - offended them terribly. The word 'hell' here is a bit uncouth and folksy, even 'heck' may be too much for some people. Now I had used that word in (another U.S. city) many times with no problem, and no one ever said anything. So, for the vast majority of people 'hell' may be a perfectly okay word, but there is a good 30% of people for whom 'hell' is something that is not ok to say in front of children, and you definitely can't be saying it as a doctor.

Graham explains how he had to adapt his teaching style after encountering an unexpected response in the classroom:

> . . . in some of my classes there were some conservative students who didn't take well to certain concepts. . . . Even in South Africa being a bit progressive or being politically motivated or involved was a part of the whole post-apartheid thing. And suddenly I realised it could be quite controversial to be doing that, which has been a learning experience here. So, in teaching I steer clear of politics and I don't try to engage that. So that was a realisation and something different you have to be more careful about - the more conservative political sensibilities.

Thabani struggles to relate to another characteristic he perceives as common to many Americans:

> It also seems that people have the attitude that 'if it doesn't affect me, I'm not going to think about it'. If they have nothing to do with the issue it doesn't matter to them. Or they don't know how to deal with it.

He also finds it particularly frustrating to adjust to new norms regarding 'acceptable' topics for conversation in the American workplace:

> People say that there are things you shouldn't talk about at work, like politics, but I think it's strange to not talk about it because it does actually affect your work. Like taxes or minimum wage – it affects the work you do and literally does have something to do with your work. So, I do not understand that people do not want to discuss these everyday things at work. . . . I don't shy away from difficult subjects like law or politics, even if many people say you shouldn't talk about things like that. I just feel that unless you talk about it, you can't get over it or understand someone else's point of view.

Lindiwe is another participant who draws attention to challenges posed by taboo topics such as racism or prejudice against foreigners:

> Unfortunately, nursing education does not focus on cross-cultural training in any depth and how to handle difficult situations. You learn as you go and by experience. It's a very taboo subject in America all together, and unfortunately recently it's come up so much in the media but not in a constructive way. People do not want to talk about it. But you would think that in facilities and in workplaces there would be good, ongoing training, but there isn't.

Conrad uses another example of U.S. culture in discussing his inability to relate to some Americans:

> I know there are other things I disagree with Americans on. Like the right to shoot someone who trespasses on your property. A guy from Texas argued that with all the violent crime in South Africa you should have the right to defend yourself with a gun, but I had to explain that it is not the mentality in South Africa. Yes, we do want to keep our families safe, but we don't automatically think of guns and shooting. But in America it seems totally cool that people would think of that first, no matter who it is. That is so foreign to me.

Such perceptions of disconnection or mismatch in values or beliefs may dampen feelings of belonging as they reinforce awareness of difference and challenge immigrants to consider how and to what extent compromises need to be made to fit in or adapt.

A South African 'lens'

As the above excerpts show, it is common for participants to make comparisons between South Africa and the U.S. when discussing challenges they have faced as immigrant employees in their organisations. There are some examples in the narratives that show how participants use a South African 'lens' in their sensemaking within the workplace: they apply South African knowledge, meaning, and perspectives to the American work context in order to interpret, understand, or solve problems.

Lerato focuses on the implementation or lack of certain HR policies and practices in her organisation:

> In South Africa when I worked in HR, I used to advise people on how to handle those situations but in the U.S., attitudes really win in the workplace. If you try to resolve a problem by reporting it, it doesn't really work very well. People are big on retaliation. So sometimes it's a matter of making a decision about whether something is worth fighting for or if you just need to move on.

Daniel compares how staff feedback or discipline is approached in South African and American workplaces:

> In South Africa it was always a very laid-back type of thing. If you had a problem with someone not doing his job you could say "let's go have a beer" and you sort it out. I come from a background in South Africa where things can be said straight and to the point. Here you need to come the long way around when there is a problem.

Thabani discusses the way diversity and inclusivity is approached:

> While I was there, I spoke to my supervisor about wanting to go into HR and work in that department. It's a part of the workplace where decisions and the culture of a workplace are made. If the company wants to be more inclusive and diversify, they need to have someone in HR who is actually from a different background. The HR department was all white. How can they create rules and policies if they don't understand where people who are different from them are coming from?

Karen mentions workplace correctness and job security:

> I should maybe have more of a guard about what I say. . . . South African workplaces are not that strict about political or workplace correctness, where here there are so many things you are not allowed to do or say that will be frowned upon or that you can be sued for. It's also surprising how easy they can fire someone here. Back home you have to get three written warnings and so on, but since I've been at this job, they have already fired multiple people. It does make me feel insecure.

Reena comments on communication with management:

> She wanted it done a certain way and that was that. In South Africa if I had the same problem, I would be able to approach my supervisor or the manager, and both sides of a story would be heard. But here it was whatever she said. She controlled everybody, even people who were above her in position in the company. . . . There was a complete lack of communication from her about things. It was hard to do my job when everyone was not on the same page.

These descriptions show how dissatisfaction, frustration, and criticism may arise when a South African perspective is not compatible with, or transferable to, an American context. Other participants explain that it is an ongoing adjustment which over time will result in the development or adoption of a more American perspective or 'lens', especially due to the need to be effective in the workplace.

5.3.4 Experiences of exclusion

Thus far in this section I have explored the types of challenges South African immigrant employees in the American workplace face in terms of attitudes and biases, workplace expectations, and cross-cultural differences. The construction of boundaries within a place and the resulting forms of inclusion and exclusion will influence a person's sense of belonging. I was interested to find out whether participants may have had any personal experiences of exclusion in the workplace. These experiences would involve more than merely being aware of their difference, but instances in which they distinctly feel separate from co-workers, out of place, or not included in social circles or events. Participants discuss a variety of ways they have felt excluded in the U.S. workplace.

Some participants, for example, feel that their sense of exclusion may arise from their own lack of local knowledge and experiences, or because they have different

interests and perspectives than Americans. This can place them at a disadvantage because it affirms their identity as 'outsiders' and complicates their ability to relate to others and join groups or activities.

> Occasionally I got that feeling but it was generally related to not having the inside track on the culture of the organisation, and to a lesser degree some understanding of the local culture and history. . . . I never feel that people purposely excluded me from anything - maybe a slight sense of exclusion in terms of not always understanding inside jokes or comments that rely upon local or American culture (Sean).

> I don't really care for hockey or football or baseball or any of these American sports. I would be invited to the general company events where they give out football tickets, but I think at some point they realised that I'm not interested in it, so they exclude me flat out from that. And sometimes that's the only type of social interaction happening at work (Daniel).

> . . . you just can't relate to some people because you did not grow up here in this environment. You don't know much about college football, for example. I do zone out when they start talking about sports because I just don't get it (Naledi).

Naledi succinctly labels communication among her co-workers as "American talk", which she explains leaves her struggling to find common ground for conversation. Participant stories also reveal a similar sentiment of Americans toward immigrants:

> . . . people sometimes are just not sure what to expect and are not sure how to treat me – people are trying to figure me out. They don't know what I know, not just in a professional sense but also socially. There is no assumption about what I know or don't know; there's a level of discovery that people go through (Mandla).

> One thing I have noticed is that some people struggle with pronouncing my name and avoid saying it or even avoid interacting with me because they are so scared that they are going to mess up my name. They think that maybe we cannot relate to each other. Then they avoid talking to me (Lerato).

Therefore, being treated differently can also be due to Americans' own lack of knowledge or confidence. Americans may be unsure of how to approach or talk to immigrants, they may not invite them to join a group, or prefer to not interact at

all. Such exclusionary acts can thus be rooted in perceptions or attitudes other than hostility or prejudice. These examples also show that participants' experiences of exclusion, while based on their identity as foreigners, do not necessarily relate to their nationality. As discussed previously, the apparent limited knowledge of South Africa and the lack of preconceptions from which others can draw, seems to offer South African immigrants a degree of protection from negative stereotyping.

Some participants mention social groups and cliques that they are aware of in the workplace to which they do not belong. In such cases exclusion is discussed more in terms of an awareness of not being included or able to participate, or the difficulty in overcoming some of the social barriers that exist in the workplace.

> My department is kind of dull. The fun people are all above me so I can't go hang out with them. The ladies who I work with are all older and we sit in cubicles, so there are not many people I had something in common with (Karen).

> I'm not part of a social circle and it's a bit of a 'bro-y' environment, so I can pick up that there are conversations going on that are not work related, and people going for drinks after work, that I am not part of. I'm sure if I asked or made an effort, I could probably break into it. Maybe it's just because I'm the new guy or because I'm the South African guy, but yes, there's a clique that I'm not part of (Mandla).

Others highlight networking as a resource that immigrants need to develop in order to overcome the barriers they face as outsiders. Sheryl asserts that "it's all about who you know like with anything else - your network and your sphere of influence. The more people you know the better you will do." Mandla emphasises that being a foreigner and a newcomer in a company locates an immigrant outside of established networks which can be difficult to break into:

> I'm not sure if Americans are just closed off, and I'm sure they already have their groups, but I think there is also an inherent lack of social power for me in those interactions. I think they think, and it's probably true, that in a professional environment they have more to give than to gain from me. . . . I definitely have less to offer which then shuts me out more.

Mandla's description points to the power imbalances inherent in the process of networking, and the challenges created for immigrants in terms of opportunities and competition with American colleagues who have extensive connections and support.

Just as an immigrant's awareness of being different can also be internally held, feelings of exclusion or not belonging can be self-imposed. Multiple participants, for example, recognise how personality plays a role in their interaction with others at work. Sean mentions that he is "not the most approachable person" and more of an introvert, which reduces opportunities for interaction in the office. Lerato similarly states that "I have a very different personality and I can be very quiet sometimes. I don't go out of my way to make friendships at work." Graham is aware of his preference to focus on work rather than on interaction:

> I don't know if it's just in my head or how people perceive me, but I think I might have a bit of an 'offish' or a less than accessible demeanour. I realise that I do need to spend some time making friends but I'm not very laid-back, and I don't really have a 'my door's always open' policy.

Other participants bring attention to agency and attitude. Sheryl contends that an immigrant's own outlook can lead to isolation: "I had a shitty attitude in the beginning, and I was miserable. I couldn't make friends; I couldn't connect. But when my attitude changed everything else changed." Lindiwe notes the potential for immigrants to self-segregate when she states that "if anything they would say we have the tendency to exclude ourselves. It would be more from our end. . . . When immigrants come here, they tend to stick to their own and what is familiar."

Although participants relate their experiences of exclusion to their identity and status as 'outsiders' and 'foreigners', they do not seem to perceive that such exclusion originates from others' hostility or that such exclusion qualifies as purposeful discrimination. However, five participants describe unpleasant encounters with specific individuals in the workplace who they perceive as prejudiced or as people they are unable to relate to or form relationships with. Conrad, for example, talks about his inability to connect with the creative director in his company:

> I think he genuinely didn't like that I was foreign. I think he would've preferred an American who spoke his lingo and everything. We were civil with each other, but I found it hard to connect with him, so much so that I wondered if this was the right place for me.

As a foreign-born nurse, Lindiwe states that she has had bad experiences with certain patients, impacting her ability to provide quality care:

> Some patients or their families are in denial about their situation and can be nasty and unwelcoming. They scrutinise everything you do and question your ability and judgement, and it infringes on the care you are able to give.

Sonja explains her difficulty working with elderly clients:

> It happens because they are from a different generation and they're not used to different cultures. . . . But it's also because they had lived there for many years and then foreigners took over the business – so that is hard for them.

Michael recalls a particularly unpleasant encounter with a client from Eastern Europe:

> I actually sold a property to someone from Ukraine or somewhere like that, and he thought I was trying to con him. He thought I was trying to get him to sell his property for the least amount of money I could. And I'm Jewish too so I'm not sure if that came into it, because I'm sure I heard the 'Jew-it-down' remarks from him. And I'm not even religious. So, with him, whatever I did and whether I was nice or not, everything was taken as a negative.

Reena recounts her negative experience as an au pair with her previous employer, leading her to resign: "I was treated like an idiot from Africa who didn't know left from right. I did not come to the U.S. to be a slave for an American." She also shares an instance where "one woman never replied to my greetings until she saw me with my white husband and then she suddenly talked to me." For the South Africans in this study, such encounters of racism and negative stereotyping in the U.S. seem to be the exception rather than the norm, with the majority of participants not recalling any overt or directed hostility from others in the workplace. While experiences of exclusion, no matter their origin, may be isolating and deleterious for immigrants in the workplace, those rooted in hostility

or prejudiced attitudes can potentially be seen as more consequential for an immigrant employee's sense of belonging.

Black participants in the study did speak of experiences of workplace exclusion in a way that white participants did not: their challenges with black Americans. Kaya and Lerato, for example, describe their difficulty in relating to African Americans:

> What I will say is that it is harder trying to be friends with African Americans. They don't open up to you very easily. . . . Like on my current project there is an African American lady, and on paper we should be friends, but all she has said to me in the last three months is 'hi'. It's typically like that. So, it's hardest with the females that are black and are from America. Some of my other black South African friends who went to university here say the same thing. They felt that African American students viewed them as beneath them because they are from Africa. You would think in the workplace people would have a different mind-set and be more knowledgeable, but it's always difficult (Kaya).

> Even with black Americans I feel like they are worse. As soon as you say, 'I'm from South Africa' it seems like they immediately elevate themselves; that they seem to be saying that 'you and I are not alike'. I don't feel like I can relate to them very well. That's been the group most difficult for me to relate to more than any other (Lerato).

Kaya and Lerato both indicate that African Americans actively create and maintain an 'us-them' outlook by asserting boundaries between themselves and African immigrants. From their stories it is evident that this was not something they anticipated and has been a source of disappointment and frustration. Other participants choose to emphasise how differences in identity and culture between black Americans and black Africans have created barriers to communication and connection:

> So, it's a very big cultural difference between black Americans and black South Africans, or even black Africans in general. It can actually be a little harder to form relationships with them. So, it's weird when you look at black Americans cause you think yes, we should have things in common, but there is actually less in common than you expect (Thabani).

> I don't think that African Americans identify with Africans or with their African heritage. They don't want to be called Africans. They identify more with the American culture, especially if they were born here and their families have been here for ages - they can't see the link (Naledi).

> Some of the language that African Americans will use is completely un-African to us. As someone who grew up in Africa, some of the things they say makes no sense. It makes you realise that there is something about growing up in Africa that makes you different. Even just the sense of pride in your skin, as Africans we are more secure (Yvonne).

Naledi and Lindiwe also focus on economic and class mobility differences as a point of contention, and how stereotypical judgements or attitudes may contribute to perceptions of difference and Othering:

> If you look at African Americans' struggles, if you look at the numbers - there are so few that are successful. Then you have Africans who move to America who tend to be the successful ones and the ones that can afford to. So, they look at the influx of successful Africans and assume that we think we are smarter and work harder. But Africans know that if they are coming to corporate America they have to work hard, and often then they are the ones who are doing better. So, there is a judgment, and also a difficulty relating to each other (Naledi).

> African Americans do feel that we don't assimilate with them. The only place we may though is in the church because we share that. You would think we would have more in common, especially with our history and how we share the same struggle, right? But a lot of African migrants have the attitude that they came here with nothing and made something out of themselves, while African Americans were born and raised here over generations and are still - you know the stereotypes - not progressing themselves in school and work and do what's right. And that can come across as very arrogant on our part (Lindiwe).

From these descriptions, it seems that the identity 'African American' is not one available to or easily claimed by black African immigrants. Similarly, participants indicate that notions or constructions of 'Africanness' are not entirely applicable to or welcomed by African Americans. The apparent boundaries between African immigrants and African Americans may thus be seen to arise from intersections of racial, ethnic, and cultural identities, revealing the complex and nuanced ways in which immigrant identity and belonging are negotiated. In addition, the socio-political context of America and its history regarding race relations provides a broader background against which black identity, culture, and immigration can be understood. Although it is beyond the scope of this research to explore this element in more detail, I do address issues of race, identity, and politics further in

chapter six as it relates to participants' perceptions of integration and belonging in the U.S.

5.4 Focusing on the Positive

Challenges, obstacles, and difficulties are balanced by the several positive workplace experiences shared by participants in the interviews, including how their South Africanness has been beneficial in their interactions with others, as well as ways in which participants have experienced connection and inclusion at work.

5.4.1 Being South African can be an asset

In addition to the positive way Americans' react to their accents, participants note ways in which they view their South Africanness as an asset in the workplace. A few participants mention that being South African is beneficial when applying for work:

> I interviewed at three different companies, and I know that I bring a different energy to a company. . . . South Africans here are rare, so you are a new creature to them. I don't know how it would have played out in London, where you hear an accent around every corner. I have friends there now who are struggling to find work (Conrad).

> I actually only saw it in terms of getting more respect than less. In (U.S. State), for example, I was pulled into being on the diversity committee because I was a foreigner and that was a plus. I think it's almost like the saying "familiarity breeds contempt" – people may have assumptions about locals or Americans whereas as a foreigner you have a bit more of a mystery factor (Sean).

Conrad and Sean note that they are seen as unusual and interesting, and as someone who will bring different perspectives and experiences to the team. Being regarded as 'diverse' is ironic in the face of their white privilege and speaks to the forms of difference that are valued or 'acceptable' in the U.S. workplace.

Participants in the education field talk of how they are able to leverage their experiences and knowledge as South Africans in their classrooms and interactions with students:

> Well at the preschool it's been useful because I've lived in different places, so I am able to teach about the countries. For example, if we have a lesson about South Africa, I can bring South African food and clothing to show the class. I have a lot of experience I can bring to the table and I can talk about the country and teach them to say some words in Afrikaans. I can tell them about animals and the landscapes (Sonja).

> I remember, in my first class, students being interested in my different accent and hearing about different experiences. The first classes I taught were generally all black students so I could talk about South Africa and my background, and some of the problems in South Africa regarding race and those kinds of things. . . . It's what makes you interesting or different, that you've lived in another country, so I might use it in introducing myself or occasionally contrast it against American examples (Sean).

> The fact that I have all these contacts and businesses that I can take my students to in the field, because I have built a good name there, has been helpful (Yvonne).

Participants in other fields also discuss how being foreign-born has provided them with skills and experiences that distinguish them from their American counterparts. Michael voices how he, compared to his American co-workers, is better able to work with a variety of clients:

> But just thinking of some of the American realtors I know here, I can never see them working with some of the people I have worked with. . . . I do feel like I am personally able to interact with many different kinds of people and relate to them. Maybe you can contribute it to the fact that I am South African?

Michael is referring to a perception that many white Americans do not possess high levels of cross-cultural competence and are not able to effectively interact with immigrants, people of colour, or those who speak with accents. Similarly, Lindiwe focuses on how immigrant nurses have an edge over local-born nurses. She describes a situation in which sixty Russian-speaking, elderly dementia patients needed nursing care:

> Projects like that are handled by immigrants who often come from diverse countries themselves. We understand that just because someone speaks a different language does not mean that they are less than or less of, it's just that they speak or do things differently. . . . Someone who is monolithic and only speaks and understands one type of person or has never been

> around anyone who speaks something other than English, their level of tolerance and understanding is very different.

Lindiwe's words imply more than an inability of Americans to relate to diverse others; she alludes to an underlying ethnocentrism and bias in their perceptions and attitudes.

Mandla observes how being an African-born immigrant is an advantage in the finance field:

> And I've chatted to the guys because they have been to school here and worked here, and even they say there is a bias toward African-born graduates compared to African American grads during recruitment in the industry. The assumption is that we are smarter and work harder.

Several participants reinforce this apparent perception of a good work ethic among South African immigrants. Going above and beyond what is expected, and being noticed and respected for hard work and effort can build a good reputation among colleagues and clients:

> We are actually in the process of hiring two other South Africans because I know what I'm getting, versus having to deal with a culture of 'whatever'. It's a typical thing in the U.S., for example, to call in sick; and we actually had to do away with sick days all together and rather add days to their annual leave which they can use as they want. In general Americans are lazy. There's no other way of saying it (Daniel).

> From what I have heard it seems like South Africans actually have a better work ethic than most Americans. The ones that are here at least seem to work harder and get a good name. . . . It seems like South African immigrants here are willing to do what needs to be done. There are other immigrants here who do not necessarily have the same work ethic as we do (Michael).

> That's where I think South Africans do well – we are agile and adaptable. We get it done and don't complain. I have found some Americans say, "I'll do it later" or "Someone else will do it" (Conrad).

> As you know South Africans have a very good work ethic, and I find many in this field of work quite lazy. So, I always go above and beyond which they appreciate. I know what they want and I do it, so they want to work with me. I provide a value-added service and I wouldn't do any less. Lots of other people do not work like South Africans do. In general

> Americans don't, but immigrants tend to have a different work ethic (Sheryl).

Yvonne's discussion suggests that work-ethic can be a function of the type of work environment, as well as personality and the pressures of being a foreigner:

> Because I'm in a university environment the work ethic among professors is pretty high. You have to compete at a high level. But yes, when you are not at home you naturally have to do better. It took me a year to get this job, so I already had this financial pressure and knew that I needed this renewal every three years, so I had no choice but to work hard. I'm entitled to nothing except what I put in. But it's also a personal thing.

These excerpts reveal the way South African immigrants view themselves (and are often seen by others) as conforming to constructions of the 'ideal' immigrant. Growing up in South Africa is seen to have instilled the necessary values and skills, such as hard work, initiative, and sacrifice, for success in the U.S. work environment. These also fit comfortably with the American discourse about immigrants arriving and working hard to earn a place in American society.

Although there are a couple of participants who do not explicitly identify ways in which being South African is beneficial to them in the workplace, they do state that they have never felt disadvantaged or held back by being a South African. For example, Lerato explains:

> I don't feel that I don't have opportunities because of my background. To be honest, I always tell my friends in South Africa that the U.S. for me is a great place to work. Once you are working in a job, I feel that you are held accountable for your actions, and if you work hard no-one can deny it. Nobody can mess with that.

From these descriptions, it is clear that being different or being a foreigner in the U.S. workplace can often contribute to being valued and included, and even be seen as an asset that South Africans can use strategically.

5.4.2 Experiences of connection and inclusion in the workplace

Participant narratives also bring insight into when and how South Africans experience connection and inclusion in their workplaces. Their stories show who they relate to and how their relationships contribute to a sense of security and

belonging. Understanding how participants experience a sense of 'we' and 'us' at work is just as relevant as feelings of Otherness and exclusion.

A few participants explain that they are able to connect with some Americans. Sonja, for example, speaks about making friends with "open-minded Americans, who are different to the ones who only want to stick with the American way." She argues that it is easier to relate to someone who is interested in different cultures and people, and therefore be able to have conversations about more than the weather. Yvonne mentions she feels a sense of comradery with several of her American co-workers who live far away from their families, and whom she considers friends. Daniel is one participant who reports experiencing a sense of inclusion with his clients:

> My customers often become customers for life. In my job it is possible to become really good friends with clients, who you get you know and build a personal connection with. I am able to invest in relationships long-term. Sometimes I am even invited to their family events like birthday parties.

Most of the other participants, however, focus more on their preference or tendency to form connections with co-workers who are immigrants:

> I do get along with everyone on the team, but obviously I can relate most to foreign people, whether they are from Spain or India. Because even though we are from different parts of the world there is always the whole foreign thing in common. The frustration about the way things work in America and so on. So, you can relate to them and they understand how you feel. We all understand how it feels to have family so far away (Kaya).

> As immigrants we are able to talk about our families and what it's like to grow up in our countries, what we love about the U.S. and what we don't love about being here. We are there for each other and we are vested in each other's success (Conrad).

> I do relate most to anyone who is foreign. Even if we come from different ends of the world the commonality is there and is something to form a bond over. I don't really have close, meaningful relationships with Americans (Lindiwe).

The ability to converse easily with people who come from different cultures and relate to others who are experiencing similar challenges and struggles stands in

stark contrast to interactions with Americans and locals who may not show much interest in getting to know immigrant employees.

Sean and Mandla offer a different perspective: they describe how connecting with co-workers is often based on compatibility in personality, values, or attitudes rather than nationality.

> I think it's more about personality and values than where they are from. . . I'm not sure if it's because I'm a foreigner or if it's just a feature of adulthood – people have their friends, and unless people pick up that you have common values or interests they don't go out of their way to make friends (Sean).

> There are some people I just don't like as people or don't get along with. This is typical of finance. There are people who are materialistic or condescending of others, so there is an air of superiority that some people have, either about other colleagues or clients. The attitude of where I went to school and where I have worked and where I've travelled - and this happens across all types of people and ages not just one type of person. So, who I get along with will be driven by their personality and not their nationality. One of the first projects I got along with the Iranian and the Indian - they had no ego to speak of. The Greek and the Nigerian I didn't like at all. So yes, it's more about personality than it is age or culturally driven (Mandla).

Others point to specifics like a similar sense of humour or an approach to work that creates connection:

> The industry is very American - there are not many immigrants working in this field. I'm not friends with people at work, but I do get along well with the attorneys because we tend to share that warped, sarcastic sense of humour which is not appreciated by most other Americans (Sheryl).

> I seem to click with my department chairs quite well. I think because they are such mature experienced people. . . . My department, when they look for talent, are able to attract so much they can get really good people. So, we find that the department is just full of really super people that are all about work and we have that in common (Yvonne).

Only a couple of participants have had the experience of working with fellow South Africans. David describes how having five South African colleagues in his first job in the U.S. created a "very South African existence", which eased his transition into America. Graham too explains the benefit of having another South

African in the workplace, but also reflects on his anxiety about perceptions of nepotism:

> So of course, that helps - having another South African around who is friendly and maybe someone that would understand me. Something about it made it a little bit easier; a little bit of a foothold and a sense of security. But it's interesting because I also didn't become their bosom buddy either because then it would be weird if it was just the two South Africans hanging out together all the time.

Contextualising the challenges and benefits that participants encounter within the specific environments of their respective organisations has allowed for a more nuanced understanding of South African immigrants' workplace experiences. However, as emphasised in the literature, social structure must be considered along with human agency in examining the immigrant experience. Halford (2008), for example, argues that although workplace structures and discourses shape "who we are at work" (p. 932), it is equally important to understand how employees interpret and respond to the work environment and negotiate identity in the workplace. People's choices and actions are enacted through their adaptions to the specificities of a place (Ekinsmyth, 2013). As migrants are also seen to actively create and maintain a sense of belonging (Mee & Wright, 2009) and position themselves to negotiate belonging (Ralph, 2012), I was interested in which ways agency would emerge during analysis of the narratives. The next section focuses on these findings.

5.5 Agency

Throughout chapter four and five, the contextual nature of immigrant experiences of identity and belonging in the U.S. has been illustrated in many examples within the participant narratives. This includes how broader social, cultural, and historical factors shape demographic patterns and attitudes to difference on a macro-scale, as well as immigrants' interactions in day-to-day life in the workplace. Whether South Africans experience a sense of belonging or exclusion at work may depend on factors such as the beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes of their co-workers, the social norms, values, and culture of the organisation, or the manner in which their difference is interpreted and valued in the workplace.

Participants are not, however, passive objects within such contexts. Various examples show how they actively respond to their circumstances, build connections and relationships, and assert their identity and beliefs. During the interviews, participants talk about the strategies they have found to be successful in adapting to their workplaces and developing a sense of belonging, as well as how they manage their difference through identity practices.

5.5.1 Strategies for adapting and increasing belonging

Evidenced by multiple examples discussed from the participant narratives thus far, it seems that immigrant employees develop a hyper-awareness of how language and communication can draw attention to their difference. By actively making adjustments in their verbal and written communication (including vocabulary, pronunciation, use of expressions, and recognition of cross-cultural differences), participants try to lessen the potential for misunderstanding, increase their effectiveness in their role, and improve their relations with others. For example, Graham mentions: "I am very aware of whether my communication works in situations - am I understandable and intelligible to others? And what do I need to make this social encounter work?"

Sonja explains how a change in her communication style improved her relationships and standing in her workplace:

> I was so proud of myself because I had never stood up for myself in that way. I have never complained or raised my voice at the school, and I think they saw me in a different light after that. I feel they respected me more and know that they cannot talk to me or accuse me of things that are not true. It makes a big difference when you can stand your ground and people understand that they cannot walk all over you and be disrespectful. They take me more seriously.

There are other areas of adjustment that participants focus on beyond language. Sean maintains that it is necessary to learn about Americans and American culture in order to work with others and to avoid offending or insulting them. He notes the importance of being proactive because Americans may be "oblivious to anything else besides what they have grown up with or lived with, so you can't make assumptions about what people know or don't know about you, or that they

understand the reason you do things." Immigrants may thus perceive Americans to be unable to relate to an immigrant's perspectives or experiences. By growing his understanding of American culture, Sean feels more competent in navigating social situations because he now understands "the nuances of people's attitudes and prejudices, and how things work."

Mandla talks of how knowledge of America can help an immigrant become "versed in American culture and it goes beyond just entertainment - like if you know and understand and follow football or when you get certain jokes or references that Americans make." Lerato highlights how her opinions and attitudes changed as she learned more about Americans:

> I would say that before I came here, I had my own perspectives on Americans but being here I know that it is actually hard to stereotype Americans because there are all sorts of different people here. It's not like what you see on tv - you can't just easily make assumptions. For example, I used to think that Americans were disrespectful but when you get to know them you realise that many are just go-getters and they are not apologetic about what they want.

Michael and Daniel describe how learning about and adjusting to the American workplace changed their expectations and outlook in their job:

> I also think that Americans, for the most part, are more 'to the book' than anything else. You can't really change them in the way they think. So even if they are wrong you just got to accept that and work your way around that. You just have to provide what they expect even if it's at your expense, because in the long run it will be beneficial for you (Michael).

> So, about a month into my time here I realised I shouldn't take it personally; that it is a job. Sometimes people will be willing to meet you halfway or come to apologise and resolve an issue. . . . If I am at fault I will always admit it, and I try to always take a big picture view and see what the end result needs to be and do what I need to do to achieve that - which is what I think the American way of looking at things is (Daniel).

In addition to understanding differences, some participants promote commonality and conversation as a strategy in building relationships in the workplace:

> Having something in common with someone who lives halfway around the world helps build a connection. Even finding a small connection is a

> big thing. Even sport - you can have a long conversation about which football team is the best, and from there you can find mutual respect or understanding, and even friendship (Thabani).

> So only now, after about two years, have I found that I have some common ground in the way to talk to colleagues. What is a funny joke, what works with certain people and not others - finding some sort of common language. . . . So you need to find that conversational space. Now what I try to do is go to colleagues' offices for a while and chat, and they sometimes stop by my office, and sometimes we find small collaborative projects to work on, and that helps it feel more natural. But it took a lot of work to get to that point (Graham).

All of these excerpts highlight the efforts and choices immigrants can make to build their understanding and cultural competence in new environments, as well as develop relationships in the workplace that will assist in breaking down perceived barriers between themselves and Americans. Interaction and connection may, over time, dilute the intensity of others' perceptions of them being 'different'.

Although some participants feel that Americans are generally not inclusive and even disinterested in other countries or cultures, a few participants have had some good experiences in sharing about themselves and South Africa as a way for others to get to know them:

> I enjoy being South African here, teaching people about South Africa and a different culture. And most people are receptive to it. . . . What's been a huge hit is biltong. I make it myself and take it into work and I've got Americans clambering over themselves to buy some from me. They love it; they are so intrigued (Conrad).

> There are even a few Nando's restaurants here which is great. I have taken my team for supper there and now they love it too. A German, a Russian, and two Americans and they all love it. . . . So Nando's has become one of our go-to places (Naledi).

> As a Jew I have a lot of Yiddish sayings that I know from home, and I have a lot of Afrikaans sayings from home, and I know a lot of South African slang. And when I use it at work with co-workers - maybe not so often with patients - you may worry about being understood, but after a few times using and explaining it they get the gist of it (David).

Participants thus focus instead on ways in which they can dilute any negative associations with being different by helping their co-workers see the positive and interesting side of being South African. Some participants also recognise the impact of their own attitudes and behaviours on their experiences of adjustment and their relationships with colleagues and clients:

> I've been here for four years now and the customers know me. They say I'm doing a good job because I go out of my way to help them. I think South Africans are quite friendly and they like that – they say I'm always smiling, even when work is tough. Your personality counts (Riaan).

> I'm also the kind of person who is open to criticism and learning. I'm able to humble myself, so I don't tend to have confrontations. I talk with someone and work through issues with people (Conrad).

> I am fairly outgoing, and I treat people nicely, so people want to work with me again (Sheryl).

Yvonne advocates being proactive in showing your value in the workplace:

> I have not rested on my laurels. I have thought about where I can become indispensable and I've focused on that. Because that is what I believe you should try to do in the workplace. You should not only say 'include me' but give people data as to why they should include you.

Many excerpts throughout this chapter have illustrated the positive and negative ways in which participants experience their foreignness and nationality in the U.S. workplace. Although much is understood to be beyond the control of participants (such as the culture of the organisation, people's prejudice, and social norms), they can and do attempt to manage their difference and affect others' perceptions as they move through space and interact with different people in various contexts.

5.5.2 Identity practices

Participant strategies for negotiating and increasing belonging include an array of practices related to their personal and social identities. Below I present five identity practices I identified from participant narratives. It would be plausible to say that immigrant employees could use multiple or all of these at different times and in different situations:

Highlight South Africanness

A few participants express their choice to embrace their difference and South African identity, even in the workplace. Conrad, who enjoys teaching others about South Africa and makes biltong for his colleagues, states that "I'm a very passionate South African – I try to stay true to myself, although I know I'm here in this place and I need to respect that."

Thabani, who emphasises that he never tries to hide his South Africanness, explains that

> Yes, I'm different, but I am what I am – I've never tried to hide anything. If you put it out there they can get over it sooner. . . . I'm proud to be different - I don't want to be like everyone else.

These participants put their South Africanness at the forefront in their interactions with others. Sharing about themselves and about South Africa can be viewed as a strategy to increase others' awareness and knowledge of the country and its culture, and as a way to mitigate misunderstanding, distrust, and discomfort when interacting with their American co-workers.

Downplay difference

This practice involves participants not wanting to draw too much attention to their foreignness, sometimes as a result of feelings of anxiety or a lack of security. Sean reports initially wanting to avoid being perceived as a threat and drawing too much attention to his foreignness:

> I sometimes don't feel it would be beneficial to shout from the rooftops that you are a South African. . . . I think there is almost an unspoken code that you do not draw attention to the fact that you are a foreigner, so I don't feel that other foreigners make a big issue out of it and put it out on the table and discuss it.

Participants who downplay their difference are more guarded in sharing about themselves and focus on blending in. Some, for example, talk about their decision to not engage in discussions about politics, religion, or other controversial topics to avoid being seen as having views or beliefs that conflict with those around

them. It can thus be seen as a strategy to circumvent unwanted or negative attention, especially in the U.S. work environment.

Be aware and strategic

Another identity practice that is evident in participant narratives involves being strategic about when to highlight or downplay difference. This means being aware of the appropriate times, places, or contexts in which to emphasise a South African identity and being able to practice self-censorship when necessary. A few participants found their South Africanness useful when applying for jobs and in interviews where an employer seemed to be focused on workplace diversity, while in other circumstances asserting it became problematic. Others describe how they tend to share information about themselves or their South African culture only when appropriate, when others enquire or show interest, and in unthreatening ways.

David, who feels strongly that immigrants should not hide their difference and that people can learn from diverse others, does recognise that not all Americans are receptive to hearing about South Africa. He asserts that "It shouldn't be hidden. It shouldn't be rammed down anybody's throats, but it shouldn't be left at home." Daniel agrees that it is necessary to learn when it is appropriate to be open about his South Africanness and "even when you need to make it completely neutral."

Emphasise sameness

Here participants focus more on their similarities with Americans than differences. Some highlight the need to adjust and integrate when moving to the U.S. instead of retaining their South African identity. 'Sameness' is often identified through commonality in values, perspective, religion, or political beliefs, and is a strategy that enables the claiming of belonging. Michael, for example, states that:

> Even though South Africa is a third world country, the way that we lived in South Africa was not really third world. It seemed that a lot of South Africans who came here and brought stuff back, like brand clothing for

> instance, wanted to be like Americans. . . . We seem so similar to Americans, other than the subtle ways Americans think and do things.

In addition to talking about how South Africans are more similar to Americans in dress and culture than other immigrant groups, Sonja mentions that "As South Africans it is easier to adapt because America is mostly Christian." Karen expresses a similar sentiment: "But we are not that different from Americans – we eat the same kind of foods and pray the same." She argues that immigrants must acculturate and integrate so that they will eventually become more than just "South Africans living in America."

Divert focus

There are instances where participants claim belonging through identity aspects other than nationality, which serves to draw attention away from their foreignness toward the ways they are able to contribute and participate in American society. Examples include participants highlighting their profession, education level, skills and expertise, or focusing on their personality in social and work contexts that help create connections and combat possible negative reactions to their foreignness. Redirecting others' focus onto such aspects may build credibility and help legitimise their presence.

Daniel, for instance, views his education and expertise in his industry as being vital to his experience of belonging at his company. As a manager with several qualifications, he feels that "I've been accepted as a very integral part of the management team; my opinion is weighed on heavily." In addition, his Christian faith helps him feel part of his "work family." Sean explains how having a doctorate and holding a faculty position "creates a sense of respect and belonging straight away" and serves to legitimise his foreignness to a certain extent.

5.6 Discussion

My aim in this study was to contextualise participants' experiences of identity and belonging in the U.S. workplace. Following Ralph (2012), this entailed exploring the circumstances under which participants experience a sense of belonging (or not) in the workplace, or as Yuval-Davis (2011) emphasises, *how* participants find

belonging (rather than merely whether they belong). A focus on the workplace as 'place' meant exploring the situatedness of immigrant identity and belonging, and the constructions and characteristics within American workplaces that may shape the differential experiences of South African immigrant employees. A focus on situatedness does not signal a reification of social structure or a view that the workplace is a fixed 'container' for social life, but recognises the materiality of place, the ways in which differences and identity are produced in situ, and the grounded nature of experiences of belonging.

Workplace characteristics and culture

The significance of social and symbolic boundaries within the U.S. workplace was evident in several of the narratives. Sean, for example, mentioned how Muslim and Hindu students and faculty may feel like outsiders within his Christian-centred university campus. This means that individuals or groups in that particular context have to negotiate social and cultural norms that are established by a dominant group, against which categories of difference are measured and evaluated (Ralph, 2012; Valentine, 2007). Immigrants may be categorised and marked as Other when they are perceived to fall outside of the norms of the organisation (Norton & Walton-Roberts, 2009). Muslim and Hindu students and faculty in Sean's workplace are constructed as a religious Other. David emphasised the stigma foreign-born medical students face during medical residency selection, where preference is given to those with U.S. qualifications. Foreign students are thus disadvantaged by their positioning in the medical field through social and symbolic boundary construction that demarcates in- and out-groups (Guetzkow & Fast, 2016).

The significance of power dynamics within an organisation was also exemplified in Sonja's experience. She explained that in her company (small family-owned business), those employees who were considered close friends of the owners were favoured while those not part of this inner circle felt excluded and powerless. Sean, David, and Sonja's experiences clearly illustrate how belonging is socially defined (Fenster, 2005), drawing attention to how entrenched power structures shape experiences of inclusion and exclusion (Chacko, 2015). Rather than being

natural and neutral spaces, workplaces are produced by institutional forces, social relations, and arrangements of power (Cresswell, 2009; Hubbard & Kitchin, 2011), while at the same time recursively shaping how social relations develop within them (Halford, 2008). The social, historical, political, and cultural contexts of organisations are therefore significant in shaping South African immigrants' workplace experiences (Johansson & Śliwa, 2014; Tatli & Özbilgin, 2012).

Reflecting broader ethnocentric tendencies in the U.S., immigrant employees in the American workplace are subject to pressures to adapt and assimilate to U.S. culture, values, and social norms (Pio & Essers, 2014). Certain categories of difference may become especially salient or amplified in a particular work context, increasing the likelihood of marginalisation or exclusion for employees deemed Other (Guetzkow & Fast, 2016). Thabani, for example, was employed at a construction company with a distinct dominant culture (white, male, American-born, conforming). In his case, being black, an African immigrant, outspoken, and having different perspectives seemed to be perceived as a threat to the status quo in his workplace.

Participants are differentially positioned in a workplace by the intersection of their dimensions of difference (Johansson & Śliwa, 2014), highlighting the contextual dimensions of belonging (Anthias, 2002). Lerato, for example, compared her sense of belonging across two different American employers. She expressed how her age, foreignness, and race are much more apparent in her current position in a social services organisation where most employees are white and local-born, than in her previous place of employment where, as a black, African immigrant, she felt less judged and more accepted by her co-workers. Intersectionality is thus a process that is highly variable and spatially contingent, and "works out in different ways in different places (McDowell, 2008, p. 504).

Several participants spoke positively about how high levels of diversity in their organisations lessened their sense of Otherness, allowing them to feel accepted and integrated in the workplace. Naledi, who works at an actuarial services organisation, stated that multiple nationalities were represented in her workplace and that "Americans do not overpower the culture of the company". The

significance of place is foregrounded through the understanding that identity does not exist in the abstract but is produced in situ through socially available and hegemonic discourses (Anthias, 2002; Probyn, 2003). Social norms and discourse within a place are thus powerful regulators of meanings attached to identity (Valentine & Sporton, 2009). In her international firm, Naledi may not regard her South Africanness as a problematic difference because 'foreigner' is a socially available and acceptable identity in her workplace. Similarly, the large number of immigrant employees present in Kaya's organisation (global management consulting company), seemed to create more opportunities for social group membership and inclusion. Participants' descriptions therefore reflect how the workplace is a locus for personal and collective identity as well as emotional attachment (Herod, 2012).

Nationality and cultural difference as a basis for Othering is also less common within certain U.S. industries that employ many immigrants, as Sean (education), Lindiwe (nursing), and Mandla (finance) explained. These examples illustrate how social divisions of 'us' and 'them' or the construction of in- and out-groups (Pio & Essers, 2014; Yuval-Davis, 2011) are less likely to be rooted in foreignness in diverse organisations than in work settings dominated by an American culture. Although their identity as 'immigrant' continues to be salient to participants working in both types of work settings, it is a decidedly less contested identity dimension in American organisations that are diverse. This also points to how it may be easier for immigrant employees to negotiate their Otherness in diverse workplaces: they may be more able to manage their positioning through everyday practices and tactics that aim to normalise a specific difference, embrace a particular identity or behaviour, or resist an ascribed difference (Chacko, 2015; Ku, 2012; Ralph, 2012).

A related factor that was shown to be significant in the participants' sense of belonging was an openness to, and appreciation of, difference in the workplace. Kaya, Yvonne, and Conrad spoke of the positive effects of employers who welcome and include all employees and create practices and policies that respect and accommodate people's differing values, faiths, and cultures. These discursive

and material structures serve as rules and resources from which organisational members can draw in everyday interactions and which guide behaviour (Boogaard & Roggeband, 2010; Hubbarb & Kitchin, 2011; Ybema et al., 2009). In an organisation that values diversity and difference, the workplace becomes a 'zone of contact' (Ahmed, 2004) within which immigrant employees can develop feelings of safety, connection, and attachment rather than fear and alienation (Svašek, 2010; Wright, 2015). Sean and Karen's comments about limits to expressions of diversity and culture in their workplaces, however, are a reminder of the persistence and strength of America's discourse of immigrant assimilation (Dicker, 1998; Quinsaat, 2014) and the conditional nature of belonging (Bhatia & Ram, 2009).

There were some participants who described organisations that are proactive about social interaction and building relationships between employees as being more successful in creating an inclusive workplace culture. This aligns with Valenta's (2008) description of the positive impact of "favourable contact structures" (p. 4) in the workplace on developing relationships. Daniel (retail company) and Riaan (pharmacy) both described their workplaces as having a 'family-feel', where co-workers become friends and form part of participants' social circles. Daniel explained how employees are protective of each other, and Riaan told of how co-workers go out to celebrate each other's birthdays. In contrast, Sonja and Reena reported a distinct lack of connection and inclusion in the workplace due to a more formal, business-like atmosphere. The question of who belongs and who does not is thus often shaped by how a place is defined (Anderson, 2010). Whether the organisation is constructed and perceived as a 'family' or a 'business' (for example) can play a significant role in whether immigrant employees become emotionally invested in or attached to their places of work (Ho, 2009; Svašek, 2010; Wright, 2015).

Feeling valued and appreciated, and perceiving a good fit between personal and organisational values, were two final workplace characteristics that influenced the degree to which participants felt a sense of belonging. Graham, for example, seemed satisfied and invested in his job as he felt respected and affirmed at work;

Lindiwe highlighted how common goals ensured a unified team; and Daniel described how Christian values in his workplace made him feel at home. These examples reveal the experiential and subjective nature of the workplace, and how workplaces are imbued with meaning (Anderson, 2010; Norton & Walton-Roberts, 2014). They also affirm Delaney's (2014) assertion that work is central to one's identity and sense of well-being, as well as Flum and Cinamon's (2011) belief that work increases immigrants' participation and enhances a sense of belonging in a host society. In addition, these participants' experiences indicate how workplaces in the U.S. can provide ways to belong despite the differences that arise from being immigrants.

The affective dimension of belonging (Antonsich, 2010; Mee & Wright, 2009) is highlighted in the participants' narratives as they shared about their workplace experiences. Waite and Cook (2011) state that emotion enables migrants "to situate themselves in the world through meaning and feeling" (p. 238). Conrad's and Daniel's use of words such as 'bonds', 'friends', 'protective', and 'family' communicated a workplace that offers safety, connection, and inclusion. Others relayed their feelings of alienation and distress when they describe their interaction with 'nasty' and 'unwelcoming' people (Lindiwe) or about experiencing judgement and 'retaliation' in the workplace (Lerato). Emotions and emotional accounts contribute to an understanding of how participants perceive self and other, evaluate and respond to social encounters, and form attachment to people and places (Boccagni & Baldassar, 2015; Svašek, 2010; Walsh, 2012).

Perceptions of South Africans in the U.S workplace

In this study, the lack of knowledge about South Africa proved beneficial for participants, as many Americans do not seem to have strong stereotypes or negative perceptions from which to draw when interacting with South African immigrants. Similarly, in the workplace the participants described examples of curiosity, misconception, or ignorance rather than open hostility or prejudice. In some cases, the biases they did encounter were due to them being foreign rather than South African per se. Karen explained potential employers' concerns over the legalities and practicalities involved in hiring an immigrant; Lerato spoke of a

preference for U.S. qualifications; David discussed a stigma against international candidates for residencies; and Daniel and Sean mentioned how they, as outsiders, might be regarded as a threat to some employees or co-workers. However, immigrants of many different nationalities may share similar experiences in American workplaces (Turper et al., 2015), and therefore these challenges may arise from anti-immigrant attitudes rather than an anti-South African sentiment.

This mirrors the oftentimes nativist, nationalist, ethnocentric, and assimilationist attitudes of broader U.S. society toward immigrants (Bean & Stevens, 2005; Dicker, 1998; Morrissey, 2015; Muste, 2013; Quinsaat, 2014). Immigrant employees, for example, may have to contend with an 'English-only' work rule and face the pressure of their employers' expectations of conformance (Dicker, 1998), or cope with preconceived notions, stereotypes, and micro-aggressions in the workplace due to the culture biases of their American co-workers (Shenoy-Packer, 2015). The relative absence of experiences of more overt prejudice or discrimination for the South Africans in the present study, as compared to West African immigrants (Showers, 2013) or Latino/a immigrants (Leitner, 2012), for example, may be reflective of their strong economic and occupational credentials and lower levels of cultural distinctiveness (Turper et al., 2015).

In the interviews, participants also focused on the various ways in which being South African was an asset to them in the U.S. workplace. The benefits they discussed related to both subjective perceptions and the positive ways others perceived them. Conrad and Sean, for example, focused on the way in which employers regard them as 'diverse', unique, and interesting. Michael and Lindiwe explained how their different life experiences, perspectives, or skillsets sets them apart from their local-born colleagues and gives them an edge in the workplace. Several participants mentioned perceptions of South African immigrants as having a strong work ethic, which builds their credibility and reputation in the workplace. These are further examples of how South Africans experience positive intersectionality (Plüss & Kwok-bun, 2012) in the American workplace. However, such positive associations with 'difference' are not experienced by all immigrants in the U.S., especially those who are not as well positioned in the immigrant

hierarchy (e.g., Muslim immigrants, non-English speakers). The South Africans in this study, who have been generally able to maintain or at least regain occupational status after resettlement, most likely have diverging workplace experiences when compared to those of less educated immigrants who are relegated to low status roles (Valenta, 2008).

This supports the view that discourse in the U.S. constructs some identities as more valuable, acceptable, or worthy than others (Keyes, 2014; Morrissey, 2015) by establishing criteria based on categories such as language, education, religion, ethnicity, and socio-economic class. Hsu and Wu (2015), for example, discuss how Asian immigrants are increasingly viewed as 'model minorities' due to perceptions of being hard-working, self-sufficient, intelligent, educated, and assimilable. Gilmartin (2008) argues that those constructed as 'idealised migrants' will have more positive experiences in terms of mobility and belonging. The interviews in the present study reveal similar perceptions of South African immigrants, and also how white South Africans, in particular, face fewer obstacles in "conforming to white American values and norms" (Leitner, 2012, p. 828).

The discussion of workplace culture and characteristics in the current chapter has highlighted how identity and belonging are inherently geographical (Wright, 2015), and demonstrated that participants' experiences are contextual and situated within their places of work. Places are, however, not isolated, bounded entities, but rather relational and embedded in broader socio-spatial structures and conditions (Agnew, 2011; Herod, 2012; McDowell, 2008). The differing social, cultural, and political geographies in America, within which organisations are situated, can thus shape how South African immigrants are perceived and received in their workplaces throughout the country.

Chacko (2015) explains that immigrant integration experiences in different spaces in the U.S. are mediated by social and cultural norms, prevailing racial and ethnic stereotypes, opportunities for socio-economic class mobility, and the strength of assimilation discourses. David described his city as very conservative (noting the dominance of Christian, Republican values), and Conrad wondered what type of attitudes he would encounter in the Midwest (alluding to a lack of diversity and

prevalent anti-immigrant views in some of those states). The present study interviewed South Africans who resided and worked in states in the Northeast region of the country. Similar to the higher levels of tolerance for social, ethnic, and racial diversity in coastal states such as California (Bean & Stevens, 2005), there are many towns and cities in the Northeast that could be described as having social, cultural, and political values and ideas that are supportive of diversity and immigrants (this was illustrated by the participants' own experiences too). Mandla and Lindiwe, for example, work in organisations located in more liberal-leaning states where immigrants and difference are more readily accepted and even expected. South Africans who work in states dominated by political and religious conservatism, such as in the Southern region of the U.S. (Price, 2012), may find attitudes to immigrants quite different.

However, the type of industry was also shown to be a mediating factor. Participants reported higher levels of diversity among employees in medical and tertiary education fields, for example, which may hold true even in conservative regions of the U.S. Likewise, such as in Thabani's case, the construction industry appeared to be primarily white and American-born even though located in a more liberal region of the East Coast. This highlights the importance of paying attention to how the construction of space and place overlaps with the construction of immigrant identities (Liu, 2000), how belonging can be experienced at multiple scales (Antonsich, 2010), and the salient role broader social and political values plays in the construction and interpretation of difference in the U.S.

Cross-cultural challenges

High levels of cultural capital and South Africans' relatively advantaged position within the U.S. immigrant hierarchy have not shielded the participants from all difficulties, and they shared many examples of challenges they have faced as South Africans in the American workplace. These were overwhelmingly cross-cultural in nature and influenced their sense of belonging in different ways. Participants discussed how, despite the commonality of the English language, the context and style of communication across South African and American cultures became problematic, including struggling with assertiveness and self-promotion

or clearly relaying meaning or intent. Participants explained how communication difficulties impact how others perceive and interact with them, affect their job performance and relationships, and requires them to become skilled at perceiving and interpreting contexts in order to effectively adjust their communication as needed. Communication and language have also been identified as problematic in other studies on South African immigrants (Trlin, 2012; Wood, 2006).

Although South Africans are regarded as less culturally distinct than other immigrant groups in the U.S. (Trlin, 2012), some participants still struggled with perceived cultural differences with Americans in their workplace. A lack of interpersonal warmth within the workplace, for example, left several participants feeling isolated and disconnected, and some participants described being surprised, and even frustrated, by particular American social values and norms. A multitude of studies have similarly centred on immigrants and cross-cultural differences in organisational contexts. Aycan and Berry (1996), for example, investigated the role of cultural differences in negative employment-related experiences which can result in acculturative stress and feelings of alienation. These include immigrants' failure to meet social norms and expectations, a difficulty in forming positive interpersonal relationships, and the inability to manage social situations in the workplace. Holmes (2015) used in-depth interviews to gain a more nuanced understanding of intercultural-communication challenges between immigrant employees and their employers, highlighting matters related to respect, non-verbal communication, and small talk. In the current study, South Africans identified particular issues such as differences in levels of conservatism and taboo topics in the workplace as examples of cultural difference that lowered their sense of compatibility and their ability to relate to American co-workers. This has the potential to inhibit a sense of belonging.

The literature connecting emotions and the immigrant experience is also relevant to my discussion of cultural differences as experienced by the participants. After all, issues of belonging and identity "are quintessentially affective and emotional notions" (Boccagni & Baldassar, 2015, p. 74). The significance of emotions in participants' perceptions of difference and disconnection in the workplace

emerged in the stories about their experiences, whether talking about Americans' tendencies toward individualism (Sean and Thabani), the lack of overtures of friendship (Karen), differences in senses of humour and work etiquette (Graham and David), or the inability to relate on important social issues (Conrad and Thabani). This affirms the assertion that emotions are instrumental in creating or maintaining boundaries between self and other (Boccagni & Baldassar, 2015). The degree to which experiences are positive or negative may be consequential for the strength of personal attachments or emotional connectivity (Svašek, 2010) to others or to the organisation.

Personal experiences of exclusion and inclusion

Understanding participants' personal experiences of exclusion and inclusion was another step in my attempt to explore the terms and conditions under which South African employees may feel a sense of belonging in the workplace or lack thereof (Ralph, 2012). There were some participants who recalled specific instances with individuals in which they felt a form of prejudice (e.g., racism, anti-Semitism, nativism) played a role in hostile or negative interactions. In general, this seemed to be the exception rather than the rule, and participants did not regard many of their exclusion experiences in the U.S. as being due to prejudice or hostility against South Africans. A lack of knowledge about local culture, places, and customs, diverging interests and perspectives, others' lack of confidence or weariness of immigrant newcomers, social barriers between groups of employees, and not having access to certain networks were more likely to affirm the participants' position as outsiders than acts of purposeful exclusion or marginalisation by others. Fangen (2010), in her research on young immigrants' experiences of social exclusion, similarly distinguishes outright exclusionary practices such as racism and discrimination from exclusion that arises from actions without intensions to hurt.

Nevertheless, participants talked about how such experiences can inhibit a sense of belonging and inclusion in the workplace, including a heightened sense of separation and difference, perceptions of social barriers, difficulties relating to others or joining groups and social activities, and feelings of vulnerability and

isolation. Several participants did not view such experiences of exclusion to be permanent or unchangeable. They surmised that over time or with some effort on their part, they would be able to build better relationships and become part of social groups, networks, and teams at work. Notably, the emphasis was placed on immigrants having to do the hard work to improve their sense of belonging, perhaps due to the persistent and unrelenting ethnocentrism they encounter in the U.S. that reinforces boundaries between immigrant and non-immigrant, and the strength of assimilationist discourse (Chacko, 2015; Dicker, 1998). Some participants also emphasised that exclusion can be subjective and internally held (rather than due to being ascribed as different by others).

Following Platts-Fowler and Robinson (2015), whose study focused on the integration experiences of refugees in two different U.K. cities, one could consider how the contextual, compositional, and collective aspects of a workplace may support or hinder improved social relations between immigrant and non-immigrant employees. Changes in interaction or an increased sense of belonging may be less likely for employees in U.S. workplaces with strong 'us-them' boundaries between groups, whether due to hierarchical structures (e.g., Karen) or work cultures that preserve the status quo of those with power and privilege (e.g., Sonja or Reena). Platts-Fowler and Robinson also argue that opportunities for positive intercultural relations between groups are increased in more cosmopolitan neighbourhoods, which supports my interpretation that participants employed in American organisations that value diversity and difference (e.g., Naledi and Kaya) may find it easier to develop a sense of belonging. Sheryl and Lindiwe's comments about migrants' own attitudes, however, reinforces how agency is just as relevant in this regard as the particularities of place (Ekinsmyth, 2013; Halford, 2008).

One notable, consistent finding when analysing the narratives for experiences of Othering or exclusion in the workplace was the fact that nearly all the black participants pointed out their difficulty in communicating with or relating to African Americans. They highlighted how cultural difference between African immigrants and black Americans leads to a distinct sense of difference and creates

barriers where they may have expected some commonality. The intersection of nationality, culture, socio-economic status, and education appeared salient in shaping and maintaining a sense of separateness and distinct identity for black South Africans in this regard.

Black participants' experiences and perceptions regarding their interactions with African Americans correspond to those within other studies in the literature about African American and black immigrant relations in the U.S. Louis, Thompson, Smith, Williams, and Watson (2017) note that black immigrants "have tended to not readily interact with African Americans and socially distance themselves" (p. 670) due to an awareness of the negative stereotypes that are associated with African Americans. It has also been asserted that the distrust is mutual, and that African Americans also engage in discourse that is critical of Africans (Nsangou & Dundes, 2018). Hunter, Case, Joseph, Mekawi, and Bokhari (2017) review contradictory findings in research on intergroup relations between the two groups. While both groups experience race-related discrimination, black immigrants have been shown to reject a common, race-based identity with African Americans. They contrast these assertions with other studies that found support for an in-group identity, disputing claims of strained relations. Black immigrant faculty in a U.S. university, for example, reported positive interactions and "felt an affinity with African Americans in terms of their Blackness" (Louis et al., 2017, p. 684). The findings in these studies, as well as those in my own, affirm the importance of recognising the heterogeneity of immigrant experiences and the utility of intersectionality in understanding how immigrants' lived experiences are influenced by their positioning in particular contexts.

Positive, stable, and meaningful relationships have been argued to be important contributors to the development of a sense of belonging (Antonsich, 2010). A sense of inclusion or 'in-group' can be initiated, for example, by shared language, ethnicity, religion, cultural practices, or life experiences. Participants' experiences of connection at work indicated a tendency for building relationships with other immigrant employees with whom they could relate due to shared experiences as immigrants in the U.S. Conrad and Lindiwe talked about how bonds are more

easily formed between people who are from other countries and cultures, and how they can provide each other with support and encouragement. Friendships with Americans were less common in this sample, perhaps limited by participants' perceptions and experiences of Americans as lacking in openness or interest in other cultures (e.g., Sonja). Challenges in developing friendships with locals inside and outside of the workplace were also reported by South African immigrants in Dubai (Long, 2010) and New Zealand (Trlin, 2012). Other participants, like Mandla and Sean, highlighted instances in which personality, values, and attitudes were more salient than nationality or culture in the development of connections.

Agency

The discussion of participants' experiences in this chapter has illustrated how immigrant employees' differences are constructed within specific temporal and geographic contexts (Tatli & Özbilgin, 2012). Categories of difference such as nationality, accent, race, age, religion, and education are measured and evaluated according to social norms and hegemonic discourses: a certain difference may become more or less salient in an organisation, be evaluated positively or viewed as undesirable, and therefore produce advantage or disadvantage within that workplace (Johansson & Śliwa, 2014; Tatli & Özbilgin, 2012; Valentine, 2007). Although workplace structures and discourses shape employees' identities and experiences at work, it is equally important to recognise human agency and explore how participants interpret and respond to their environments (Ekinsmyth, 2013; Halford, 2008).

Analysing the narratives showed the participants' awareness of, and response to, the ways in which they (and their difference) were perceived in the American workplace. They presented various strategies they found effective in adapting to their new environments and increasing their ability to belong. Graham and Sonja focused on their awareness of, and adjustments in, their language and communication style when interacting with others at work. They both mentioned, for example, how being unassertive or overly soft-spoken was not the norm in the American workplace. Sean and Mandla emphasised how learning more about

Americans and U.S. culture increased their understanding and confidence in social interactions at work. Jian (2012), in a quantitative study, similarly noted that immigrant employees' relationships with co-workers in U.S. workplaces improved as they acculturated and adapted to workplace cultures and norms. Thabani discussed the importance of social interaction and building relationships through finding common ground with co-workers and clients. A few participants, like Conrad, found it beneficial to share about themselves and their South African culture, which they saw as a way to decrease how they may be viewed as Other and to create connections with colleagues.

A focus on agency in exploring migrant belonging emphasises that individuals are not only positioned but are able to position themselves within these contexts (Ralph, 2012). In the present study, participants' use of identity practices demonstrated their recognition and management of positive and negative aspects of their identity or difference. Conrad and David embraced and highlighted their difference as they recognised the benefits accompanying positive perceptions of South Africans in their workplace. Sean, on the other hand, explained that he often downplays his difference to avoid drawing attention or being seen as a threat in his competitive, academic work environment. This was also identified as an identity practice used by Caribbean immigrants to position themselves in the U.S. workplace (Bridgewater & Buzzanell, 2010). Being strategic about these choices means paying attention to when it is appropriate to emphasise a South African identity and when a degree of self-censorship is required.

Other participants' stories showed how emphasising 'sameness' with Americans increases their belonging and inclusion. Karen and Sonja, for example, pointed to commonalities in religion, for example, but other aspects like social values, political beliefs, culture, and lifestyles were also mentioned in the interviews. Daniel and Sean both discussed how particular identities, such as being an educated professional, serve to divert attention away from potential negative perceptions of foreignness toward the attributes and skills that others value. This echoes Valenta (2008), who posits that immigrants are able to use their

educational and occupational status as symbolic capital to reconstruct their identity and emphasise similarities with non-immigrant co-workers.

These identity practices reveal how South Africans are able to mobilise dimensions of difference or specific identity markers as resources to achieve a desired aim, signify inclusion, counter Othering, and negotiate belonging (Anthias, 2002; Chacko, 2015; Johansson & Śliwa, 2014; Ku, 2012; Valenta, 2008). The examples also represent what Atewologun and Sealy (2014) refer to as "identity work" (p. 433), in which people engage to construct or maintain a sense of personal significance and credibility.

Applying Bourdieuian concepts at the organisational scale

Bourdieu's (1984, 1986, 1989) theorising on capital, field, and habitus emphasises relationality and the structure-agency dynamic. Studies have applied Bourdieu's theory to understand migrants' labour market integration experiences in host countries (Akkaymak, 2017; Al Ariss & Syed, 2011; Nowicka, 2014; Plüss, 2012). Migrants arrive in a destination country with a habitus (the "mental structures through which they apprehend the social world", Bourdieu, 1989, p. 18) and differential endowments of capital (economic, social, and cultural) formed in their country of origin (Erel, 2010). Migrants acutely experience the differences between one habitus and another when they relocate to a new country and enter new fields (Kelly & Lusis, 2006). When a migrant's habitus is well suited to a new field, changes experienced may be gradual and manageable. In contrast, a mismatch between habitus and field, termed 'hysteresis' by Bourdieu (1984), leads to a lack of understanding of the 'rules of the game' and may cause disorientation, dissonance, and difficulty in migrant adjustment (Nowicka, 2015), as well as challenges in employment and career progression (Akkaymak, 2017). This is relevant to the present study on immigrant belonging because an incongruence between habitus and field causes discomfort and a lack of 'feeling at home' (Alanen & Siisiäinen, 2011).

One particular study, although not related to migration, applies Bourdieu's theory at the scale of the organisation. Vaughan (2008) conceptualises the organisation as

a ‘field’, where employees encounter an organisational habitus reflecting the institutionalised beliefs, norms, rules of functioning, configurations of power relations, and a shared understanding of ways of seeing and behaving. Adopting this perspective to the present study, South African immigrant employees’ habitus will be in dynamic relationship with the organisational habitus in the U.S. (Khanchel & Ben Kahla, 2013). Within the organisational habitus, forms of capital are given meaning and those forms of capital that are highly valued or recognised as legitimate become symbolic capital (“organization-specific capital”, Vaughan, 2008, p. 77). South African employees are in this way relatively positioned within the organisation-as-field according to their forms and amounts of capital. Participants’ abilities to accumulate, convert, and mobilise their capital are shaped by habitus and by their positioning within the complex structures of power (Erel, 2010) of organisations. Applying Bourdieu’s theory in exploring South African immigrants’ experiences in the U.S. workplace brings the structure-agency dynamic into clearer focus, and contributes insight into South African immigrants’ forms of capital, their strategies to employ their capital, and how South Africanness may be articulated in the American workplace context. It also relates to their experiences of belonging as they work to lessen feelings of not belonging stemming from a lack of fit between their habitus and that of their organisation-as-field.

Like Turkish migrants in Canada (Akkaymak, 2017), some of the participants in the present study discussed how a lack of U.S. credentials and experience posed some challenges when applying for work. Lerato, for example, explained how her securing employment in the corporate sector was derailed in the final stages of the selection process as her degree was not obtained in America, and David described how foreign medical students were perceived as “third-class passengers” during consideration of candidates for residencies. Karen’s South African teaching qualification was not recognised in the U.S. context, forcing her into a different career track. These examples represent a devaluing of institutionalised cultural capital in the American workplace and reveals how South African immigrants may experience their cultural capital as incongruent with the symbolic capital (Erel, 2010) of the organisation-as-field. Like the migrants in Akkaymak’s (2017)

study, Lerato ultimately decided to pursue a postgraduate degree from a U.S. institution to accumulate host-country capital to realign with the habitus of her new context. However, for many other participants (e.g., Sean, Graham, and Yvonne in the education field; Daniel in a specialised retail industry; Mandla and Naledi in the finance sector; and Riaan in the pharmacy industry), South African academic qualifications and experience were resources that facilitated their immigration and employment in America. For these participants, the valuing of education as a legitimate and desired form of capital within a South African habitus continued in their respective workplaces in the U.S. context, allowing participants to mobilise it for professional and geographic mobility (Erel, 2010). In addition, for many of the participants, their foreignness represented a valuable cultural resource that, because it was validated as desired capital in their workplace, could be converted and mobilised to secure and improve their position in the organisation-as-field. Conrad, for example, highlighted how his employer (advertising agency) valued his unique insights and perspectives as a foreigner, and Yvonne explained that her contacts and work experience in different countries contributed to her value and legitimacy as a university faculty member. This reinforces the importance of local context in how forms of capital are differentially valued within the habitus of different 'fields', and how the organisational habitus informs meaning and action at the micro-level (Vaughan, 2008).

Just as Chinese-Singaporean migrant women found their differences valued and appreciated in the U.K. (Plüss, 2012), participants' stories demonstrated how dimensions of difference intersect in the American workplace to create positive experiences for South African immigrant employees. This extends beyond South African immigrants' educational attainment. While racial differences can function as "negative cultural capital" (Plüss, 2012, p. 126) in the U.S. context, the experiences of participants of colour in the present study highlighted the salience of accent in countering this process: black South Africans explained their perception of being set apart from, and being treated more favourably than, African Americans and other African immigrants. Accent privilege was also apparent in the narratives of white participants, who spoke about how their work

colleagues make attributions of intelligence or sophistication based on their 'British-sounding' accent. Both black and white participants' experiences thus revealed how associations are made between accent and social class in the American context, which become reinforced by the tendency for South African immigrants to be highly educated professionals. In the present study, the South African accent was found to be central to the way participants' difference becomes accepted as cultural capital in the U.S. workplace, and participants mobilise this resource in navigating the American context and negotiating belonging at work. The participants' experiences thus affirm the utility of an intersectional approach in understanding how dimensions of difference such as race, nationality, accent, education, and class position immigrant employees in U.S. workplaces.

Unlike the Lebanese migrants in Paris in Al Ariss and Syed's (2011) study, South African immigrants in the U.S. do not tend to have high levels of social capital that can be mobilised and deployed. A few of the participants specifically addressed how their lack of networks, or being located outside of established networks, acts as a barrier to participation and belonging in their workplaces. Sonja discussed how staff who were not close friends of the owners of the business were not supported and held no power; Thabani described his workplace as having a 'fraternity' atmosphere where non-conformity was frowned upon; and Mandla explained his perception of social cliques in a 'bro-y' work environment and a power imbalance between those with and without access to such networks. The habitus of each of these workplaces, which positions employees and orients their actions, informed the participants' responses and strategies to accumulate and deploy their capital (Al Ariss & Syed, 2011).

Sonja's strategy involved adjusting or transforming certain dispositions within her own habitus to overcome aspects of mismatch with her organisational habitus: she changed the way she communicates by being more assertive and standing up to her boss and colleagues (which she described as challenging for her as a South African but a necessary skill in the American context). Sonja felt that this change was respected and improved her standing with her co-workers. Thabani explained

his tendency to not shy away from controversial and taboo topics in the workplace, and also attempted to pursue a position in the organisation where he could contribute to the organisation's diversity efforts (dispositions and valued cultural capital within a South African habitus). Unfortunately, within an organisational habitus that valorises hierarchy, is dominated by whiteness, and functions to conserve the status quo, Thabani's anticipated choices did not match expectations within the field (incongruence of individual and organisational habitus), leading to a negative outcome (Alanen & Siisiäinen, 2011).

Several other examples within the narratives revealed ways in which immigrant habitus may change and adjust in relation to the organisational habitus. Nowicka (2015) describes this as "dynamic transformations of [migrants'] values, orientations, beliefs and behaviors" (p. 8) in relation to the new field. Daniel, for example, discussed how his increased interactions with LGBTQ customers has resulted in a more "progressive" view which he sees as aligning with an American cultural context. Several other examples in the narratives indicate how participants adopted certain behaviours and ways of interacting that are more comfortable and appropriate for their work environment: being more assertive (Sonja); adapting to Americans' expectations (Michael); avoiding certain words (David) or controversial topics (Sean); adjusting to Americans' sense of humour (Graham); or adopting a new managerial style (Daniel). The workplace is in this way a site for sociality and socialisation that shapes how migrants' habitus modifies to the organisational habitus, and how immigrants may internalise American norms, values, perspectives, and ways of 'doing' work.

Erel (2010) discusses how migrants may compensate for the devaluing of certain forms of capital by validating or creating value in other attributes. Similar to the labour market integration experiences of Polish migrants in the U.K. (Nowicka, 2014), narratives in the present study revealed how participants validate their cultural capital in the local context of the U.S. workplace through articulating their South Africanness as a resource. Sheryl described South Africans as having "a very good work ethic" and Conrad explained that South Africans are "agile and adaptable". Lindiwe (a nurse) emphasised her ability to relate to patients from

different cultures compared to a "monolithic" person who only speaks one language, and Michael similarly perceived his cultural competence as giving him an edge over his American colleagues in the real estate industry. Such "discursive self-positioning" (Nowicka, 2014, p. 16) by participants, which often involves comparisons with other people, represents a strategy aimed at bringing new value to their cultural capital within the American workplace. The situatedness of migrant-specific capital (Erel, 2010) within the U.S. workplace means that participants articulate 'being from South Africa' in locally-specific ways. This study also highlighted how a lack of knowledge among Americans about South Africa, and the attribution of positive stereotypes associated with the South African accent, seems to increase South African immigrants' ability to define and give meaning to their cultural capital (create distinction), and mobilise these resources in the U.S. context.

Integrating the perspectives of migration and organisational analysis studies, and applying Bourdieuian concepts at the scale of the workplace (organisation-as-field), contributes insights into how the U.S. workplace, as a social context, influences immigrant employees' experiences. Specifically, it more clearly emphasises the structure-agency dynamic in the validation of, and migrants' capacity to mobilise, different forms of capital in different workplaces.

5.7 Summary

This study aimed to contextualise participants' experiences of identity and belonging within the American workplace. I presented my analysis of the participant narratives in relation to the workplace and their workplace experiences in four sections. The first section focused on the culture and characteristics of the workplace that I identified as having an influential or mediating effect on how participants experience a sense of belonging. These appeared to be primarily related to perceptions of social boundaries and group membership, as well as the values and norms of the organisation regarding diversity, difference, and social interaction. Participant descriptions provided examples of how power relations, dominant cultures, and boundary construction in the workplace position immigrant employees in ways that shape experiences of inclusion and exclusion.

Their stories highlighted how social norms and values are specific to a workplace or an industry, and illustrated the conditions under which participants personally experienced acceptance and respect or felt Othered and disadvantaged. Various conceptualisations of cultural geographic notions of space and place were reflected in this section.

In the second section I discussed the practical and relational challenges the participants faced, as South African immigrants, in the U.S. workplace. Participants shared about the attitudes and biases of colleagues and clients, workplace expectations that they found challenging to adjust to, the significance of cross-cultural differences in how they are perceived by, and interact with, others in the workplace, as well as their own experiences of exclusion. Section three explored how participants viewed their foreignness as an asset in the workplace and the circumstances under which they have felt a sense of belonging and inclusion at work. Some participants emphasised the benefits of being regarded as unusual, different, and able to contribute unique perspectives and skills in their workplace. Several participants reported a tendency to connect with and relate to other immigrant employees than with American-born colleagues.

As an important complement to the first three sections which explored various workplace structures and discourses shaping participants' perceptions and experiences of identity and belonging, section four addressed human agency and the strategies and identity practices participants use to manage their difference, build relationships, negotiate belonging, and increase inclusion in their workplaces. Applying Bourdieu's theory at the scale of organisation-as-field highlighted the structure-agency dynamic and the process of capital validation and mobilisation in specific workplaces. While chapter five has focused on situating the participants' experiences in the workplace specifically, chapter six encompasses those themes relating to participants' experiences of belonging beyond the workplace: their integration in the U.S.

CHAPTER 6: PERCEPTIONS OF INTEGRATION IN THE U.S.

6.1 Introduction

The aim of this study was to contextualise South African immigrants' experiences within the American workplace. This was the primary focus of discussion in chapter five. However, my interviews with participants also yielded a large amount of data on broader issues of belonging and integration within the U.S. In general, I found that participants wanted to share, and enjoyed talking about, their immigration journey in the interviews. At times these stories overlapped with the work context, while at others they revealed more about social situations and contexts that were unrelated to their work lives. This allowed me to gain some insight into the relative significance of work in participants' overall feeling of belonging and integration in the U.S. compared to other social contexts (e.g., family, community, social groups, cultural activities, and so on). In addition, participants' discussions of topics such as identity, politics, and 'home' further illuminated the immigrant experience of South Africans in the U.S. The purpose of chapter six, therefore, is to present and discuss themes related to these findings.

Integration essentially means the process through which migrants become an integral part of society in their host country. The OECD/European Union (2015) identifies various indicators of migrant integration, including participation in the labour market, social inclusion, and civic engagement. Integration is important in promoting social cohesion and allowing migrants "to become self-reliant, productive citizens" (p. 15). For the purposes of the present discussion, the term 'integration' relates to the ways in which the participants perceive they are adapting to, fitting into, and becoming part of, American culture and society. The participants themselves use words such as integrate, acculturate, adjust, and adapt interchangeably when discussing how they have grown accustomed to life in the U.S. Participants who have more recently immigrated do tend to share more about struggles with issues of identity and belonging than those who have been in the U.S. for longer. However, feeling acculturated or integrated does not necessarily mean that participants identify as 'American' or that they have a sense of belonging or 'home' in the U.S. As experiences are unique to every individual, the

aim in this chapter is not to generalise but to highlight some central themes in the participants' integration experiences.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section looks at how participants have adjusted to life in the U.S., the relative importance of their work life in their acculturation as immigrants, and the ways in which they have found a sense of community. Next, I explore participants' experiences of identity and belonging in America by focusing on their perspectives on U.S. politics, their identity as South Africans, and their feelings about 'home' and their future. The chapter ends with a discussion of the findings and a summary.

6.2 The Immigrant Journey

6.2.1 Adjusting to life in America

Several participants' stories illustrate that the immigration experience can be a very emotional one, and it is understandable why the phrase 'culture shock' is often used to describe the initial adjustment period. Daniel, for example, reflects on his emotional state after the first few weeks of trying to adapt to day-to-day living in the U.S.:

> I remember the first week that I was here going to the store and trying to buy food and expecting the foods here to be equivalent to South African foods – but they are not. . . and you are actually disappointed to your core and you don't know what to do. It has a very negative impact on your overall morale at the end of the day. I remember three or four weeks in I had a complete meltdown because I was hungry, I couldn't get what I was looking for, and people didn't understand me. It sounds so stupid and silly but when you're on your own and not coping or adjusting, and struggling to communicate with everyone, and trying to find a place to live. . . all those things just pile up and at that point something silly like mayonnaise not tasting like it should is the last straw.

Naledi talks about her feelings of loneliness and disconnection that many immigrants would relate to:

> For me immigration has been more emotional, because economically I'm ok. Emotionally it has taken a toll on me. For six months I didn't know anyone and I didn't make friends. . . . America is not a communal country – it's not like your neighbours or friends just pop over like they do in

> South Africa. When I'm walking around the city I feel alone. I don't know enough people to bump into someone or go and meet a friend.

Karen opens up about her struggle to adapt after she left her family and her job to move to the U.S. with her husband:

> It's been tough. I became depressed, gained weight - it was so different and hard in the beginning. And not having a purpose and sitting at home while my husband worked gave me no self- worth. Making friends was difficult. We didn't have an entry way with Americans, and we didn't know any South Africans for a long time. . . . I do miss my family and not knowing my sister's children really sucks.

Daniel's description reveals how an immigrant may feel overwhelmed quite easily when even the simplest things like food items do not fit a South African frame of reference. Naledi and Karen's comments point to a how a loss of family, friends, and social networks results in feeling isolated and disheartened. However, not all the participants report an emotionally intense journey:

> I never found immigration that hard. I didn't find the acculturation a big deal. Having my first child was a much bigger change than immigrating to America. In fact, in comparison to it, moving to America was nothing (David).

> I never felt homesick when I came to the U.S., or that I wanted to go home to South Africa. It was a pretty easy transition for me. . . . I know it's difficult for a lot of people, but I'm more on the easy-going side and less concerned with the fitting-in side of things (Michael).

When discussing ways in which they have integrated in the U.S., almost all of the participants describe various social and cultural areas to which they have adjusted and adapted, ranging from American sports and politics, holidays and celebrations, to social norms and etiquette. Many of them note that this builds confidence and reduces the anxiety they initially felt as immigrants. However, only some participants focus on integration in terms of becoming accepted by Americans. These participants use phrases like "but once they got to know me" when discussing how Americans are initially doubtful, dismissive, or uncertain of them or their skills and abilities. For example, Lerato states that "It definitely adds some sort of stigma, but once people get to know you that gets better"; Mandla

explains that “once you have worked with them for a while they realise you are not an idiot”; and Reena remarks that “once you are there for a while and they see your skills and that you know what they are talking about then they are ok.” Notably, such phrases are largely absent in the narratives of white, English-speaking participants, perhaps indicative of how they are more likely to be given the benefit of the doubt in their new environments. Participants of colour, and participants with a more noticeable Afrikaans accent (like Riaan), may tend to discuss this aspect of integration because of the significance of embodied characteristics such as race and accent in signifying immigrants as Other. They are thus more likely to encounter stereotyping or prejudice.

Some of the participants describe integration as a natural process that occurs over time, to the point where it almost becomes second nature: they can drive on the right side of the road, they understand what language and behaviours are appropriate in which contexts, they use pounds, miles, and ounces as measurements, and they know what to order at a Mexican restaurant. Graham compares his experience in the U.S. and the U.K: “The process was similar in London, where I started by feeling very out of place and judging everything by South African standards to being slightly more assimilated.” Karen explains that “it’s all a big learning curve. And often you make mistakes - we call it ‘paying tuition’. We are paying to learn.” Naledi speaks of the inevitability of adapting to life in America:

> But as much as I am fighting to keep my South African identity, I do find it is slipping away a bit. I was more in touch with South Africa when I arrived. There is so much I have missed, and I’m getting used to stuff here. In the beginning my mom would ship products from South Africa to me, but now I’m just using stuff from here. Same with food and tv programs.

Some participants emphasise that becoming integrated is a choice. Karen argues against being alienated from American culture and feels that integration is necessary to “eventually be an American living in America.” Daniel points out that becoming Americanised requires conscious effort:

> And it takes a lot because if you didn't grow up in a place you are the outsider. You need to be the one who calls up people to go to lunch and socialise. If you don't do that you will sit at home and sulk and feel sorry for yourself.

Daniel further speaks about how integration is not only about becoming adapted to America, but also sometimes becoming disconnected from South Africa.

> I've experienced different things that no-one at home can relate to anymore. I go back every year, and every time I go, I realise I will never be able to stay there again. Even though it's the place I grew up in, and I see all my friends and family and everything that makes South Africa what it is, I really can't relate with them or their problems. It's their life but not who I am. . . . Immigration does that. It is what it is. Perhaps it's even part of why I am adjusting better than I thought I would because I have nothing pulling me back.

Sonja similarly discusses how she had to let certain aspects of her life in South Africa go so her family could embrace life in the U.S.:

> It's important to have traditions in our family. . . . But you can't force your traditions and culture on your kids if you live in this country - you have to become part of this country or it's going to be too hard for you to adjust.

It is interesting to note that the three participants who are most vocal in advocating for the need to 'Americanise' are Afrikaans-speakers. Perhaps this is indicative of perceptions of incompatibility between Afrikaner culture and American culture (compared to English-speakers from South Africa who may not experience the same degree of difference or adjustment).

A few participants provide examples of the ways in which living in the U.S. has changed their personal views or perspectives. Daniel, for example, reflects on the link between his interactions with LGBTQ clients at work in America and his outlook:

> I have found that my beliefs are moving around because I am being exposed to these things more now. It does not mean I am turning my back on the Bible, but because I'm living in a society where it is more acceptable, and I realise that nothing bad is happening, I am much more accepting towards gays and lesbians than I ever would have been before. And I think that's a really good thing. I find myself to be a bit more progressive.

Not all changes are embraced so enthusiastically. Mandla and Thabani both express some dismay at how they sometimes find themselves viewing the world from an American perspective:

> I do find that I think about the world a lot less now that I am here. It's the news – it blows my mind how U.S.-focused the news is. The only other international news they have is news that affects the U.S., like North Korea and anything to do with Islamic terror - nothing else. So, I find myself thinking like the U.S. is the centre of the world. Not that America is better or the centre of the world, I just don't engage with the rest of the world much anymore. I knew more about other countries' politics when I was in South Africa (Mandla).

> But the only media you get is filtered down to what Americans see, and you can get lazy into accepting something or following a narrative, instead of questioning something, which would then not be very American of me. . . . I don't want to be blindly following like Americans often do (Thabani).

The above excerpts illustrate participants' awareness and agency in the ongoing process of identity re-evaluation and expression as they negotiate belonging in the U.S. Some may view Americanisation as inevitable while others selectively embrace certain aspects of American identity and culture.

6.2.2 The relative significance of work in immigrant acculturation

From the interviews it seems that most participants view their work life as central to their acculturation and integration in the U.S. Some participants focus on opportunities for social interaction and connection that work provides:

> I don't have any childhood friends here, so friends come from work or through my wife. So, work has a big role in the relationships I form (Thabani).

> It is a very important aspect of my life. My wife is always meeting people in the neighbourhood and in her moms' network. I find it really difficult to meet and interact with the guys around the neighbourhood (Graham).

> Work is a big thing. I am surviving here through the networks I have made through work. . . . So for me work has been number one. If I didn't have work, I would be living alone by myself. Where would I go to meet people? People are not easy to talk to outside of work and it's not easy to make friends with people who are already established here. . . . You need

> someone to introduce you to others. At work, for example, I met other new people at training sessions (Naledi).

Other participants describe how their job has helped them understand and relate to Americans. Sean notes that "at work you are interacting with Americans on a one-on-one basis and it humanises them a little bit, which helps you understand that they are just people who have problems just like everyone else." Lindiwe's unique work environment as an independent nurse allows her to gain a deeper understanding of Americans:

> Especially for me going into people's homes which are such personal spaces- that's where you see the real deal. If you really want to know Americans and see how they live go into their homes. . . . That has helped a whole lot, and a lot faster than if I was in any other industry. And there are a lot of similarities, believe it or not, between South Africans and Americans. I would not have known that if I had not come that close to them.

Naledi highlights that the workplace is also an important social context within which Americans can get to know immigrants: "At least at work people are forced to interact with different people and are forced to learn about them. It builds tolerance." Sonja similarly states that immigrants are more likely to be accepted by Americans in the workplace than outside of it.

Other participants focus on the sense of purpose that their jobs provide:

> That's why work is so important for me. I need it. In fact, if I didn't have a job, I would've forced my husband to go back to South Africa. After six months of not working I was pretty over it. Then my life started once I found a job. I had purpose with work (Karen).

> Well I spend most of my time at work, so I think I found my identity to some degree in that. I find my identity in the quality of work that I produce and in the impact I have on people's lives. I find my role is more a form of ministry than just a job because I'm dealing with people and their relationships. I think my profession is the perfect mix of science and art. So yes, I find a big part of my identity in my job (Daniel).

> Work is huge for me because I have something in common with the people there. . . . So at least with work I've got the purpose, I'm invested, I like the office, I like the people; we've got something in common and we are working towards something (Graham).

Work can thus be viewed as source of meaning and self-worth for these participants, and central to their sense of self and identity. Sean extends the argument to how a professional role aids in building credibility for foreign workers in the U.S.:

> I think that the professional aspect is huge, because for example, when people ask you what you do and you tell them you are a professor at the university, it creates a sense of respect and belonging straight away. It legitimises your foreignness a little bit, because people would expect there to be some foreigners at a university. Maybe that applies to other professions like doctors too, I'm not sure, but being employed at a university, being a professor, and having a PhD sounds very legitimate.

Yvonne focuses on the opportunities her job creates in terms of her professional identity and job security:

> It is an established and protected industry here, which means that I would always have a job and I would be allowed to be an expert in my field. I would be able to focus solely on this field and be surrounded by people who have the same interest and passion.

In some cases, employment is of extreme importance due to more practical, legal realities related to immigration: immigrant visa status is temporary until a green card is obtained. Riaan notes the insecurity he felt as a new immigrant: "I was here on a working visa, so you don't want to mess anything up and lose your job." Yvonne similarly states that "as a foreigner you are always scared about making sure your papers are right so that you are not sent back home." Naledi explains her current pursuit of a green card:

> . . . that is why I have been studying to get my CPA and meet all the requirements to get my green card. I am very close now to my dream and getting that security. But until that happens, I am still uncomfortable every day.

Karen talks about feeling insecure and frustrated about her family's dependence on her husband's employer:

> The problem is they seemed a bit reluctant to start to the green card process because of the current political situation, and also because it's expensive and they want to make sure you are committed. But I'm hoping it will happen, especially when he gets promoted. I think you have to work

> twice as hard to show why they should keep you when they could get an American who they don't have to pay sponsorship fees for.

There are a few participants who see their personal lives and other non-work contexts to have been more influential in their acculturation and integration in America. Kaya, for example, explains that she already had many personal South African friends in the U.S. when she arrived. They supported her, helped her adjust, and introduced her to people. Sheryl remarks that although work is important to her it has never been a source of socialisation for her in the U.S., and that her "social life is based more through my kids and home rather than through work. I have made connections by joining the PTA or getting involved in art classes." Michael expresses a similar view:

> Having kids and family is more important. For example, they are very involved with teams in their sports and activities. So, I'm relating more to others through my kids than at work. I'm not with the people at work much and with clients you make the deal and that's it.

Sheryl and Michael, though, are two participants who do not go into the office daily. As Michael notes, "Someone who has an office job will be interacting with the same people day in and day out. My belonging comes more from my family and my kids than the workplace."

6.2.3 Finding a sense of community

A sense of belonging implies feelings of security, familiarity, and emotional attachment (Antonsich, 2010), and is an important aspect of immigrant well-being. Paying attention to the people participants identify as an 'in-group' to which they feel they belong contributes to an understanding of South African immigrants' integration experiences. Who do they relate to? Who becomes their 'surrogate family' in the U.S.? Which social groups or communities do they become part of?

Similar to their experiences in the workplace, several participants mention that they get along with, and relate best to, other immigrants:

> I tend to make friends with other immigrants. My one friend is from Lebanon and another is from Thailand. We have a lot in common; we talk differently and as immigrants you don't always get accepted by Americans. . . . Immigrants do not have family to get together with on holidays like Thanksgiving like Americans do. And we don't often get invited by Americans to special events. So, we know how it feels not to have family or to be part of things and it connects us (Sonja).

> Two of my friends are Canadian, one is from Iraq, another from Germany, many from Ghana, and another from Sierra Leone. . . . It's hard to make friends with Americans because they already have their lives and don't have time for new friends (Naledi).

Participants' social circles thus often consist of individuals from a variety of countries, with whom they can share their experiences, insights, and struggles as newcomers and outsiders, and support each other as immigrants in America.

There are some participants who speak about how their American friends are an important source of support and inclusion in their life in the U.S. Lerato notes that "Despite some of the negatives, the more you get to know the Americans the more you'll find some very nice people. When they get to know you, they even do a lot for you." Sheryl, who has many American friends in her social circle, explains that it was a challenging but worthwhile process to develop relationships with Americans:

> It took a long time and hard work to make connections because people here already had their friends. . . my husband and I entertained more than anyone else did. That's definitely a South African thing because people do not entertain in their houses here and it takes a long time for Americans to reciprocate. But eventually you make it work and now I have different groups and friends that I spend time with.

A few other participants similarly emphasise the importance of participating in social activities, taking an active role in meeting people and nurturing connections, and becoming part of their local community. Examples include joining a church or synagogue, playing sports, volunteering, attending kids' school and sports activities, meeting people with similar hobbies or interests, attending American sports and cultural events, inviting others for Thanksgiving or

other holidays, and even getting (and walking) a dog. These represent contexts other than work where immigrants can develop a sense of belonging.

A notable contrast exists between black and white participants when speaking about Americans. Black participants discuss their differing interactions with both white and black Americans, while white participants tend to not make the same distinction. When talking about 'Americans', they tend to be referring to white Americans, and none make references to any friendships with African Americans (socially or in the workplace). References to race in the white participants' narratives are limited, and mostly relate to their observations about race relations and racial segregation in the U.S. Michael, for example, asserts that America is not as integrated as one might think and that "whites stay more with the whites and the blacks stay more with the blacks." David reports that "Americans don't like talking about race, and certainly not in mixed company. When blacks and whites are together, they will avoid race like the plague." He feels that race relations were better in South Africa. Karen believes that Americans "are almost more racist than South Africans, they are just not as open about it. They don't say it, or act publicly on it, but I think they are bigger racists." She describes ways in which African Americans are purposefully kept from advancing to high-status, better paying jobs.

Only a few white participants refer to personal interactions with African Americans. Sean talks about the African American students in his class:

> If I think of black Americans, I've tended to form really good relationships with them, and it seems that some would rather work with me because there may be an assumption that they might be more stereotyped by white Americans than they would be by me . . .

Graham reflects about feeling some apprehension about how African Americans may perceive him as a white South African:

> What sometimes does hit me with a little bit of anxiety is when it's an African American person who asks me where I come from, and in that moment I don't really want to answer because I don't know what the average African American thinks of South Africa or South Africans. Maybe nothing, but if you know even a little bit of history - anyway, I do

> feel a bit anxious about whether they will see me as this white South African.

David gives an example of how South African immigrants may possibly struggle with identity labels regarding their nationality and racial identity:

> The most memorable encounter I had with an African American was a few years after I immigrated, when an elderly black woman came into the emergency room and asked me where I was from when she heard my accent. So, I answered 'born and raised in South Africa', and she looked at me strangely, so I asked her if she was surprised, and she said yes. So, I said, 'you realise then that makes me more African American than you?' and she looked at me more and said, 'I guess you are!' So maybe I have stepped on some toes over the years, but most people seem to take it well.

Even these isolated examples indicate a lack of meaningful and ongoing relationships with black Americans: white participants in this study do not seem to have much interaction with African Americans, and their social circles are less likely to include African Americans. For these participants, integration essentially means becoming integrated into 'white America'.

It can be argued that this is to be expected because the U.S. is a majority-white country, and that many regions and cities have pronounced racial segregation (spatially and socially) which reduces opportunities for interaction. It is relevant, however, because it means that many white South African immigrants are disconnected from a segment of American society which results in an incomplete conceptualisation of what it means to be an 'American'. It can also be seen as another example of how white privilege works to increase white participants' capacity to belong by providing more access to an 'American' identity. Interestingly, while the black participants in this study do speak more often about their personal interactions with black Americans, they also do not identify the African American community as one they feel part of or able to relate to (as relayed in the discussion of their experiences with African Americans in the workplace).

While only two participants had experiences working with fellow South Africans, most of the participants speak about their interactions with and feelings about

other South Africans in their life in the U.S. For many, other South Africans continue to be a very important part of their social circles and networks. Thabani and Sheryl enjoy meeting and spending time with other South Africans:

> I know one South African who lives in another part of the area; he owns a farm and we often buy boerewors from him. In the few times I have seen him and spoken to him it seems like we are able to easily have a conversation without any major introductions or difficulty. We spoke about rugby for example. So that's different than with Americans. We have some South Africans in another city close by, and every year there is an expat get together on Freedom Day which we go to - just to get that little bit of home. The small things make a big difference when you are homesick (Thabani).

> I feel that I connect with South Africans in a way that I don't with Americans. I'm loving my group of South African friends They are just so lovely and when they come over it's not about what they can get but what they can give. . . . We do things that Americans can't understand, and we share a sense of humour that I would never be able to show with my Americans friends (Sheryl).

These comments point to an ease in conversation and a connection with South Africans that participants do not have with Americans. Reena and Karen note how being South African creates a common bond among fellow South Africans despite other possible differences:

> The nice thing about other South Africans - despite any issues you would maybe have had with others in South Africa - when you meet another South African here those go away, because they are the closest thing to home that you will have here. So, although other people may view you negatively, I feel that any other South African you meet, no matter race, colour, or whatever, it is always positive (Reena).

> Then he started to play Rugby at a club, and we met other South Africans, and now we know more. They are all older than us and we would never be friends in South Africa but because we are all here in America we have things in common to be able to be friends. . . . But it is nice to make boerewors and chutney, and do South African things with them, which you will never get with Americans. You do need those things too (Karen).

Sean mentions that knowing other South Africans "gives you a sense of comfort" and helps combat feelings of isolation. Lindiwe explains how fellow South

Africans form an important part of an immigrant's social and support network, especially during holidays and for celebrations:

> We have a pretty large group of South Africans in this city - people who left South Africa at different times. Some people came here in the seventies and those who have come recently. So, it's a mixed group we gather with for parties and holidays. New Year's Eve is a big celebration - without fail. Sometimes as many as 80 people. So, we do stick together in that sense, and they are a major part, if not all, of my social group.

Mandla discusses his reliance on his South African network in terms of building his career:

> Where I have found success is in leaning on the South African network. There is a pretty big and strong one in this city, and quite a big one in finance. I'm not personal friends with them, but we do go for a beer and talk about work and stuff. That's easier than trying to build my network among Americans.

The above examples demonstrate the benefits of being part of a South African expat 'community' in the U.S., and the desire to stay connected and interact with others who share some common perspectives, experiences, or backgrounds.

There are, however, participants who have mixed feelings about getting together with fellow South Africans. Lerato and Naledi, for example, recount their negative experiences at expat gatherings:

> When I first arrived here, I was involved with another group but there were a lot of petty problems and fights. And there was another group that held socials, but I found that group very alienating for me. You go there and you don't get to speak to anyone. Everyone has formed their own groups or cliques - there was no-one pulling the group together. But my little group is great, and everyone gets along and it's drama free. We have braais and potjies (Lerato).

> It's difficult for us to link up as South Africans here because of the different social standards back home. When we come here, we can't relate to each other as a community – not as a close-knit community like other immigrants. . . . You can be lonely here even if you live next to a South African. I have met a few South Africans I probably would never talk to again. I don't know what we expect from each other, and there seems to be a lack of respect for each other too. I did go to some of the expat events, and it's nice to meet South Africans and eat all the nice food like pies and

> boerewors and braais. But there were also squabbles. On a social level I was not comfortable with some of the people there (Naledi).

Several other participants of colour also allude to a perceived persistence of racial tension or barely-concealed racism at South African expat gatherings. Their interactions with expats in these social events show that some white South Africans continue to hold the intolerant and prejudiced views and attitudes they developed in South Africa. Social groups at expat gatherings thus often mirror divisions and social boundaries within South African society. However, several white participants were similarly unenthusiastic about socialising with other South Africans:

> I'm not always super excited to meet other South Africans. . . . I don't mind if other South Africans flit in and out, I just don't need to form friendships with them. Sometimes you meet South Africans who are excited to meet you but when they speak, they don't sound very patriotic about the country. I understand that people may have a gripe but I'm not really into that whole expat thing about talking negatively about South Africa in that way. My friends and I are proud to be from South Africa and have that sense of unity, which I appreciate. The others don't really share my opinions or my values. But we are not all the same (Conrad).

> People might think I am a snob but I'm really not. I find that when I try to interact with the other South Africans it's difficult because they tend to be the typical 'Brakpan' people who I don't really want to mix with. They use bad language and don't know what to do socially. And you get put in the same camp as those people and I don't want to be looked at as someone who does not know what something is. . . . So I'm trying to avoid it to some degree if that makes sense (Daniel).

> There are South African social groups, but I don't participate. They already have their own friendships and a lot of them drink and smoke and curse, and that's just not me. I also hate gossip which South Africans seem to love doing. Also, if you are in a South African group, they don't like it when you are friends with people from a different culture or who are a different colour. It's usually the Afrikaans-speaking South Africans. They don't want you to be friends with a Chinese person or with a Muslim. So, you cannot be part of a South African group if you are willing to be friends with those kinds of people. It's just a different culture and they are judgmental. If you are from a different culture, or are in a mixed marriage or gay, you will not be accepted into their group (Sonja).

Although Daniel and Sonja are the only ones making direct references to Afrikaans-speaking expats, the underlying implication in several of the interviews is that white Afrikaners in the U.S. are perceived to more likely have prejudiced views or negative attitudes about South Africa.

The contradicting feelings about interacting with fellow South Africans represents a tension between a need for connection and a desire for distance. It also brings back into focus the heterogeneity of South Africans as an immigrant group in terms of race, language, ethnicity, attitudes, and perspectives. Some of the participants also express a desire for a social circle that includes more than just South Africans:

> I do find that a lot of my friends hang out because they find that sense of belonging and there is a lot of reminiscing; we do a good job of reminding each other of our upbringing at home. But I personally find it annoying. I think we should be engaging with the environment we are in. I want to watch NFL games and try to understand baseball - get into it all. Let's not all get together and watch the Springboks (Mandla).

> I also want to be connected with people that aren't South African. I want to be connected as a colleague or a friend, and I still dream of having a totally American friend (Graham).

> But one aspect of status was based on whether you had American friends. Yes, you are expected to automatically become friends with the South Africans in your city, but do you have American friends? And most people pride themselves on being 50/50. If you only had American friends then you were seen as trying to hide away from being South African, but if you only had South African friends you weren't integrated. So, the highest status would be to have some of both (David).

Exploring how participants seek connection and manage their social group memberships contributes to an understanding of South African immigrants' acculturation experiences. It also points to the role of identity in participants' sense of belonging in the U.S.

6.3 Identity and Belonging

6.3.1 Perspectives on politics

The majority of participants, whether spontaneously or with prompting, share some thoughts about politics in America. This is relevant because immigration is a prominent and controversial issue within the political climate in the U.S., and because politics or political beliefs are often salient to identity and belonging in the country. Participant narratives may bring some insight into how strongly they feel about politics and the ways in which they are impacted by political ideologies in the U.S., how they situate themselves in relation to the largely liberal-conservative divide, and the degree to which political viewpoints intersect with other aspects such as race, gender, or religion.

Excerpts from the interviews show the ways in which perspectives about politics can differ. Although not generalisable, some patterns or tendencies within the narratives about politics are noted within this sample. For example, people of colour are more likely to speak about their racial identity than white participants, and share personal experiences of racism; those who feel comfortable enough to voice their opposition to Trump (the president at the time of writing this thesis) tend to be white English-speakers who identify with democratic or liberal values; and participants who indicate some support for Republican ideals are more likely to have grown up in a more conservative Afrikaans culture in South Africa.

A couple of participants verbalise their strong disapproval of Trump and the anti-immigrant movement that his administration advocates. Both excerpts are from white, English-speaking men:

> I can’t stand Trump. I can’t stand what's happening here. I think it's terrible. I feel like we've taken a 170-year step back - a regressive step to a medieval response to our problems to get back to the ‘good old days’ (David).

> I didn't think we could go back that way, and I was dismayed that the American people would vote for this guy and think that he's presidential. All of it seems like a disgrace to the flag and the history of the country. And I am surprised every day that there aren't more people that are more shocked. Our flag fell down and we haven’t put it back up because of the

> Trump thing. To be honest it lowers my sense of what America is and can be, fairly dramatically (Graham).

Although none of the participants explicitly voice support for Trump, there are two Afrikaans-speaking women who agree with his position on certain issues:

> I don't like people coming across the border and demanding education and healthcare, or who commit crimes. We came in the legal way. It was a long, hard, expensive way. I've never asked America for anything and they gave me nothing for free - you have to work your way up. It's not easy to do it the legal way, so I agree with him. . . . We all come here to be safe, and if you let anyone come in here and make it unsafe what kind of country will you end up in? (Sonja).

> People would think it's weird that we are Republican because they don't like foreigners or want them in the country. But I'm also open enough to understand that if I was born here, I also wouldn't want a bunch of foreigners to come in. I would want to select them from educated people without criminal records because I have seen what it does to a country when you just let loose. If you haven't seen anything else and you haven't seen poverty and you don't know what unemployment is, you think it's ok to just let people in (Karen).

Karen and Sonja's views on immigration seem to reflect those held currently by many Republicans in the U.S., suggesting a perceived fit between white, Afrikaner conservatism and conservative attitudes in America. There are several white, male participants who tend to be less eager to engage politics, or describe how politics is unimportant in their lives:

> At the end of the day politicians play politics, but you and me down here need to make a living. It doesn't make a difference if you are a democrat or republican, as long as I can make my life work here. The things they fight about do not personally impact me here. If it did maybe it would be a problem (Riaan).

> I hear the stories now about Mexicans and the wall, so I guess they may feel unsafe, but it's not something that has concerned me at all. I have an American passport now and I've been here for such a long time. I'm married to an American, we have American kids now. I've never been in the firing line to be sent back to my country. I can also vote but I choose not to. It's difficult for me but I feel it's all corrupt. You are just voting for the lesser evil (Michael).

> I am an apolitical person. I decided to cut that part out of my life when I emigrated. But that said people will try to have a conversation with me about things and will try to elicit a political response - an American response - from me. I find it difficult to block that off. For example, people have commented on how long it has taken for my wife to get a green card and then try to blame it on President Trump, and I have to politely thank them for their interest but try to steer the conversation away because it is a personal matter (Daniel).

In contrast to racially-Othered immigrants in the U.S. who are more likely to implicitly experience the intersection of politics and day-to-day life, the ability of these participants to distance themselves from politics or claim it personally irrelevant can be seen as an example of white privilege.

Participants of colour in this study, by contrast, articulate their views on the salience of racism and politics in the U.S.:

> The NFL is another example. My wife and I were watching a football game recently, and you see that all but one guy on the team is black. But they don't want the players to stand up for what they feel is wrong. It makes zero sense. I don't understand why people would have a problem with somebody kneeling. It's not one of those moments you would say 'great minds think alike' - more 'not so great minds' (Thabani).

> Coming from South Africa where we have our own battles to fight, I think I was naïve that it was better here - that it was a country that had unity. Then you come here and you're like 'whoa'. It was a shock and it still is. It only took one new president to see the true colours. I think everything else was just hidden. My friends and I argue about which country is worse, and my friends in South Africa ask me if I'm coming home. It's not so great (Kaya).

There is a degree of disappointment and disillusionment in their comments about socio-political issues in the U.S., as well as a disconnection between their own values and those they are encountering that may influence their sense of belonging. Yvonne and Reena discuss more personal examples of ways in which current political attitudes or policies shape their thoughts and feelings about their life in the U.S.:

> I think when I saw the DACA kids being told they may have to go back then I felt, wow, what's going to happen if that becomes my story and policies no longer allow me and my spouse to be comfortable? So, when it

> comes to the challenges of the future, especially under the Trump administration, I was concerned, and people were asking me if I was alright (Yvonne).

The DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) program was created to grant undocumented immigrants brought to the U. S. as children temporary, renewable lawful status to live and work in the country (NCSL, 2020). Yvonne makes this connection as many DACA recipients (overwhelmingly people of colour) being targeted by the Trump administration face the insecurity of deportation despite being educated, qualified professionals. Reena, who earlier in the interview had expressed her worry about being perceived as Muslim by "ignorant people" because she is Indian, repeats this concern when she explains that she has had negative experiences "in terms of what is happening in the U.S.". Here she is referring to anti-Islamic sentiment that white Americans may direct toward immigrants of colour based on assumptions regarding religious beliefs.

Others choose to speak about politics from the viewpoint of an observer, preferring instead to focus on explanations for or interpretations of American attitudes toward immigrants:

> The majority of my friends here voted for Trump and some of them fiercely supported him. Some are very radical, but most of them just wanted a change. They are just ordinary people who trust their system so much, they haven't been through experiences like us. . . . Some Americans are also just uneducated about what everything means and may treat immigrants differently with no understanding. . . . Some of my American friends complained to me about foreigners but they didn't feel that way about me personally. They just want people to contribute to the economy. . . . I always try to be logical with my views. Some might be very mad with him still, but I do think his time will come to go (Lerato).

> I would say that is a conflict between Americans: pro- and anti-Trump; Democrats and Republicans. Americans have such strong opinions in general. . . . They are so patriotic as a country. I don't think it affects us as much as it is important for them. It doesn't bother me. . . . In South Africa other people were always the immigrants and were not treated well, and there was a big worry about xenophobia and how we can all get along. Then you come here and now you are the one who is the immigrant. . . . But I also think that colour is not why people dislike each other - it's differences. If it's not black or white, it will be religion, or politics. . . . People will always find a reason to fight (Naledi).

Whether immigrants align themselves with a political party or choose to distance themselves from American politics, it is a relevant factor in how they view the fit between their own values and what they perceive American values to be, and therefore applicable in trying to understanding their experiences of identity and belonging in the U.S.

6.3.2 Re-evaluating identity

As immigrants, participants discuss how relocating to a new country affects their sense of self and how they feel about their identity as South Africans. Graham reflects on how he has been re-evaluating his identity after living in the U.S. for a few years:

> For the most part I think it's mostly a balancing act where I can be about 70% the South African me and 30% trying to be that part of me that is slowly becoming American. . . . I don't want to be too South African because I don't want that to be the only thing that people think of me. Like last night when we had South Africans over for dinner and we talked about South Africa - I don't want that to be my whole identity. I do think about it a lot: What am I now? And I'm interested in what other people are.

Daniel describes how inviting American friends over for holiday celebrations allows him to combine South African and American traditions:

> Every year I have a fourth of July party at my house and we do weird and wonderful things. This year it was an Ostrich cookout; the year before was a Rattlesnake cookout. I make bobotie and potato salad and things like that. And they enjoy being exposed to South African culture, and you learn what you enjoy in American culture too and you get used to the cultural differences.

This enables Daniel to cultivate a more hybrid identity, the dynamic nature of which he recognises when he explains that his identity is "something that is constantly changing and in flux." Sean feels that it may be problematic for a South African immigrant to assert a South African identity as a primary identity:

> Each person sort of has a sub-identity; so not just American, but African American or Hispanic American, Irish American or Italian American. Each sub-identity makes a little difference in understanding who people are. . . . So having a subordinated identity as a South African is fine as

> long as that is what it is. If you ran around criticising the American aspect and placing your South Africanness above it people will question why you are here.

He mentions that he will never feel 'American' but also does not feel comfortable with the term 'South African-American'. Sonja struggles to define her identity and chooses to refute any national identity labelling:

> I don't feel either American or South African - I just feel like myself. I am who I am. I don't do American things to be part of America, I do things that I like and because of who I am. And it depends on where you live - there are people from many different countries here. So, who sets the standard for what is 'American' and what's not?

Reena conveys how torn she sometimes feels about her identity in this country:

> But I'm not sure I feel like an American. I feel more like I am caught in between. I feel like I have South African ideas and ideals in me, but then when I talk to my family and friends at home, I feel that I am not like them. Then I feel more American. So, it depends on who I am talking to. I feel like I am caught in the middle where I am not really South African but I'm not really American.

Her description illustrates how identity is dynamic, contextual, and contingent. Mandla, Daniel, and Karen all speak about their difficulty reconciling certain cultural aspects of their South African identity with their life in the U.S.:

> I'm Xhosa, and we are very warm people who put a lot of emphasis on social connections. Just acknowledging and greeting others and asking how they are doing is a big part of how I grew up. That's what a good friend of mine hated about this city – the way people don't engage with each other. He felt that if he had a heart attack no-one would come and help; that people care only about the people they know and not the broader community. But for me, and I grew up in a small town, I enjoy that about a city - not having to engage with everybody. Part of me misses it, so I am torn. Do I want you to genuinely ask me how I am doing, or do I want you to shut up and not talk to me? (Mandla).

> I don't necessarily relate with anything Afrikaans anymore. It's the language I speak and I was born there, but I don't see myself as a 'boer'. . . . On the other hand I'm still an Afrikaner. It's something that I will never be able to lose. My kids will learn Afrikaans and speak Afrikaans, they will know about the Groot Trek and the Battle at Blood River, and all the

> other things that happened. It's part of history, and part of who they are as a people. I can't remove that from who I am (Daniel).

> I have always wondered what my kids will speak– will they speak Afrikaans or English? My parents can't speak English very well, I grew up only learning English at school, I went to an Afrikaans university, and I didn't have English friends. And now I am thrown in this English country. But here or in places like London speaking Afrikaans is not going to help them. But then I friend of mine said "How can you not make your child a part of you and your husband speaking Afrikaans? They will never be part of that bond if they don't speak Afrikaans with you in the house. They would be an English kid who doesn't understand you" (Karen).

These comments show how participants re-evaluate and re-negotiate their identity and sense of self in the U.S., and how it can influence how they choose to present themselves to, and interact with, others. Yvonne appreciates how both American and South African cultures shapes her sense of self, as well as her hope to pass on the South African values she grew up with:

> There is a certain humility about being from Africa that I will always admire. I love that and it's important to me. The value we have for family I will always keep with me. . . . I draw from all these cultures, but I hope to pass onto my children that humility about life and how we can grow through the difficulties we go through that comes from my South African upbringing. When I see how easy it is to love people who are totally different from me, and genuinely enjoy them, that is something that comes from being South African. All people need love and respect. And all those values come from the nation you are from, and then you learn new good things from the place you are in now.

Other participants' narratives also focus on how being South African continues to be a salient personal identity even after several years in the U.S.:

> I haven't even changed my last name yet. When I married and came here, I didn't want to change it because it was the only thing I had left. I don't see myself as identifying as an American - at least not yet. Maybe after many years pass. But now it's still important to me to say I'm South African, and I find myself saying that more and more to people. And getting your American citizenship does not wipe away your South African identity (Lerato).

> I still think of myself as South African. I don't think I am American. I still eat South African food because I don't like processed food. So, I make my own food most of the time and bring my own lunch to work. I can't tell

> you the last time I ate McDonalds. I still like to eat pap and wors, and I make my own biltong (Riaan).

> I think there is a sense that being South African will never go away. I always compare, in any interaction with Americans or American culture, my frame of reference which is still South African. . . . In the classroom I would introduce myself as a South African or someone who grew up in South Africa, but I've not tried to force the issue of becoming American or pretending to be American. I am someone who grew up in South Africa who's living in America (Sean).

Even Sheryl, who has been in the U.S. for 25 years and now considers herself more American than South African, emphasises the continued importance of her South Africanness:

> There are things inside me that are so South African that I can't help and that's not going anywhere. I'm not sure where South Africa begins and ends with me anymore. Your formative years are so strong and so influential in who you are, and mine were as a South African.

There are some participants who still strongly identify as South African. Kaya, for example, describes experiencing a continued sense of separateness from Americans:

> In all honesty I still say 'you Americans' or 'you people' when I talk to my American friends. I live here but I'm not American. I will keep my South African citizenship when I get my American citizenship. I like being South African.

Conrad, who explains that he "was a child in the new South Africa" and views himself as a "young diverse South African", also feels that his South African identity will continue to be his primary identity even after he becomes an American citizen:

> When I naturalise I have to be respectful of that, but to me it feels like just a document. It doesn't change who I am or where I am from. But people who come over from Mexico for instance and get that passport, they're American. They want to leave everything behind and I get that, but I've been very blessed to grow up in my family and grown up in part of South Africa that has been good to me. . . . That is more important to me than becoming American.

Thabani, who is married to an American and has American citizenship, coveys his continued investment in his South African identity:

> I think I will always hold onto it because I like being different. For instance, I do not want to sound like an American. I still say cooldrink and chips. I don't want to be American. I guess you can say it like that. I don't want to be the same old same old. I love being me and being different. It's also important to me that my kids know who they are and where they come from. When my mom comes to visit, they will get to speak Zulu because I don't get to speak it often. So, I want them to be South African and American. . .

The excerpts in this section illustrate the various ways participants re-assess or redefine their identity as they negotiate belonging in the U.S. Some wish to retain their South African identity as their primary identity while others hope to be able to cultivate a more hybrid identity. Various examples emphasise the contextual and contingent nature of identity, and the potential challenges immigrants may face in reconciling aspects of their South African and American identities.

6.3.3 The U.S. as 'home'

Participants like Conrad, Thabani, and Kaya who identify most strongly as South African do not consider the U.S. as 'home', and some express a wish to someday return to South Africa:

> The feeling of 'home' for me is being comfortable, and I haven't been able to feel that this is home yet. It just doesn't have the feeling of community for me. Like being able to walk to a neighbour's house and talk and do whatever – there isn't that here. Everybody just keeps to themselves. It's kind of weird. Nobody wants to open up to any other person. For me, home is about that. It's about community, connection, and communication (Thabani).

> I don't think it is home for us. . . . I am thankful for getting another passport, so I want my kids to have another one too. It gives you some opportunity to go somewhere and travel. But we want to move home again at some point. I think I will be done with this city within a few years. It's very tiring. South Africa is still home for me (Conrad).

> I don't feel like I belong here. It's like moving to a different country for a few months - you just live there temporarily. I still feel that way even after three years. I still feel like a foreigner and I don't think I've had that

> integration yet. Living here does not mean that it feels like home. I'm not sure it will change though. I don't know (Kaya).

However, not all participants speak of a sense of home or belonging. Mandla describes not having a sense of home in any country, while Sean highlights his sense of non-belonging in both South Africa and the U.S.:

> I don't have that feeling with any place, and I actually don't seek it out. I think I am more opportunity- and work-focused, so for the right opportunity I would move to China or India. So, I could make this home for the right job or opportunity, but I know that it is a tough place to live in terms of healthcare and cost of education, childcare costs. It's a tough place to make it in. But I've never visited or travelled anywhere where I think 'this feels like home'. . . . I will always feel a connection and a sense of duty toward South Africa, and I never want to forget that or let my kids forget that, and I would go visit as often as I can (Mandla).

> Things change and time moves on. But I don't feel that I would belong anymore in South Africa than I feel how much I don't belong here. You just have to make peace and make compromises to work and live with other people because who you are is never going to be completely accepted (Sean).

Although Riaan does not claim to have a sense of belonging in America, he describes other factors that make returning to South Africa less appealing:

> I have property and stuff here. You would financially lose a lot – that is what it comes down to. And starting over again in South Africa, what are you going to do? And to be honest I feel very secure here. I have a job, and the quality of life is very high. . . . I mean we have so much opportunity here, whereas the opportunities in South Africa dried up. It still feels new and growing even if it's hundreds of years old. There's also a lot of variety here, like the food. There are all types of restaurants here. And of course, you can even get all sorts of South African foods online.

Several other participants' descriptions reveal what belonging and 'home' means for them. Graham, for example, speaks about sense of belonging and permanency develops over time:

> It happens as it happens, and that means 15 to 20 years of living in this place and then we'll see. So I have a great amount of respect for the history of America and I like being here, and I want to contribute, but I did have a slightly precarious sense in the first 18 months that I was a visitor and that I had to live by the rules and work extra hard, and I mustn't make

> too many demands or be too noisy - and not all people have that - but I really felt that I had to earn my right to be here, in a way.

Karen conveys a similar sentiment about developing a sense of security and home over time, but explains that her strong connections to family in South Africa make that difficult:

> There is a lot that still pulls me back to South Africa. My sister just started having kids and I'm missing out on all of that. And I don't have that close friend here yet. I think that when you establish that it will feel more like home, and maybe when you are no longer living on a visa. . . . If you have kids here you are then starting your own family here. This Christmas will be our first without our family; last year we went back to South Africa for Christmas to meet my new nephew. So, when you have gotten through all your firsts, this will become home.

For her, accumulating experiences and memories, and developing connections with people will generate feelings of home and belonging. Lerato differentiates between home and belonging, also commenting on the strength of her roots in her home country:

> I don't feel that it is home for me, but I do feel like I belong here. I feel like I can relate to a lot of things here. It is just difficult because everywhere you go, especially if you are in a new place, people have to get to know you which can be daunting. In South Africa it was easier because there was no pressure, and no-one asks you where you are from. I still see South Africa as home a little bit. I mean my mom is there, the important elders are there. That is scary for me because when those people disappear, I may not feel like that anymore. Maybe I won't even feel like visiting as often.

Besides significant social relationships, Lerato points to how a sense of home is a result of feeling comfortable, secure, and not like an outsider. This echoes Thabani's understanding of home as being about community, connection, and communication. Naledi discusses how she feels torn between both countries, and how the push and pull affects her sense of belonging:

> I am happy here but if South Africa would self-correct it would be so easy to go back home, especially because I am the only one here. I have no family here. But I am also fighting hard to be successful here so I can give others the opportunity to come if they want to. I want to open that door. I would love to be with my family, but I also love being here career-wise.

> Everything here works so well. But home is where your family is, so it is difficult.

Reena explains that her parents' experiences with crime in South Africa, in addition to the support network provided by her husband and his family in the U.S., have reaffirmed her feeling of America as home:

> I always get excited when I think about going to South Africa but when I am there, I do not feel like that is my home. This is my home now. When I am there, I just want to come back. My husband also did a very good job in helping me when I came here. He helped me feel comfortable and not feel lonely. His parents have also been incredible and very supportive. . . . There are pros and cons, but in terms of my child I think I made the right choice. Especially in light of what has just happened again to my parents. In fact, they are considering moving here now that this has happened.

Yvonne is another participant who emphasises how connection and relationships with others have played a vital role in nurturing a sense of belonging and home:

> It feels like home and I have found a sense of belonging, but weirdly it was with total strangers who treated me like I was family. When you are a foreigner, your friends are all you have, so those bonds become more than what they need to be. They mean more to you. People don't understand what it means to you when they are kind to you and share your life with you, but you know how much it means.

Lindiwe discusses the different meanings that 'home' has for her, and her realisation that her future is in the U.S.:

> I think there are American values I appreciate more, and I think that explains a lot why we are still living here. There are obviously still aspects of our culture that we value, but are we more American? I would hate to admit that but yes. The freedom of speech for example, to think and say and express yourself is an important one. . . . I would say it is home physically, but I am not sure it is home in my heart. That will always be South Africa. But this is where I have settled. I've accepted that South Africa was my start, but this is my now.

A couple of other participants similarly emphasise that immigrants have agency in creating a sense of belonging and home. Sonja states that "home is where your family is. If my husband put me in China, then that will be my home. You make it your home." She continues to describe how getting U.S. citizenship brought a

greater degree of security "because you know if something happens that America will come and help you because you know you belong to something. Now we are not in between the two countries."

Of all the participants, Sheryl conveyed the strongest feelings of attachment and belonging in the U.S. She has been in the country for over two decades, all her immediate family members have immigrated, and she has married and built a life in the country with an American:

> I used to feel that I didn't belong here or in South Africa; that I didn't belong anywhere. About six years ago I went to visit South Africa and I realised that the way I felt about it was the way you feel about a magical place from your childhood that doesn't exist anymore. And it happens to everyone. My American father-in-law feels the same about where he grew up. So, I don't belong in South Africa anymore and it's not my home. . . . Now I'm married to an American and I have American friends. At this point I feel that I am more American than South African. My formative years were in South Africa, but my adult life has been here. Home is where you build your memories.

Participant narratives demonstrate the different ways in which immigrants experience and define belonging and 'home', and how they may not always occur simultaneously. In general, the examples emphasise the importance of relationships, connections, and a sense of community, the influence of experiences, emotions, and memories, as well as the perceived benefits of the quality of life and opportunities that American provides.

6.4 Discussion

A focus on lived, subjective experience and personal stories, rather than more traditional, objective measures of migrant settlement, provided rich detail and more nuanced insight into issues of identity, meaning, and emotion in the integration experiences of the South African immigrants in this study (Dutta, 2016; Philipp & Ho, 2010). The participants discussed several aspects of their immigrant journey beyond the spatiality of the workplace that contributed to an understanding of the South African immigrant experience in the U.S. These included themes related to acculturation, finding a sense of community, politics, identity, and home.

Adjustment and acculturation

Several participants in my study were very open about their personal struggles, revealing the ways in which migration is an emotionally charged experience (Silvey, 2013). They employed emotional discourse (Svašek, 2010) in their discussions of the personal challenges they have faced in adjusting to life in the U.S. and how immigration affected their sense of self, sense of belonging, and interactions with other people. Daniel, for example, described feeling overwhelmed by the cumulative, everyday struggles he initially experienced within a foreign environment. Naledi explained her loneliness and feelings of disconnection during the isolation of her first six months in the U.S., while Karen mentioned her depression arising from a lack of purpose and the loss of her social networks. Studies on South Africans in other countries have showed similarly emotional accounts (e.g., Sonn et al., 2017). This affective dimension of belonging was not unexpected as the significance of emotions in the immigrant experience has been discussed and researched by multiple authors (e.g., Ho, 2009; Richter, 2015; Skrbiš, 2008; Valentine & Sporton, 2009; Waite & Cook, 2011).

In the present study, all participants described various ways in which they have adjusted and integrated socially and culturally in the U.S. Participants of colour, however, were more likely than white participants to speak about the initial dismissiveness and doubt of others, and how it took a period of time to feel accepted by Americans. This is indicative of the working of white privilege in the U.S. context and affirms the significance of embodied characteristics such as race and accent in signifying Other (Bürkner, 2012; O'Conner, 2010; Valentine & Sporton, 2009). It also serves as an example of how belonging is contingent and conditional (Bhatia & Ram, 2009; Hsu & Wu, 2015; Leitner, 2012). Some participants emphasised agency by arguing that integration is a choice which requires focused effort, as well as sometimes needing to 'let go' of aspects of their life in South Africa to embrace a new one in the U.S.

The participants mentioned ways in which immigrants can acculturate and integrate in America, including participating in volunteering, sports, cultural events and holidays, and joining religious organisations and clubs. These show

different social contexts can provide pathways for migrant incorporation and social membership. Tostensen, Tvedten, and Vaa (2001), in their work on the role of associational life for immigrants in African cities like Angola and Kenya, explain that civil-society institutions (e.g., community-based organisations, clubs, ethnic associations, charities, faith-based organisations, and non-governmental organisations) work to grow and support a sense of community and cohesion. Religion is one example of associational life, where institutions such as churches, mosques, and synagogues offer immigrants a different avenue for belonging and inclusion in their host communities (Landau, 2009). The majority of participants in the present study, however, emphasised the importance of their work and work-life in their acculturation and integration in the U.S.

Thabani, Naledi, and Graham, for example, viewed the workplace as an important context for social interaction, making connections, and developing relationships, especially as they had no access to a social support network when they arrived in the U.S. This differs from various other immigrant groups who often form strong communities and social support networks based on national or ethnic identities in host countries (Giordano, 2010). The workplace thus offers immigrants ways to increase their social capital (Akkaymak, 2017). Sean and Lindiwe also emphasised how the workplace allowed them to increase their knowledge of American culture and develop understanding and trust with American co-workers. The participant narratives thus affirm Valenta's (2008) assertion that employment provides opportunities to access social networks, build social ties, and enhance integration. The workplace can be seen as an example of a key site of encounter and attachment (Phillips & Robinson, 2015) that has shaped participants' experiences of belonging.

In addition to the significance of employment to financial security and legal status, several participants emphasised how work created purpose, meaning, and a stronger sense of self. Karen, Daniel, and Graham's descriptions of the importance of their job are examples of how work is central to immigrants' identity formation and well-being (Flum & Cinamon, 2011), and how immigrants can become emotionally invested in a particular identity (Valentine & Sporton,

2009). Sean and Yvonne's discussion of their profession as academics demonstrated how work can provide a level of credibility and legitimacy for foreigners in the U.S. It also points to how immigrants can draw on aspects other than nationality to articulate and negotiate belonging (Chacko, 2015; Dahinden, 2012).

Overall, the participants' descriptions and experiences suggest that their work life, relative to other social contexts, plays a substantial role in their acculturation in America, and that the workplace is a potentially significant avenue for the development of a sense of belonging for South African immigrants.

Sense of community

Although issues of citizenship and belonging are often examined in relation to difference, exclusion, and Othering (Fenster, 2005), migrant experiences can also be viewed through a focus on inclusion. Sonn (2002), for example, argues that a sense of community is central to immigrant well-being, providing opportunities for experiences of stability, security, and acceptance. I thus paid attention to how participants connected with others and how they articulated their group membership. Several participants explained their tendency to relate best to, and develop deeper friendships with, other immigrants in the U.S. Sonja and Naledi, for example, mentioned relationships they had formed with immigrants from different countries around the world; friendships arising from shared experience and a mutual need for connection and support. This finding corresponds to those of other migration studies. Butcher (2010), for example, described how Australian immigrants in Singapore gravitated to expat spaces and social activities which created a zone of comfort and cultural fit. Long (2010) found that her South African participants established friendships with other immigrants in Dubai which provided much needed social support. The narratives of some of the black participants suggested that connection and friendships were found within the broader African diaspora in the U.S.

A few participants in this study did point to the importance of having Americans in their social circles but noted that these took time to establish. Interaction and

relationships with African Americans were largely absent from the narratives of white participants, who tended to refer to white Americans when speaking about 'Americans'. Although black participants described their interaction with both black and white Americans, they did not identify the African American community as one to which they could relate or in which they could find a sense of belonging. This echoes my earlier discussion about a clear sense of Othering and boundaries between black African immigrants and black Americans in the workplace.

In several other studies focused on South African immigrants (Cain et al., 2015; Long, 2010; Philipp & Ho, 2010; Trlin, 2012), fellow South Africans were identified as a social group that contributed to a sense of community in the destination country. My participants' responses to questions about other South Africans were mixed. Many spoke of the benefits of knowing other South Africans in the U.S., including having friends and a sense of community, attending social events to enjoy South African food, music, sport, and easy conversation, being able to relate to others and be understood, and being part of a network with access to support, guidance, and resources. This was similar to Sonn's (2002) findings about South African immigrants in Australia, who enjoyed the sense of familiarity and emotional connection they had with other South African expats. Sonn et al. (2017) noted high levels of nostalgia and a sense of loss among South African immigrants in Australia. This may also motivate South African expats to gather at social events to reconnect with their national identity and culture.

However, many of the participants in my study who spoke of benefits also expressed reservations about, or have had negative experiences with, other South African immigrants, resulting in a tension between a desire for connection and a need for distance. While a few participants mentioned their concern about perceived nepotism in the workplace, a more common reason for hesitancy seemed to be a difficulty in relating to other South Africans. Conrad, for example, did not appreciate the negativity about South Africa that some South African immigrants in the U.S. express, while Sonja voiced her criticism of some South

Africans' prejudiced views of people of other races and cultures. Naledi and Lerato described feeling alienated, disrespected, or uncomfortable at South African expat gatherings, preferring instead to spend time with a few close South African friends. Weeber (2005) noted similar tensions among the South African participants in her study, especially between English- and Afrikaans- speakers.

Differences in life experiences and upbringing, language and culture, perspectives and attitudes, reasons for immigration, and political and religious views are to be expected in such a heterogeneous immigrant group from a country with South Africa's socio-political history. The varying attitudes among South Africans in the U.S. may also be seen to reflect Louw and Mersham's (2001) assertion that subcultures exist within South African diasporic communities due to the timing and reasons for migration. Although a couple of participants felt that being South African in America overrides any differences that would have been problematic in South Africa, others noted that a common nationality is not a guarantee for friendship.

Participants' discussions about experiences with fellow South Africans also highlighted how attitudes and perspectives that developed in South Africa may persist in the U.S., and how this can be consequential for an immigrant's integration. Sonja, for example, explained how she struggles with her Afrikaans friends who continue to express their conservative beliefs and often racist and homophobic attitudes at get togethers in America. She argued that these women would most likely never integrate in the U.S.; their identity and beliefs are unthreatened within the safety and comfort their social group provides. Naledi and Lerato's descriptions of groups or 'cliques' at expat gatherings in the U.S. indicate a mirroring of social divisions in South African society, formed by norms and exclusionary social boundaries reflecting those existing in South Africa. The most obvious examples of such divisions include those based on race (e.g., black and white South Africans), language (English and Afrikaans speakers), and political beliefs (e.g., conservative and liberal) (Marchetti-Mercer, 2012; Marrow, 2007; Weeber, 2005; Wood, 2005).

This is relevant when considering experiences of immigrant belonging. Moving to another country may not necessarily alter a South African's perspectives if that person finds a group of like-minded fellow expats who share similar beliefs and attitudes. A sense of belonging will remain rooted in a South African identity and in his or her social circle. On the other hand, if immigrants are faced with prevailing social norms and perspectives that are in conflict with their own views, they may be forced to re-evaluate their attitudes and beliefs as they struggle to overcome feelings of dislocation and re-establish cultural fit in their new environment (Boccagni & Baldassar, 2015; Butcher, 2009). As Sonn (2002) notes, this includes "challenges to systems of meaning. . . and social identities" (p. 206).

Politics and identity

Narratives revealed the way politics and political discourse impact how participants articulate their immigrant experience, including how they, as South Africans, appear to be largely shielded from anti-immigrant sentiment due to their more favourable positioning in the U.S. immigrant hierarchy. Interviews for the present study began four months after the 2016 presidential election, before Trump's focus on legal immigration became more clearly apparent. Although all the participants are legal immigrants and reported no fear of being in imminent danger of deportation, several did make connections between politics and their experience as immigrants, including how it can shape their perceptions of identity and sense of belonging in America.

Those participants who identified more strongly with certain conservative values indicated some support for Trump's stance against illegal immigrants, while others spoke out strongly against what they perceive as hateful, divisive rhetoric. Participants of colour shared more personal ways in which racism and anti-immigrant sentiment within U.S. politics relate to their feelings of security as well as their perception of the fit between their own and American values. Several white participants spoke in ways that distanced themselves from politics or asserted the irrelevance of politics in their lives. This can be viewed as an example of the working of white privilege in that the targets of anti-immigrant attitudes are most usually ethnically and racially diverse immigrants (Ford, 2011;

Portes & Rumbaut, 2014). As Riaan noted: “The things they fight about do not personally impact me here. If it did maybe it would be a problem.” Politics, even when claimed to be irrelevant or unimportant, invariably shapes the very nature of the immigrant experience of identity and belonging in the U.S.

During data analysis I also focused on how participants perceived and experienced their identity as South Africans in the U.S., including changes in its importance and salience. For some, the relevance of a South African identity has lessened over time, while for others, such as Kaya, Conrad, and Thabani, it remains a primary identity they are strongly invested in. As in Sonn et al.’s (2017) study of South Africans in Australia, many continue to “feel South African inside” despite having attained U.S. citizenship. All participants spent their formative years in South Africa, and as a couple of participants explained, moving to a new country or getting U.S. citizenship does not “wipe away your South Africanness.” Some discussed ways in which they have become Americanised, but even after several years do not identify as ‘American’. Other migration research, such as Waite and Cook’s (2011) study on African immigrants in the U.K., describe how first-generation immigrants continue to have strong feelings of belonging and emotional attachment to their country of origin even while being embedded in the host country. This reflects a transnational perspective in migration research, which emphasises plurality and hybridity of culture and identity, and the significance of contextual factors for immigrant identity formation (Ernste, van Houtum, & Zoomers, 2009; Giordano, 2010).

Renegotiations of identity and subjectivity are instigated as individuals are confronted with challenges to former cultural frames of reference (Butcher, 2010). There were several examples in the narratives that illuminated the ways in which participants’ have re-evaluated their identities. Consistent with literature on migration and transnationalism (e.g., Giordano, 2010; Kaplan & Chacko, 2015; Waite & Cook, 2011) some participants in this study reported the development of a more hybrid identity that combines elements of both South African and American cultures. However, others noted their struggle in reconciling perceived cultural differences when re-evaluating their sense of self. Mandla, for example,

compared the individualism and social distance of American culture with his Xhosa upbringing which emphasises warmth and social connections. Karen questioned whether her children should learn to speak Afrikaans in a country where the Afrikaner culture is more likely to be irrelevant beyond the home. As Staeheli and Nagel (2006) note, tensions may develop as migrants struggle with wanting to integrate while not losing a sense of their heritage or culture.

Authors like Clark (2008) and Valentine and Sporton (2009) posit that immigrants can embrace or distance themselves from particular identities. Sonja and Daniel, in their explanations for seeking distance from other South Africans, represent examples of how immigrants may dis-identify with certain aspects of their South Africanness. Both spoke of the importance of integrating and embracing life in America. Waite and Cook (2011) contend that such migrants are more able to claim a stronger host country identity. Conrad and Thabani, in contrast, described a deep, continued emotional investment in their South African identity, and argued against adopting American values and way of life for the sake of conforming. These participants' experiences highlight the way identity is not only ascribed but also self-imposed, claimed, and managed (Butcher, 2010; Chacko, 2015; O'Connor, 2010). The contextual, contingent, and dynamic nature of identity was revealed in several descriptions, including Reena's discussion of how her assessment and expression of identity depended on who she was speaking with.

The U.S. as home

Perceptions and experiences of belonging and home in the U.S. were not consistent among the participants. This corresponds to the literature in which belonging is described as complex, multidimensional, and multiple in form and scale (Antonsich, 2010; Wright, 2015). From my data analysis of the interviews, it seemed that becoming acculturated and 'Americanised' enabled some participants to relate to and communicate well with Americans, be successful at work and socially, and to no longer feel like 'outsiders'. But this did not necessarily result in them developing a strong sense of belonging in the U.S., and many participants articulated their difficulty in regarding America as 'home'. As Wright (2015)

states, the “emotional resonances of belonging” (p. 396) make it more than a question of citizenship. In addition to a strong personal identity as South African, participants like Thabani, Conrad, and Kaya discussed the lack of a sense of community in the U.S., a sense of impermanence and disconnection, and a lack of integration. Lerato and Karen highlighted the ‘pull’ of deep roots and strong family connections in South Africa. These support Antonsich’s (2010) description of a sense of belonging or feeling ‘at home’ as based on familiarity, rootedness, security, and emotional attachment.

A few participants reported feeling torn between both countries, or not feeling a sense of belonging in either (e.g., Mandla and Sean). Waite and Cook (2011) also identified feelings of non-belonging to both countries of origin and destination among West African immigrants in Britain. They posit that transnational migrants may be “more likely to experience feelings of homelessness” (p. 243). Sonn et al. (2017) noted a similar ambivalence regarding belonging among South Africans in Australia. Some participants focused on how the U.S. may provide for a better ‘home’ than South Africa: Lindiwe, Yvonne, and Naledi pointed out the opportunities and quality of life America offers for their future, including career development, financial stability, and feelings of safety and security; and Riaan explained his hesitancy to return to South Africa as being due to a lack of work opportunities as well as his financial investments in the U.S.

In general, the participants’ comments about America as ‘home’ did not reveal strong feelings of enthusiasm or loyalty to the country or a strong identification as ‘American’. This echoes the findings of Valentine, Sporton, and Nielsen’s (2009) study on Somali immigrants in the U.K., whose sense of belonging arose not from an attachment to the British nation but from “complex webs of emotion and identification . . . that span local and transnational scales” (p. 247). For the present study, the few South Africans who did express a sense of belonging or a feeling of ‘home’ in the U.S. were those who have been in the country the longest (e.g., Sheryl and Sonja) and/or who reported a strong sense of connection or community (e.g., Yvonne). More often than not, the participants discussions affirmed Philip and Ho’s (2010) statement that the notion of ‘home’ can no longer be understood

as a single localised place or even a dichotomy of ‘here’ and ‘there’. Many of the participants continued to regard South Africa as home even while expressing some form of belonging (e.g., formal, legal citizenship or a personal, emotional connection) in America. Participants also articulated a sense of home in a variety of ways, including connections with identity, heritage, citizenship, relationships, and emotion. Home is therefore more than an attachment to a bounded locality, but is constructed, negotiated, and experienced at multiple scales and in many forms (Staeheli & Nagel, 2006). Lastly, while agency and choice were advocated by some participants as vital to an immigrant’s success in adapting and integrating, others’ experiences illustrated that connection and belonging can be elusive despite a willing attitude and effort.

6.5 Summary

In chapter six I focused on those themes related to broader issues of South African immigrants’ integration and belonging in America. Participants shared their challenging and emotional journey of adjusting to life in the U.S. In particular, they emphasised the significance of work and their work-life (relative to other social contexts) in their acculturation and integration in America. Participants pointed to how the workplace offers opportunities for social interaction and connection, how work is a source for identity, meaning, and purpose in their new life in the U.S., and how it provides financial stability and a sense of security. The findings thus indicate that the workplace is a significant avenue for the development of a sense of belonging for South African immigrants in America.

I also discussed participants’ perceptions of their social membership and a sense of community, as well as how politics and political beliefs related to their experiences of belonging as immigrants in the U.S. Participant narratives offered several examples of how the immigrant experience results in re-evaluations and re-negotiations of identity, including the degree to which participants’ identity as South Africans continues to be meaningful and relevant to them. Lastly, participant articulations of belonging and ‘home’ in the U.S. demonstrated the ways in which the two concepts may converge or how they may exist as distinct experiences for immigrants.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

7.1 Overview of the Study

Across various disciplines, migration studies have focused on immigrant settlement and adjustment in destination countries. Beyond objective indicators like labour market performance and psychological measures of acculturation, authors have argued that more attention should be paid to the subjective, lived experience of immigrants (Dutta, 2016; Philipp & Ho, 2010). Within geography, migration studies have endeavoured to reassert the centrality of place in the study of migration (Collyer & King, 2015; Gielis, 2009; King, 2012; O'Conner, 2010). The present study contributes to this body of knowledge through its focus on contextualising immigrant experiences of identity and belonging within the U.S. workplace, demonstrating the value of qualitative studies over potentially reductionist quantitative approaches in appreciating the nuances of immigration, belonging, and identity.

My study on South Africans as an immigrant group aimed to address the paucity of research on the experiences of South African migrants abroad (Trlin, 2012). The findings further the understanding of this understudied group and the distinctiveness of their immigrant experience. My choice of topic was also informed by the assertion that the work setting is underacknowledged as a significant social context for the immigrant experience (Cook et al., 2011; Van Tonder & Soontiens, 2014). The study, which situates the participants' experiences in the workplace, adds to the richness of cultural geography research on migration where a variety of contemporary studies advocating a 'place-based' perspective of migration have explored local contexts such as the home, neighbourhood, city, and public spaces (e.g., Kaplan & Chacko, 2015; Phillips & Robinson, 2015; Platts-Fowler & Robinson, 2015; Valentine & Sporton, 2009). My goal in focusing on the workplace was to bring deeper insight into the differential experiences of belonging of South African immigrants in their places of work, and to interrogate the terms and conditions under which this occurs.

A qualitative research design was appropriate to the study's focus on participants' perspectives, emotions, and lived experiences. Qualitative inquiry is characterised

by an emergent design, a valuing of depth and contextual sensitivity, and an understanding that research is partial, biased, and situated (Creswell, 2014; Peters, 2017; Rossman & Rallis, 2012). My aim was to gather in-depth, qualitative data from an information-rich, heterogeneous group of South Africans living and working in America. Collecting participant narratives through interviews allowed me to explore the subjective meanings and experiences of individuals in relation to immigrant identity and belonging, while staying attentive to articulations of context.

Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were completed with 18 South African immigrants from states in the Northeast region of the U.S. Purposive sampling ensured a degree of heterogeneity in age, race, gender, profession, industry, time in the U.S., and educational attainment of the participants. With the participants' permission, each interview was recorded and transcribed. I used an inductive approach to data analysis to develop codes and categories, and continuously compared and contrasted data to verify the meaningfulness and accuracy of my codes and categories (Patton, 2015; Urquhart, 2013). An intensive, iterative process resulted in the identification of relationships between categories, the formation of major themes, and an exploration of the patterns and complexity within themes to develop a more nuanced understanding of the South African immigrant experience in America.

The study was guided by the following research questions: 1) How do South African immigrants' experiences of sameness and difference in the U.S. workplace influence their sense of identity and belonging? 2) How do experiences in the workplace inform the identity practices of South African immigrants as they re-evaluate and re-negotiate their sense of self, identity, and group membership? and 3) How do these experiences affect South African immigrants' perceptions of their integration and feelings of belonging in the U.S.? Analysing the interview data revealed salient dimensions of difference and how these were constructed and given meaning in the American workplace to shape participants' experiences of identity and belonging. The narratives also highlighted participants' articulations of self and other, their perceptions of social boundaries, experiences of exclusion and inclusion, and the ways in which they have been able to manage

and negotiate their identity and difference at work. In addition, I gained insight into the relative significance of the workplace as a social context for the participants' sense of belonging and explored their perceptions of their place and belonging in the U.S.

Having presented the findings within the previous three chapters, my aim in this final chapter is to synthesise and discuss the findings and the contributions of the study as they relate to the central aims of the study: 1) Contributing to knowledge about South African immigrants in the U.S., and 2) Understanding the role and significance of the work setting as a social context for the immigrant experience.

7.2 Contributing to Knowledge about South African Immigrants in the U.S.

7.2.1 South Africans as an immigrant group in America

In keeping with the findings of previous research on South African immigrants abroad (e.g., Crush, 2011; Louw & Mersham, 2001; Segel, 1995; Weeber, 2005), the participants in the present study were generally well-educated and highly skilled, proficient in the English language, and had legally immigrated to the U.S. Such high levels of cultural capital can be seen to increase the likelihood of South African immigrants experiencing social integration, socio-economic mobility, and attaining citizenship in their destination countries. In addition, existing U.S. migration literature asserts that attitudes are more favourable toward immigrants who come to the U.S. under employer-sponsored specialty occupation visas (Dicker, 1998), have high economic credentials (Turper et al., 2015), and are perceived to be able to culturally and linguistically assimilate (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014). By using the immigrant hierarchy (Ford, 2011; Koskela, 2014) as a frame through which to understand how the participants are categorised and perceived, the study has affirmed that South Africans are well positioned within the U.S. immigrant hierarchy compared to those immigrant groups who may not speak English, are less educated, or have immigrated illegally.

However, analysing the interview narratives also showed that the immigrant hierarchy frame is relevant in understanding how participants discursively construct themselves, thereby bringing new insight into how South African

immigrants articulate their identity and understand their place in America. In particular, participants' identity appeared not to stem from a strong sense of South African identity or culture, but by drawing on notions of sameness and difference in a process of comparison and negation. Migration literature has highlighted the agency of migrants in defining and negotiating identity and belonging, and the way they may internalise or contest the ascriptions and categories imposed upon them (Boogaard & Roggeband, 2010; Johansson & Śliwa, 2014; Ku, 2012; Ralph, 2012). In the U.S., immigration discourse often negatively constructs immigrants as resisting assimilation, being unable or unwilling to embrace American values, posing a threat to public safety, taking advantage of welfare assistance, and endangering American cultural identity and social norms (Chacko, 2015; Keyes, 2012; Morrissey, 2015). By noting how South African immigrants are fewer in number, less culturally distinct, and in the U.S. legally, as well as drawing attention to their own skills and education, participants effectively distanced themselves from those immigrants who are more likely to be viewed as 'problem immigrants' or a 'threat' to the American way of life.

Another notable theme that emerged in this study, which reveals more about the uniqueness of the South African immigrant experience, was the impact of a general unfamiliarity with South Africa and its people among residents of the U.S. This absence of knowledge seemed to result in fewer assumptions or preconceptions from which Americans can draw when interacting with South Africans, offering participants a degree of protection from being readily stereotyped. This stands in contrast to more entrenched discourses and negative stereotyping that Mexican (Nelson & Hiemstra, 2008; Quinsaat, 2014), Indian (Bhatia & Ram, 2009; Chacko, 2015), and Afro-Caribbean (Louis et al., 2017) immigrants, for example, encounter in the U.S.

Collectively, these observations and insights make it unsurprising that the South African immigrants in the present study did not report strong feelings of vulnerability within the current anti-immigration sentiment in the U.S. South Africans, however, are not a homogeneous group, and their relative advantageous positioning within the U.S. immigrant hierarchy does not mean that the individual, subjective experiences of participants are similar or equivalent. Ralph (2012)

posits that migrants are not discursively positioned as Other in a host population in an unproblematic way, meaning that some migrants have a higher capacity to belong to or in a place than others. The present study aimed to narrow the knowledge gap in understanding how immigrants from South Africa have differing experiences in the U.S.

7.2.2 South African immigrants' differential experiences

Through the analysis of rich, detailed qualitative data, the study has presented a more nuanced understanding of the South African immigrant experience in America. Adopting an intersectional frame, as advocated in a multitude of migration studies, facilitated an exploration of how the participants in this study are socially located within specific contexts by the intersection of dimensions of difference (Anthias, 20120; Johansson & Śliwa, 2014; Yuval-Davis, 2011). The findings in turn shed light on how the disadvantages or privileges associated with such differences (Norton & Walton-Roberts, 2014) may shape South African immigrants' lived experience. While education, age, religion, and profession were mentioned by a few individuals, the three most salient dimensions of difference relevant to participants' personal experiences of identity and belonging were foreignness, accent, and race. These intersect and interrelate in the U.S. context to shape South African immigrants' experiences of belonging.

The persistent salience of their foreignness in everyday interactions seems to create an enduring boundary between self (immigrant) and other (U.S.-born) for the participants. However, as previously mentioned, South African immigrants appear to benefit from a general unfamiliarity with South Africa that offers a degree of protection from negative stereotyping. In addition, the findings of the study also indicated that the South African accent becomes central in how the vacuum created by this absence of knowledge is filled by the attribution of positive stereotypes that many Americans seem to associate with a 'British-sounding' accent (e.g., sophisticated, smart). For black and white participants, foreignness and accent intersected with race in different, but ultimately advantageous ways. While race did not appear to be a salient or personally meaningful aspect of identity within the narratives of white participants in this

study, the consequences and implications of their whiteness for their experience as immigrants in America is significant. White privilege and advantage are rooted within U.S. immigration history, where whiteness has been constructed as the norm and as integral to the American national identity (Hughey, 2012; Leitner, 2012). The findings indicated that participants' whiteness facilitated their 'blending in' and heightened their "capacity to belong" (Ralph, 2012, p. 446) in the U.S.

Unlike immigrants of colour, who are racially Othered in America, the white participants highlighted their accent as the primary signal of their difference. In most cases, this brought additional advantage as they reported being perceived by others as 'exotic' or as sounding 'intelligent'. In other words, white South African immigrants' difference has tended to be positively received and valued in America. White participants also did not encounter the same physical and symbolic boundaries that participants of colour described in their narratives. In this way, the study has indicated that the social, cultural, and economic capital inherent in whiteness (Lewis, 2004; Weeber, 2005) intersects with accent privilege to decrease barriers to belonging for white South African immigrants. Interestingly, the study did not find that white participants more strongly expressed feelings of belonging in the U.S. than black participants, despite their increased capacity to belong. This may stem from the continued salience of their foreignness that reinforces their status as outsiders and contributes to persisting feelings of non-belonging.

Race as a dimension of difference was salient in the immigrant experiences of black participants in a qualitatively different way, emerging as a significant embodied difference (Dunn, 2010; O'Connor, 2010) in their sense of identity and belonging in their daily lives in the U.S. Participants of colour spoke of how their racial difference is highlighted in spaces where whiteness is the norm and described occasions and environments in which they felt that Americans were dismissive, hesitant, suspicious, and even prejudiced. The narratives of black participants thus contained more examples of challenges and barriers to belonging than in those of white South Africans. This is in line with the assertion that

processes of Othering and the racialisation of immigrants in the U.S. serves to limit belonging for immigrants of colour (Leitner, 2012).

However, analysing the data revealed the significance of intersections of race, accent, and nationality in understanding black South Africans' interactions with Americans. Participants shared examples of how their accent seems to be viewed as less negative or 'threatening' than other African accents, effectively distancing black South Africans from more unfavourable stereotypes of African immigrants in the U.S. In addition, some discussed the benefit of being differentiated from African Americans. In contrast to assertions that African immigrants face more prejudice than African Americans (Capps et al., 2012; Porter, 2011), some of the black participants in the present study expressed that they are viewed more positively and treated more favourably than African Americans. The study has therefore indicated that accent privilege mediates the influence of racial Othering for black South Africans by distinguishing them from African Americans and other black African immigrants, who may be associated with specific negative stereotypes in the U.S. context.

Exploring the differential experiences of participants affirmed the centrality of place in the migrant experience (Gielis, 2009; King, 2012) and the inherently geographic nature of belonging (Mee & Wright, 2009; Richter, 2015). Multiple examples of how identity and belonging are situated, relational, and contingent within specific contexts were present in the narratives. Participants' 'difference', and the ways in which it is interpreted, varied with their movement through social and geographical space. This aligns with broader migration literature that posits that categories of difference are perceived and evaluated according to existing social norms and hegemonic discourses: a certain difference may become more or less salient in particular moments and spaces, carry positive or negative attributions, be more or less valued, and thus produce advantage or disadvantage in its situated context (Johansson & Śliwa, 2014; Tatli & Özbilgin, 2012; Valentine, 2007).

While the present study's main focus was on experiences of identity and belonging in the social context of the workplace, the interviews produced much

information about participants' immigrant experiences beyond the workplace. The findings showed that participants experienced identity and belonging in many forms and in multiple places, sometimes in seemingly contradictory ways. This is compatible with how immigrant identity is conceptualised in the literature as plural, hybrid, and variable (Atewologun & Sealy, 2014; Ernste, van Houtum, & Zoomers, 2009) and how belonging can be experienced at various scales (such as global, local, and national) and in different places (e.g., city, neighbourhood, or home) (Antonsich, 2010; Wright, 2015).

At the macro-scale, several participants emphasised the varying demographics, cultures, lifestyles, and political and social values across U.S. regions, states, and cities. In particular, participants suggested that unwelcome attitudes to immigrants are more likely in central states with lower levels of diversity and dominated by white, conservative U.S. culture and values. This is consistent with accounts in the literature of higher levels of tolerance for social, ethnic, and racial difference in liberal and diverse states such as California (Bean & Stevens, 2005). Participants also focused on their lived experiences and social relations within specific localities in their everyday life (micro-scale), such as the classroom, airport, coffee shop, and neighbourhood. Descriptions of how participants' skin colour, accent, or nationality relate to how they were perceived and received by others illustrated the ways in which norms can signal who does or does not 'belong' in a place (Fenster, 2005; Yuval-Davis, 2011), and thus influence the degree to which immigrants feel Other or out of place (Valentine & Sporton, 2009).

7.2.3 South African immigrants' belonging in the U.S.

Ralph (2012) posits that the concept of belonging is "best understood as the intersection of personal feelings of being 'at home' and broader social definitions that discursively construct one as belonging (or not) to a particular place, people, and nation" (p. 447). The latter has been addressed through the discussion thus far on South African immigrants' advantageous positionality in the U.S. immigrant hierarchy: their high levels of cultural capital and the ways in which South African immigrants are constructed and perceived in America means that they experience relatively high social belonging. Given that social dimensions of

belonging "inexorably conditions" (Antonsich, 2010, p. 649) personal feelings of belonging, one might expect that South African immigrants' high social belonging would lead to an increased sense of belonging. However, the study has indicated that while participants' social belonging is high, their subjective feelings of belonging are not.

Several themes that emerged from data analysis could suggest explanations for this finding. In the migration literature, authors have argued that a sense of community is central to immigrant well-being (Sonn, 2002), and that belonging is tied to a sense of connectedness generated through frequent, positive, and significant interactions with others (Antonsich, 2010). The majority of participants in the present study did not report close, meaningful friendships with Americans, often alluding to limited and superficial interactions. Americans were described as more reserved, individualistic, and less welcoming than expected. Some participants also highlighted their inability to relate to particular aspects of culture, norms, and values in the U.S., a factor that may contribute to perceptions of incompatibility with Americans. In addition, the findings highlighted the persisting salience of foreignness as a dimension of difference and the strength of social boundaries between immigrant and non-immigrant that prevent participants from claiming an 'American' identity. This is especially notable with regard to white South Africans: their white privilege, while increasing their capacity to belong, fails to overcome that final boundary between 'us' and 'them'.

As described in other migration research, migrants encountering more sustained exclusion may make their home in ethnic or religious enclaves where they can sustain a sense of identity, find security and comfort, and forge a sense of belonging (Ralph & Staeheli, 2011). Participants themselves compared their experiences with Asian, Latino/a, and Indian immigrant groups who they described as higher in number, more closely-knit, and living in clusters or communities. South African immigrants in the U.S. have not followed this tendency (Philipp & Ho, 2010; Marrow, 2007). In fact, while the majority of participants expressed a desire for, and noted the benefits of, connection with fellow South Africans, their narratives also revealed a tension created by a need for distance with South African expats who hold values, perspectives, and

opinions in conflict with their own. The findings therefore suggested that neither Americans nor fellow South African immigrants are a consistent, significant source of feelings of belonging for the participants.

Participants' descriptions of home and belonging in the U.S. also shed light on their subjective feelings of belonging. In the literature, a sense of belonging is stated to imply feelings of security, familiarity, rootedness, and emotional attachment (Antonsich, 2010), highlighting the affective dimension of belonging (Mee & Wright, 2009). Feelings of non-belonging can result in a sense of uprootedness, isolation, and displacement (Wright, 2015). In this study, the participants who remained deeply invested in their South African identity, lacked a sense of community and connection, and felt strongly aware of their 'difference' were more likely to reject the idea of the U.S. as 'home'. Sonn et al. (2017) similarly found that notions of home and identity remained rooted in South Africa for South African immigrants in Australia. Other participants in the present study described ways in which they have become acculturated (e.g., being able to meet social norms and expectations; having the cultural competence to navigate living and working in the U.S.) without having developed a sense of belonging. Some participants expected their feelings of belonging and attachment in America to develop over time, echoing the defining of belonging as an ongoing, dynamic process (Ralph, 2012; Wright, 2015). However, many of the participants struggled to regard America as 'home' or identify as 'American' even after years in the country and despite gaining citizenship (which represents formal, social belonging).

Applying the theoretical conceptualising of immigrant belonging as personal and emotional as well as social and intersubjective (Ralph, 2012; Wright, 2015) in the analysis of participant narratives has enhanced the understanding of the South African immigrant experience in the U.S. The study suggests that the advantageous positionality of South African immigrants, which results in fewer experiences of prejudice, discrimination, and exclusion compared to other immigrant groups in the U.S., does not guarantee a strong sense of belonging. Although South Africans do seem to have high levels of cultural capital and an increased capacity to achieve economic integration and citizenship (relative to

other immigrant groups in America), the findings of the study imply that feelings of belonging are not as easily acquired. However, as the majority of participants expressed the importance of their work life in their acculturation in the U.S., the study proposes that the workplace is a potentially significant source of belonging for South African immigrants in America.

7.3 Understanding the Role and Significance of the Work Setting as a Social Context for the Immigrant Experience

7.3.1 The workplace as an avenue for belonging

The present study has explored the ways in which the workplace relates to both the personal and social dimensions of migrant belonging. For several participants, for whom relocation to the U.S. was made possible by their education, skill, language proficiency, and occupation, the workplace represents a social arena within which their forms of cultural capital are recognised, validated, and valued. These South Africans were able to convert their cultural resources into symbolic capital, which confers cultural competence, legitimacy, and privilege within their organisation-as-field (Al Ariss & Syed, 2011; Khanchel & Ben Kahla, 2013; Vaughan, 2008). Differences function "as signs of distinction" (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 19), both positive and negative, and position individuals within a symbolic space of status groups. In addition to participants' institutionalised cultural capital (education credentials), the present study has suggested that the South African accent is a salient marker of distinction (Erel, 2010) and a validated cultural resource for South African immigrants, contributing to their often favourable social positioning within the American workplace. Along with strong economic credentials (Turper, et al., 2015), the class connotations of a 'British-sounding' accent and the tendency for South African immigrant to occupy professional roles in turn reinforces their access to higher social status in U.S. society. In this way, the workplace as a social context contributes to the reproduction of class that enables and enhances South Africans' social belonging and integration in America.

At the same time, this study's findings suggested that South African immigrants' subjective sense of belonging may not correlate with their relatively high levels of

social belonging. Feelings of belonging in the U.S. may be inhibited by a lack of connection or sense of community, a persisting identity as 'outsider' due to the salience of their foreignness, perceptions of a lack of fit between particular personal beliefs and American values and attitudes, and a difficulty in regarding the U.S. as home. Other research has explored the role of associational life, such as community-based and religious activities, in the development of migrant belonging (Landau, 2009), but this did not arise as a significant theme across the group of participants in the present study. However, the majority of participants identified ways in which their job and their work life played a significant role in their adjustment and acculturation experiences. This extended beyond the financial and legal security that being employed ensures.

For several participants, the workplace offered opportunities for meeting people, forming friendships, and developing social networks. For others, the workplace has been a social setting through which they have been exposed daily to Americans and American culture, increasing a sense of cultural competence. In addition, participants described work as an important source of meaning, identity, and purpose, and as contributing to perceptions of legitimacy and credibility as foreigners in the U.S. The findings therefore align with the literature that asserts work to be central to identity formation and affirmation, a sense of well-being, a source of engagement and interaction, and a way for migrants to adapt to new cultural patterns and values (Delaney, 2014; Flum & Cinamon, 2011; Valenta, 2008). Participant stories of friendships and connection in the workplace reflect the meaningful interactions that occur in such contexts (Cook et al., 2011), and the insistence by some participants that work was a primary source for their sense of belonging affirms the argument that the workplace is an overlooked and understudied social context for the immigrant experience (Cook et al., 2011; Van Tonder & Soontiens, 2014).

7.3.2 Situating identity and belonging in the 'place' of work

A focus on the workplace involved embracing a place-based perspective that emphasises the contextuality of migrant experiences (Phillips & Robinson, 2015) and the inherently geographical nature of belonging (Mee & Wright, 2009). It also

meant recognising that the workplace is not a natural and neutral space, but socially constructed and produced by institutional forces, social relations, and arrangements of power while at the same time recursively affecting how social relations develop within them (Cresswell, 2009; Halford, 2008; Hubbard & Kitchin, 2011). Viewing the immigrant experience as situated emphasises the materiality of place without reifying social structure.

Following Yuval-Davis (2011), my focus during data analysis on participants' workplace experiences was not to simply assess whether participants belonged or not, but rather *how* they belonged. As experiences of identity and belonging are situated and relational (Phillips & Robinson, 2015; Sonn et al., 2017; Valentine, 2007), this entailed paying attention to discourse and social structures which position participants within their respective workplaces as well as subjective experience, identity formation, and human agency (Christensen & Jensen, 2012; McDowell, 2008; Tatli & Özbilgin, 2012). This also echoes Anderson's (2010) description of a cultural geographic approach to place which investigates the dynamic, contingent, and exclusionary nature of place, and considers the meanings, identities, emotions, borders, and agency in how places are produced.

The study has contributed to knowledge about the ways in which, and the circumstances under which, South African immigrants experience belonging in the U.S. workplace. These are summarised under three headings: 1) Constructions and perceptions of difference; 2) Workplace culture; and 3) Agency in managing difference.

Constructions and perceptions of difference

Drawing on intersectionality literature and notions of the social construction of difference (e.g., Bürkner, 2012; Christensen & Jensen, 2012; Valentine, 2007; Yuval-Davis, 2011), the study revealed how participants' experiences of identity and belonging were shaped by the meaning and value attributed to dimensions of difference within each workplace. The significance of place was also foregrounded in this process: differences are situated in specific contexts; identities are produced in situ; and the social and spatial norms within

organisations are powerful regulators of meaning (Anthias, 2002; Probyn, 2003; Richter, 2015; Valentine & Sporton, 2009).

In addition to the previously identified salient dimensions of foreignness, race, and accent, the findings indicated that educational attainment, profession, and religious beliefs were also relevant to how South African immigrants are positioned in their workplaces. Examples from interview narratives demonstrated how certain categories of difference were shown to be viewed as valuable or desirable in some organisations (e.g., accent described as 'sophisticated'; status conferred by education), while in others were amplified in ways that reinforced participants' status as Other (e.g., accent signalled 'outsider'; education viewed as threatening). Various forms of difference thus resulted in benefits (e.g., respect, inclusion) or disadvantage (e.g., viewed as non-conforming or a threat to the status quo) for participants in their particular workplaces. These findings exemplify how "intersectionality works out in different ways in different places" (McDowell, 2008, p. 504), and affirmed the necessity to remain contextually sensitive while exploring the lived, subjective experience of participants.

While the findings indicated that South Africans tend to be relatively less strongly marked as Other in many American workplaces, factors such as structures of power, norms in the specific industry or field, and wider social, historical, and political contexts were also noted to be influential. The ways in which participants were perceived by others in their workplaces oftentimes echoed broader social discourse in the U.S. regarding immigration which constructs some immigrants as more worthy and acceptable than others (Morrissey, 2015). This was also reflected in their experiences of inclusion and exclusion in the workplace: in general, participants seemed to have fewer experiences of overt discrimination and exclusion compared to their immigrant co-workers (e.g., Muslim and Latino/a colleagues).

More often than not, participants explained their sense of exclusion as being instead due to their own lack of understanding of American culture and history, struggles in relating to American co-workers, and their limited access to networks and social capital. Some instances of prejudice and stereotyping did emerge in the

participants' stories, although these seemed to stem from an anti-immigrant rather than an anti-South African sentiment. A notable finding was the reporting of stronger us-them boundaries between black South Africans and African Americans, maintained by perceived differences in identity and culture as well as barriers in communication and connection. This exemplifies how racial, ethnic, and cultural identities intersect in complex and nuanced ways to shape intergroup relations and experiences of belonging, a finding confirmed in other race-related immigrant studies (Hunter et al., 2017; Louis et al., 2017; Nsangou & Dundes, 2018).

The study also drew attention to how being a South African in the U.S. workplace has been beneficial for participants. Examples within the interview narratives included how participants were perceived as unusual and interesting, and how their unique perspectives, knowledge, and experiences distinguished them from their American counterparts. In general, South African immigrant employees seem to be able to conform to constructions of the 'ideal' U.S. immigrant: educated and skilled, hard-working, taking initiative, and being willing to adapt to American workplace norms (Gilmartin, 2008; Hsu & Wu, 2015; Reitman, 2006). Participants also spoke of experiences of inclusion with co-workers that created a sense of 'we' and 'us' at work. Sometimes this was based on compatibility in personality, values, or attitudes rather than nationality, but more often it seemed that participants related more easily to other immigrant employees.

Paying attention to the social construction of difference, how participants are perceived, and their experiences of inclusion and exclusion within their respective organisations, highlighted how the 'place' of work is imbued with meaning and becomes a locus for personal and social identity as well as emotional attachment (Anderson, 2010; Herod, 2012). For some participants the workplace represented a zone of contact (Ahmed, 2004) that provided connection, stability, and a sense of self, while for a few it was a space that generated feelings of alienation, resentment, or anxiety (Svašek, 2010).

Workplace culture

Although participation in the work arena has been claimed to contribute to the social and economic integration of migrants, Valenta (2008) posits that this may only occur under certain conditions. The present study has offered insight into what this might mean for South African immigrants in the U.S. The findings shed light on how the workplace may enable or inhibit a sense of belonging for South African immigrant employees by identifying and discussing several aspects of the cultures and characteristics of American workplaces.

The social norms and values of the dominant culture in an organisation create a framework for what is valued and respected in the workplace and positions employees relative to in- and out-groups, thereby impacting who is more likely to find themselves in positions of privilege (Guetzkow & Fast, 2016; Ralph, 2012; Tatli & Özbilgin, 2012). Examples mentioned by South Africans in this study included being white, of the Christian faith, holding American qualifications, being U.S.-born, and being socially connected. The findings indicated that increased levels of diversity and numbers of foreign employees in an American workplace seem to lessen feelings of Otherness, allow for the negotiation of identity, and create an in-group within which to experience inclusion and connection. In addition, organisational cultures that espouse openness and inclusiveness, promote social interaction and communication, and value relationships and employees were more likely to encourage stronger feelings of emotional attachment and connectedness for South African immigrant employees, which are essential for the development of a sense of personal belonging (Antonsich, 2010). These themes are compatible with the findings of other organisational studies (e.g., Lu et al., 2013) which identified factors that increase the affective commitment of immigrant employees.

In diverse workplaces with a mix of local and foreign workers (as described by several participants in this study), aspects of American culture co-exist, and sometimes stand in contrast to, those of immigrant employees of other nationalities and cultures. Taras et al. (2013) suggest that qualitative inquiry will deepen an understanding of the impact of cross-cultural differences in workplace

contexts for immigrants (a topic that much quantitative work has well established). The present study has contributed some insights into South African immigrants' perceptions of such differences in the U.S. workplace. In addition to more general immigrant-related work challenges (e.g., preference for American qualifications, hesitancy or anxiety about hiring foreigners, and stereotypes and misconceptions about immigrants) the study highlighted the significance of cross-cultural differences as influential in participants' perceptions of belonging. These included the contextual and cultural nature of language (e.g., vocabulary, and idiomatic expressions) and communication styles (e.g., levels of forthrightness and assertiveness) that complicate interactions between South Africans and Americans in the work context. Participants reported having to pay attention to how their communication is interpreted and make necessary adjustments to better manage how they are perceived and understood.

Interpersonal warmth and connection in the workplace was another cross-cultural difference that participants discussed. Some found Americans to be less welcoming, inclusive, and friendly than South Africans, arguing that South African workplaces were more social, open, and relaxed. American co-workers were also described as more reserved and individualistic, leading to perceptions of reduced opportunities for collaboration and interaction in the U.S. workplace. Sonn et al. (2017) similarly found that South African immigrants felt culturally alienated by the "inwardly focused Australian way of life" (p. 48). A final cross-cultural difference that posed a challenge for participants involved social norms in the American workplace, such as appropriate language use and taboo topics (e.g., politics, racism, gun-control, or religion). The perception of a mismatch in values or beliefs and the need to adjust to new norms resulted in feelings of frustration and even demotivation for some of the participants.

The discussion of workplace characteristics and culture affirmed how the workplace is a key site of encounter and an important context for immigrants' interactions, social membership, identity negotiation, and experiences of connection and belonging (Phillip & Robinson, 2015; Platts-Fowler & Robinson, 2015). While workplace structures and discourses were shown to shape participants' experiences of identity and belonging at work, their responses,

choices, and actions were similarly significant to explore (Halford, 2008; Ekinsmyth, 2013).

Agency in managing difference

In line with other authors who emphasise human agency in migration studies (e.g., Anthias, 2002; Chacko, 2015; Johansson & Śliwa, 2014; Ku, 2012; Mee & Wright, 2009), the present study highlighted how participants interpreted and actively responded to their work environments. This included various strategies participants found to be successful in adapting to their workplaces and developing a sense of belonging, as well as how they managed their difference through identity practices. Although patterns emerged in the narratives, such strategies and identity practices can be understood to evolve within the intersection of individuals' dimensions of difference, their levels of cultural capital, and the unique features of a specific workplace context. This echoes the assertion by Bürkner (2012) that migrants draw on "flexible, context-dependent coping strategies" (p. 188) in adapting to changing frameworks of reference.

Strategies described by South Africans in the present study included increasing their cultural competence with regard to social interactions, values, and workplace norms in the U.S.; making adjustments in their verbal and written communication; recognising cross-cultural differences in order to become more effective in their roles and interactions; and using commonality and conversation as a strategy for building relationships. These varied strategies could be viewed as effective in weakening perceived barriers between participants and their American co-workers and diluting the intensity of others' perceptions of them as 'different' or Other.

A variety of identity practices were also identified in the study, which participants employed in the workplace when actively managing their difference to influence how they are perceived and to negotiate belonging. These included: a) highlighting their identity as South Africans, embracing their difference, and putting their South Africanness at the forefront in their social interactions; b) downplaying their foreignness as a strategy to circumvent unwanted or negative attention and avoid conflict, especially in situations where they were viewed as a threat or in which they felt a lack of security; c) being strategic about the

appropriate contexts for openness or self-censorship and flexible in their behaviour and self-presentation within specific social situations; d) emphasising sameness with Americans over differences (whether through religion, political beliefs, social values, or cultural norms); and e) diverting focus from their foreignness toward those identity aspects and characteristics that may be viewed as more desirable or legitimate to others in the workplace (e.g., profession, skills, and expertise).

Several of the strategies and identity practices described above are also present in other work-related immigrant studies (e.g., Bridgewater & Buzzanell, 2010; Jian, 2012; Valenta, 2008). They can be seen as ways in which South African immigrant employees work to connect and relate to others, combat negative perceptions of their foreignness, build credibility in the workplace, and claim belonging. This aligns with Shenoy-Packer's (2005) description of the proactive behaviours that immigrants adopt in their attempt to become integrated within the workplace. This may prove challenging even for educated professionals who lack the "sociocultural capital of cultural insiders" (p. 260) in the U.S. workplace. In addition, while the participants may have been able to leverage perceived strengths and 'desirable' attributes to negotiate acceptance and belonging, participants' agency continued to be constrained by the contexts within which they work (Halford, 2008; Hubbarb & Kitchin, 2011; Wright, 2015; Ybema et al., 2009). Examples from the present study included workplaces with a lack of diversity or appreciation of difference, strong expectations of conformity and assimilation, low levels of social interaction or inflexible social boundaries, and unfavourable or negative attitudes to foreign employees.

Applying Bourdieu's concepts of capital, habitus, and field at the organisational level contributed further insight into how the dynamic between structure and agency shaped participants' social positioning and their capacity to mobilise forms of cultural capital in their places of work. Several participants seemed to be able to navigate the 'rules of the game' in their workplaces (organisation-as-field; Vaughan, 2008), and over time found ways to mobilise their capital, accumulate or create new cultural capital appropriate to the new habitus, or transform aspects of their own habitus to better align with their new field. A few, however,

experienced an incongruence between the organisational habitus and their own, resulting in feelings of discomfort, alienation, and not belonging (Alanen & Siisiäinen, 2011; Erel, 2010). In these workplaces, participants' cultural capital was devalued or did not include the forms of organisation-specific capital that represented symbolic capital.

Through situating experiences of immigrant identity and belonging in the U.S. workplace, and exploring the conditions under which participants experience belonging, this study has revealed how 'South Africanness' is triggered in particular contexts and the different ways in which the participants articulate and mobilise the South African identity. These can be described in three broad categories. The first encompasses those workplace contexts in which participants felt secure and relatively comfortable with their place in the organisation. South Africanness was mobilised to explain their sense of belonging: South African immigrants are educated, hard-working, and culturally and socially compatible with American norms and values. South Africans were thus articulated as the 'right kind' of immigrant, aligning with expectations implicit in U.S. immigration and integration discourse.

The second type of workplace context which was seen to trigger South Africanness was one in which participants experienced a degree of resistance or doubt, or some form of prejudice or exclusion. In these contexts, participants mobilised particular aspects of South Africanness, articulated as skill or expertise, unique perspectives and experiences, cross-cultural competence, and work ethic (as examples), to increase the perceived value of their difference or to legitimise their presence or position in the organisation. Participants also made attempts to enlighten or educate others about their South Africanness to normalise their difference and lessen perceptions of being Other. Participants seemed to have more capacity to manage their identity, mobilise their cultural resources, and negotiate their belonging in these workplace contexts.

The final context highlighted in the study represents those workplaces where participants did not experience a sense of belonging. Barriers to capital mobilisation and perceptions of a lack of fit, for example, evolved in workplaces

with more solidified boundaries between 'Us' and 'Them' or an incongruence between the participants' habitus and that of the organisation. South Africanness, in these circumstances, was articulated to highlight cultural differences in explaining or justifying persistent feelings of alienation and experiences of exclusion. For some participants, this resulted in changes in employment to an organisation better aligned with their own habitus, a reinvention of career that enabled capital accumulation and mobilisation, or a stronger identification with their South African identity and culture which may increase their desire to return to South Africa.

In summary, the present study has enhanced an understanding of the workplace as an important social context for the South African immigrant experience. Being advantageously positioned in the U.S. immigrant hierarchy and having a relatively high level of social belonging did not seem to equate with a strong sense of belonging for the South Africans in this study. Instead, the workplace was suggested to be a significant source of feelings of belonging in America. The findings indicated that the workplace offered opportunities for social interaction and connection, and provided meaning, identity, and purpose for participants. South African employees' high levels of cultural capital, in combination with a lack of knowledge about South Africa in the U.S. context and the benefits of positive accent stereotypes, helped mitigate some of the barriers to belonging that foreign employees face in the American workplace.

The participants' differential experiences highlighted the centrality of place and the utility of an intersectional frame when examining issues of identity and belonging. The findings contributed to knowledge about South African immigrant experiences in the U.S. workplace through an exploration of the circumstances under which they experience belonging. Factors such as the construction and perception of difference, various workplace characteristics and culture, and the agency of participants were identified as mediating the ways in which they were positioned within their workplaces, managed their difference, and negotiated belonging.

7.4 Limitations and Further Research

The present study was largely exploratory and descriptive in nature, with purposefully broad aims and objectives to avoid presumptions about what may or may not be salient and relevant to South African immigrants' experiences of identity and belonging. This resulted in a large volume of collected data that related to many different aspects of the immigrant experience. Future studies on South African immigrants in the U.S. could narrow research objectives in order to increase the focus on specific themes or dimensions of difference, or concentrate on a single industry (e.g., education) or career role (e.g., managers). In addition, further research could examine categories and themes that did not emerge in the current study such as disability or sexual orientation, or bring insight into the challenges South Africans of different faiths (e.g., Hindu or Buddhist) face in American workplaces where Christianity is the norm. Given the anti-Islamic sentiment in the U.S., the absence of a participant of the Muslim faith in the study limited my ability to engage this experience.

Another important aspect to acknowledge is the highly context-dependent nature of the experiences of identity and belonging. Due to sampling being restricted to one particular region as a result of time, cost, and travel constraints, interviews were not conducted with South Africans living in other parts of the country. Studies in other U.S. regions, where demographics, culture, and attitudes to immigrants may differ, could contribute new and unique perspectives and experiences about issues of belonging and identity at work. For example, further research with South African immigrants in very politically and religiously conservative states in the middle or southern regions of the country, could affirm or refute the participants' views that immigrants in such states may have more direct experiences of discrimination or prejudice. Future studies could also focus on South African immigrants in other countries where contextual configurations may result in a variety of differences in the immigrant experience.

7.5 Closing Comments

Responding to claims that the workplace is a relevant and understudied context for the immigrant experience (e.g., Cook et al., 2011; Van Tonder & Soontiens,

2014), my exploration of South African immigrants' experiences of identity and belonging within the U.S. workplace proved to be an intricate and challenging undertaking. The complexity and multidimensionality of migrant belonging became apparent at the outset of my search of the broader literature, in which I could not identify any unified or discrete theories of belonging. Instead, authors from a multitude of disciplines have approached belonging from a variety of perspectives, highlighting its subjective, social, political, and geographical dimensions. The present study contributes to this evolving and expanding body of multi- and inter-disciplinary discourse on migrant belonging.

A review of migration literature made it clear that adopting a single theory or framework to conceptualise migrant belonging would stifle interpretation and undermine the credibility of my study. Instead, embracing multiple perspectives and approaches enabled me to pursue an exploration of my participants' experiences while keeping the dynamic, situated, relational, and contingent nature of identity and belonging in mind. The study drew from concepts and theories within a diverse body of knowledge and areas of interest, including geographic notions of space and place, intersectionality and the social construction of difference and identity, research on work and organisations, and migration studies. Ultimately, the study became ambitious in its scope. It involved examining how South Africans are positioned as an immigrant group in the U.S., exploring the complexity of experiences within a group of South African participants, as well as understanding the positionality of individual participants in the particular contexts of their workplaces.

The findings, however, have enhanced the knowledge of South African immigrants in America, brought insight into the role and significance of the workplace as a social context for immigrant belonging, and added to the richness of cultural geography studies focused on the immigrant experience from a place-based perspective. In particular, the study has extended the theoretical conversation on migrant identity and belonging through its exploration of the ways in which the workplace may enable or inhibit an immigrant's sense of belonging. For many South Africans, as skilled migrants in the U.S., the workplace represents an everyday space within which their cultural capital and

forms of ‘difference’ are affirmed as legitimate and valuable, allowing for the building of credibility and increasing opportunities for inclusion that may be less accessible in other social contexts. The study identified various factors within the U.S. workplace that may mediate such experiences, including workplace culture, levels of diversity, and cross-cultural differences, and also highlighted dynamics of structure and agency in understanding how South African immigrant employees validate and mobilise their cultural capital and manage their difference.

While focused on South Africans, the themes and insights from this study may be relevant and useful to studies concerned with the immigrant experience of migrants of various nationalities in America as well as in other nations. The study’s findings may also have some practical value to South African immigrants (and the people supporting them) seeking to understand the challenges that immigrants face as they attempt to acculturate, integrate, and negotiate a new life in the U.S. For researchers interested in migrants and the workplace (or a myriad of other social contexts), the study serves as an example of the complexity and multidimensionality of the migrant experience, as well as the various levels of analysis that may illuminate the ways immigrants negotiate integration in destination countries. These include the need to be cognisant of: the migration-specific capital of a particular group of immigrants (and within-group differentiation); how immigrants are positioned by their intersecting dimensions of difference in specific contexts where forms of capital are differentially assessed, given meaning, and valued; the way discourse, social structures, power relations, and practices function within particular places to influence processes of inclusion and exclusion; the interrelatedness of scale in understanding immigrants’ experiences, including macro- (e.g., national or regional), meso- (e.g., state or city), and micro- (organisation or public space) levels; and the dynamics of structure and agency in relation to immigrants’ choices and strategies as they negotiate identity and belonging in new environments.

Migrant belonging will continue to attract migration scholars, especially during an era of globalisation and mass migration where countries around the world encounter migration-related challenges such as xenophobia and nativism, cultural

and religious conflicts, and social and economic upheavals that threaten resources or political stability. In the U.S., belonging and citizenship are more easily claimed by those who are local-born, white, and Christian. For the immigrant, a sense of belonging in America, traditionally regarded as a 'land of immigrants', is increasingly becoming tenuous. The ability to identify as 'American' or experience personal feelings of belonging in the U.S. will continue to be shaped by changing immigration discourse and social norms which immigrants must navigate in order to find ways to claim and negotiate belonging. The present study has contributed to the knowledge of South African immigrants' differential experiences of identity and belonging in the U.S workplace and beyond, and has served as an empirical example of the personal, relational, political, situated, constructed, contingent, and dynamic nature of migrant belonging.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Part 1:

Introduce myself and the topic of study; affirm confidentiality and anonymity; address any questions and concerns.

Gather background information on reasons for emigration; the U.S. as the choice of destination; previous and current employment in America; and details about their employers.

Part 2: Sameness/difference

- When you think back to when you started working in the U.S., what were some of the challenges you faced in those first few months?
- Can you describe any ways in which you felt that you were different to your colleagues?
- What about ways in which you felt you fit in quite easily?
- Can you think of a time when you felt your boss or co-workers treated you differently because you were a foreigner?
- How do people perceive you or respond to you when you tell them you are from South Africa specifically?
- Who do you get along with, or relate most to, in your workplace?
- Can you recall a time when you felt excluded by certain people or from certain activities or decision-making at work?
- To what extent do you feel a sense of belonging at work?

Part 3: Workplace focus

- Would you say that your organisation, or the employees and management in the company, are open to difference and embrace different cultures and values? Can you discuss an example?

- Do you feel supported and valued by your company, boss and co-workers? How so?
- Are you aware of an employee or a group of employees who may feel disregarded by others, or who may not feel they have a voice in the company?
- How much opportunity do you have for advancement and promotion compared to your American colleagues?
- How do you feel your experiences have been different to or the same as other immigrant employees in your organisation?
- In which ways do you feel being a South African has been an asset or had benefits in your job? Can you share some examples?
- Can you share an example of where you felt the need to hide any aspect of who you are in order to accomplish something or fit in at work?
- Can you tell me about some of the strategies that have worked for you in terms of connecting with Americans and improving social relationships and interactions?
- Do you plan to stay with your organisation in the long term or are you considering leaving the organisation?

Part 4: Integration

- How have you adjusted to life in the U.S.? Can you share some examples?
- How important would you say your work life has been compared to other aspects of your life in helping you adjust and integrate in the U.S.?
- Can you describe any ways in which you feel like you have become more 'American'?
- Do you feel that you belong here in the U.S. now? Is it home? How so?
- To what extent is your South African identity still important to you?
- Based on your conversations with other South Africans you know, at work or socially, have your experiences been very different or similar to theirs?
- As in immigrant in America, do you feel secure in your future here? How so?

APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Greetings

My name is Danielle Allen and I am a PhD student at the University of the Witwatersrand completing a qualitative research study about the immigration experience of South Africans who have moved to the U.S. I am particularly interested in the role of the work setting and the influence of experiences in the workplace on immigrant identity, sense of belonging, and integration. You were selected as you are a South African living and working in the U.S., and I am contacting you to see if you would be willing to participate in the study and share your own immigration experience.

What is involved? Being involved would mean participating in an interview, usually one to two hours in length, at a time and place that is convenient for you (e.g., your home) or via Skype if travel to your location is not feasible. Your participation in this study will be confidential: your name and any identifying information (personal or work-related) will not be revealed or shared. Confidentiality and anonymity will also apply to any publications and presentations that may be made based on this research (including conference presentations and journal publications). Interviews will be recorded (with your permission), and transcribed. I will erase the recordings after transcription, and no other person will have access to the interview recordings or transcriptions (which will be kept on a password protected computer). The results of the study will be published as a PhD thesis, and I can make a summary of the research available at your request. The thesis will also be available from the WITS electronic database.

Benefits and risks of the study: There are no direct benefits (e.g., payment) for participating in the study. This study has the potential to enhance the understanding of the South African immigration experience in the U.S. There are no anticipated risks or discomfort related to this research. Participation is

completely voluntary - during the interview you may refuse to answer a question, and you may withdraw from the study without penalty at any time.

Contact Information: If you have any questions about the research or need additional information, please feel free to contact me (845-405-6960 or daniellea76@gmail.com), or either of my Research Supervisors: Dr. Teresa Dirsuweit (+2711-717-6516; Teresa.Dirsuweit@wits.ac.za) or Professor Hugo Canham (+2711-717-4516; Hugo.Canham@wits.ac.za).

If you are interested in participating in the study, you can respond to this email or call me directly. The next step will be to set up an interview time and complete a consent form.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Danielle Allen

APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM

I have been given information on the research study about South Africans' immigration and workplace experiences in the U.S. by Danielle Allen, who is conducting this research as part of a PhD degree supervised by Dr. Dirsuweit and Professor Canham at the University of the Witwatersrand.

I confirm that (please tick if applicable):

- ☐ I have been advised of what is involved in participating and what is requested of me.
- ☐ The risks and benefits of the study have been explained.
- ☐ I have been assured of the confidentiality of my participation in this study.
- ☐ I understand that the results of the study will be published as a PhD thesis, and that the data collected will be kept private and secure.
- ☐ I have been assured that if any presentations are made, that my identity will be kept confidential in all public forums (including conference presentations and journal publications).
- ☐ I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary and that I am free to refuse to participate or withdraw from the research at any time without penalty.
- ☐ I have had an opportunity to ask Danielle (or her supervisors) any questions I may have about the research and my participation.

Please indicate your permission for the interview to be **audio-recorded**:

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree

By signing below, I am consenting to being interviewed as a participant in this study:

_____ (Name in print)

_____ (Signature) Date: _____

APPENDIX D

ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

Research Office

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)
R14/49 Allen

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	**PROTOCOL NUMBER: H16/06/01**
PROJECT TITLE	Contextualising experiences of identity and belonging in the workplace: South African immigrants in the United States
INVESTIGATOR(S)	Mrs D Allen
SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT	GAES/
DATE CONSIDERED	24 June 2016
DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE	Approved unconditionally
EXPIRY DATE	17 July 2019

DATE 18 July 2016 **CHAIRPERSON** _____ (Professor J Knight)

cc: Supervisor : Dr T Dirsuweit

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR(S)

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Secretary at Room 10005, 10th Floor, Senate House, University.

I/We fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I/we guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee. **I agree to completion of a yearly progress report.**

_____ Signature

21 / 7 / 2016 Date