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Exploring the daily lived experiences of African international students at a Gauteng Based University

2019

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This research report is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for a Master's Degree in Community Based - Counselling Psychology by Coursework and Research Report in the Department of Psychology Faculty of Humanities, School of Human and Community Development at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

DECLARATION:

I declare that the work in this research report is entirely my own work and I am the sole author thereof. Where the report does not reflect my own ideas, these parts have been acknowledged in the form of references and citations. This research has not been submitted before to any other university.

_____

Jane Ivy Mugambi
September 2019

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SOLI DEO GLORIA

To God Alone, the ultimate Glory

I begin by extending my sincere gratitude to Dr Mambwe Kasese-Hara, for all your encouragement, support, guidance and professionalism that has enabled me to come to this moment. Thank you and may God Bless you.

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To my friends, sisters in Christ and church family, I say, thank you. You did not stop praying for me, encouraging me, letting me vent, crying with me, laughing with me, dreaming with me and cheering me along the way. "A real friend is one who walks in when the rest of the world walks out".

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Finally, to the Lord Almighty, I stand at this point but by your Grace alone, to you belongs the highest praise. You are my rock, my refuge, my provider, an ever present help in times of trouble, my comforter, my strength. This journey has been a vivid testament of your goodness and faithfulness.

"The Danger of a Single Story"

"Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign, but stories can also be used to empower and to humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity".

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

ABSTRACT

Internationalisation of higher education and the movement of international students has over the years become a rising trend. Latest statistics by UNESCO show that by 2016 there were 4.8 million international students across 200 countries. As a result of this migration, there has been growing research on international students and the internationalisation of higher education especially in the Western World. This study explores the daily lived experiences of international students at a Gauteng University in South Africa, with an interest in Black African students who come from other African countries. There is a dearth of research on experiences of Black African internationals in South Africa and this research takes on a holistic approach to build on the existing work as well as identify further areas of research.

A review of literature was situated in international student experiences, internationalisation of higher education and critical race theory which amplifies different realities. Following a qualitative research design, semi-structured interviews were conducted with nine participants. The findings revealed that African international students have positive experiences linked to a cosmopolitan campus environment, high quality academic qualifications, access to university resources and qualified supportive academic staff. Negative experiences were centred around race, ethnicity, support structures, stringent visa and institutional entry processes. The study provides recommendations for universities to reinforce support structures available for international students. Implications for further research conclude this research report.

KEY WORDS: Internationalisation, Diversity, Race, Identity, Micro-aggressions, Critical race theory

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

> An internationally mobile student is an individual who has physically crossed an international border between two countries with the objective to participate in educational activities in a destination country, where the destination country is different from his or her country of origin. (UNESCO, 2015)

1.1 Background

By 2016, 4.8 million international students were recorded worldwide from over 200 countries, more than double the number from 20 years ago (UNESCO, 2018).

Migration is considered one of the biggest social ruptures in an individual's life and embraces all dimensions of social existence. This concept of movement also grapples with social boundaries, inter-group conflicts, social cohesion and the ethics of otherness (Landau & Palmary, 2016). The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO, 2017) refers to migration as the movement of people across political or administrative boundaries for a certain period of time either within the country or between countries. Further, UNESCO specifies the relocation of people across countries as international migration. Migration by definition assumes that people are active agents and have a choice in exercising their relocation (UNESCO, 2017). UNESCO however points out a flaw with this definition. They argue that the movement of people who have been forced to move as a result of conflict, persecution or sudden impoverishment should not be regarded as migration because it is an involuntary move (UNESCO, 2017). This research study is interested in both the experiences of students, whether their history speaks of passive or active agents of the movement, with the focus being the students' agency in making a conscious decision to pursue educational opportunities in a country other than their country of origin. Entry into tertiary learning is generally embodied through different experiences and the transition is said to be full of tension and stress while at the same time also optimistic in nature (Bojuwoye, 2002).

According to Dzvimbo and Moloi (2013), through internationalisation of higher education, countries can contribute to and benefit from global knowledge economies and to the process of globalisation. Sehoole and De Wit (2014) posit that internationalisation of Higher Education in Africa has progressed over the years to uncover strengths and weakness that require further exploration. An overarching suggestion is for universities to include students in establishing and providing support programmes (Mokhothu & Callaghan, 2018). Further, according to Mokhothu and Callaghan (2018), with the increase of international students, multicultural competence is a necessary skill that is associated with improved academic performance.

Students from Africa form the fourth largest group of international students in the United States of America and there is a need for qualitative investigations into their social, cultural and educational experiences (Mwaura, 2008). Likewise, in South Africa, the highest number of international students are from within Africa (UNECO, 2018). However, Madhavan and Landau, (2011) point out that when thinking about migrants in any context, the population of international migrants compared to host populations is usually comparatively small. As such, this may result in their experiences being marginalized. Therefore, Landau and Palmary (2016) argue that scholarship of teaching and learning would be greatly enriched by the rich diversity of migrant student experiences which often calls for explanations and questioning beliefs.

Lived Experiences

At the onset, it is important to define the term 'lived experience'. Van Manen (2016) helps us in this regard by describing the 'lived experience' as first-hand accounts that require sensitivity and understanding of a person's unique situation.

Lived experiences are important because they guard against the danger of a single story and provide us with a glimpse of different realities. According to Yosso, Smith, Ceja and Solórzano, (2009), critical race theory (CRT) is oriented towards critiquing and changing society through exploring lived experiences to counter the discrimination and marginalisation of different individual and group perspectives. Critical race theory (CRT) has also developed over the years to

analyse and investigate the inequalities and exclusionary practices that occur in institutes of Higher Education (Hiraldo, 2010). Hiraldo (2010) suggests that as CRT elevates counter storytelling by minority groups, universities can be challenged to start building an authentic diverse and inclusive campus environment.

One of the advantages of conducting qualitative research is that it is characterised by embracing complexity and uncertainties as well as understanding constructs such as race, gender, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation and age (Choudhuri 2003).

Given the increased trends in student mobility globally, it is crucial to not only investigate and uncover stories, but to also extend this towards opportunities for changes in pedagogic settings (Pithouse-Morgan, Morojele, Pillay, Naicker, Chikoko, Ramkelawan & Rajpal, 2012).

1.2 Problem Statement

A lot of research on migrants has been from the particular perspective of xenophobia (Adjai & Lazaridis, 2014; Chiweshe, 2016; Crush, 2001; Harris, 2002; Landau, Ramjathan-Keogh, & Singh 2005; Ramphele, Crush, & McDonald, 1999; Neocosmos, 2008). In this regard, most of the research has foregrounded xenophobia which is only one aspect of migrants' lived experiences. By keeping the aim broad and exploring daily lived experiences, my research has opened up discussions through open-ended questions about migrant students' daily lives. The intention is to assist in uncovering experiences that will add onto the body of research, a wider range of experiences that migrant students go through. Ramphele et al., (1999) acknowledges that international students as a subsection of migrants are an integral part of internationally recognised universities, and any benefits to be gained from them must be recognised. The rationale for this research is propelled by this need to understand the migrant student as a socially embedded individual in a foreign environment and uncover a broader picture of their daily experiences which at present is scarce. It is in only after documenting such knowledge that positive experiences can be reinforced and challenges can be appraised and rectified.

1.3 Research Aim

The main aim of this research study is to explore the daily lived experiences of African international students at a Gauteng-based university. The research qualitatively explored how Black migrant students experienced life within all the contexts of their lives as students, taking in their positive experiences and their challenges or negative experiences.

1.4 Research Questions

What are the daily lived experiences of African international students at a Gauteng-based university?

Sub questions:

1. What are the positive experiences of African international students?
2. What are the challenging experiences of African International students?

1.5 Chapter Organisation

This report is divided into five chapters. The first chapter is an introduction that begins with a background and context into the research problem. This is followed by a definition of key terms, the aim, research question, sub-questions and the rationale.

The second chapter is the literature review that deliberates on relevant literature on key concepts that inform the research study. It looks at main topics of internationalisation of higher education and lived experiences of international students. The topics gleans from research studies conducted locally and internationally.

Chapter three is research methodology. This chapter presents and discusses the methodology that guided the study. A qualitative research design was followed using an interpretivist approach to explore lived experiences by conducting interviews using open-ended questions. In addition, data collection and analysis methods, participant selection, ethical consideration and reflectivity are covered.

Chapter Four focuses on the research findings and discussions. A detailed account is provided of seven themes that give a deeper understanding of the daily lived experiences of African International students at a Gauteng university.

Chapter five is a summary of the findings of the research study, limitations, implications for future research and recommendations.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to unpack literature on the findings involving internationalisation of higher education and especially, research writings that have addressed the experiences of international students. Discussions will work through a brief statistical background on international students in South Africa, followed by significant themes and the theoretical underpinning that dominates similar research worldwide. In order to understand the topic under exploration, studies that addressed key topics were reviewed and guided by research questions. In addition, patterns that emerged from the findings also helped to contextualise the literature review while identifying gaps that may require further research especially for international students in South Africa. As a result, this section reviews and focuses on internationalisation of higher education, diversity, racial micro-aggressions, support structures and religion.

In 2016, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation Institute for Statistics (UNESCO-UIS) recorded the number of international students in South Africa as at 45 142 (UNESCO, 2018). UNESCO- UIS goes on to record the inbound flow of students into South Africa by country of origin. Subsequently, these statistics show that out of the top 20 countries listed, 19 are other African countries as the country of origin for international students in South Africa. This overwhelming majority of students coming from other African countries accounts for 84% of the total number of international students coming into South Africa worldwide. Further, according to Chien and Kot (2012), UNESCO-UIS shows the number of international students worldwide at 1.1 million in 1980, which grew to 3.4 million in 2009 and by 2020 is estimated to reach 8 million. The turn of the 21st century and knowledge based globalised economies have contributed to the push for internationalisation of higher education (Altbach & Teichler, 2001).

International students are defined as students who have left the country of their citizenship and crossed borders to pursue studies in another country (Chien & Chiteng, 2011).

According to Chien and Chiteng (2011), within the Southern African region, South Africa possesses a larger capacity to meet the tertiary needs of students within the region.

2.2 Internationalisation of higher education

What is Globalisation, Internationalisation and Internationalisation of Higher Education? Internationalisation and Globalisation are terms that are closely linked and used synonymously despite having different meanings. According to the Draft Policy framework for the internationalisation of Higher Education in South Africa (DHET, 2017), internationalisation refers to the linkages between nations, cultures, individuals and systems. On the other hand, globalisation is defined as the move from local towards worldwide economic, social and political processes (Altbach & Knight 2007). The difference is in an emphasis on the trajectory taken by a country to expand its processes relative to other countries in regards to globalisation whereas, internationalisation suggests relationships across countries. Subsequently, the internationalisation of Higher Education is the deliberate efforts to infuse different peoples, cultures and networks of connections and systems from other countries into higher education programmes and institutions.

Altbach and Knight (2007) argue that internationalisation is a two-way street, however, this is not always the case as mobility favours better developed education systems. Within the African continent, South Africa is regarded as an advanced knowledge hub that attracts a large number of African International students (DHET, 2017). This therefore results in a skewed flow towards more advanced countries where these countries can be considered as having the responsibility of streamlining the processes, policies and services. In such countries, becoming a global institution has thus made internationalisation of universities a key issue.

A growing trend in academia is that of international mobility of both staff and students which has created a global shift towards international education (Altbach & Teichler, 2001). Reasons put forward for why students go to other countries are, access to higher education, differences in quality of education, seeking internationally recognised qualifications, and international work

opportunities (Chien & Kot, 2012; McGregor, 2014). South Africa as compared to the United Kingdom and the Unites States has pull factors such as better education opportunities and cheaper fees that makes it a destination of choice for other African international students (Hall, 2004; McGregor 2014). There are also recorded benefits from internationalisation of higher education for destination countries. Brown and Brown (2013) state that international students are seen to contribute to local economies and to the tertiary education system through tutoring, working in local companies and starting their own businesses. In South Africa, international students are also regarded as having an economic impact through visa fees remittances, tuition fees, skills impartation, medical aid payments, accommodation and entertainment (Aloyo, 2009; DHET, 2017).

Further, studies on international education in countries such as Canada and the United Kingdom also identify benefits of internationalisation (Ryall, 2017; Scott, Safdar, Desai Trilokekar & El Masri, 2015). The benefits associated with internationalisation for these host countries have included global networks, intercultural skills, exchange of socially responsive knowledge and additional income through premium international fees and research partnerships (Hall, 2004; Ryall, 2017). However, such countries have to balance these benefits against local higher education interests and objectives (DHET, 2017).

On the other hand, studies by the South African Migration Project (SAMP, 1999) revealed a key challenge faced by that international students. SAMP (1999) stated that students especially those from other African countries, struggle with immigration policy controls. According to Ramphele, Crush and McDonald (1999), these policy controls are viewed as discriminatory because of the stringent conditions that need to be adhered to. Forms of strict bureaucratic conditions include being excluded from certain areas of employment within the university where priority is given to South African students, premium international fees, lengthy application processes and repatriation costs that need to be paid in advance are decried as punitive (Ramphele et al., 1999; Naidoo, 2015). All of these conditions are deemed to foster exclusion rather than inclusion and impact on international students socio- emotional functioning (Naidoo, 2015).

With the advent of internationalisation, it is necessary to highlight some of the misconceptions that may be confused as internationalisation in higher education. A major driving force of internationalisation is dominance of English globally as the primary language of communication in higher education. De Wit (2017), delineates some of the misleading viewpoints, beginning with the assumption that teaching in English is seen as equivalent to internationalisation of programmes offered. He argues that this may present an adverse effect of neglecting the students whose first language is not English and thus affecting the quality of education that is supposed to be international. Another misrepresentation is when institutions focus mainly on increasing the numbers of international students or offering courses based on international subject material. The increase of international students and courses is relevant, however, it requires a deeper incorporation of local and international requirements in order to be meaningful. This also may create exclusivity or seclusion by creating a separate entity for international students consequently diminishing the benefits of multicultural interactions. According to De Wit (2017), internationalisation of higher education is a process and not a goal. Therefore, identifying the misconceptions is useful in understanding the process and appreciating the strengths and weaknesses so as to improve the objectives and motivation for higher education (Altbach & Knight, 2007).

2.3 Diversity

According to Tienda (2013), diversity is a terminology that usually incorporates racial categories while incorporating in-between dimensions such as ethnicity, gender, class, sexual orientation and religion. Landau and Freemantle (2016) go on to assert that in populations where difference exists, it is vital to engage in conversations and practical concerns about diversity. On the other hand, the authors suggest that there are certain presuppositions which impact diversity dialogues and need to be acknowledged. This includes the existence of internal homogeneity in minority and majority groups as well as the premise that cohesion equals healthy groups such that any deviation may lead to tension or conflict (Landau & Freemantle, 2016). In addition, Amin (2002) argues that much of the negotiations of difference within and between different population groups should occur through everyday experiences drawn from grassroots levels rather than in

abstract political, social and economic terms. Consequently, an understanding of multiple experiences represented by diverse student populations needs to be pursued.

Literature on diversity also shows that there is a shift in transformation from what has been termed as structural diversity, that is, a quantitative increase of different looking people to a qualitative exchange and appreciation of diverse experiences (Gurin et al., 2002; Hurtado et al., 1990). Gurin et al., (2002) argue that to increase numbers for the sake of fulfilling policy requirement is integral but not sufficient for harnessing maximum benefits of diversity. Institutions of higher learning should be imbued with a mix of local, national and international flavour. Classroom diversity requires deliberate race and ethnic interactions that especially gives first time students a "learning about difference in background, experience and perspectives" (Gurin et al., (2002, p.14). The benefits result in a deeper learning experience both inside and outside of the classroom.

In the last two decades, institutions of higher learning worldwide have made great strides in opening up their doors to international students (Naik, Wawrzynski, & Brown, 2017). However, the bulk of literature has centred on student experiences in the Western world especially the United States of America, Canada, United Kingdom and Australia (Brown & Brown, 2013; Constantine, Anderson, Berkel, Caldwell & Utsey, 2005; Gu, Schweisfurth, & Daya, 2009; Naik et al., 2017). Further, based on cross cultural studies in Canada, a disconnect is identified between international students' experiences and policy changes in higher education (Scott et al., 2015). As a result, the increase in numbers of international students in Canada has necessitated the need to look into the complex needs created by this diversity. Subsequently, the primary benefit of a diverse university environment is a focus on students that are "prepared to meet the demand of a complex diverse society" (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen & Allen (1999, p.5).

Elliker, Kotze and Coetzee (2017), foreground universities as large and diverse socio-spatial areas made up of multiple student groups. These multiple groups can be in the context of classmates, student body, social clubs or student residences where student experiences are

intertwined and enacted within these various groups. There is a common identity of being university students, but as Madhavan and Landau (2011) highlight, there are also distinguishable differences between host and migrant communities founded on attributes such as ethnicity and place of birth that result in different social relationships and experiences.

2.4 Cultural Shock

One of the main experiences for international students is the culture shock that manifests as an emotional reaction to the perceived loss of one's cultural support networks (Adler, 1975). Culture in this case is that which relates to an individual's reality based on how one has been oriented towards knowing, practice and relating specific to their world (Elliker et al., 2017).

Language barriers have been documented as cultural stressors that contribute to everyday worries which affect social and academic functioning (Smith & Khawaja, 2011; Lopez & Bui, 2014; Contreras-Aguirre & Gonzalez, 2017). In Canada and the United States of America (USA), a majority of international students are Asian who experience difficulties in speaking and understanding the English language, which leads to problems socially and in participating fully in the classroom (Lopez & Bui, 2014).

Brown and Brown (2013) argue that it is important to understand the International students' cultural experience and how this affects their mental and physical well-being. It can be said that students generally prepare for and research the country they intend to move to for studies. However, the actual experience still results in cultural adjustment challenges with the new environment. Some of the signs of culture shock include demoralisation, conflicts in identity, isolation and social stigma (Brown & Brown, 2013).

Contreras-Aguirre and Gonzalez (2017) identify social support structures as a solution to the adaptation challenges brought by the new socio-cultural environment faced by international students. However, Constantine, Anderson, Berkel, Caldwell and Utsey (2005), state that access to culturally sensitive support structures may be limited for African international students or may

be deemed as Eurocentric. This is also complicated further as some students become averse to going for counselling as it conflicts with their cultural upbringing on mental wellness (Constantine et al., (2005). Consequently, counselling itself becomes part of the culture shock experience.

Orientation programs within universities provide another opportunity for students to build social networks and familiarity with the new environment. Those international students who miss orientation struggle with alienation and a basic understanding of the social and spatial spaces (Naidoo, 2015). Universities have a responsibility to create structures and programs that promote social-cultural competencies such that students get the opportunity to build confidence while retaining their cultural individuality (Smith & Khawaja, 2011). According to Mwangi, Changamire and Mosselson (2018), this is especially significant in countries like the USA where there is an expectation for international students to abandon their culture and conform to American culture as the ideal coping mechanism. This belief works against multiculturalism which speaks to the experience and appreciation of diverse ethnic and racial histories. Within an academic setting, this exposure is an invaluable asset in the life of a student that extends to life in the world of work (Elliker et al., 2017; Hall, 2004).

2.5 Racial Micro-aggressions

A significant area of research in the literature on international students is their socio-political experiences. According to Dominguez-Whitehead and Sing, (2015), insults, assaults and discrimination are some of the non-academic challenges international students face in South Africa. Micro-aggressions can be termed as subtle forms of racism whether intentional or not that consist of perceived offensive or hostile interpersonal interactions (Sue, 2010). Research on micro-aggressions in North America shows that it is as a result of a prevalent racial climate inside and outside of the university. The effects of navigating disparaging perceptions of stereotypes in being African (Mwangi, Changamire & Mosselson, 2018), African American (Solórzano, Ceja & Yosso, 2000), Latina (Yosso et al., 2009). or Asian (Houshmand, Spanierman & Tafarodi, 2014) impact on social and academic experiences.

In universities where a racial climate exists, critical race theory (CRT) has been used to explore, name and challenge encounters of racial micro-aggressions (Yosso et al., 2009). Literature on minority students who are Latina and African American indicate that these students experience covert insults and invalidations such as being ignored and negative assumptions on their intelligence and ethnicity (Ceja & Yosso, 2000; Solórzano & Bernal, 2001; Yosso et al., 2009). Consequently, proponents of CRT, such as Solórzano and Bernal (2001) argue for counter storytelling that contributes to theory and practical learning and challenges dominant voices. They posit that when experiences of minority groups are told by the people themselves, these narratives became a conduit for transformational purposes. Further, CRT also recognises and takes into account the intersectionality of race micro-aggressions with gender, class, sexual orientation, religion and ethnicity which make it meaningful as a theoretical framework (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

In a study of African International students in America, Constantine et al. (2005) state that for African international students who come from contexts where Black is the norm, racial experiences affect the adjustment process. This was highlighted when negative interactions characterised by racial slurs towards African students' accents and physical features by White students were recorded as unique stressors (Constantine et al., 2005). This in turn contributes to ethno-racial dissonance, a term that is used to refer to a lack of identification with available racial and ethnic representations (Hordge-Freeman & Veras, 2019). Ethno-racial dissonance focuses on negative perceptions of Black features as an influential factor that affects identity and adjustment.

In general, international students in America struggle with prejudice and discrimination towards their foreignness, coping in the absence of family support, ignorance or lack of knowledge about their countries and accent problems (Contreras-Aguirre & Gonzalez, 2017; Williams & Johnson, 2011). On the other hand, international students, especially from Asian countries, in Canada and America experience hostility, miscommunication and social exclusion because of limited fluency in the English language (Leong, 2015).

Contreras-Aguirre & Gonzalez, (2017) reveals that students have to contend with brushes of uncongenial behaviour, ethnic and language confrontations and sometimes cultural intolerance. Some examples of uncongenial behaviour that have been described are perceived experiences of rejection when local students avoid interaction with foreigners and no long lasting friendships between the two are formed for the duration of the studies, ridicule of accents as well as being victims of violence and racial insults (Contreras-Aguirre & Gonzalez, 2017; Leong, 2015; Hoehne, 2012; Constantine et al., 2005; Naidoo, 2015; Yi & Jung, 2015). Findings carry on to show that students react to micro-aggressions by skipping classes or in limited participation, keeping to themselves and sleeping which adds to mental and emotional strain (Houshmand et al., 2014).

Houshmand et al., (2014) also argues that international students feel invalidated through institutional micro-aggressions perceived because of limited or no access to funding and challenges in visa and permit application process. Institutional micro-aggressions are explained as the presence of unequal policies, structures and operations or apathy within institutions that perpetuate discrimination especially towards marginalised groups (Yosso et al., 2009).

In South Africa, racism is a dominant discourse and cautionary measures are required to monitor all forms including xenophobia within higher education institutions (Dominguez-Whitehead & Sing, 2015). Crush (2000) highlights a survey taken by South African citizens that presented antagonistic sentiments towards migrants with a strong preference for barring access to social services such as police, housing, medical and education especially for undocumented migrants. These views jeopardise the lived experiences of international students because, popular public discourse appears undifferentiated towards the non-South African population categories, such as migrants, immigrants, refugees and undocumented migrants (Crush, 2000). Over time, resultant xenophobic and discriminatory fears have subsequently been pointed out by African international students (Dominguez-Whitehead & Sing, 2015).

From a South African perspective, Naidoo (2015) reports that migrant students tend to deal with politics of race and his research advocates for appropriate orientation programs and support services. However, Walker (2005) revealed increased positive racial experiences where both Black and White local university students in post-apartheid South Africa commented positively on their interactions within the university campus. The educational experiences of these students were linked to their social relationships and a student's story was interlinked to the lives of the others. This is also true of some migrant students who indicated that social interactions that occur within the academic environment improve integration of students within the class (Hoehne, 2012). It is in this where Leong (2015) argues that the socio-environment, that is, the reception of the host population, is most significant for shaping experiences as good or bad for international students.

Although Naidoo (2015) and Hoehne (2012) highlight racial experiences as present for students in South Africa, research that explores how African international students engage with racism and micro-aggressions as a dominant discourse in South Africa seems to be non-existent.

2.6 Coping and Support

Extant studies show that international university students have to find ways to cope with adjustment struggles, the social environment, and the academic contexts through various support structures (Modipane, 2011; Smith & Khawaja, 2011; Naidoo, 2015; Sennett, Finchilescu, Gibson & Strauss, 2003). Compared to international counterparts from North America and Europe, not many students from other African countries in South Africa come well-funded from their countries of origin (Dominguez-Whitehead & Sing, 2015). These students thus have additional challenges to meet recurrent expenses like food, transport and accommodation and require financial support (Naidoo, 2015). Wilcox, Winn and Fyvie-Gauld, (2005) recognises that friendships end up offering direct emotional and financial support which helps students navigate daily life easier. Research by Constantine et al., (2005) also states that students depend on kinship, especially if they reside in the same country, for money and to cope with loneliness and social stress.

Building social relationships produces a link between adjustment and social support which determines how well international students adapt into the host university (Leong, 2015). Nevertheless, these social relationship influences do not necessarily involve host populations (Killick, 2011; Leong, 2015). International students may find it easier to build social networks with those from their own nationality and culture, and these relationships tend to act as protective factors in their daily lived experiences (Contreras-Aguirre & Gonzalez 2017; Houshmand et al., 2014; Hoehne, 2012). Additionally, Lopez and Bui (2014) and Constantine et al., (2005) revealed that self-esteem had a lower correlation with language barriers because of friendships primarily from the same nationality that preserved cultural pride. Social networks are thus critical because they contribute to a student's sense of identity, well-being, agency and capabilities (Madhavan & Landau, 2011; Muthuki, 2014; Walker, 2005).

The role of religion has also been identified as a significant experience heightened in the adaptation process in the daily life of international students (Muthuki, 2014). For Muthuki (2014), the role of religion and spirituality as a personal experience related to thoughts and feelings has an overall effect on well-being and identity, helping to mediate against environmental and psychological stressors. In addition, religion and belief in a higher being also contributes to migrant students' academic success and enhanced social relationships between diverse population groups within a university environment (Muthuki, 2014).

2.7 Theoretical Framework: Critical Race Theory (CRT)

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a theoretical framework developed from legal studies in the United States of America, which has extended to other areas of study such as History, Ethnic Studies, Sociology and Education, (Solórzano, Ceja & Yosso, 2000). According to the proponents of Critical race theory, there are five guiding principles that govern the model. These include; the criticality of race, racism and the intersectionality with other forms of discrimination, discourse on dominant ideologies, focus on social justice, centrality of first-hand knowledge and integrated across different disciplines (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

This theoretical framework is premised from the understanding that race is a social construct (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Delgado & Stefancic (Eds.). (2000). This has then entrenched racial categories in society and have been normalised (Ladson-Billings, 1998). As a result, race is used as reason to link social and cultural characteristics to physical traits of social groups as the primary form of identity (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Parker, 2003; Pérez Huber & Solórzano, 2015). This is especially significant in countries where race is salient like South Africa, United States and the United Kingdom (Seekings, 2008; Parker, 2003; Matsuda, 2018).

Essential to CRT is counter storytelling and qualitative inquiry (Delgardo 1989). It aims to amplify multiple voices especially of minority out groups through counter narratives to dominant in groups. Delgardo (1989) advances that the stories of dominant in groups solidify their identity through their shared reality which then takes prominence as the dominant discourse in a society. Counter narratives are thus important as they neutralise the dangers of a single story by foregrounding different realities. In addition, CRT looks at experiences of race of minorities at individual and group levels and how it intersects with gender, class, ethnicity, language, phenotype, accent, immigration status (Graham, Brown-Jeffy, Aronson & Stephens, 2011; Solórzano etal., 2000; Yosso, Smith, Ceja & Solórzano, 2009)

CRT seeks to theorize lived experiences of people of colour and other marginalised groups and one of its goals is to minimise ethnocentrism, (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano & Bernal,

2001) Therefore, CRT is crucial within educational settings and helps educators, policy makers and community workers bring about transformation through the agency of counter stories (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Yosso etal., 2009).

This chapter has discussed relevant literature that has sought to explore and understand the lived experiences of international students, with a special lens on students from other African countries. The review of research has been guided by key concepts and theory that dominate existing literature. The topics have investigated the complexities of international higher education with the aim of appreciating and contributing to improvements in the daily experiences by African international students. Moreover, the literature reviewed will also assist in making meaning of the findings of this research study and discussions thereof.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

3.1 Introduction

This chapter gives an account of the steps that were taken in conducting the research study. According to Creswell (2007), researchers must decide on the philosophical stance that they will adopt in guiding the research process. As such, the research was a qualitative study and looked at the nature of reality from an interpretive approach where multiple realities exist. The research study was an exploration of the lived experiences of nine African international students at a Gauteng based university. An epistemological standpoint was taken where realities were uncovered collaboratively through interactions between the researcher and the participants. Further, the chapter will look into reasons for the research design, how the researcher went about choosing participants, acquiring the information and analyzing the data. Lastly, the chapter will refer to ethical considerations and a reflexive piece on the researchers' positionality in relation to the research.

3.2 Research Paradigm

Research is seen as quantitative when it is said to be objective and phenomena under study can be controlled and measured (Hammarberg, Kirkman & de Lacey, 2016). However, Hammarberg et al., (2016) state that when the data cannot be counted but is focused on describing, clarifying and understanding of experiences, then research takes on a qualitative approach. As the research focused on an exploration of the holistic daily lived experiences of African international students, the study was located within a qualitative research design. An ontological stance meant that multiple realities were key and all nine realities were credible and used to generate detailed data. Within a qualitative approach, the research was grounded in an interpretative social constructivism paradigm. According to Creswell (2007), research based on social constructivism grounds the findings on how individuals socially and historically make meaning of their experiences. The nature of the reality that was to be studied was rooted in the internal reality of the subjective experiences of the participants as international students from other African countries. Further, Creswell (2007) states that interpretive research is guided by

interpretations that are influenced through interactions between the social and historical contexts of both the researcher and researched. The researcher thus adopted an interactional stand between herself and participants with the knowledge that the relationship was intersubjective. However, adopting a qualitative research meant that researcher bias was factored in the research, which then became an exercise in reflexivity. Research that is qualitative and interactional in nature needs to also assume an axiological stance (Creswell, 2007). The rationale being that the researcher develops empathy and partiality in gaining understanding that requires an acknowledgement of researcher bias, beliefs and background (Creswell, 2007; Yilmaz, 2013). The core intention was of exploring, understanding and being able to represent these experiences within the current social, cultural, historical and political context.

3.3 Research Participants

The researcher interviewed nine participants who were African international students originally from other African countries, currently studying in Gauteng Province, South Africa. Initially, the students were to be inclusive of both undergraduate and postgraduate students between the ages of 21-45 years. However, the researcher noted that eight out of the nine participants were postgraduate students between the ages of 25 -43 years. This is a notable observation where a greater majority of African international students in South Africa enroll primarily in postgraduate studies rather than undergraduate studies (DHET, 2017; Chikoko et al., 2013; Mda, 2010; Rouhani, 2007).

To allow for an indepth exploration of experiences, the researcher had targeted 10 Black international students to be selected through a snowballing method. Snowball method as a sampling strategy is efficient because it works through people who can refer "information rich cases" aligned to the phenomenon of interest (Creswell, 2007, p.127). However, after seven interviews, there was an unfortunate loss of three audio recorded interviews caused by a malfunction of the researcher's cell phone as the recording device before it could be backed up. The researcher had to snowball for an additional two participants and was able to interview a total of nine participants from June 2017 – November 2017. The researcher ensured safety by backing

up audio recordings after each interview in a password protected computer filing system. The small number of participants was chosen to stay true to qualitative research that looks to explore and understand experiences rather than large numbers and generalisation of findings (Riet & Durrheim, 2006; Creswell, 2007).

The participants consisted of five female and four male students to take into consideration any homogeneity brought about by gender. In addition, the students were from five different African countries purposively avoiding uniformity of nationality and to bring in diverse country experiences.

Table 1: Participants Demographics

	Participants (Pseudonyms)	Gender	Age	Nationality	Study Program in RSA	Age of Arrival in South Africa & (no. of years in South Africa)
1	Masimba	M	34	Zimbabwe	PhD – Sociology	29 (5 years)
2	Shamiso	F	33	Zimbabwe	Masters - Psychology	20 (13 years)
3	Gift	M	30	Zimbabwe	PhD - Migration studies	28 (2 years)
4	Jacinta	F	31	Kenya	PhD - Development studies	12 (19 years)
5	Naomi	F	25	Kenya	Masters – Migration studies	20 (5 years)
6	Olufemi	M	35	Nigeria	PhD – Development studies	28 (7 years)
7	Abiola	F	43	Nigeria	Masters – Drama Therapy	36 (7 years)
8	Eleanor	F	26	Uganda	Honours – Human Resources Management	23 (3 years)
9	Paul	M	25	Rwanda	Bachelors – Clinical Medical Practice	7 (18 years)

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was in the form of individual interviews. One of the advantages of qualitative research is that it aims for depth over breadth in uncovering and understanding meaningful experiences (Labuschagne, 2003; Creswell, 2007). The way in which this was achieved was by conducting semi-structured interviews through open ended questions. In research, when making an endeavour to interact with people for the purpose of being a partaker in the person's

experience, interviews fit in well because they give the researcher an opportunity to get to know the participant (Kelly, 2006; Golafshani, 2003).

The researcher recruited participants through word of mouth by asking for referrals from other student acquaintances within the campus. A snowballing technique aided the researcher to make a choice in identifying different demographics of key participants. The researcher was purposive in finding out, in advance, details like year of study, estimated age based on year of study and country of origin so as to avoid pulling in homogenous samples. Participants had the flexibility of choosing the researcher's student office located on campus or any other quiet location of their convenience. Six participants opted to have the interview in the researcher's office which was quiet and convenient within the university. An introductory meeting was organised by an acquaintance for one other participant and the interview was at a coffee shop near the university. The interview was conducted in the morning hours and the coffee shop was slightly busy. To minimize noise and interruptions, the researcher and participant chose a quiet table in the corner. Yet another participant requested that the researcher meet her at her office where she tutored due to time constraints of being a student and a tutor. The ninth participant preferred to be interviewed at her house.

Interviews commenced when participants were verbally welcomed, invited and briefed on the study as well as issued with an information sheet (Appendix A: Participant Information Sheet). Voluntary participation, informed consent and confidentiality through pseudonyms was conveyed verbally and in written form (Appendix B: Interview Informed Consent Form).

The data collection protocol was guided by six open ended questions, and took on average between 45 minutes to one hour (Appendix D: Questionnaire Schedule). The use of open ended questions in semi-structured interviews is to encourage conversation and in-depth data collection (Creswell, 2007; Ryan, Coughlan, & Cronin, 2009). The interviews were audio recorded via a cell phone with the express signed permission and recording consent of the participant (Appendix C: Recording Consent Form).

3.5 Data Analysis

The process of analysing data was guided by Braun and Clarke's (2013) Thematic Analysis method. As the research was grounded in an intepretivism approach, it was critical that data analysis utilized a method that would allow for open ended deeper realities to emerge. Thematic content analysis is useful because it provides a flexible tool for coming up with rich and detailed accounts of information that is still theoretically and methodologically sound (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher adopted Braun and Clarke's six step Thematic Analysis guide to identify, analyse and report themes across the data set.

According to Clarke and Braun (2013), the first step in Thematic Analysis entails immersion in and familiarization with the data. Data collected through interviews was audio recorded and transcribed by the researcher. The act of transcribing ones' research also contributes to familiarization which requires actively seeing the data with meaning while making observational notes (Braun, Clarke, Hayfield & Terry, 2018) In order to immerse herself in the data, the researcher not only listened to the audio recordings but also read and re-read the transcribed interviews multiple times throughout the analysis process. Terre Blanche, Durrheim and Kelly (2006) emphasize staying close to the data as key to a good analysis.

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), coding is the second step through which the researcher began by looking at what is in the data, what stands out in the data, and creating initial codes from the data that broadly address the research questions. Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest the use of visual aids in organizing the different codes into themes. This flows into the third and fourth step that teases out content, semantic and latent features of the data representing important features that could be analysed in a meaningful way (Clarke & Braun, 2013). Through mind maps, the researcher sorted the different codes into possible individual themes and then further looked at how these themes can be grouped into coherent categories or reworked to create new themes from yet again another recoding process. Creswell (2007) advances that the process of qualitative data analysis regarded as subjective is no less rigorous than quantitative research particularly the arduous and complex task of identifying relevant categories and themes.

The researcher attests to this challenge and initially struggled with coding and collating themes due to a lack of experience in Thematic Analysis and in depth reading on related research topics.

These challenges were overcome by engaging with pertinent literature, examples of Thematic Analysis reports and how to link data to the interpretive and social construction nature of the research study. In addition, researcher triangulation was applied where the researcher worked closely with her supervisor to interrogate the themes, use multiple participant perspectives and appropriately represent them with substantive quotes.

For step five, this inductive approach involved defining, refining and naming themes until no new information emerged to enhance or contest the themes uncovered. An overview of the themes and sub-themes is represented in Table 2 (page 29). Finally, the last step to conclude the analysis process was a cohesive write-up by the researcher of all the themes as represented in this written report that revealed the findings of the research study.

3.6 Trustworthiness

A significant critique towards qualitative research is on how to establish integrity and rigor similar to what quantitative research terms as reliability and validity (Hammarberg et al., 2016). This is because qualitative research is generally regarded as a subjective paradigm and does not utilize statistical measures like quantitative research (Creswell, 2007; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). According to Hammarberg et al., (2016), the principle of trustworthiness is applied to represent the integrity of qualitative research. Integrity is then seen as dependent on the researchers' skill and efforts in designing, conducting and analyzing the research (Golafshani, 2003). Trustworthiness as the quality standard in qualitative research involves determining credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability of findings (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Korstjens and Moser (2018) state that credibility conveys that the findings of the research are a truthful representation and interpretation of the participants' insights. Some techniques that can be used to ensure credibility include, "prolonged engagement, member check, persistent

observation and triangulation - data, method and investigator" (Korstjens & Moser, 2018, p.121). To maintain credibility, the researcher emphasized voluntary participation, took on an open ended questioning approach and also collaboratively worked through investigator or researcher triangulation with her supervisor. This allowed for another pair of eyes throughout the process of data analysis, and in ensuring that there was true representation of participants' data and interpretation of themes. Data triangulation was also made possible by using open ended research questions to encourage participants to lead the data collection process by integrating enriched data that incorporates their multiple constructions of reality. (Golafshani, 2003).

Transferability and confirmability were approached through the process of providing a detailed description of the participants and the research process. The concept of transferability refers to how applicable the research is to other research studies based on similar settings conducted by different researchers (Korstjens & Moser, 2018) Dependability was related to consistency in the process of data analysis and using techniques such as Thematic Analysis that are suitable to the research design. However, in ensuring trustworthiness, the researcher had to be self-reflexive and kept a journal of her biases, experiences, values and assumptions in shaping and influencing the research process. Self-reflexivity is paramount as this acknowledges the role of the researcher and the significant inter-subjectivity that occurs during interpretation in qualitative research (Golafshani, 2003; Clarke & Braun, 2013; Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

3.7 Ethical Considerations

In view of the research being conducted within the university institution and with university students, consent was obtained and a certificate clearance protocol (Appendix E: Research clearance certificate protocol) issued from the Gauteng based university. Wassenaar (2006) speaks to the importance of adhering to ethical principles of research and applying them thoughtfully. Ethical considerations traverse through issues such as confidentiality, anonymity, informed consent, benefits or risks in participation and sensitivity of the research topic under study (Creswell, 2007).

The topic under research was of minimal risk as it looked to understand and explore holistically the daily lived experiences of African international students at a university. In addition, the participants were over 18 years of age and consisted of a non-vulnerable population group. Informed Consent was obtained from each participant taking into consideration provision of adequate information about the research, participants' understanding, voluntary participation and that there was freedom to decline or withdraw anytime during the course of the interview process. The researcher verbally explained the aims and purposes of the research before the start of the research. Together with each participant, the researcher verbally went through the informed consent form, participant information sheet, recording consent forms and invited any questions regarding the research study by the participants. Only after this did participants voluntarily sign the forms before commencing the interview.

The ethical forms provided addressed issues of confidentiality, non-maleficence, autonomy and respect for the dignity of persons. They were assured that their participation and right to be recorded was voluntary and they were free to withdraw at any point during the interview without any negative consequences for them. The participants were also assured of confidentiality, however anonymity could not be guaranteed since the researcher knew participants' identities and direct quotes were used in the final research report. However, pseudonyms were used to maintain confidentiality in the written transcripts and in the final research write-up.

Further, the researcher reassured participants that the audio recordings were to be password protected when stored electronically and only her supervisor and herself would have access to them. The researcher was committed to respecting the autonomy and dignity of the persons participating in this study. The participants were given the contact details for Lifeline and CCDU (Counselling and Careers Development Unit) in case of any unintended emotional distress experienced. Lastly, the researcher has the final research report available to the participants upon their request.

3.8 Reflexivity

In conducting qualitative research, researchers are required to engage in self-reflexivity. This refers to an acknowledgement and influence of one's life experiences, values, biases and background in the research process (Creswell, 2007; Korstjens & Moser, 2018; Taylor, Bogdan & DeVault, 2015). The topic and scope of daily lived experiences of international students was of personal interest to me because it formed part of my world and a desire to see improvements in the internationalisation of higher education. Keikelame and Swartz (2019) emphasize the significance of looking at self-reflexivity from a transformative perspective. This means the agency and contribution of the researched has to be acknowledged, and the research endeavoring to have beneficial outcomes for the researched. However, Creswell (2007) argues that social justice is important but does not always have to be the dominant agenda in qualitative research. This means sensitivity is required in approaching the data and the researcher had to work to set aside researcher beliefs and experiences through a self-reflexivity journal to remain true to the phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2007).

I am originally from Kenya and have been an immigrant for the last 19 years, having first lived in Botswana for six years and in South Africa for the past 12 years. When I moved to South Africa with my family and as a mother of two daughters under 3 years, I joined a distance learning university to pursue a career in Psychology. I have been an international student in Gauteng Province through distance study for seven years and full time Masters student for two years. Since then, I tend to gravitate towards immigration issues as it is not only socially, culturally and historically relevant but also currently politically charged internationally. My position as an international student appeared to have a positive effect on participants, with a willingness to share openly in regards to being a member of the same "international student" population group. This also made it easier for me to naturally exude empathy and understanding towards participants' experiences. However, there was also the danger of colluding to certain shared experiences and resistance towards divergent experiences which required a mindful effort to listen and be an interviewer. The process of transcribing and immersing myself in the data allowed or forced me

to acknowledge my own prejudices and biases when it came to certain phenomena. This in turn necessitated a respect of the data and the participants' lived experiences with an openness to gaining new insights on the complexities of lived experiences and the danger of ascribing to homogeneity.

In other ways, my world-views are shaped by my experiences as a Black (African), middle class, middle-aged woman who is a follower of the Christian faith. Although I came from a country which experienced colonialism before I was born, I did not experience the saliency of race and therefore only started to acknowledge my race as part of my identity after moving to South Africa. In doing this research, I also realized that being a Community based counselling psychologist in training required reflection on whether sometimes I was overanalyzing from a social justice agenda and a psychologist point of view. This compelled a conscious putting off of my student psychologist hat while retaining my listening skills primarily as a researcher; clarifying questions, enjoying the interaction, the inter subjectivity and the depth of the interview.

In constant journaling, I worked at recording any assumptions and frustrations in the quest to accept rather than defend against healthy tensions of the research study and findings. In so doing, I strived to maintain a critical approach and perceptive towards my research study.

TABLE 2: SUMMARY OF THEMES AND SUBTHEMES

Themes	Sub-Themes	Participants cited
Internationalisation	Politics of internationalisation	• [P1, P2, P7]
	Push and pull factors	• [P3, P2, P6, P4, P1, P9]
	Studying in a cosmopolitan city	• [P2, P8, P1, P5, P8, P6, P4]
	Experiences of culture shock	• [P8, P6, P2, P7]
Identity and Documentation	Daunting bureaucratic processes	• [P5, P8, P3, P6, P2]
	Who am I?	• [P7, P9]
	Third space – where do I Belong?	• [P2, P7, P9]
Diversity	Perceptions of Diversity	• [P1. P3. P8. P9]
	Enriched learning experiences	• [P3, P6, P7]
Race	The novelty of race	• [P2, P7, P8, P9]
	Racial experiences – "it was so pervasive!"	• [P2, P3, P4, P7, P8, P9]
	Your story does not negate my story	• [P2, P7]
	Intersectionality – Gender, religion and class	• [P7, P9]
	Intersectionality – race and ethnicity	• [P2, P5, P9]
Micro-aggressions	Verbal and non–verbal micro-aggressions	• [P2, P4, P7, P8, P9]
	Public and institutional micro-aggressions	• [P2, P3, P6, P9]
	Language	• [P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P7, P8, P9]
Access	Funding opportunities and international fees	• [P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6]
	Access to jobs and accommodation	• [P1, P2, P4, P5, P6, P8]
	Access to healthcare and medical services	• [P1, P3, P4, P5, P6]
Support Structures	International Office and Orientation	• [P1, P5, P6, P8]
	Psycho-social support, sports, clubs and faith	• [P1, P3, P4, P6, P7, P8, P9]
	Support from academic staff	• [P1, P4, P6
	Student to student support	• [P1, P2, P5, P6, P8
	Country and Kinship associations	• [P1, P3, P4, P6, P7, P8

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Key words: Internationalisation, diversity, race, micro-aggressions, access, culture shock

4.1 Introduction

The value of engaging with multiple lived experiences in a dynamic setting such as a university is necessary for sustained learning, challenging assumptions, and a commitment to change. It is looking beyond tolerance of difference to a greater goal of inclusivity.

Critical race theory is utilized as the theoretical underpinning of the findings of this study. Central to critical race theory is exploring lived experiences especially of marginalized groups, centrality of race and racism and commitment to social justice (Solórzano, 1997; Solórzano, 1998). Seven main themes and respective sub-themes were extracted as yielding insights into the holistic lived experiences of African international students. These seven main themes are Internationalisation, Identity and Documentation, Diversity, Race, Micro-aggressions, Access and Support Structures.

The participants' demographics were captured in Table 1 (page 21). There were nine participants in total; four males and five female students. All the participants were Black International students from other countries within the African continent, namely, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Kenya, Nigeria and Rwanda. Out of the nine participants, seven had come for post graduate studies as adults, while two had grown up and been in the South African education system from primary school. For purposes of writing and discussing the findings, participants have been allocated pseudonyms to protect their identity.

4.2 Internationalisation

Globalization is considered as the expansion of social processes to depict worldwide trends and creates interconnectivity among countries around the globe (Teichler, 2004). As a result of globalization, internationalisation has emerged and though both terms tend to be used synonymously, internationalisation refers to the cross border movement and activities of peoples,

culture and systems (DHET, 2017). This inadvertently contributes to the richness of a society. The findings of the study showed that participants are drawn to the concept of an international university as a result of various pull and push factors and also experience the effects of the policy making of this process of internationalisation in institutions of higher education in South Africa. The subthemes under internationalisation are:

- Politics of internationalisation
- Push and pull factors
- Studying in a cosmopolitan city and
- Experiences of culture shock.

4.2.1 Politics of internationalisation

Internationalisation of higher institutions of Education has become a necessity in keeping with current global trends in the world today (Naik et al., 2017; Rouhani, 2007). According to the Draft Policy Network of Internationalisation of Higher Education in South Africa (DHET, 2017), internationalisation is a decisive goal to encompass the movement of students and staff between countries as well as integrate into the curriculum meaningful cross border and cross cultural educational scope.

Some of the participants experienced the politics of internationalisation and expressed themselves through ambivalent comments such as:

> *Masimba: Issues of transformation, yeah...I think it's now closing opportunities for international students, they are now trying to go South African first, yeah. I remember the conversation that I had, with, it was the three of us: a lecturer, the other one was a South African student who was complaining that it seems the department has given opportunities to International students - actually she was complaining that there are so many international students in the department and where are the South Africans? [P1]*
>
> *Shamiso: I did not feel like being a Zimbabwean put me at an advantage or a disadvantage although it might have… If they wanted diversity and I was the only [laughs] Black foreigner it might have put me at an advantage, but I'm not sure, I haven't felt like it. [P2]*

Abiola: For the first time, I understood BEE - why they had to make room for Black people, or else I found out that, sincerely, they would never catch up if we don't have things like that in place, because the-the divide is too wide. [P7]

The above excerpts point to an acknowledgement of the process and politics of transformation of higher education in South Africa. Furthermore, participants such as Shamiso, Abiola and Masimba express an awareness that appeared to elicit conversational discomfort because of the complex nature of transformation that requires both local and international students. They respond to it with a consciousness that being an African foreign student may or may not put them at an advantage as an applicant into the university as part of the process of achieving diversity. At the same time, it also created encounters where their presence was seen as taking up local opportunities required for transformation. Thus, distinctions were acknowledged between diversity from local students and from international students through internationalisation processes.

Since attaining democracy in 1994, South Africa has been involved in transformation through diversity and inclusion in the Education sector both locally and internationally (Seabi, Seedat, Khoza-Shangase & Sullivan, 2014). As a young democracy, this has resulted in parallel processes of negotiating challenges in reconstructing the post-apartheid public education system within the country as well as opening up the universities internationally. Subsequently, international students seemed also to contend with the politics of internationalisation in their lived experiences.

4.2.2 Pull and push factors

With the advent of internationalisation, universities in South Africa have become accessible to students from other countries, and especially from within the African continent for various reasons. This has, in turn, contributed to drawing a diverse body of students who can contribute to research, culture, knowledge and the economy. There are certain pull factors that participants revealed contributed to them seeking a tertiary education in South Africa:

Gift: Before I applied, I had a chance to look at the official website to look at the personnel that they have, the kind of courses they offer and It's something that actually attracted me to come and study….it is one of the best institutions globally. [P3]

Shamiso: But still, you cannot compare to being back home. I wouldn't even have what might seem like minimum opportunity that I have here, compared to South Africans I still wouldn't have that in Zimbabwe. This year I got a PMA [Post-graduate Merit Award], last year at [another Gauteng university] for honours. I didn't pay fees cause we got a bursary. Everyone that got into the class, we all had attained a certain minimum mark and everyone got that internal bursary, so there are so many opportunities in this place that were not available for me at home. [P2]

Participants especially from neighbouring countries like Zimbabwe were attracted by pull factors such as the diversity of courses, subsidies, availability of affordable and better quality higher education as well as the favourable global standing of South African universities.

Further, universities in South Africa were considered to be Africa's jewel in terms of developments in well-equipped universities which added to the appeal of pursuing studies in South Africa (Seehole, 2011). In general, participants had the following to say:

Olufemi: There are a lot of positive experience. First of all, studying in an environment that has a lot of research materials and you have things that make your studies more productive, like an effective Internet system and other resources, such as the [university] writing centre. [P6]

Jacinta: We had, you know, this amazing common room where we even had coffee and you really felt like a postgraduate student and they even can give you a laptop…you know, in-in terms of just in the common room itself you really wanted to go there and just do your work…also other resources like the library. [P4]

Some of these benefits of studying in a Gauteng based university included availability of advanced technologies like the internet, computer hardware, well equipped libraries and auxiliary centres such as writing and post graduate common rooms. One of the reasons cited for student

mobility has been the decline of university resources especially in other African countries (Altbach & Teichler, 2001). Because of this, the students appreciated the availability and accessibility of university resources which enriched their experiences.

Additionally, participants left their countries because of push factors such as worsening economic and political instability in their home countries.

Masimba: So I decided to move from Zimbabwe to this place in 2015, just because, you know, of a lot of things that are associated with economic crisis that is actually taking place in Zimbabwe. [P1]

Paul: "I should rather say that Rwanda was a very political, let me say, environment so you come here as a refugee." [P9]

According to Mdepa and Tshiwula, (2012), there is a trend for student mobility to also increase in times when other African countries struggle with economic, educational and political crises, a finding that was observed in the study. Research by Darby, (2015) reveals that push and pull factors play a big role in growing student mobility. Push factors are considered those factors that push a student out of their home country while pull factors are those elements in a host country that draw students into the country for better opportunities (Darby, 2015).

Sehoole, (2011) confirms that South African graduate programmes in particular reflect global trends and utilize favourable education policy frameworks and sponsorships to achieve diversity through internationalisation.

4.2.3 Studying in a cosmopolitan city

Being a student in a major city exposed the participants to the cosmopolitan nature of Gauteng where they could appreciate the diverse cultures and large, well developed city. The participants enjoyed the advanced infrastructure such as the road networks and shopping malls:

Shamiso: I was impressed by this country with so many lights [laughs]. I had never seen so many lights! I just fell in love with the place, like it's a beautiful country… I find the place very fancy! [Laughs] [P2]

Eleanor: You go to the mall and you can get almost everything in one place. Unlike us, where you have to drive to the market to get this specific thing and that, and then drive to the mall and get only clothes, and then if you want to get foodstuffs have to drive out to go to a proper market and get foodstuffs. Accessibility is fast, everything is fast, the roads are proper. I was like "oh my God"! I think all the years I have been here I have forgotten all the horrible potholes from my country, so, the roads, the fast life, everything is quick. [P8]

In addition, findings showed that participants were also drawn to the vibrant and diverse population groups that existed in the city. In turn, this contributed to multi-cultural social spaces, lifestyles and global food cultures which were sampled and highly appreciated.

Masimba: You hardly feel foreign, because this - it is more like a cosmopolitan institution where you have different people from different backgrounds. Everything is different, everyone is different. [P1]

Naomi: South Africa was the gateway. I think I was really sold by what I saw in the media about South Africa, so I expected to have a very flamboyant, very sociable lifestyle. [P5]

Eleanor: We would try out most foods like that, because back in Uganda we don't have the restaurants like that - we don't have Spur, we don't have Wimpy, we don't have McDonald's, you know, so for me it was like: let's start with the foods. [P8]

However, studying in a cosmopolitan city sometimes meant having to also deal with negative aspects such as crime, which was mentioned:

Naomi: There have been moments where there have been break-ins in residencies that I've stayed in, or my clothes have been stolen. You know, things like that. So I wouldn't say it, no, I haven't had a great experience in terms of safety. [P5]

Nonetheless, secondary benefits also existed for participants and included not only enjoying the benefits of living in a better developed country, but also being a human resource for aspiring students from their home country who wanted to pursue similar opportunities. Participants like Olufemi shared how their experiences allowed them to be able to assist other friends and family to develop themselves academically and ultimately their own communities.

Olufemi: I was able to understand the system a little bit more and then I was able to assist a few more people in coming through and then do a kind of orientation of how to cope within the system. [P6]

Attending a cosmopolitan university additionally presented with international exchange programs and advantages of reciprocity where African students travelled to other countries and also engaged with other foreign students. This added to a holistic experience and provided opportunities for them to give suggestions that may improve the standards of the university as well as their own lived experiences as global citizens. Two of the participants captured these benefits of reciprocal learning within such an environment.

Olufemi: When I travelled to Canada, most of the students in the political science department who were students in the PhD program had responsibilities such as teaching assistants and they were getting stipends from there. And I was talking to somebody and saying, why can't this department maybe develop their research portfolio where maybe they can have partnerships through which they can have developmental funds where they can help the students? [P6]

Jacinta: We had students who would come for semester study at [university] and they'd be from all these universities across the world: so there'd be somebody from Egypt, there'd be somebody from New York University, so it was just not about, like, South African Whites on their own. [P4]

4.2.4 Experiences of culture shock

The concept of "culture shock" is termed as the traumatic event that results from a physical change of familiar environment to a new and unknown environment (Velez-Gomez & Bell, 2018).

When students leave their country for further education, one of the things they seem to undergo is culture shock. Culture in itself takes on a wide array of meaning: a basic definition is that it refers to shared ways of life that are familiar and within one's group membership (Leong, 2008). Participants experienced notable differences in social norms, values and beliefs that are described as markedly different from the way of life back in the country of origin.

> *Eleanor: I have never been to a more relaxing and liberal country like South Africa....Unlike where I come from, where my president says that you shouldn't wear short skirts, no gays or lesbians. You come here, it's like a free world, people who are homosexuals are free to do whatever they want, and you see people wearing bum shorts, and you are wow…. [Laughs]...how do you do that; you know? So, with time it was like a culture shock - all the freedom that they have here. [P8]*

Coming across the different liberal way of life and social dress appeared to astonish participants, especially students who came from conservative countries like Uganda. In turn, the city was experienced positively as open-minded and progressive.

Culture shock was not only by what the international African students observed but it also took the form of an inability to identify with own family members who were already living in the host country. For participants such as Olufemi, living with his uncle and cousins was beneficial but also contributed to culture shock which worked against his academic goals and mental wellness.

> *Olufemi: The children [uncle's children] had a different upbringing from the one we had back home, so it was quite a difficult period, mentally straining, umm, mentally challenging for me and that time too I was writing - I think that was second semester, I was still trying to grapple to understand how things work here, and then I was also trying to conceptualize my Masters research report". [P6]*

There seemed to be a lack of commonality with the way of life of extended family members. This was linked to the fact that despite similar ethnicity, the host family had acculturated to the way of life in South Africa. According to Berry (1997), acculturation refers to

the process of adapting culturally and psychologically to different cultural phenomena. Acculturation stress is therefore recognised as the pressure to adapt to the host country culture (Smith & Khawaja, 2011). For participants like Olufemi, living with his uncle's family hence contributed to feelings of solitude and mental stress.

Some participants also described an aspect of culture shock where they struggled to adjust because of the difference in speech.

> *Eleanor: It's a problem for us to adjust to the accents of people and how they say things, it will actually take long because the pronunciations that we have back there in Uganda is totally different from the pronunciations they have this side. [P8]*

Further, encountering different accents also meant some participants struggled with the distinct way of speaking, particularly with the teaching staff. Consequently, this affected their learning experience and outcomes negatively albeit temporarily due to challenges that were experienced in understanding the lecturers who were from different races.

> *Eleanor: After first semester, my results for Business Management were low because I struggled with an Indian lecturer, and also for psychology with a White lecturer, but I noticed for the other three modules I had a Black lecturer, from Mozambique, because she spoke slower like me, and more clearly. She spoke similar to me and I could understand and relate. [P8]*

There was also culture shock experienced in encountering race. Most of the participants expressed their surprise at the pervasive racial categories and having to racially profile themselves. Seekings (2008) asserts that a racial profiled culture exists amongst South Africans which permeates society. In turn, this required an adjustment in grappling with identity and also social interactions.

> *Shamiso: Growing in Zimbabwe as a Black person, it's not implanted in your mind that someone could actually look down on you because you got a different skin colour. And then*

you come here and then it hits you in the face and it's like, Wow! What is going on in this place? And everyone is like, 'oh it's because I'm Black' and you're like, 'what?' [Laughs][P2]

Another aspect experienced was within the classroom setting and lecturer interactions. This was in relation to observing the different cultural ways of relating to lecturers.

Abiola: The system of the relationship between the lecturers and the student is totally different from where I'm from in Nigeria. The lecturer is like there... [Pointing far], it's like so far away from the students. Here there's easier access. [P7]

Eleanor: Back home, they don't give you any scope. You just study. It's more like military school, and you come to South Africa and its more, the guidelines are there for you, questions to prepare yourself, lecturers are available for you, more accessible. [P8]

For the students coming from other African countries such as Nigeria and Uganda, they had come with different experiences of formal authoritarian lecturers. On the other hand, studying in universities in South Africa required an adjustment to relate directly and collaboratively by consulting and engaging with the lecturers. This was considered a positive academic experience as it resulted in better learning outcomes through easier access when academic consultation was required.

In addition, differences in societal practices of engaging with others across age and status, resulted in difficulties in social adaptation and the experience being perceived as disrespectful.

Abiola: I mean, there was also the way we relate to others. It's kind of different from the way South Africans relate to. In Nigeria, whether you are both students, if a person is like married or an older person there's still that respect that you'll still have for that person though you are classmates. Here, there's nothing like that. Somebody will even talk to you in a way that you don't like and you are looking at this person, you feel that this person is a young person, but that's the way that they relate to each other, so there was also that - it was more - it's a cultural thing". [P7]

Experiences of culture shock are noteworthy due to the implications they have for international students' wellbeing. Research does show that adjustment to new contexts, and especially in universities, contributes significantly to stress and anxiety (Araiza & Kutugata, 2013). The inter-cultural contact arguably affects the mental, emotional and physical wellbeing. Chikoko, Pillay, Pithouse-Morgan, Morojele and Naicker (2013) posit that the interface of the university as an academic and social space is important because understanding the norms, values and practices affects retention, learning and lived experience of students.

As a result, a holistic approach to access should also include opportunities by the universities to offer support for foreign students that is multi-culturally sensitive and cognisant of the challenges that international students come with as a result of culture shock or acculturative stress.

4.3 Identity and documentation

According to King and Ruiz-Gelices (2003), international students are often overlooked as migrants with a contribution in global mobility. Tajfel (1981) as well as Torres, Jones and Renn (2009) state that daily lived experiences contribute to the concept of identity, and this could relate to, for example; personal, cultural, economic and political categories. In other words, identity is complex and results from a combination of individual, group and broad social contexts, an overall systemic framework. As a result, this study found that a significant proportion of the international student identity construction becomes intertwined with them as migrants and subtly through the process of acquiring immigration documents. Sub-themes discussed under identity and documentation are:

- Daunting bureaucratic processes
- Who am I? and
- Where do I belong - the third space?

4.3.1 Daunting bureaucratic processes

Acceptance to an international university is only one aspect and the first step of becoming an international student. At the onset, the paperwork and bureaucracy required to apply for a study permit is regarded as a most traumatic experience (Da Silva, 2016). Further, critical to the lived experiences of an international student are the hurdles that are encountered in satisfying the legal immigration requirements of the host country. Two of the research participants grew up in South Africa and had not experienced the process of applying as an international student from outside the country, while seven out of nine participants spoke openly about the challenging task of gaining entry. Excerpts of participants' sentiments included:

> *Naomi: I think a lot of us international students were actually struggling just in terms of livelihood, visas and that kind of administration that really just made our experience here in South Africa quite unbearable.* [P5]
>
> *Eleanor: First year was horrible, because I came in late... I was having visa issues. I did not know that whether I should come in as a student with a study visa or with a visitor permit…. when you do not have a study visa they tell you to wait until everyone else has finished registered, so you wait for late registration, but obviously classes have already started. So, but by the time I was accepted to register, my course, they said, my course was full! [P8]*

For an international student, the immigration process and acquiring legal documents affected their lived experiences and their ability to access resources and opportunities. This starts with a daunting list of statutory and institutional requirements to obtain legal identity status. To apply for a study permit, the documents required are proof of educational qualifications and provisional acceptance letter from the institution which is generally issued 6-12 weeks after application. In addition, other documents include, statutory documents (residence and birth certificate, police clearance from all countries that students have held domicile), medical certificates (radiology certificates, yellow fever certificates, medical insurance); proof of finances

(bank statements and medical insurance) indicating proof of funds to cover living and medical expenses. Subsequently, the process of securing legal status was shared as a difficult experience. Responses included:

> *Gift: Usually as foreign students, even before you apply for study permits, it is a requirement that you must have a 12-month medical cover…. The challenge that arises is, like, not all hospitals and clinics accept our [university] medical aids… it also poses a challenge if you are a foreign student - you feel like you're secured because you have a medical aid then you visit a hospital and they tell you that 'we don't accept this one'. [P3]*
>
> *Olufemi: One other challenge for students like us, who secure admission in an institution like this one, is first of all you have to send your qualifications to the SAQA [South African Qualifications Authority] board... they just increased the amount from R860 to R1010 at the moment. So, usually the process took about a month or so, not less than a month for you to get your certification. What is the purpose of the international fee? Ok, so if it is to cover for the SAQA issues, why is it that you can't secure admission before your qualifications are verified by SAQA itself? So it becomes a challenge. [P6]*
>
> *Shamiso: I think the last time I called an immigration lawyer and I said to her that I would like to apply for a work permit and then she said that I have to go back home to apply from home and I'm wondering why do I have to go home to apply for it when I have lived here for five… this-this is my seventh year now, and It's not as if I have any criminal records and any of those. So all of those makes us understand that we are what is called the outsiders within the system. [P2]*

Fearon (1999) argues that identity has aspects of personal and social characteristics that are tacitly associated with one's dignity, honour, status and self-respect. In this regard, engaging with identification procedures seemed to affect how participants felt about themselves and how they felt the world viewed them.

Subsequently, the bureaucratic processes of becoming an international student contributed to social and personal identity perceptions, however, this appears to remain an under-researched topic for international students.

4.3.2 Who am I?

The literature on identity from a student's perspective suggests that identity is socially constructed within broader environmental contexts such as in educational institutions (Torres et al., (2009). Similarly, this was perceived by the participants whose identity was strongly attached to their international student status. In addition, participants struggled to know where to place themselves based on what type of identity document they had in their possession.

Out of the nine participants interviewed in the research study, three were in possession of non-citizen national identity cards as a result of acquiring permanent citizen status. The remaining six participants were holders of student visa permits. However, the benefits of having a local identity document were mainly seen as access to resources and in bypassing lengthy bureaucratic processes rather than a sense of national belonging. These views were mainly expressed by participants who held identity documents:

> *Abiola: I had [ID] documents when I went back to school, but it didn't stop the fact that I was perceived as a foreigner because I only had to just say my (surname) and somebody is asking you, where are you from? [P7]*
>
> *Paul: I don't always see myself as a South African student, even though I might not pay, you know, the same fees that [study visa holders] pay or undergo the same, you know, things that the other international students undergo, but at the end of the day, I'm not South African" [P9]*

The participants, though holding national identity cards, acknowledged that the documents did not give them a sense of belonging within the country. Aspects such as names which stood out culturally and ethnically defined their identity more.

Ultimately, participants such as Paul from Rwanda who had grown up in, and only studied in South Africa from primary to tertiary level chose to reconcile with the identity tension by referring to themselves within a broader grouping of African ancestry as 'an African child'.

Paul: "I'm global, I'm an African child." [P9]

Tajfel & Turner, (1986) speak about social identity being socially mobile. The authors argue that identity is fluid and individuals acquire identity based not only on their personal belief system but also on their perceptions of the membership and structures of the social group that they belong to. Nevertheless, for the African international students who had local identity documents, they could access the benefits that were associated with structures aligned to a national identity, but they did not feel a part of the group membership.

4.3.3 Where do I belong – The third space?

Identity and belonging, as explicated in this theme, is distilled through a personal and broad social context lens. Attached to identity is usually a sense of belonging and how one feels about oneself in relation to group categories (Stets & Burke, 2000). Research findings indicated that despite being an international student, there appeared to be an anomaly, in an awareness of not belonging to any national group. This can be likened to a deficiency in the 'third space'. According to Homi Bhabha as cited by Dudgeon & Fielder (2006), the concept of 'third space' engages with physical spaces, identity, culture and belonging. Third space refers to creating spaces in between dominant cultures where new identities can emerge (Dudgeon & Fielder, 2006). Participants expressed the following in relation to studying away from their home country and the identity pressure that resulted in the host country:

Paul: Actually, sometimes I'm confused. I don't know whether I'm Rwandan, cause I've never personally been there myself, and sometimes I don't identify myself as South African. So I'm kind of lost." [P9]

Abiola: "I still felt like an outsider, do you get what I'm saying?" [P7]

Shamiso: Even though South Africans don't feel I am South African; I feel more South African than I feel Zimbabwean. In a few years' time I would have spent more time in South Africa than I have in Zimbabwe. [P2]

The notion of third space deficiency was alluded to because of an identity dissonance that seemed to exist, especially with participants who had resided in South Africa before joining the university. Paul has lived in South Africa for 18 years - since he was seven years old; Abiola for 17 years and Shamiso for 13 years. In this regard, developing an identity appeared to be complicated as they ceased to identify with the country of origin due to time and space away. On the other hand, local identity documents, familiarity and assimilation of local culture and norms also did not bring about the expected belonging.

In essence, the African international student in South Africa harbored ambivalence and identified as *mkosa kabila*, a Kiswahili term for 'tribe-less', or 'cultureless'. Third space then can be extended to the African foreigners who grapple with how to identify themselves. The tension for the participants was whether to identify themselves, for example, as Zimbabwean, or Rwandese or South African or both Rwandese-South African and Zimbabwean-South African. Brah (2005) advocates for a third space where a 'hybrid' or an in-between can be negotiated within culture, ethnicity and identity that is not marginalized. It is notable that as international students adapt to the new country they become prone to identity pressure and a search for new identities (Severino, Messina & Llorent García, 2014). In addition, studies in student affairs and identity development emphasize that there should be a commitment by student affairs practitioners to help students understand how they make meaning of their identity (Torres et al., 2009).

4.4 Diversity

A key finding of this research study is the theme of diversity. Diversity within an educational context can be defined as an inclusive system of people that reflects, but is not limited to different races, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexuality, disability and class for the purposes of accessibility and transformation (Mdepa & Tshiwula, 2012). Institutions promote and pursue diversity according to

their mission, vision and objectives. In addition, it is equally important that this is integrated with the students' views on what constitutes diversity. Two themes were extracted and emerged from participant interviews, namely:

- Perception of diversity and
- Enriched learning experiences.

4.4.1 Perception of diversity

An inclusive higher education system is considered broadly as that which incorporates the diversity of students and their needs (Akoojee & Nkomo, 2007). This means it should be sensitive and responsive to the needs of students who are within this system.

All nine participants expressed one of the main advantages of studying at a Gauteng university was the awareness of the diverse, inclusive student population within the institution. This was key as the participants' central idea of diversity was a space that represented different people from different backgrounds including their own.

Some of the excerpts that emerged include:

> *Masimba: You hardly feel foreign because this is it, it is more like a cosmopolitan institution where you have different people from different backgrounds, everything is different, everyone is different, actually. [P1]*
>
> *Eleanor: Coming to the university, you get people from all over the world, the exposure that I've got, and the ability to work with more diverse people. [P8]*
>
> *Gift: My experience with my fellow students, there is tolerance of each other despite of, you know, nationality, race or what it is a mixed class of Whites and Black, South Africans, and other people from the West, we somehow tolerate each other despite our differences… [P3]*
>
> *Paul: "When I did get to university I found it very easy to settle in cause there's a lot of diversity in the university." [P9]*

These views indicate that for the participants, they experienced diversity as positive due to a tolerance of difference and the absence of a homogenous student body. As a result, a student

climate that consists of students from different backgrounds such as race, culture and nationality presented an environment where they too could embrace their different demographics and quickly settle in.

Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen and Allen (1999) suggest that a basic understanding of diversity is that it takes into consideration the participants' perceptions of the racial and ethnic climate within the university. As a result, encountering difference was one of the participants' uppermost positive experiences. Further, according to Peifer, Chambers and Lee (2017), token or structural diversity is defined as an increase in numbers of a more diverse student-body composition. Consequently, the presence of African international students in universities can be said to contribute on a basic level to structural diversity.

Increasing the numbers of diverse students is important and as is usually associated with the first step of engaging with diversity and inclusion. Ivy (2001) outlines that universities are under pressure to represent themselves as unique and different from other institutions particularly in the advent of globalisation. The primacy of Critical Race Theory's tenet of giving voice to minority ethnic groups such as African international students is helpful in this case in confirming the authenticity of diversity within the campus.

4.4.2 Enriched learning experiences

In addition to a university environment that consists of different student populations, a wide choice of different fields of studies that are being offered and taught at this university is seen as an advantage. It was reported that the course content was enhanced because it was linked to other courses outside the department. Participants stated that learning which incorporated other disciplines resulted in an enriched learning experience. This was because ideas could be shared and exposure to other cultural backgrounds contributed to growth on a personal and academic level.

Gift: Since the department [Migration Studies] is actually interdisciplinary, so there are a lot of people who are coming from different disciplines: from the medical department, law,

administration, historians, development studies, that alone is, that kind of sharing ideas, our backgrounds, encourages us to grow individually and academically of which is something that I actually take as a positive. [P3]

This suggests that participants had an appreciation of their experiences in departments which provided different academic programs and multidisciplinary teams that resulted in enriching the concept of diversity even further.

Similarly, Abiola, a student from Nigeria, shared that engagement with other students also brought about socially responsive learning experiences and a deeper understanding of local history:

Abiola: I learnt and I got to understand the people more. There were people who would sit down with me, you know, and explain - and in all fairness - and say you don't understand our struggle, this is what we are struggling with. If they don't give us these bursaries, Black people won't go to school. And I could see for the first time I understood. [P7]

However, there was also a sense of frustration that was articulated because of the lack of incorporating a wider range of international content into the classroom discussions.

Abiola: "…and I found out that they use examples that are familiar to them, do you understand? They don't use international examples; they use South African examples." [P7]

Olufemi also noted that exposure to other international students created opportunities to grow valuable global career networks and to experience and learn about other cultures:

Olufemi: Also it's building my international networks here. Studying here opens you up to understand how things work in advanced societies. One, it gives you a cosmopolitan feel and then it helps you feel out opportunities out there... Like I got to know about the Youth peace fellowship when I was here and then I was also able to travel to Canada through the same platform and that give me another experience to see the West. [P6]

One of the advantages of institutions of higher learning increasingly leaning towards internationalisation is that it infuses the learning experience with multiculturalism. The importance of diversity in this regard is articulated by Hurtado et al., (1999) who argue that there are real and tangible benefits to a diverse learning setting. The advantage may be inclusion and exposure to multifaceted views within learning groups and tolerance for difference within the academic and social contexts (Hurtado et al., 1999; Velez-Gomez & Bell, 2018). In this study, positive experiences in general were seen to occur through the quality and quantity of the academic disciplines and learning which occurred in and out of the classroom context. However, a need was identified to include international content in course material and classroom discussions.

4.5 Race

Race was a significant theme extracted in the lived experiences of African international students. It was significant because physically, as African and Black students from other countries in the continent, they looked like the majority of the population in South Africa, yet arrived with different historical backgrounds and limited encounters with other races. The sub-themes that emerged include:

- The novelty of race
- Racial experiences – "it was very pervasive!"
- Your story does not negate mine
- Intersectionality – Gender, religion and class, and
- Intersectionality – Race and Ethnicity.

4.5.1 The novelty of race

In South Africa, race is a prominent marker of identity. Race is a social construction that uses physical characteristics to categorize races (Magubane, 1979; Pérez Huber & Solórzano, 2015). Since the Populations Registration Act of 1950 that birthed racial classifications by South Africa's Apartheid regime, race remains a ubiquitous construct that pervades everyday life in South Africa (Posel, 2001). In addition, the Bantu Education Act of 1953 also categorized and separated

education along racial lines (Mdepa & Tshiwula, 2012). As a result of this legacy, all nine research participants were vocal about the novelty of race and encountering new experiences and conversations on race. One such participant whose sentiment echoed a shared view by the other participants was Shamiso from Zimbabwe:

Shamiso: I tell people that I didn't know I was Black until I came to South Africa because that is when you get awareness that Oh my goodness! [Laughs] I am Black and not like any other, I need to actually acknowledge my race in here. [P2]

This was a statement that encapsulated a general sentiment of encountering race in South Africa. It was a realization that as Black African students, both in social and academic spaces, identity was determined primarily by the colour of the skin. There was, in turn, an expectation to declare and acknowledge their race, an experience that was a novelty. These study findings suggest that because the African international students originated from other countries where Black people were a dominant majority there was less or no pressure to identify oneself as such. Participants were quick to share that they realized that they had experienced different historical backgrounds unlike what they encountered in South Africa's racialized inherited legacy. Participants also shared the following:

Shamiso: Growing up in Zimbabwe as a Black person, you are never going to experience discrimination from the system or another person based on race because Zimbabwe favours blackness. You grow up without that experience of being discriminated. [P2]

Eleanor: But if you come from a country [Uganda] that features equality for all and you do not have as many White people or as many Coloured people… but when you come here you see that they draw the line between who is who, and you know, what privileges who gets. [P8]

Abiola: I understand apartheid, I got what happened, but it seems like if you didn't struggle with them, you were not a part of them, that was a thing that constantly kept coming up and I couldn't relate. I couldn't really relate; I couldn't really relate to that. [P7]

It then appeared that even though participants had experienced the concept of race for the first time, they too seemed to have internalized the racial categories and shared their lived experiences through this lens.

Paul: Med school is very, very divided; so it's either you, you're Indian; you're White Jewish; White Afrikaans; Black…. Everyone is very, you know fixed on their corner. [P9]

Eleanor: I went on to get Coloured friends and then I got two White friends, which mostly, you walk to the student centre with a White person and you are talking and you pass and you do see people's facial expressions, and they are turning and looking …. You know, in first year I wouldn't easily pick up things, but now that I have stayed here a little bit longer you become more aware of it and you actually see the lines clearer, like people do see. [P8]

The participants had observed that in both the academic and social contexts, people had a tendency to group themselves racially, that is, as Black, White, Indian or Coloured. As a result, in spaces where the African international students interacted with other races, they also noted that this drew some attention that counted the dominant narrative on racial groups.

Walker (2005) argues that in South Africa, the saliency of race is said to wield a lot of power in the conceptualisation of identity and how this is normalised. All of the participants expressed the heightened awareness of their racial identity when they came to South Africa. South African society was strongly perceived as mainly stratified according to racial categories - a phenomenon experienced by students who came from homogenous race environments. Similar research from the United States also highlighted the novelty of race by non- American Black college students that debunk universal Black student experiences (Mwangi & Fries–Britt, 2015).

4.5.2 Racial experiences- "It was very pervasive!"

Due to the saliency of race, the participants seemed to encounter varied experiences between different races and within similar races. This same trend featured in the academic and social spaces. Participants such as Abiola did not seem to fit in with Black or White students.

Abiola: To them I was a Black person, but to the Black I had things that the White people would have…I don't know which one was worse. I didn't know how to relate to them and there was also that thing of if you relate too much to the White people, you are identifying with the oppressors - you are classified as one of them. [P7]

Other participants like Gift, from Zimbabwe and Eleanor from Uganda appeared to be overwhelmed by having White classmates and lecturers. They shared that it had an impact on their confidence and ability to contribute to the class.

Gift: Then it was actually so strange, especially because I am coming from Zimbabwe. It was so strange to be in class with Whites, it's ***very, very*** *[participant emphasis] strange...but when I came here almost three quarters of the class was Whites, I said oh...oh...[Laughing]…There was a lot of excitement that was associated with it, at one point, probably I was even afraid to participate. What do I say in front of these people? [P3]*

Eleanor: It was so hectic, it was so overwhelming, and even the classes, you know, where I am from, we do not have Indian and White lecturers. [P8]

Engaging with the newness of interactions with the different races appeared to elicit some discomfort through nervous laughter for some of the participants. In addition, while some participants seemed to be open to the experiences, others like Abiola and Paul projected helplessness and feeling misunderstood, not knowing how to interact with both Black and White students.

Abiola: There were some [local students] that were more forthcoming and there were some that I actually felt were hostile. I felt they were actually hostile to the fact that I didn't understand. [P7]

Paul: There are certain moments were you know they [local friends] really don't understand what you're talking about. They don't understand where you're coming from, I can say they probably look at life a certain way and people from other countries also probably look at life a certain way as well. [P9]

Within the classroom or academic contexts in the university, there were accounts of overt racialized encounters between different races:

> *Eleanor: There was a White boy in my class who said, 'why is it the Black tutor who's coming to tutor today?' There was a Black student sitting right next to him and so they started an argument in class while I was teaching in front. And I'm wondering why are these two students fighting and I go there to try and calm them down and a Black girl is like, "Don't even tell us to keep quiet, this boy is racist. You don't even know what he said when you walked in. He was saying 'why is it that a Black tutor is the one who is in here today?'" So it was a bit of a strong issue. [P8]*

The same was also encountered still by Eleanor, a Ugandan student in the Human Resources Department, outside of the classroom in the social spaces:

> *Eleanor: One day when I was walking on campus, and by mistake then, I knocked a White girl and then she turned and swore at me and things like that. But then I was just still new, so for me I just said 'sorry', because in my country you knock someone by mistake you apologize and then you move on. I did not understand why she was yelling and things like that and then it is also my local Black friends who started yelling back at her…to them it seemed racist for them, that they had to stand up and do something about it. [P8]*

The above excerpts indicated incidences of conflictual interactions between Black and White students. The outcome was Black students identified and resonated with one another on the basis of race. On the other hand, participants such as Shamiso, a Clinical Psychology student from Zimbabwe, shared that she felt more welcome amongst her White and Indian colleagues compared to her Black colleagues.

> *Shamiso: You don't feel that you are not from here when I interacted with White people or Indians, but when I interacted with Black people I kind of did feel that there is a difference. I wouldn't necessarily say in a bad way; it was just there. It was just tangible - the fact that I'm not one of them [Black South African students*]. [P2]

That notwithstanding, further differences between experiences with White people in South Africa and White people from other European countries were noted. Participants such as Eleanor shared that she positioned herself alongside White students who were not South African in order to enjoy the social interactions without the racial tensions.

> *Eleanor: I did make friends from Netherlands, from Finland, from Germany, so, and you know, obviously with the whole race issue in South Africa it was easier to meet White people from outside, they blend in more and they make you feel, you don't have to feel the tension that goes on here, yeah and then it was easier." [P8]*

In addition, interactions with teaching staff were indicated as mainly positive by the majority of the participants. One explanation was that they, as international students, were probably seen as a novelty:

> *Shamiso: I think for most it was just something fascinating and different to have to deal with a foreign student. I think it's, ja, it's something that they quite enjoy doing, working with foreign students. I found most of my lecturers were kind, were fascinated by the fact that I was a Black non-South African [Laughs]. [P2]*

While others, like Jacinta, were conflicted by the nuanced nature of the comments that they received and concluded that it was due to the pervasive racialized environment.

> *Jacinta: I remember one of the lecturers at the college where I lecture asking me, you know, when I told him I'm doing my PhD, then he says 'oh, so you not South African, are you?' So there's always these things people say attached to certain things that maybe because you're doing PhD and you're Black you might not be a South African - you must be from elsewhere and I think for me, this the racial aspect. [P4]*

The above experiences suggest that the awareness and acknowledgement of race and racial experiences is seen as a positive first step where inclusionary or exclusionary experiences can be studied through theoretical frameworks like Critical Race Theory (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

4.5.3 Your story does not negate my story

Another aspect of interactions with racial experiences for the African International student was feeling like they had to battle to have their experiences validated. This then added a burden of figuring out where to position themselves especially in the polarised Black-White debates.

Shamiso: For my Black students, my colleagues, it's like if you are White, they don't like you. It's racism, period. We are not negotiating…in my class it's a racism - is a very big theme, especially at the moment and I am actually neither with the White people nor with the Black people, so just kind of sitting in a place by myself where I'm, like, 'where am I'? [P2]

Abiola: There was a conversation in the class where I actually said that there's a way that South Africans assume that everybody knows their story. It's especially when they're talking about their history… and I'm ***not*** *in any way diminishing their story, but it does not negate my story, there's not an ear to listen to anything else. [P7]*

It was apparent that some participants like Shamiso and Abiola were indignant that their perspectives were not acknowledged.

Shamiso: Racism is the last place that I go to, and I find for some South Africans racism is the first place they go to, so when there's an issue with a White person the ***first*** *port of call is race and for me race is the last thing. [P2]*

For these participants, other factors were taken into consideration before identifying with racism as the main contributing factor to discussions. They objected to the lack of another lens to address conflict such as a difference in personality, upbringing or values before ascribing to race. Seekings (2008) asserts that the pervasive nature of racialized identities inherited from the apartheid era still continues to be entrenched in racial terms and categories that colour everyday life experiences. As a result, African International students also appeared to have significant experiences with race and racialized interactions that affected their lived experiences both socially and academically.

4.5.4 Intersectionality: Gender, religion and class

The novelty of race is also made more complex when race intersects with other social constructs such as gender, religion and class. In addition to the centrality of race, Critical Race Theory (CRT) also serves to unpack the intersectionality of these social constructs that are important to lived experiences (Hiraldo, 2010). There were unique remarks that highlighted how being Black African overlapped with either gender, religion or class. This resulted in social interactions being experienced differently and left participants grappling with societal stereotypes.

> *Paul: I'm also Muslim. So I'm Rwandan and I'm Muslim, so they [Black South African friends] wouldn't really understand why I'm doing, why this is - these particular things…in Islam it's usually a good thing if you eat with your hand…he couldn't eat with his hand and he demanded that he get a fork or a spoon and he caused a bit of commotion. [P9]*
>
> *Paul: Another thing, ah, because I'm Muslim and I'm Black, on Fridays to pray, you know, you get this kind of hostility cause it's usually Indians and then you're Black. But so they don't say anything, you just feel a vibe. They can't say anything, I mean we're there for prayer, we're there for God, but you do feel that you know they wondering, what is this person doing here, you know? [P9]*

As such, an assumption was held by the different races, where they struggled to reconcile not only a person being Black and not South African, but also Black and a follower of Islam, all perceived as an anomaly. In this case, there were assumptions that a Black person should not be a Muslim. Whereas Abiola shared that she felt alienated and struggled to interact because her race, gender, age and middle class status did not represent normed racialized categories.

> *Abiola: It was very, very pervasive! Because for me, it was even funny for me. I'm an older woman, I am comfortable in that sense, but I am a foreigner, that's why I said I constantly felt like an outsider. I was comfortable in the sense that I had a car that drove me to school …I think the person that I was, they were more used to seeing (it) as a White person. [P7]*

4.5.5 Intersectionality - race and ethnicity

According to Mwangi and Fries–Britt (2015, p.17), race and ethnicity contributes to the nuanced nature of "Black within Black" interactions. These nuances need to be interrogated and their subsequent effects to the daily experiences of students (Mwangi, 2014; Mwangi, Changamire & Mosselson, 2018).

A distinction in the lived experience of the African international students was where participants revealed that primarily, interactions with White South African students remained along race lines. However, when race intersected with nationality, ethnicity was foregrounded amongst interactions with Black South African students. This was a general sentiment from the participants.

> *Shamiso: I didn't feel like, oh I'm a Zimbabwean. I just felt like a student and these people are White and I am Black and this people are Indian and I'm Black. But then with my South African Black students I did feel okay. I'm Zimbabwean before I'm a student. [P2]*

In this instance, what was more striking was that when interactions were between races, participants perceived themselves as experienced in terms of race. While within similar races, such as being Black, it was the nationality or ethnicity that one belonged to, which became significant. Mwangi (2014) suggests an understanding of this phenomenon as it usually has negative connotations intertwined with transformation, micro-aggressions and inclusivity.

Despite being students away from their own countries, when it came to interactions outside the university interactions, there were atypical circumstances that occurred where participants were cautious about people from their own ethnicity or other Black foreign nationalities. Thus, relationships between different ethnicities proved to be complicated and affected the educational and social contexts negatively.

> *Naomi: Being discriminated against by fellow foreigners, so the Ethiopian community, that's where I'm doing my research, and because of the closed community that they are... I am an outsider to them even though we are both foreigners and we are neighbouring countries, but I am still as much of an outsider to them ...They are not very open and*

welcoming, I think they are suspicious of me as an outsider so that's the discrimination I've been facing recently. [P5]

*Paul: Beginning of this year I was at a hospital called Germiston hospital and, ah, I was working with a Congolese doctor. He's my supervisor and he asked me randomly where I was from because I have very distinctive features, and I told him I'm from Rwanda. Now Rwanda and Congo have a bit of issues - I don't know if you know… But there are certain people around the border between Rwanda and Congo, they have issues with one another. After I told him that I'm from Rwanda, our relationship just ended there. He told me I should never talk to him…. **Ja ja ja** so I had to find another supervisor. One of his colleagues came and told me that 'you shouldn't have told him you're from Rwanda'. [P9]*

One of the explanations for this phenomenon is that it may result from political upheavals that characterize some African countries, forcing those facing political persecution to seek safety in neighbouring countries such as South Africa. Subsequently, the political tension between warring parties spills over to South Africa, creating a hypervigilance and a fear of one's own countrymen or neighbouring countries, thus affecting the lived experiences. This was particularly true of Paul and Naomi.

In conclusion, according to Critical Race Theory (CRT), race is a multifaceted complex notion that gives voice to the diverse participant experiences. CRT rejects the idea of dominant discourses and looks at understanding the different experiences. Further, Solórzano (1997) delineates that race and racism takes on the conscious and unconscious, individual and institutional, and impacts individual and group processes. These different lenses can be seen to have manifested in the lived experiences of all the research participants.

4.6 Micro-aggressions

The term 'micro-aggressions' denotes unconscious, subconscious and conscious everyday slights, insults and invalidations to certain members of the population because of their group membership (Sue, 2010). According to Sue (2010), a five phase model is valuable for interpreting

micro-aggressions. This process starts with a trigger experienced from an event, followed by deconstructing the intention of the aggressor, developing direct emotional, cognitive and behavioural reactions to the interaction, processing the experience and finally, developing coping mechanisms to the effects of micro-aggressions (Sue, 2010). The target population is usually marginalized groups who are seen as 'the other'.

According to Staszak (2009), the concept of 'other' is defined as one where people are divided into two: the majority - 'us', whose identity, values and culture are not only the norm but also superior, while the minority – 'them', are identified by their faults, real or imagined, resulting in a justification for discrimination. Further, Staszak (2009) states that people considered as 'other' are generally due to their spatial marginality and their difference at best only gets termed as 'exotic' to re-affirm the majority of its self-imposed sense of superiority. The idea of 'them' versus 'us' was highlighted by all the participants and was experienced through discourse and other forms of interpersonal relations.

In the current research, micro-aggressions emerged as a theme from the findings. In this category, three sub-themes emerged, namely;

- Verbal and non-verbal micro-aggressions
- Public and institutional micro-aggressions and
- Language.

4.6.1 Verbal and non-verbal micro-aggressions

A key finding was subtle verbal and non-verbal micro-aggressions that coloured everyday living experiences. Accounts of negative lived experiences that were highlighted by participants consisted of triggers through personal encounters with verbal and non-verbal slights and snubs that were processed as a result of not being South African. The responses consisted of various experiences such as:

Eleanor: I did go to the finance offices, and I spoke to one of the ladies there, and I just wanted my statement because I wanted to check how much I owed because my results

were blocked, and she was just on her phone talking. But then when one White gentleman behind me came, she said, 'I'll call you later' and put the phone down and said, 'how can I help you', you know, so it makes you feel different, because if you are a Black person who has come for a service, and you treat me different because you think I am not as much worthy as a White person who is right behind me, you treat them better, it's not the White person looking down on us. [P8]

Shamiso: I also work and I actually am still going through that right now where my manager is Black and he's South African and I have colleagues that are Black and they are South African and some of them have actually said in so many words that we [Zimbabweans] are second class or second grade - something along those lines. [P2]

Abiola: A classmate of mine actually told me that the true test - and he's a South African …because I was saying to him 'oh this person is so accepting of me and I think she accepts me as a foreigner'. So he now said the true test would be, let's say there's a riot, okay let's stone the foreigners or bring out those foreigners that won't join in the riot, that person actually takes me out and say, 'oh, she's a foreigner'. Because after that person told me that, I started questioning myself and so in fact I didn't go to school for, like, all the times there was all those xenophobic or school riots. I didn't go because I didn't want a situation where they say, 'look, she's foreigner, she's comfortable, she's like those White people. Let's stone her car' or something like that, so I stayed at home throughout. [P7]

Non-verbal responses such as those Eleanor and Abiola perceived as being ignored, and environmental fear that results in missing classes due to invalidations are examples of micro-aggressions. This is in addition to ethnic slurs such as being termed as 'second class' in verbal conversations. Perceived hostility and sentiments due to race and ethnicity as indicated in the excerpts triggered negative emotional and behavioural responses. Sue (2010) explains that racial micro-aggressions, whether conscious or unconscious, may consist of insensitive comments and treatment as lesser or second class citizens.

Additionally, findings showed that some participants also identified their physical features as a characteristic that elicited negative experiences.

Paul: I'd say school as a foreigner is particularly sometimes not as easy, right. Especially if you have distinctive features of foreign, someone like me. I've particular features, so school was not very easy. [P9]

Jacinta: The biggest battle that I had to fight was probably the fact that I was darker in complexion than most, so, it was in South Africa in general, in-in the years that I've been here, most of the times, I think beauty is defined from the light in complexion perspective and with these girls and given the age as well, so it was one of those where obviously they would call me names. So maybe because you might appear to be darker than somebody else, already people categorize you as a foreigner, I guess [Laughs]. [P4]

Abiola: "I don't know. Somehow people seem to know even from your face, that you are not from here." [P7]

This was particularly significant for Paul from Rwanda and Jacinta from Kenya who had gone through the school system in South Africa from primary school to university. They emphasized experiencing micro-aggressions such as offensive and insensitive remarks because of having darker skin pigmentation and what was considered atypical body features in comparison to the local population.

As a result, participants harboured feelings of fear and of being invalidated as a Black and non-South African student. In turn, an internalized disposition of being the 'other' was acquired that produced a narrative of 'them' versus 'us' between Black African international students and Black South Africans.

4.6.2 Public and institutional micro-aggressions

Findings also revealed that participants denounced the role of public narratives that perpetuated negative sentiments about Black migrants from the African continent. It was for this

reason that this narrative also had implications for international students in their day-to-day experiences. Examples of public discourse included:

Gift: "There was a lot of conventional knowledge about migrants. Some people will just say, they do come here to take our jobs, take our wives and stuff like that." [P3]

Paul: … he [local doctor] said to me, we do more C-sections on foreign women than we do on our own women and then he went on and on about how in the next ten years this country is gonna just be full of foreigners. [P9]

Olufemi: ... then the day-to-day lived experiences in terms of job search and other things kinda tells you to your face who you are in this country... these experiences tell you that you are the other, you are not one of us. [P6]

Further, negative personal experiences occurred when some of the African international students felt that they were being exploited outside of the university spaces. Participants described the challenges of finding accommodation due to being identified as non-South African students and being charged a higher rate for off-campus housing as well as being excluded in some student concerns.

Gift: I have noticed when you are looking for accommodation also in the community, once you mention that you are a student, and a foreign student to be specific, they have a tendency to believe in and a general notoriety to believe that foreigners have money and their fees or their charges are usually exorbitant. Like, they always take us as desperate, we are desperate for accommodation, especially to those places around the campus. [P3]

Olufemi: When the fees must fall [FMF] was happening, international students were not considered, even, you know, in terms of what it would cost them to stay longer. [P6]

Paul: It [FMF] was good, for the most part, until you know someone brought, well I think one foreign guy he's an engineer, I think he's from Zimbabwe, he stood up and he asked, you know, it's all great, you know, we're here for you guys, we agree to have free education and he asked, so what about international students, you know, we're also here with you guys. Some of you guys take us as one of your own, what about that? Before one of the

Fees Must Fall leaders could answer, I think one person jumped in and he said no, this is our land. This is our country. [P9]

Despite voiced efforts for solidarity with student challenges such as funding in the university sphere, international students talked of being disavowed as part of the student body. Similarly, being 'other' was not only evidenced through stated local views and personal experiences, there were also accounts of negative experiences of institutional practices that perpetuated the concept of 'other'.

Shamiso: The fact that next year I'm going to be working in a government hospital, my colleagues are getting thousands of Rands *and I'm getting nothing by virtue of being [claps to emphasise] a non-South African and that is xenophobic for me. I'm doing the same work; I'm going to do it for free because I'm not South African. So what are you trying to communicate to me? And then you can't turn around and say to your people, 'don't be xenophobic'. I mean you need to first address it: you are xenophobic and you are teaching these people that, you know what, it's okay to not treat these people the same way you treat, so that actually annoys me. It makes me angry. I feel like the system needs to be addressed. [P2]*

Olufemi: One of the women, from the organization, she's always under attack that she's using me when there is a work opportunity. They call me to help and then from there maybe get some stipend. It's not even about the quality of the work, but the fact that she's using me and the fact that when they use other people the work quality is not the same, and it's just the fact that she's using a foreigner. [P6]

Shamiso, a Psychology student from Zimbabwe, described circumstances which made her angry because she felt that she was treated differently and denied equal salary benefits especially for internship work environments. Crush and Peberdy (2018), also found that Black foreigners in South Africa may be subjected to exploitation in the job market, political rhetoric and are blamed for social ills and shortages. In South Africa, a legacy of differentiation of different groups, different rules and different opportunities is seen as an inherited ideology from the apartheid era (Adjai &

Lazaridis, 2014). Likewise, Huber and Solórzano (2014) assert that micro-aggressions are not only nuanced everyday personal experiences but also include institutional micro-aggressions that consist of structures and processes that disregard marginal population groups. Consequently, this too became an overall negative experience for the participants as Black African international students.

Furthermore, according to Pyke (2010), Critical Race Theory also investigates internalised racism in the processes of inequalities. Pyke (2010) suggests that Internalised racism begins when stereotypical expectations of non- Whites are regarded as universal within a race that transforms into self-hatred or hatred towards one's own race. This notion can be extended to explain the intra-racial tensions or Black on Black hostility described by participants. This results in perpetuating a discourse of minority African international students as less worthy or undeserving of opportunities thus maintaining inequalities to opportunities.

4.6.3 Language

Language challenges were recounted as significant for all participants. Use of English as the *lingua franca* evoked different reactions in everyday experiences. As the participants' primary means of communication, it resulted in either inclusion or exclusion. For all participants, being Black and speaking predominantly in English heightened their distinctiveness in being 'other' and elicited mainly negative reactions.

> *Naomi: "You have those experiences where you go the police station. They can see your passport is foreign, but they still speak to you in their local language." [P5]*
>
> *Shamiso: When I walk in there [university administration office], even though they understand English and I say 'Hi, good morning', everyone is just rolling their eyes, like ja… I mean I've had people saying, 'how can you be Black and not be able to speak this language?' So that does get frustrating. [P2]*
>
> *Abiola: The way I pronounce things - I would say something and somebody would say, 'pardon, I don't get some of the things you say?' This is how we say ('beck' – back). You Nigerians, you say 'back' so the 'back' must be wrong. Where is it written? That it is the*

way I say that is wrong. That's the way you say it, yes I understand, but the way I say it is different, do you understand? [P7]

Masimba: …am just scared, like, especially going out, going to the taxi ranks, like MTN, the fact that I can't speak a local language, yeah, I don't like going out to places where I will be expected to speak in a local language. [P1]

Jacinta: Yesterday I went to buy medication and somebody was saying, 'so where you from?' and it's a question I hate with a passion because I never know people's intention of asking that question. You know when you speak English to people, people still want to know why you are speaking English, and not the local language. [P4]

Participants expressed how they battled psychologically with anxiety and unease as they were wary of the responses they would get in spaces where they were expected to speak the local language. They described that generally responses such as "how can you be Black and not speak this language", or lack of response, made them feel unwelcome and slighted in some of the spaces in and outside of the university. Houshmand, Spanierman and Tafarodi (2014) posit that being ridiculed for having an accent or for language proficiency is a micro-assault and therefore a form of racial micro-aggression.

Abiola, a participant from Nigeria, narrated a way to deal with the inability to speak a local language was to respond back in her own home language.

Abiola: There were instances like that where people who said, 'ooh I mean you should be speaking Zulu', and I'm wondering why? Why should I be speaking Zulu? I had instances where someone spoke to me in Zulu in school and I responded in my language - I had experiences where I did that. They [South African classmates], then said it sounded gibberish. The same way it sounds gibberish to you, that's how it sounds to me and you can't say I must go and learn your language as you do not understand my language. [P7]

The outcome was expressed as two-fold. Firstly, to create an awareness that the other person, despite being Black, was not South African and secondly, as a form of enlightening peers on the diverse languages of the continent.

Conversely, having an official common language such as English was described as beneficial. Two general sentiments were expressed:

> *Gift: English is more of the official language. Everybody in our Department is speaking English, so it is not much of a challenge, language is not much of a challenge. [P3]*
>
> *Eleanor: I do also have friends from Namibia and from the Congo. It's easier for you to speak to them because all of you cannot speak your own language, so we speak English. It definitely becomes easier, especially with things like xenophobia, you sit back and you say we are the group that is being targeted and so if we do not stand up for each other, so I believe it's easier you know, with the foreign friends and stuff. [P8]*

There was an appreciation of the institution's policy of English as the language of instruction in the teaching context, which in turn created an inclusionary environment for all the students. Also, amongst international students originating from different countries and speaking different languages, the participants recognised the centrality of English. It was acknowledged as a conduit for building social networks.

Within social and academic contexts, not being able to speak in a local language and engage with other students affected the quality and frequency of interactions. Participants' narratives showed that feeling excluded was a common phenomenon in this regard as indicated in the following excerpts:

> *Eleanor: "When you're standing in a group and people are talking their language and laugh and sometimes they forget you are there, so yeah, that was difficult." [P8]*
>
> *Gift: "If you can't speak their own language it's a problem, you can't interact much, you actually sometimes self-exclude yourself because you are not well-conversant with the language they speak." [P3]*

Abiola: South Africans have a way of speaking in their language and it excludes me. Whether they speaking Zulu or Afrikaans it excludes me. Also a lecturer could just be speaking and just start speaking in Zulu or in Tswana. Or somebody starts to respond in English but midway starts to speak in Zulu and I have to keep asking, 'please what's this person saying?' So sometimes I find that very difficult. To me I always look like an outsider - someone from the outside looking in throughout. I constantly feel like that. [P7]

In social spaces, participants became aware that the default medium of communication was local languages. As a result, they encountered difficulties in joining in conversations and being part of the group. Further, enriched learning dialogue was also hampered when discussions in the classroom were conducted in local languages. It was unclear whether this phenomenon was consciously or unconsciously prompted. Nonetheless, the effect was that it made some participants physically and psychologically react by excluding themselves from any more involvement.

However, some participants were keen to try and learn local languages or could speak a local language.

Paul: Class is fine. You can't really feel that you are foreign. When I go to practicals, now if you talk to patients in English, sometimes they won't respond to you, but if you try to speak, you know, Zulu, Sotho, you don't have to be fluent, but they'll give you something. [P9]

Shamiso: I found, actually that being able to speak Zulu has helped me a lot in terms of settling in and getting used to the system and being able to access people who can help me... In other contexts, because I'm Zimbabwean it's very close to Zulu, so I can speak a fair amount of Zulu to the point where someone will not really pick up that I'm not from here, and I have seen that before I mention my nationality and I'm just speaking to someone there's a difference and the moment it comes up that I'm actually from Zimbabwe I sense that, you know, there's that withdrawal. [P2]

The motivating factor was that in some instances, the response was a lot more positive rather than negative. Both Moses, a participant from Rwanda and Shamiso from Zimbabwe, found that making the effort to learn the local language made the difference. This was outside of the university where interactions were more likely to occur with the general population who seemed to appreciate the effort and extended a friendly reception. However, a distinction was observed by Shamiso that in her experience, despite her fluency in a local language, her ethnicity still resulted in feelings of rejection.

The general view of the participants in regard to expectations of language was summarised by Naomi.

Naomi: Even if they sense that you can't understand the language, they don't understand how a Black person cannot speak their language. It's fine for a White or person of other race not to speak their language, but for a Black non-South African they question that, so there are those language barriers or you get discriminated against because you can't speak the language. [P5]

Overall, the defining factor that made language proficiency and accents a micro-aggression was the assumption that they ought to speak the local language because of the colour of their skin, irrespective of their country of origin. On the other hand, being White, regardless of whether it is White South African or foreign did not bring about the same expectations.

These findings revealed that negative experiences were predominantly a 'Black on Black' manifestation. Although there are varying attitudes towards non-citizens in South Africa, South Africans are generally uncomfortable and intolerant towards African foreigners (Landau, Ramjathan-Keogh & Singh, 2005). According to Jearey-Graham & Böhmke (2013), anti-foreigner sentiments and discrimination of groups of people based on their ethnicity or nationality is what is termed as 'xenophobia'. Mwangi (2015) also argues that the foregrounding of ethnicity over race may contribute to negative sentiments or micro-aggressions towards African international students who are a minority group population. Distress and anxiety that comes from xenophobic

experiences thus affects interactions that in turn hamper sound pedagogic settings (Pithouse-Morgan et al., 2012).

4.7 Access

As a result of internationalisation of higher education, student mobility has increased as universities open up access to students beyond its borders (Sehoole, 2011). According to Chikoko et al., (2013), access is more than just opening up admission to international students, but rather that access is a much broader concept which can be better qualified through the students' lived experiences. Increase in numbers of different student populations is broadly termed as the massification of university spaces or physical access (Akoojee & Nkomo, 2007; Ilie & Rose, 2016). However, despite the positive statistical increase in access, new challenges of inequalities arise in trying to service the different student population (Ilie & Rose, 2016). Regarding access, all nine participants interviewed expressed in various ways that, as international students from the African continent, they perceived their needs as unique and somewhat unacknowledged by the institution after admission. The three sub-themes under Access include:

- Funding opportunities and international fees
- Access to jobs and accommodation and
- Access to healthcare and medical services.

4.7.1 Funding opportunities and international fees

South Africa is a preferred destination for higher education due to its quality and competitively priced tuition fees compared to education in Europe and North America (Mda, 2010; Rouhani, 2007; Sehoole, 2011;). Also noteworthy in the findings of the study was that there was access to funding opportunities towards tuition fees and associated student costs in South Africa. Seven out of nine participants were able to access the meritorious funding available with responses such as:

> *Gift: "I'm very grateful that I'm on a scholarship, so living outside, financially I am still able to do all the other things that I'm supposed to pay for." [P3]*

Shamiso: I like the fact that there's a Post Graduate Merit Award at [Gauteng university] that awards bursaries to any person by merit, as long as you meet this standard, your marks are this good, then you get it and I like that. [P2]

Naomi: "I think receiving a scholarship, it is the DAAD German scholarship, despite the fact that I'm a foreigner, has been a great experience." [P5]

The advantages expressed above were undisputed in having access to funding schemes such as the Post Graduate Merit Award (PMA), German Academic Exchange Service or DAAD Scholarships, DHET Gap funding and other internal schemes open to all students. These included less financial stress and the ability to pay for upkeep, which in turn increased the positive experiences of the international students towards their studies and the institution. Findings in research studies have identified that, in general, international students combine scholarships, own initiatives and financial assistance from family and friends to service their academic financial needs (Aydinol, 2013; Chikoko et al., (2013).

Despite the funding opportunities, one of the biggest financial challenges for international students is comparatively high international fees. When it comes to tuition fees between local and international fees, the Department of Higher Education in South Africa allows for a differentiated approach (DHET, 2017). The approach as stated by DHET is to grant universities the leeway for additional sources of revenue within reasonable levels.

Jacinta: "The fees is also more and registration fee is more than what local students pay." [P4]

Olufemi: An individual aspect that international students wondered about is the fact that we have to keep paying fees every year as PhD students, and because we don't go for classes we don't go for a lot of things, but you're made to pay fees every year. Actually, it increases every year by 10%., Every year it increases by 10%, so last year I paid 24 000, so this year it's about 25 000, I think. [P6]

The above observations highlighted the acknowledgement of the different tiers of the fee system. Due to the higher fees structure, participants felt that although there were funding opportunities, access was limited and restricted and resulted in challenges. An outcome of having to pay incrementally more fees and the reality that funding was predominantly for local students caused participants to feel excluded:

> *Gift: There is an element of exclusivity, like, for instance, you will find a lot of bursaries and scholarship opportunities that are actually specifically meant for South Africans alone despite you having all the qualifications, especially if you're not a South African citizen, you won't to be eligible to apply for that kind of thing. [P3]*
>
> *Paul: "I can't apply for NSFAS because I'm not from South Africa because I don't have citizenship." [P9]*
>
> *Naomi: "The opportunities that are there for students are specifically for local students and so international students are excluded." [P5]*
>
> *Olufemi: "It is difficult, even though some of the funding is internal to [Gauteng university], a lot of times they will specify that it's only for South African students." [P6]*

Research suggests that one of the major challenges international students face is limited access to funding (Nailevna, 2017; Ilie & Rose, 2016; Akoojee & Nkomo, 2007).

In South Africa, there has been controversy in higher education institutes over access to opportunities between local students and non-South African Black students alongside fulfilling objectives of redress (Mda, 2010). According to Mda (2010), there are usually quotas accorded with the majority being granted to South African students for transformation purposes. Consequently, this phenomenon was realized and articulated by the African International students as a challenge to grapple with.

In addition, lived experiences were tainted not only due to limited access to finances but a perceived lack of sympathy from the university in this regard. This then added extra pressure for

international students such as having to extend the duration of studies contributing to debt as well as stress and anxiety of not meeting academic requirements.

> *Olufemi: I couldn't get another source of funding or any form of financial assistance and that made it difficult for me, so that's why I haven't finished until now. Actually, I wanted to finish in two and a half years if I had my way but this is my sixth year. The funny aspect is that the school does not understand and they do not want to know, they just want you off their system. [P6]*
>
> *Masimba: I didn't want to lose on getting PMA [Merit Award], cause I wasn't going to be able to pay for my own tuition, yeah. So I was trying to maintain my grades, and it took out the social part of my stay here in South Africa, especially in 2012." [P1]*

The concern of equity and access to funding continues to be a challenge in universities (Ilie & Rose, 2016; McCowan, 2016). This is fundamentally true of South Africa where historical legacies of inequalities have undermined transformation of higher education funding and student fees (Luescher, Loader & Mugume, 2017; Rouhani, 2007; Seabi et al., 2014).

4.7.2 Access to jobs and accommodation

As a means of countering the challenge of finances, the international students described proactive ways to access other sources of funds. Participants such as Jacinta talked about being vigilant in looking for opportunities within the university for funding. This approach enabled her to harness the rare opportunities that presented themselves.

> *Jacinta: I do remember a time at [university name] when I was doing my masters. when I saw an advert on the certain department had advertised for assistant research for a research that they were doing and they want to pay R25 000 towards your fees, so I just went in and I was like, I'm on, and I helped them to do the fieldwork and at least it helps to - it helped to pay my fees" [P4]*

Some participants also reported that gaining admission at a South African university had come with benefits such as the potential of being able to secure work opportunities. These

opportunities were mostly part time, through lecturers, or as part of training in some of the departments within the university. That notwithstanding, this was recognized as a positive experience that allowed them the opportunity to gain experience, make money and supplement their subsistence.

Masimba: "I had to work hard to supplement the little support I was getting from my family. I was working for ASAWU, it's a Union for academics" [P1]

Naomi: "The relationship that I had with the lecturers were very close because they could identify you from far to tutor and to lecture certain modules." [P5]

Eleanor: "I got a job as a student assistant for two years because of my performance, which I enjoyed. And now I was a tutor, first semester in my honours, and now I am a head tutor still because of performance, so I can say it has been well. [P8]

Research indicates that international students are regarded as making a contribution to the local economy, higher education contexts and globalization (Brown & Brown, 2013; Rouhani, 2007). Access to opportunities, as described in the excerpts above, do highlight participation in areas of research and teaching and therefore a contribution to the economy.

On the other hand, there were other participants who could not hold back their discontentment when sharing the down side of being students from other African countries in terms of access to job opportunities.

Shamiso: "The fact that next year I'm going to be working in a government hospital, my colleagues are getting ***thousands of Rands*** *and I'm getting nothing by virtue of being [claps to emphasise] a non-South African. They [classmates] do the work now, they get the money now, so I'm also doing the work. Why am I not getting the money? Because I'm not South African - so what are you saying? It's okay to exploit me? It's okay for me work for free because I'm not South African? [P2]*

Olufemi: It is very difficult to get a job as a non-South African and especially if you're an African foreigner here, it's difficult, as opposed to the other Western countries, especially countries in the west where if you're going as a student, especially a postgraduate student, there are always things to do. [P6]

Jacinta: Since I started my PhD I've really never had not even a single tutoring opportunity, which… for me that was the biggest frustration. When you don't have such opportunities you know, to have extra money. [P4]

Shamiso from Zimbabwe shared her frustration on being excluded from getting paid as a non-South African intern. This was in comparison to her South African classmates who would earn salaries for the same internship programs, a compulsory requirement to complete her Master's degree.

Unequal opportunities in some departments and limited jobs prospects in comparison with Western countries contributed to despondent feelings towards lived experiences. Overall, factors such as money, funding sources and living expenses are considered major stressors for international students (Araiza & Kutugata, 2013).

4.7.3 Access to health care and medical services

Access to health care is also noted as an area of concern. One of the stipulated requirements for international students is medical cover. The participants talked about the mandatory medical aid cover offered by the university as a requirement for international students. However, this was a source of frustration as the prescribed medical aid only provided limited access to health facilities.

Gift: Usually as foreign students, even before you apply for study permits, it is a requirement that you must have a 12-month medical cover…. the challenge that arises is, like, not all hospitals and clinics accept our [university] medical aids… it also poses a challenge if you are a foreign student. You feel like you're secured because you have a medical aid then you visit a hospital and they tell you that we don't accept this one. [P3]

Masimba: I think it is mandatory from the Department of Home Affairs that international students should have medical aid and without a medical aid you can't register…I have seen a lot of people who have been turned down and cannot register because they don't have those medical aid. [P1]

Jacinta: "So, if you don't have medical aid you can't even go to campus health, so those are some of the challenges." [P4]

Similarly, access to accommodation was pointed out as a challenge because it was an extra cost and the onus rested on the students to secure accommodation. These were participants' experiences:

Olufemi: "I couldn't afford the res [university accommodation] so I had to look for cheaper options elsewhere." [P6]

Naomi: You come here, usually for the first time, and you've no family and you've nowhere to stay. I think it's important that universities at least prioritise international students when it comes to accommodation. [P5]

In addition, Naik et al., (2017) argues that international students need to be given access to similar opportunities as a significant component of the student body. This is a sentiment that Naomi from Kenya also echoed when speaking about suggestions she would like the university to adopt:

Naomi: Widening the opportunities for international students because, as an institution we are all students, right? We're all - and we actually pay more than local students - so I think making sure that at least the opportunities are equal for both international and local students. [P5]

According to Ilie and Rose (2016), it is necessary to understand the needs of different student populations in order to find out where the gaps to access lie. This study revealed mixed reviews where there were noted opportunities for funding and jobs, however, the desperation of students needs in accommodation, limited funding, fees and restricted accessible healthcare resulted in exclusionary experiences being stated as negative.

4.8 Support networks

According to Chikoko et al., (2013) the institution bears shared responsibility in the process of student socialization that should ultimately contribute to a successful student life. In addition,

shared norms should be cultivated within the student body and amongst the different student population.

The strong message by Chikoko et al., (2013) is that a good throughput in a higher institution is a reflection of how much effort, academically and socially, has been invested in the student welfare. The emphasis ought to be on all students of the university and as a result of joint efforts by students and the institutions. Social support interactions exist on different levels for students that impact on the students' academic success. The support networks theme yielded the following five sub-themes:

- International office and orientation
- Psycho-social support, sports, clubs and faith
- Support from academic staff
- Student to student support and
- Country and kinship associations.

4.8.1 International office and orientation

One of the key divisions in which universities support international students is through the international office. The majority of the participants were hesitant about speaking about the international office and did not feel that the office had the competencies or the awareness of the uniqueness of their experiences to provide effective and relevant services. They perceived the international office as more unhelpful and a "white elephant".

Olufemi: A lot of times we have issues and we go to the International office. We hardly have any substantial assistance...uummm, apart from those visa issues where, when we apply they give us letters to submit with, otherwise the rest of the work you've got to do it yourself. [P6]

Masimba: "From my understanding and my interactions with a lot of international students, there's not a lot of support for international students, especially African international students." [P1]

Naomi: The international office is useless, apart from giving that clearance certificate in the beginning of the year they provide no form of support for international students. We really do not have that structured support that you expect the university to provide. [P5]

There were unanimous views that the only significant service that the international office extended was issuing letters to process the study visas. The international students expressed dissatisfaction and unmet expectations with the breadth of services provided by the international office.

A significant support feature at the start of the year for new university students is orientation. This is provided at the start of the academic year and is important as an introductory means of easing students into the new study environment, and the rules and regulations. However, only one participant spoke about orientation.

Eleanor: It was my first time in South Africa. I have missed orientation - I had come late, you know, so now I do not know classes. I used to come to school and sit under the stairs and just wonder and cry and wish that I had gone back, you know, because I knew no one." [P8]

In the case of Eleanor, because she had arrived late due to processing study visas, she had missed orientation. As a result, she had struggled with settling in and adjusting to the academic environment. Naidoo (2015), suggests that orientation is an important aspect for new students, and more so, international students, because it contributes to faster adaptation and active participation within the university. Orientation is a once-off event and the opportunity to attend may not always be possible because of issues of registration or visa applications. In such instances, students can struggle with feeling alone and unsupported which could lead to experiences of stress and adjustment problems that require psycho-social support.

4.8.2 Psycho-social support, sports, clubs and faith

For international students who were adjusting to the new environment, additional challenges that required support arose. For example, participants expressed loneliness that ensued from having to be far from their families and not yet having made friends.

Olufemi: I didn't have a lot of friends. I wasn't introduced to a lot of people out here. It was basically myself, my books, and my room and so when I come back and there's nobody to say hello to, to smile with, so I just go to my room, lock the door and sleep. So I still had to face some of those psychological issues. [P6]

In addition, the loneliness was compounded by the academic stress and created a need for psychological support.

Olufemi: I think the [university] system should at least pay attention to the welfare of students. You know that a lot of PhD students are going through a lot of psychological issues and nobody really pays any attention, you know. [P6]

Jacinta: "And I feel that's why a lot of students end up overwhelming themselves, like, now I think, that four people have died after they completing their PhD and during the PhD process." [P4]

The above scenario reflected mental challenges that some international students undergo. On further clarification on awareness of psychological support structures, participants indicated a lack of knowledge about the presence and workings of the psychological services for students within the university. Participants shared the following:

Olufemi: Maybe because I was new and I did not know, really, how to use the structures. There is [psychological centre] where you can go and talk about certain issues, but I had just come in, especially that time, I had just come in. I didn't know how the system worked that much. [P6]

Abiola: Maybe counselling would have helped. Maybe there would have been a place where I can go and say that, okay, I'm feeling so left out, but there wasn't, like, a proper structure

to say that, okay this is where you should go If you're feeling so overwhelmed and especially if you have not schooled in South Africa before, where I don't know the systems. [P7]

Therefore, there seemed to be a deficiency in the university system either in communicating the services or familiarising the students on the availability of support structures. According to DHET (2017), it is the responsibility of the university to provide support structures for all students. For example, support pertaining to registration and study visas, accommodation, psychological and basic health care services.

In striving towards physical and mental wellness, some participants turned to other social structures like sports, clubs and faith. One of the yearnings expressed by the participants was to be acknowledged and extend their social interactions within different student social spaces. Consequently, participants such as Eleanor and Gift realized that joining clubs or sports was fruitful in growing their social networks.

Eleanor: "I got more friends, especially more foreign friends when I joined AIESEC because AIESEC is an organization that has more international students." [P8]

Gift: When you join this institution, despite all our differences, when it comes to sports you play together as a team. We support together and, you know, it coheres, you know. Life is easier and that is how you make friends as well. [P3]

Extra-mural activities such as global student platforms like AIESEC and sports clubs set up within the university were named as instrumental in creating communities. AIESEC is a youth leadership organisation that develops cross cultural leadership potential internationally (AIESEC, 2018). Such communities in turn created opportunities to interact and unite with other students regardless of their nationality.

Another avenue through which the participants appeared to navigate the different experiences was through religion. There was an acknowledgement on the positive influence that

faith contributed in mitigating against the different stress factors faced and in also enhancing social relationships.

Jacinta: Given what other students go through, but I do feel that, you know, I guess God has come through in certain things because even when I quit my job I was, like, I need funding and I just applied and I got funding... and I remember, for example, being in the Christian organisation that I was part of, you meet so many students where another student probably might help you to, you know, to get accommodation or to stay with them and so forth. [P4]

Masimba: "Weekends, Sundays, I go to church. Being from a foreign country, I think it shapes your focus, you become more focused." [P1]

Abiola: "I have wonderful people in the church, that if I needed help with things I could call on." [P7]

Paul: "I've invited some of my classmates, some of my friends, to weddings - to functions, random functions - and they've really enjoyed it; so I'm also Muslim." [P9]

Participants articulated benefits such as attributing motivation, focus and funding opportunities to the providence of God, and being able to draw on support networks within religious contexts.

Given the unique social support challenges of studying far from home; a strong work ethic, having a strong belief system and faith in God are other ways in which the participants coped with being far from home. The role of faith has been noted as an important factor for international students and contributes to having positive experiences both academically and socially (Muthuki, 2014).

4.8.3 Support from academic staff

In order to cope with the demands of the new academic environment, students also reached out and received support from lecturers and supervisors. Support from academic staff was reported primarily as a positive experience. Participants expressed gratitude for encountered opportunities because of the compassion and support that was extended by teaching staff.

Masimba: "I got massive support from my lecturers, even when i was doing my masters. One of my lecturers, she paid for my accommodation." [P1]

Olufemi: My research supervisor - she's Senegalese, helped me in a way, in the sense that I was able to teach part time students during the second phase of my first semester, that was how I was able to raise some money. I think I have been fairly lucky as a student in terms of relationships with lecturers. [P6]

For example, participants were able to obtain monetary support and opportunities to earn money that helped to ease some of their expenses such as accommodation costs. Besides support of a financial nature, participants also shared notable academic staff support towards their studies and mental wellbeing.

Jacinta: My supervisor, I think she's just one of those incredible people I've met and I'm not saying this because of the interview. She really is always available and always motivating, there was no time that she doesn't put an effort in into my work and she gives me feedback. So that, for me, has really been helpful in this journey. [P4]

Masimba: "They [lecturers] somehow give us psycho-social support, of which is very important for us students whenever we have challenges, we are free to approach." [P1]

Participants like Jacinta and Masimba were effusive in sharing the difference it makes to have extraordinary support from staff at the university and how much it contributed to positive experiences. According to Clark (2011), the benefits of international universities and the encounters with difference is critical as it contributes to transforming lives beyond the borders.

4.8.4 Student to student support

Participants were also drawn to friendships and support from other students. This study revealed that daily lived experiences provided the availability of a mixed wider social support student network that was a blend of international and local.

However, a majority of eight out of the nine participants spoke about their support mainly being fellow international African students that were residing in the country, and three of these participants stating a mix of both international and local.

Olufemi: "Mostly, I would say here in South Africa, my support base has mainly been foreign, foreign in the sense that not from South Africans." [P6]

Eleanor: For my first class, I sat at the front, so you know for me I started talking to people who are at the front and then I landed on a Zimbabwean girl….and then she asked me where are you from and I said that I am from Uganda, because they easily know accents as we all don't sound the same. There she said I'm from Zim and also international, and we have been close friends since then. [P8]

Masimba: "I think it's easy for foreign students to completely integrate because you know that you are all foreigners." [P1]

Shamiso: It's funny, my friends are South Africans and Zimbabwean friends and when I think about my friendships with them, as well, there's still that-that barrier that I spoke about with my classmates - there's a certain way in which I relate to my South African friends which is different from how I relate to my Zimbabwean friends. Although I have more South African friends than Zimbabwean so it's more like colleagues, acquaintances, than really close friendships. [P2]

Only one out of the nine participants shared that her support did not primarily come from other international students.

Naomi: "I didn't have the closest of relationship with international students. I think a lot of us international students were actually struggling just in terms of livelihood." [P5]

This was because of the perception that as international students, they were all struggling and therefore it was difficult for anyone to be of assistance to the other. On the other hand, the general feeling was that South African students could not really grasp the challenges of international students as articulated by Naomi from Kenya.

Naomi: "The local students just don't understand the difficulties of international students." [P5]

Where to reach out for support was seen as an important and personal aspect in terms of determining with whom and how to go about social relationships. The main perspective was derived from a desire for familiarity and interactions with those who could empathize with the different set of challenges that were presented to international students.

4.8.5 Country and kinship associations

Other ways that international students initiated as additional avenues for support amongst themselves were country and kinship associations. One of the means of mediating against culture shock appeared to be an inclination towards organisations from their own countries.

Olufemi: Well, there are a couple of organizations like the West African Students Association, but that has not been functional for a while. But basically what that does is organise students and then maybe they have some West African theme; maybe they have some theme parties and then maybe it helps you to meet and maybe make some friends from your area. [P6]

Jacinta: "It's not a bad thing, people like grouping with people, with their own people, so you'll find the East African society." [P4]

Masimba: "We had a community of Zimbabweans, who were also open to interact with, and I remember I had friends from Nigeria, Cameroon, DRC, so it was easy to mix and integrate." [P1]

Eleanor: "Ugandans in South Africa have got an association where families host parties so that the kids get to know each other." [P8]

The participants talked of identifying with communities from either their country or region in the continent. Associations such as the West African Association and the East African Society catered to bringing together students from these regions. Participants like Olufemi, Jacinta and

Masimba expressed the benefits as being with people who came from similar cultures and hence it was easier to interact and be with people who could understand their experiences.

Further, all nine participants were vocal about the importance of support from family or kinship relationships, whether near or far. Family was seen as an instrumental source of emotional, physical and financial support. Different sentiments shared included:

> *Jacinta: My family support here that, I think, played a big role in surviving different aspects of my university life all together and the fact that, you know, I knew I had a home… My parents are now back in Kenya, obviously is a different story, but I do see that difference and how it had, you know, positive impact in my life just having that support system. [P4]*
>
> *Gift: My brother is here and I've got fellow countrymen from Zimbabwe, so usually when I am physically or financially challenged, those are some of the people whom I am free to approach. Like since we are from the same country, no language barrier, no cultural barrier, no anything that may act as a hindrance between us, so I feel free to fully express myself.* [P3]
>
> *Abiola: "I had a very supportive family, like I said, every day I would come back and tell my husband when I had a bad day, so I had a strong support." [P7]*

African international students who had immediate and extended family residing in the country spoke of resolving challenges with a lot more ease as a result of having family within the country. Family and other kinship ties were thus considered as a protective factor in mediating against the different social, emotional, academic and financial challenges that participants faced on a daily basis.

Subsequently, as international students navigating the demands of tertiary education, having the different spheres of social support networks was a critical factor in improving an overall positive experience of shared and supportive networks.

From the findings of the study, this chapter produced seven main themes that holistically explored the lived experienced of African International students. The findings revealed that African

international students have both positive and negative experiences that colour their academic and social contexts. The themes journeyed through internationalisation, identity and documentation, diversity, race, micro-aggressions, access and support networks.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary of Findings

This research presented an overall perspective of the daily lived experiences of nine African international students at a Gauteng university. Flowing from the complex nature of lived experiences, themes had elements of positive and negative experiences rather than each category in purist form. From the findings of the study, seven main themes emerged. The themes of internationalisation, identity and documentation, diversity, race, micro-aggressions, access and support networks described the diverse experiences.

Primarily positive findings consisted of appreciating the diversity of different student population groups especially race and ethnicity, access to university resources, support from academic staff, studying in a cosmopolitan city and the ability to pursue an international qualification. On the contrary, predominantly negative experiences were micro-aggression encounters, time-consuming legal and institutional requirements and processes and inequalities of job opportunities and funding as well as university support structures.

Immigration is a current global phenomenon and critical race theory is useful in understanding the complexity of different lived realities. The research literature showed that global economies and advancement in technology has doubled the number of international students across 200 countries to 4.8 million from 20 years ago. Exploratory studies of foreign students therefore help in uncovering what is positive and can be reinforced, as well as the negative experiences and suggestions of what can be done to alleviate the challenges.

The study finds that participants live in tension of pursuing the benefit of an international qualification in a cosmopolitan city while navigating the politics therein. In addition, they live in a society where differences exist yet they are also perceived as different. For the participants, identity construction remains a complex phenomenon that is affected by politics of belonging.

One of the most defining experiences for African international students is the novelty of race, racial experiences and re-defining identity through the lens of race, racial classification and ethnicity. Literature on international students in Europe and America continues to be well researched and is geared towards pedagogy and calls for active change in policy. As Solórzano et al., (2000) point out, even in spaces like universities regarded as progressive spaces, the campus climate is still shrouded in negative aspects such as racial and ethnic micro-aggressions. The danger of these subtle forms of insults, assaults and invalidations is that over time, the effects contribute to intellectual, physical and emotional strain.

Challenges of education, immigration policy and legislation governing entry requirements for international students continues to be a touchy issue and solutions don't seem to be forthcoming (Ramphele, Crush & McDonald, 1999). While it is significant that countries have to prioritise national education, this needs to be secured alongside the development of internationalisation of higher education. The benefits of internationalisation of higher education need to be weighted by each country against socio-economic and political pressures. There are advantages such as brain gain in innovation, knowledge and skills to be balanced against high unemployment rates, public services burden and negative sentiment towards immigrants. Furthermore, challenges of funding, restricted employment opportunities and stringent immigration policies continue to be an expressed concern for international students who continue to perceive institutions and host countries as duplicitous in this regard.

5.2 Limitations of study

Given the small sample size of nine participants, the result findings cannot be termed as generalizable to all international students. However, the experiences that have been uncovered can still offer specific insights into the African international student. Another limitation would be due to the nature of exploring overall lived experiences, the study focused on breadth rather than depth. As a result, the study provides snapshots that may be utilised as opportunities for further research.

5.3 Implications for future research studies

Implications for future research are that this research can add on to the body of knowledge in areas such as building on a racial micro-aggression theory. Studies so far are extant mainly in universities in the Unites States of America (Pérez Huber & Solórzano, 2015; Velez-Gomez & Bell, 2018; Nailevna, 2017). Subsequently, conducting research at a Gauteng university continues to build on the reality of racial and ethnic micro-aggressions also experienced by African International students in Africa.

Further, continued research will aid in spreading awareness on the benefits of African diversity in countries within the continent. Moreover, through new knowledge gained from the multi-cultural learning spaces, the curricula can also be situated within Africa rather than in Eurocentric worldviews (DHET, 2017).

This research is not only relevant in the social sciences but findings may also contribute to the political sciences especially with immigration and immigration policies. Additional research should be encouraged to increase the transferability value of the findings that may contribute in future to beneficial international policies for foreign students.

In addition, a plethora of research is on race and between races, however, this research study reveals that there are nuances within races and ethnicity. There were assumptions about Black international students by Black local students which contributed to tension in the classroom and in social spaces. Such subtleties within similar race categories that don't share similar cultures compel further investigations.

The extent and perceived limits of access for international students requires further research as it is noted as a challenge where skewed opportunities such as jobs and funding exist within the university amongst the student population.

In using CRT as a theoretical underpinning, lived experiences of cultures that exist in the third space can be ventilated. Subsequently, the counter narratives that are extracted assist in adding to the body of knowledge of different groups and coming up with solutions of how best to serve their needs as well as incorporate what they have to offer.

5.4 Recommendations and suggestions for possible interventions

In view of the findings, a number of suggestions can be put forward to contribute to the continued improvement of international tertiary education. These are as follows:

As International students face distinct lived experiences, they can benefit from sensitive multi-cultural counselling which is responsive to the unique challenges faced. This would be helpful in facilitating a faster adjustment process both socially and in academic contexts.

Universities may also consider incorporating international students in the international office as a peer buddy system. This may be beneficial especially for students who may miss the orientation day or those who may struggle to adjust to the unfamiliar environment by initially connecting them with other international students.

When it comes to employment, international students who have gone through the South African academic system may be seen as opportunities for brain gain. This can be identified as advantageous to both the local economy and the foreign student where the system benefits from the human resource that already resides within while the student can pursue work opportunities.

Unlike in countries like the United States of America and the United Kingdom where foreign students face stigma for a lack of proficiency in English, in South Africa, and especially for Black African international students, the stigma is associated with speaking only English and the inability to speak a local language. As a result, consideration by the institution to offer language support through basic classes in selected local languages would equip the students and empower them with basic local language proficiency.

The research used interviews from nine international students from five different African countries to reveal a big picture of their daily lived experiences. Lived experiences are significant as they provide essential descriptions of participants' conditions and circumstances that make it possible to step into their realities. Subsequently, findings call for reinforcement of the positive aspects with a recommendation for universities to change and improve on the negative experiences in order to contribute to an empowering campus climate for all.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Participation Information Sheet

Psychology
School of Human & Community Development
University of the Witwatersrand
Private Bag 3, Wits, 2050
Tel: 011 717 4503 Fax: 011 717 4559

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is Jane Ivy Mugambi and I am currently doing my Masters in Community based Counselling Psychology degree at the University of the Witwatersrand. As part of this degree, I am required to conduct a research study and submit a corresponding research report. As such, I am conducting a study with the aim of exploring the daily lived experiences of international students at the University of the Witwatersrand.

I would like to invite you to participate in this study. Participation in the study will entail being individually interviewed by me, for between a time period of 45 and 60minutes. Your participation is entirely voluntary and the interview will be conducted at a time and place of your choosing. With your permission, the interview will also be recorded for the purpose of ensuring accuracy.

Recordings will be stored in a locked cupboard at the university, and will be accessed only by my supervisor and myself. Along with the transcripts, the recordings will be destroyed approximately 5 years after completion of the study.

You will in no way be advantaged or disadvantaged by choosing whether or not to participate in the study. Confidentiality will be maintained, with the exclusion of the researcher and participant acquaintance, by assigning a pseudonym to your responses. No information that could potentially identify you will be included in the research report. You have the right to refrain from

answering any questions, and you may also choose to withdraw your participation from the study at any moment without penalty.
If after completion of the interview you experience emotional discomfort, you may contact Lifeline (0861 322 322) or the Counselling and Careers Development Unit (CCDU) at the University of the Witwatersrand for counselling. Their contact is: (011) 717-9140.

Kind Regards,

Jane Ivy Mugambi
079 7588483
Ivy.mugambi@emdysolutions.com

Dr. Nkululeko Nkomo
Supervisor- (011) 717-4542
nkululeko.nkomo@wits.ac.za

Appendix B: Interview Informed Consent Form

Psychology
School of Human & Community Development
University of the Witwatersrand
Private Bag 3, Wits, 2050
Tel: 011 717 4503 Fax: 011 717 4559

I, _____, have read the information provided through the participation information sheet about this study and corroborate that I understand what is expected of me as a volunteer participant. I agree to participate in the study and am aware of the following:

- I have the right not to answer any questions that I do not feel comfortable answering.
- I acknowledge that, at any time of the study, I have the right to withdraw my participation or any information that I disclose during the interview without any penalties.
- I understand that my identity will be kept confidential, my own words may be used, but in no way will it be linked back to me.
- I consent for my experiences to be included in the research report which will be presented at varying academic levels, such as the research report and possible conference proceedings.

I hereby consent to participate in the study and give my permission to be interviewed.

Signature _____ Date _____

Contact Details _____

Appendix C: Recording Consent Form

Psychology
School of Human & Community Development
University of the Witwatersrand
Private Bag 3, Wits, 2050
Tel: 011 717 4503 Fax: 011 717 4559

I, _____, have read the information concerning this study and confirm that I understand what is expected of me as a volunteer participant. I understand that all necessary measures will be taken to ensure restricted access to my interview materials (audio-recording and transcript). The researcher, Jane Ivy Mugambi and her supervisor Dr Nkululeko Nkomo are the only individuals with access to interview materials. I confirm that I am in no way forced to consent to being recorded and understand that the recordings will be destroyed 5 years post completion of the study.

Permission granted to record (Please circle your answer)

YES/NO

Signature _____ Date _____

Appendix D: Questionnaire Schedule

Psychology
School of Human & Community Development
University of the Witwatersrand
Private Bag 3, Wits, 2050
Tel: 011 717 4503 Fax: 011 717 4559

QUESTIONNAIRE SCHEDULE

Participant Demographics:

Name:

Age:

Country of origin:

Interview Date: Start time: Finish Time:

1. Greetings: please share your name and what you are currently studying?
2. What made you decide to come to South Africa to further your studies?
3. Did you have expectations about South Africa before you come?
4. How long have you been in South Africa and how have you experienced being a student academically and socially?
5. What are some of the things that have been positive and have helped you adjust as an international student?
6. What are some of the challenges you have experienced in settling in and daily?
7. Are there any suggestions/tips/advice to international students looking to come to South Africa that would help them manage their stay?

Thank you for answering my questions. Is there anything else you would like to add about your lived experiences as an international student?

Appendix E: Research clearance certificate protocol

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (SCHOOL OF HUMAN & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	**PROTOCOL NUMBER: MACC/17/006 IH**
PROJECT TITLE:	Exploring daily lived experiences of African international students
INVESTIGATORS	Mugambi Jane
DEPARTMENT	Psychology
DATE CONSIDERED	06/06/17
DECISION OF COMMITTEE*	Approved

This ethical clearance is valid for 2 years and may be renewed upon application

DATE: 06 June 2017

CHAIRPERSON
(Dr Hugo Canham)

cc Supervisor: Mr Nkululeko Nkomo
Psychology

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR (S)

To be completed in duplicate and **one copy** returned to the Secretary, Room 100015, 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 be contemplated from the research procedure, as approved, I/we undertake to submit a revised protocol to the Committee.

This ethical clearance will expire on 31 December 2019

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES

1058654:Research_Report_2019_PDF.pdf

ORIGINALITY REPORT

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