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International students from Africa : the impact that living in South Africa has on one's sense of identity.

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Chapter One

1. Introduction

International students can be found in most countries' higher learning institutions around the world, and are a vital part of any internationally recognized institution (Paige, 1990, in Sam, 2001; Ramphele, 1999). The number of international students studying at higher learning institutions worldwide has been growing steadily over the last couple of decades with over two million international students studying annually in 2003 (International Education Association of South Africa (IEASA), 2009). In South Africa, there were over 13000 international students enrolled in South African universities in 1996, and in 2007, that figure rose sharply to over 53000 (Ramphele, 1999; IEASA, 2009). In South Africa, about two thirds of international students come from other African countries (Ayliff & Wang, 2006). It must be noted however, that approximately one third of those international students enrolled at South African universities in 2005 were enrolled through the University of South Africa in distance education courses by correspondence (Department of Education, 2005, in IEASA, 2009). For the purpose of this paper so that it corresponds with the general literature on international students, an international student is defined as a student who is studying and living in a country other than his or her country of origin.

Because most international students intend to return to their country of origin once they have completed their studies, their temporary stay in the new environment has been termed as a "sojourn" (Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001). The duration an international student spends in a foreign country can vary greatly, depending on the level and purpose of study. However, a period of between six months and five years is most common, making international students' stay abroad usually "more committed than tourists...but less involved than immigrants and resettled refugees" (Ward et al., 2001, p. 142). So for this study, only international students who were intending to study abroad for more than six months were considered for research purposes.

It should be mentioned that the term "international student" has also been referred to as "foreign student" in the literature, but the term "international student" has been favoured (Klineberg, 1981, in Ward et al., 2001). In South Africa, both terms have

been used. The former, mainly by universities, and the latter, by the Department of Home Affairs, which is problematic in light of the negative attitude that “foreigness” holds in South Africa (Ramphele, 1999). The Department of Home Affairs defines a “foreign” student as anyone “who is not a South African citizen, not a permanent resident or does not have diplomatic exemption” (Ramphele, 1999, p. 1). As Ramphele (1999) points out, the reference to “foreigness” can be a cause of tension between a section of black South African students and black students from other African countries especially regarding the recent xenophobic attacks of May, 2008.

There are many reasons why students study abroad, from wanting to get a better education than they can acquire in their own country, to experiencing a different culture from one’s own (Ward et al., 2001). There are also many reasons why a country or an institute encourages international students to come to their country or institute to study, including academic, cultural, financial and political benefits not only to the institute but to the country as well (Ramphele, 1999; Ward et al., 2001). In South Africa, there have been debates and conflicts surrounding the issue of either encouraging or discouraging international students from coming to study and live in South Africa (Ramphele, 1999). Those that oppose international students from coming to South Africa argue that there is a need to provide deprived South African citizens with access to resources and subsidies before international students, because the competition over scarce resources warrants South African citizens to be looked after first. Proponents who are in favour of encouraging international students coming to South Africa argue that there is an “obligation to neighbouring countries and their international duty” (Ramphele, 1999, p. 1). Furthermore, these countries sponsored black South African students in their countries during apartheid, therefore South Africa is indebted to these countries for their contributions to the fall of apartheid (Ramphele, 1999). Ramphele concludes that it is imperative for South Africa to continue to enrol international students at its higher learning institutions but that the policies “regulating the admission of international students at South African institutions must conform to policies governing international students in other parts of the world” (Ramphele, 1999, p. 20).

1.1. Rationale

Moving to a foreign country can be exciting and filled with opportunities to learn about oneself and others, but it can also be challenging and traumatic in dealing with an unfamiliar environment and a different cultural mentality (Ward et al., 2001). Much has been written on the psychosocial and psychological effects that moving to a foreign country has on a person, from immigration to tourism (Akhtar, 1999; Church, 1982; Volkan, 1999; Ward et al., 2001) including the effects it has on international students from alienation, adjustment and acculturation to the host country, to difficulties with academic performance and mental and physical health (Church, 1982; Kaczmarek, Matlock, Merta, Ames & Ross, 1994; Klomegah, 2006; Sam, 2000; Ward et al., 2001). Psychoanalytic theories of identity formation have been applied to understanding the effects that immigration in general has on the immigrant, such as loss and mourning, ego disintegration, and identity crises, but it has not been specifically applied to understanding the effects that living abroad has on international students, particularly the effects upon their identity (Akhtar, 1999; Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989; Volkan. 1999; Walsh & Shulman, 2007). Therefore this research will seek to fill that gap. Erikson's theory of identity development is pertinent to this study because it provides a summary and a means of organising the various psychodynamic perspectives into an integrated theory of identity.

International students are an integral part of many higher learning institutions and research has found that they encounter more problems than host or local students (Ward, et al., 2001). Whilst there has been much research on international students worldwide, there is a paucity of research on international students in South Africa. After many years of apartheid and a "closed door" policy on immigration, a new government came into power in 1994 which adopted a policy to allow for immigration into the country (Harris, 2002). As has been mentioned, migration can be traumatic and stressful, as well as having an impact on both physical and psychological health. In South Africa, this may be further confounded by the atmosphere of xenophobia. The xenophobic attacks that started in 1994 and raged fiercely in May of 2008 saw predominantly black African immigrants being targeted, regardless of whether they were legal or illegal immigrants (Lippert & Mpanza, 2008; Mattes et al., 1999, in Harris, 2001). This atmosphere of xenophobia in South Africa may then impact

especially on international students from other African countries studying in South Africa, as they may fear that they will become targets of discrimination and prejudice. Thus, the aim of this research was to try to understand the self-reported impact that living in South Africa has on international students' sense of identity, which was analysed primarily from the perspective of Erikson's theory of identity development.

1.2. Research question

What self-reported impact does living in South Africa have on international students' (from Africa) sense of identity?

Chapter Two

2. Literature review

2.1. Problems experienced by international students

Research on international students at universities in the U.S.A. suggests that international students experience a more difficult adjustment to campus life than do host students (Klineberg & Hull, 1979, in Klomegah, 2006). Amongst the problems they encounter are loneliness, hostility, alienation, fear and difficulties in academic performance (Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Lu, 1990, in Ward et al., 2001; Sam, 2000). International students also tend to suffer from more physical complaints than host students, which Ward (1967) (as cited in Ward et al., 2001) saw as a case of "foreign-student syndrome" which suggests that international students tend to somatise their problems. But international students have also found to suffer from psychological problems, such as depression, low self-esteem and anxiety (Berry et al., 1987, in Ward et al., 2001). In a study of 30 years of research on the difficulties that international student encounter at universities in the U.S.A., Church (1982) found that language barriers, financial problems, homesickness and educational and social adjustment were the main areas of difficulty that international students encountered (Church, 1982, in Kaczmarek et al., 1994). Singh (1963) (as cited in Furnham & Bochner, 1986) interviewed 300 international Indian students in Britain and found that international students suffered from emotional problems (such as loneliness), academic problems (mainly due to language difficulties), and problems of adjustment (mainly social adjustment). However, Singh noted that it is important to be aware that there were many differences within the group of international students and that there were many variables that affect their experiences, such as, age, personality traits, duration of stay in the country, level of study and the university itself (Singh, 1963, as cited in Furnham & Bochner, 1986).

It has been found though that in general, older students and graduate students tend to adjust less well to the new culture than do younger students and undergraduate students (Klomegah, 2006). Based on this finding, this research focused only on postgraduate international students. In addition to this, most of the previous research has been quantitative in nature, looking at the overall problems that international students encounter. This study however, tried to understand in greater depth the

experiences of a few international students and partly to begin to access “intrapsychic” aspects of subjective experience, and was thus qualitative in design.

Furnham and Bochner (1986) suggested that international students tend to face four types of problems, two of which can be experienced by all students, and two of which are exclusive to international students. Firstly, all students, from late adolescents to young adults, can face difficulties related to identity and personal development and the stressors of moving to a new environment. Secondly, all students can face academic challenges and stresses. Thirdly, international students tend to face the exclusive problems that are associated with moving to a new country such as “insufficient linguistic and cultural skills, prejudice, discrimination, homesickness and loneliness” (Ward et al., 2001, p. 153). Lastly, exclusive to international students, is the ethnic or national role that they present in social interactions. In a recent review of empirical literature, Ward et al (2001) found broad support for Furnham and Bochner’s categorization. However, similar to Singh’s findings, there were many variables that influenced the level of each category, for example, linguistic and cultural differences between the country of origin and the host country (Ward et al., 2001). What follows is a closer look at some of the psychosocial factors that can contribute to the problems that international students encounter.

2.2. Psychosocial factors

There are many factors that can be seen to contribute to the problems that international students encounter, such as social support, cultural differences, social relations, language and social norms.

2.2.1. Social support

Because international students may be alone in the new environment, establishing social relations and social support are seen to play a key role in their psychological adjustment to the new culture (Ward et al., 2001). For example, a study on Greek students in the U.K. found that high levels of culture shock were related to low levels of social support (Pantelidou & Craig, 2006). There has been debate as to what type of support is more important, whether it’s the source, the quality or the quantity of the

social support (Furnham & Li, 1993; Searle & Ward, 1990, in Ward et al., 2001). Social support can come from fellow compatriots (which may allow for the common understanding of cultural values), from other international students, or from host national or local students (Ward et al., 2001). Bochner (1982) (as cited in Ward et al., 2001) suggests that the optimal form of social support in order to acculturate and to learn and acquire the social norms of the new environment whilst still maintaining the culture of origin, is to have frequent contact with students in all three categories.

Having host national support is especially encouraged as this can help with learning social skills and norms. However, because the international students' stay in the host country is temporary, they may not invest their time and energy towards acculturating and this may also influence the quality of the contact and relationships between them and the host nationals (Furnham & Bochner, 1986). Whilst it can be difficult from the onset for international students to build social relations and social support, the atmosphere of xenophobia in South Africa can alienate foreigners and international students even further from South African society and dissuade them from staying in South Africa (Harris, 2002). This has led to the creation of discrete networks of non-nationals of a common country of origin, such as "Nigerians" and "Zimbabweans" to "act as safe havens and comfort zones for migrants" (Harris, 2002, p. 181).

2.2.2. Cultural differences

It has been found that international students that come from countries that are similar to the host country, experience less alienation than those that come from countries which are dissimilar i.e. the greater the cultural and social distance between the countries, the greater the social difficulty (England, 1982, in Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Ward & Kennedy, 1999, in Ward et al., 2001). This, together with other factors such as whether the country is homogenous or heterogeneous, individualistic or collectivistic, race, ethnicity, religion and language, can impact on the nature of contact the international students have with the host society (Babiker, Cox & Miller, 1990, in Ward et al., 2001). Today, partly due to globalisation and migration, most countries have largely multicultural and diverse societies such as the U.S.A. but some countries like Japan are more ethnically distinct (Ward et al., 2001), so one

could expect great differences in levels of acculturating depending on the specific country. Furnham and Bochner (1986) hypothesize that an international student in a culturally diverse country would not stick out as much, but in the case of South Africa which is culturally diverse, the threat of xenophobia may counteract their hypothesis.

2.2.3. Social relations

Related to social support is the social relations between the international students and the host nationals. There are many psychosocial theories relating to these relations. Firstly, in-groups and out-groups may be formed based on stereotypes and characteristics such as race, religion and language, which can affect the interaction between the groups and lead to discrimination (Duckitt, 1992). The interaction between groups also depends on the circumstances and the nature of the contact between the groups (Duckitt, 1992). For example, in the work environment in South Africa, there have been conflicts over competition for scarce resources, whereas in the university, there have been notices and pamphlets condemning the xenophobic attacks. Thus, international students may feel safer in the university environment than outside of it. Unsurprisingly, research has shown that the rejection of international students by host students greatly impedes acculturation (Ward et al., 2001). An important contributing factor to this is the country's institutional structures such as its immigration policy, legislations and attitudes to discrimination, in that they either support or hinder inter-group relations (Bochner, in Ward et al., 2001).

In South Africa, international students may come from many countries, but only those students that come from neighbouring countries (that share a common border with South Africa, namely, Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe) and Southern African Development Community (SADC) member states (Angola, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Malawi, Mauritius, Seychelles, Tanzania) may receive education subsidies from the South African government (Ramphele, 1999). This policy has aggrieved many international students in that they feel the policy of Home Affairs is trying to discourage them from coming to South Africa (Ramphele, 1999). Thus, the Department of Home Affairs is seen to stand in contradiction to the higher learning institutions' efforts to rid their campuses from all forms of discrimination (Ramphele, 1999). For research purposes,

participants from SADC member states as well as from non-SADC member states were included.

2.2.4. Language and social norms

Communication barriers in the form of language and social norms can hamper international students' ability to acculturate and poses a great barrier to academic success, which is usually one of the key objectives of the international students (Kim, 1995, in Ward et al., 2001). Whilst language barriers are self explanatory, social norms refers to the different socially acceptable ways in which people interact, from non-verbal language such as gestures, body language, and facial expressions, to the way people express emotions, and address one another (Earley & Randel, 1997, in Ward et al., 2001). Thus, anxiety, misunderstanding and friction can arise due communication problems and a lack of knowledge of the social and behavioural skills of the new environment (Ward et al., 2001).

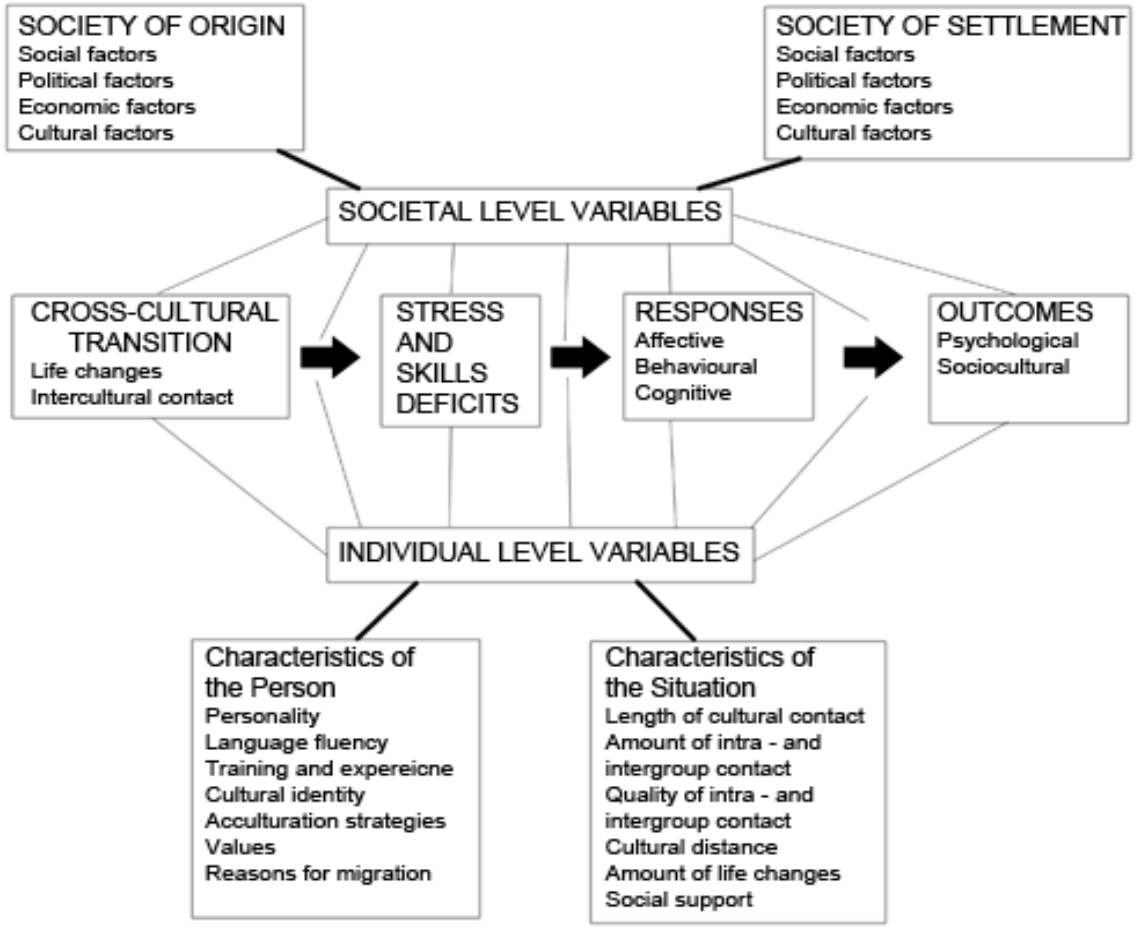
In summary, international students in South Africa are likely to experience a wide variety of problems and stressors, all of which are likely to impact upon wellbeing in general and psychological wellbeing in particular. As a result, a number of explanatory models have been put forward to make sense of this.

2.3. Models of understanding the effects of migration

Many terms and models have been used in the literature to try to understand the psychological impact that migration has on one. A term that has been extensively used is "culture shock" which was initially coined by Oberg (1960) (as cited in Ward et al., 2001) to imply that the experience of a new and unfamiliar cultural environment causes one to experience a negative or unpleasant surprise or shock, resulting in confusion, disorientation and anxiety. The term however, has been redefined and reworked by many researchers. For example, in contrast to Oberg, Ward et al (2001) see one's reaction to culture shock as being more active than passive in the way one deals with change. Oberg listed several aspects of culture shock. The strain in trying to adapt to the new culture, a sense of loss of friends and status, being rejected by the host nationals or rejecting them, confusion in role expectations and identity, anxiety over cultural differences, and feelings of impotence

in not being able to cope in the new environment. In response to this, Oberg identified four stages of emotional reactions to culture shock. The first stage is the honeymoon stage whereby one is fascinated and excited by the new environment. The second stage is crisis, in that there are many differences in the new culture such as language and values which causes anxiety and frustration. The third stage is recovery, whereby the crisis is resolved through learning the language and about the culture. And the last stage is adjustment where one begins to partake in the new culture (Oberg, 1960, in Ward et al., 2001). Other researchers have made modifications to Oberg's definition and model of culture shock (Adler, 1975; David, 1971; Torbiorn, 1982, in Ward et al., 2001). Church (1982) found many of these models to be problematic as they do not apply uniformly to everyone's experience in the new cultural environment as there are many variables that influence the impact on the person, such as intrapsychic, interpersonal and social factors.

Other terms that have been used widely to describe how one deals with the new environment are "adjustment" and "adaptation", but the term "acculturation" seems to be preferred as it implies changes in "attitudes, values, and behaviours...(and) cultural identity" (Ward et al., 2001, p. 99). Ward et al (2001) presented a model of the acculturation process based on the work of other researchers. This model forms a framework that combines theory and research on the "affective, behavioural and cognitive components of cross-cultural transition and intercultural interactions" (Ward et al., p. 43).



The acculturation process (Ward et al., 2001, p. 44)

Theories of migration have been developed with regards to social relations between the immigrant and the host nationals. Bochner (1979, 1982) (as cited in Furnham & Bochner, 1986) has identified four categories of inter-group contact, namely: genocide, assimilation, segregation and integration. Genocide is when there is an attempt to eradicate the group. Assimilation is when the group adopts or is forced to adopt all factors pertaining to the dominant culture. Segregation supports separate development of the groups, and integration refers to the “accommodation that comes about when different groups maintain their respective core cultural identities, while at the same time merging into a superordinate group in other, equally important respects” (Furnham & Bochner, 1986, p. 28). This takes place at the group level.

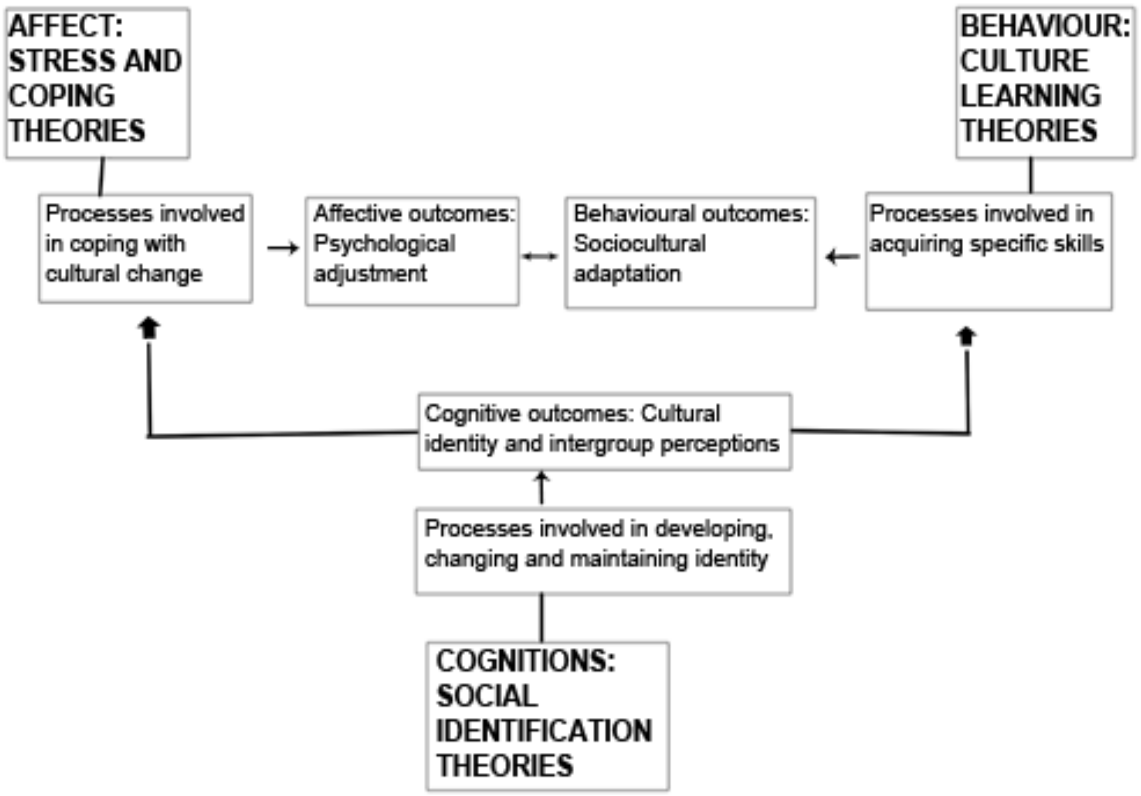
At the individual level, four responses have been described as to how one responds to intercultural contact which is dependent on one’s identity in resisting or embracing a multicultural identity (Bochner, 1982, in Ward et al., 2001). “Passing” is used to

describe the effect whereby one rejects one's own culture and adopt the new culture. "Chauvinist" refers to one's rejection of the new culture and becoming almost nationalistic or chauvinistic regarding one's own culture. The "marginal" response occurs when one constantly moves between the two cultures, feeling comfortable in neither of them. And the "mediating" response is similar to integrating, whereby one incorporates their various cultural identities, hence acquiring a multicultural identity (Ward et al., 2001).

Another theory that is important to understanding how one acculturates, is social identity theory, as it takes into account the impact that inter-group contacts has on one's self concept or identity, and one's awareness of group membership (Erez & Earley, 1993, in Ward et al., 2001; Tajfel, 1978, in Foster, 2006; Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994). The theory is shaped by cognitive influences and is "largely concerned with internal mental processes rather than external observable behaviour" (Ward et al., 2001, p. 98). Social identity theory argues that one's self is made up of a personal identity as well as a social identity (Foster, 2006). The personal identity consists of aspects that are unique to the individual, whereas the social identity consists of aspects of the self as a member of a group. The individual also tends to perceive other members of one's group to be similar and assigns positive attributes to them. Members of another group are perceived to be more different and are assigned negative attributions (Foster, 2006). This social comparison of groups is important for the individual's self-image and self-esteem, and so one will therefore try to maximise one's in-group's position in society in any way possible, at the expense of the out-groups, even to the extent that it results in "out-group hostility or prejudice" (Duckitt, 1992, p. 90). The social identity theory suggests that a transformation in identity occurs from personal identity to social identity when in a group (Foster, 1991). If a "social identity is supported by a network of social relationships, then one would anticipate that a change in context, for example, a change in physical location or a change in the social environment, would have some impact on identity" (Ethier & Deux, 1994, p. 244). Several researchers have used social identity theory as a conceptual framework for exploring identity and inter-group relations in immigrants especially relating to issues of perceived discrimination (Moghaddam, 1998; Phinney, 1990, in Ward et al., 2001).

2.4. Coping strategies and interventions

There are many different strategies and interventions to help international students acculturate, from counselling, social support, cultural sensitisation, stress relief and coping techniques, to culture-based social-skills training (Sandhu, 1995; Ward et al., 2001). Ward et al (2001) propose the “ABC model of culture shock” which incorporates the affective, behaviour and cognitive models needed to acculturate. The “affect” component comprises of stress and coping theories which focuses on the affective and emotional impact that cross cultural contact has on one’s psychological well-being. The “behaviour” component comprises of culture learning theories which focuses on the behavioural changes, such as learning social skills, that one must make in order to acculturate. The “cognitive” component comprises of social identification theories that have been discussed earlier (Ward et al., 2001). This “ABC model of culture shock” proposes that one has to actively respond and deal with the problems that arise due to migration in constructive ways, as opposed to being passive victims who need help from the outside (Ward et al., 2001).



The ABC model of culture shock (Ward et al., 2001, p. 274)

Up to this point, mainly the interpersonal factors affecting migration have been looked at. But an important component of this model is the affective component which looks at the intrapsychic effects. What follows are some of the psychoanalytic models that have been applied to migration.

2.5. Psychoanalytic models applied to migration

> A new identity will reflect the final consolidation into a remodelled ego identity of those selective identifications with the new culture which were harmoniously integrated or fitted in with the past cultural heritage. What actually ensues from the crisis of culture shock, if adequately solved is a fecund growth of the self. What began as a threat to identity, mourning, and low self-esteem ends in a confirmation of both ego identity and self-esteem. (Garza-Guerrero, 1974, p. 425)

There is vast psychoanalytic literature examining the intrapsychic impact that immigration has on the immigrant (Akhtar, 1999; Garza-Guerrero, 1974; Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989; Volkan, 1999; Walsh & Shulman, 2007). There are similarities as well as differences between immigration (permanent resettlement) and migration (temporary resettlement) and the effect that it has on one. One of the main differences is that whereas people that move abroad temporarily will inevitably return to their own country, immigrants usually intend to settle permanently in the new environment (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989). Thus, immigrants may experience a more intense loss for what they have left behind whilst the sojourner knows that their separation is temporary, and that the thought of returning home can help them deal with the difficulties they encounter in the new environment (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989). Akhtar (1999) says that there is no real difference between immigration, migration and exile, because “all migration is inherently traumatic” (Akhtar, 1999, p. 124). The only difference is in the intensity of it (Akhtar, 1999). However, whilst migration can cause one psychological problems, it can also give one the opportunity for psychic growth (Akhtar, 1995; Meaders, 1997). Grinberg and Grinberg (1989) compiled a comprehensive work on the psychoanalytic study of the effect of migration which will be summarised as it forms the heart of the psychoanalytic approach to immigration.

Grinberg and Grinberg (1989) based their analysis of migration (the authors have used the term interchangeably with immigration) on the works of several psychoanalytic theorists, including, Freud, Bion, Klein and Winnicott, and begin by saying that migration has a traumatic phase. Freud (1920) sees trauma as an "excess of external stimuli which overcome the protective barrier against overstimulation, leading to long-lasting disturbances in ego functioning" (Freud, 1920, in Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989, p. 11). What Grinberg and Grinberg propose is that a trauma need not be a singular event but several events spanning a length of time, as is in the case of migration, where the effects of trauma are cumulative, deep, and long lasting. Strictly speaking, though, migration itself would not be categorised diagnostically as a traumatic event (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). What perhaps is suggested is that the stressors of migration may be prolonged and serious enough to present a similar crisis to the ego that a trauma does. A migrant's feelings of helplessness and loss are thus modelled on an infantile position of loss of the protective mother and of containment. In severe cases, this can result in a threat of ego disintegration (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989).

Initially, the immigrant (the authors have used this word interchangeably with migrant) also tends to be mentally preoccupied with the people and places that have been left behind, rather than being mentally preoccupied with the new environment. What the immigrant needs is something akin to Winnicott's notion of "potential space", which is the ""space between two" – between the ego and the nonego, the "inside" group (the group of origin) and the "outside" (receptor) group, between past and future" (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989, p. 14). If the immigrant does not have this potential space, he or she may fail to develop an effective cultural awareness (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989). This potential space gives one a sense of continuity between the self and the external world, and in the case of the immigrant, acts as a "transitional place and transitional period between mother country / object and the new outside world" (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989, p. 14). This is analogous to the prolonged absence of a child's mother which then prevents the child from being able to symbolize. One's ego strength (which is one's capacity to overcome anxieties and develop more adaptive defences), is dependent on one's capacity to symbolize (Erikson, 1994). Lemma (2006) quotes Hobson's summary of the need to symbolize:

> ... symbolising enables us to think of absent realities but also to conjure up imagined worlds; symbolising allows us to fix objects and events as experienced, and then to think about them; symbolising gives us mental space in which we can move to take up one and then another attitude to things. (Hobson, 2002, in Lemma, 2006, p. 156)

This means that one will not be able to mentally represent the mother and will not be able to tolerate the frustration of her absence and thus not be able to separate from her. Just as a child needs a transitional object to symbolize the mother's absence, most immigrants also need something to symbolize the absence of family, friends, country, and culture, and so takes with them many objects from home that have great emotional meaning and have "great significance for one's sense of identity" (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989, p. 80). In this case, the symbolic "objects" that immigrants bring with them to the new environment include not only physical mementos, but their language as well as patterns of behaviour, thought and emotional expression.

Volkan (1999) uses a similar concept to Winnicott's transitional object for the way in which the immigrant deals with the loss of what has been left behind in the country of origin. Volkan terms it "linking object" and "linking phenomenon" which are tools that help one through the mourning process and to adapt to the loss involved as a result of migration. Volkan identifies three outcomes of the mourning process: Firstly, one can work healthily through the mourning process if one selectively identifies with the "mental representation of what was lost" (Volkan, 1999, p. 174). A second outcome is that problems can occur if one identifies too strongly with the mental representation of the lost object. And thirdly, when the person "internalises the mental representation of what was lost and turns it into an "introject"" (Volkan, 1999, p. 174). When the introject is externalised to an object, this object then becomes a linking object. Thus any object that reminds one of what was lost can become a linking object. "Nostalgia is the affect attached to linking objects" (Volkan, 1999, p. 176). These linking objects can serve as pathological or adaptive means of dealing with the loss. Similarly, immigrants create linking objects in order to deal with loss and the nature of these linking objects or their nostalgia, can determine how the immigrant will adjust to the new environment. When the immigrant becomes

pathologically preoccupied with the linking object, they do not have enough energy to invest in living in the present. In this situation, nostalgia can be dangerous as it can prevent the immigrant from working through the mourning process. When the immigrant uses the linking object creatively, the person is able to incorporate what is lost in their home environment with what can be gained from the new environment, and can adapt to the new environment (Volkan, 1999).

One's social integration is most noticeably affected by immigration as one's social role changes. This can result in a feeling of "not belonging to any group of people that confirms one's existence" (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989, p. 134).

> It is only by having a good relation to internal objects, by accepting one's losses, and by working through the mourning process that a person can integrate the two countries, two time periods, and two social groups in a discriminating way. In so doing the person reorganizes and consolidates his sense of identity as someone who remains himself despite changes and restructuring. (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989, p. 134)

Since immigration causes one to experience a state of disorganisation, one needs the capacity to reorganise, which not everyone is able to achieve. Anxiety usually accompanies this state of disorganisation and the immigrant may experience a feeling of regression in that they feel helpless and unable to act effectively. In this situation, the immigrant may have an intense need for someone in the new environment to take on the "maternal and containment functions that will enable him to reorganise and survive" (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989, p. 76). The immigrant needs someone to soothe the anxieties and fears that one has towards the new and unfamiliar environment, which is analogous to a child who is left alone and searches for his mother and the security and familiarity that she brings. In other words, someone to act as a container or to provide a holding environment. Thus, in line with object relations theory, the person that the immigrant seeks out represents an internal mother. Similarly, if the immigrant does not find a person to fulfil these needs, this can lead to feelings of rejection by the new environment. How the immigrant experiences the new environment is also dependent on one's internalised

objects, so one's past experiences will have an effect on one's current experiences (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989).

A further regression to even more basic levels of functioning may occur. For example, when the immigrant rejects the host country's cuisine and seeks out cuisine from him own country. In this sense, emotion is expressed towards food which symbolizes a link to the oral phase, and to the mother and the breast. This can also be seen as splitting, where the immigrant rejects the host country and idealises the home country, in the same way that the infant sees the bad breast and the good breast (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989).

The language barrier may also post a major problem for immigrants as language is fundamental for understanding someone and for being understood and supports one's identity. When an immigrant does not understand the host country's language, the immigrant may feel excluded and alienated, similar to a "child who does not understand the secret language of his parents" (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989, p. 110).

In order to adjust to the new environment, the initial anxieties an immigrant experiences appears in stages of "persecutory, confusional, and depressive types" (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989, p. 87). "Persecutory anxieties" occur when the demands of the immigration become too intense to handle, such as problems with the language and feelings of loneliness. "Confusional or disorienting anxieties" arise from conflicts between the home environment and the host environment, especially when there are similarities between the two countries which causes confusion with one's memories. An Oedipal triangle can also be set up between the two countries as if "each symbolically represented one of the parents, in relation to whom ambivalence and conflicting loyalties reappear" (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989, p. 87). "Depressive anxieties" occur from experiences of loss and from fear of not being able to "recover all that has been left behind" (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989, p. 88). This can lead to a loss of one's sense of identity as well as becoming disoriented in space and time. This then poses the problem of finding one's place in the new environment and achieving the status one had in one's home environment. This causes anxiety and insecurity as one is unknown in the new environment. Thus, not only is there a loss of objects, i.e. the home country, friends, and family, but a loss of

part of the self or identity that is invested in those object losses. In cases of melancholia, this can lead to ego impoverishment. So working through the mourning process can take a long time and is a process in which the ego plays a vital role. “If one successfully works through the period of mourning for oneself and for objects, that encourages the progressive reestablishment of one’s sense of identity” (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989, p. 97).

Grinberg and Grinberg (1989) divided the migratory process into various stages but it does not necessarily follow a set sequence. The first stage comprises of feelings of pain for that that has been left behind or is lost. The person may be in a state of disorganization and oscillates between paranoid, disorienting and depressive anxieties. In stage two, the feelings that arise are of sadness and nostalgia for the loss but by working through the loss, one can start to incorporate elements from the new environment, making a closer connection between one’s inner and outer worlds. In the third stage, the immigrant’s past does not impede his living in the present. It is at this stage that the mourning period has been worked through, though this may never be altogether complete. However, the ego will be enriched and one might have a new sense of identity. The issue then of identity is a key factor when immigrating because the function of identity is to protect one’s ego in the face of one’s social world, and establishing an identity is a sophisticated process which events such as immigration can impede (Erikson, 1994). Therefore we need to look more closely at the psychoanalytic constructions of identity.

In line with object relations theory, “the establishment of a sense of identity depends most importantly on the internalization of object relations and their assimilation by the ego” (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989, p. 129). Thus, in order to have a stable sense of identity, one needs to have good internal objects. But immense changes in one’s life such as immigration can pose challenges to one’s sense of identity. Grinberg and Grinberg (1989) argue for three components that make up one’s sense of identity. Firstly, “spatial integration” which allows a person to differentiate oneself from others. Secondly, “temporal integration” which gives one a feeling of sameness even though one may act differently in different situations, and thirdly “social integration”, which concerns the relationship between one’s self and others. These three components operate simultaneously and interact with one another. Migration affects all three

components and depending on the individual, one or more components may be disturbed, which can lead to the immigrant feeling confused and in extreme cases, alienated from himself. As has been mentioned earlier, the objects that the immigrant brings from home serves to stabilize the identity, but they can also be dangerous in that they may prevent the immigrant from “incorporating the new and accepting the past as the past” (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989, p. 133).

Akhtar (1999) focused his psychoanalytic approach to immigration on the effect it has on identity, based mainly on Mahler’s work. An immigrant’s identity is challenged by the culture shock one experiences from the new and unfamiliar environment. This is compounded by the mourning and losses inherent in immigration (Garza-Guerrero, 1974, in Akhtar, 1995). This impact on the immigrant’s identity is reminiscent of the childhood separation-individuation phase and the individuation process of adolescence (Mahler et al., 1975, Blos, 1967, in Akhtar, 1995). “The third individuation” that Akhtar theorised, is formed through the “similarities between the two earlier individuations and the immigrant’s identity transformation” (Akhtar, 1995, p. 1052). Akhtar however emphasises that the identity process for the immigrant is more complex than the childhood and adolescent phase, since the immigrant is at a significantly later stage of development, whereby the psychic structures are better organized and more entrenched. This is actually detrimental to the adult immigrant, as change may be experienced as much more threatening (Akhtar, 1995). Thus, the term “third individuation” denotes “an adult life reorganization of identity, a potential reworking of earlier consolidations” (Akhtar, 1995, p. 1053). What Akhtar found was that what unfolds in the migratory process resembles Mahler’s separation-individuation which has the “developmental tasks of the rapprochement subphase and the beginning of self – and object constancy” (Mahler et al., 1975, in Akhtar, 1995, p. 1057). Together with this, Akhtar proposed four interlinking factors of identity change that immigration posits. These involve dimensions of “drives and affects, space, time and social affiliation” (Akhtar, 1995, p. 1057).

The first factor, Akhtar termed, “from love or hate to ambivalence”. The new environment that the immigrant encounters, challenges the ego’s stability and the immigrant becomes susceptible to splitting of the self and object representations (Kerbger, 1967, in Akhtar, 1995). For example, this may take the form of idealising

the country of origin and devaluing the host country. But Akhtar notes that these splits reverse and shift continuously. If the immigrant manages to synthesize these two representations of home country and host country (i.e. form whole objects), and tolerate the ambivalence he feels towards them, a consolidated sense of identity can develop.

“From near or far to optimal distance” is the second factor. This notion is based on the optimal distance required between the mother and child for the child to grow and to become an individual (Mahler et al., 1975, in Akhtar, 1995). Thus, the child needs space from the mother to explore the external world, but at the same time needs the availability of the mother as a security precaution. Similarly, the immigrant might enjoy the distance away from his home country, but when anxieties surface, the “immigrant’s ego loses the support it had drawn from the familiar environment, climate and landscape – all unconsciously perceived as extensions of the mother” (Krystal & Petty, 1963, in Akhtar, 1995, p. 1062). The immigrant may seek out fellow immigrants from his native country, or look at pictures from home or listen to music from home, which serve as transitional objects. Intrapsychically, the immigrant may have problems in consolidating an identity as he “fluctuates between extremes of distance from his native self-representation and his newly emerging self-representation as a resident of the adopted country” (Akhtar, 1995, p. 1063). What can alleviate this polarity of self representations of being too far or too close to either culture, is the holding environment of the host country. The emergence of a solid identity is dependent on a reformed self representation that encompasses the old and new self representation.

“From yesterday or tomorrow to today” deals with mourning of loss objects and self, deeper object relations, and a more realistic self-concept, which results in identity consolidation and a stronger ego. The immigrant has to deal with loss and separation which can result in an idealization of his past. By clinging to these memories, the immigrant fantasizes of a lost paradise, and so is unable to work through the mourning process. Focusing on the return to the homeland in the future, can displace the immigrant even further. Thus, in focusing on the past and the future, the immigrant is unable to live in the present, which can result in a fracture of the

ego. By deidealsing lost objects, though not rejecting them either, the immigrant will be able to live in the present.

The last factor is “from yours or mine to ours”. Here, Akhtar argues that the immigrant experiences a split in a sense of “mine” and “yours” and is unable to experiences a sense of “ours”. This has important implications for one’s identity, reminiscent of the resolution of the Oedipal complex which gives one the capacity for mutuality. In essence, the immigrant needs to connect to both the cultures which then form a part of him.

Language is important in establishing a sense of “ours” or “we-ness”. Living in two different linguistic worlds can compound the split in self-representations in immigrants. “Different self-representations might remain under the influence of different languages and express different conflicts and aspirations...(and) adopting a new language might at times represent the acquisition of a developed identity for the first time” (Akhtar, 1995, p. 1070-1071).

These various psychoanalytic perspectives offer a wide variety of understandings applicable to various aspects of the intrapsychic response to migration. However, for the purposes of this research and consistency in interpretative work, a central psychoanalytic framework was required within which to order these diverse analytic positions in a coherent psychosocial framework to make sense of the data. In this respect, the study draws upon the established theoretical paradigm of Erikson’s psychodynamic understanding of identity, its perception of centrality of ego-stability in the needs of the person, and the roots of identity in infantile psychic structures (Erikson, 1994).

2.6. Erikson

Erikson was an immigrant himself, immigrating to the U.S.A. from Germany in the 1930’s, and he acknowledged that the formation of his ideas about identity and identity crisis came about as a result of this (Welchman, 2000). As Erikson said, “it would seem almost self-evident how the concept of “identity” and “identity crisis” emerged from my personal, clinical, and anthropological observations... (these terms) seemed naturally grounded in the experience of emigration, immigration and

Americanization" (Erikson, 1975a, in Welchman, 2000, p. 26). Erikson's theory of identity development is central to this study because it provides a summary and a means of organising the various psychodynamic perspectives applied above into an integrated theory of identity.

2.6.1. Model of the life cycle

Erikson created a theory of psychological development and crisis, focusing on the ego's relations with the social world, that occurs during various periods throughout the life cycle (Sadock & Sadock, 2007). His theory is based on the epigenetic principle that "development occurs in sequential, clearly defined stages, and that each stage must be satisfactorily resolved for development to proceed smoothly" (Sadock & Sadock, 2007, p. 207). If not, this can result in maladjustment. Erikson's eight stages of the life cycle are as follows: Stage one is "trust versus mistrust" which occurs from birth to about eighteen months. Stage two, "autonomy versus shame" occurs from about eighteen months to about three years. Stage three is "initiative versus guilt" and occurs from about three years to about five years. Stage four, "industry versus inferiority" occurs from about five years to about thirteen years. Stage five is "identity versus role confusion", from about thirteen years to about twenty one years. Stage six, "intimacy versus isolation" is from about twenty one years to about forty years. Stage seven is "generativity versus stagnation" and occurs from about forty years to about sixty years. And stage eight, "integrity versus despair", from about sixty years to death (Erikson, 1994). Erikson saw crises as part of the developmental process of overcoming each stage of the life cycle. The term "crisis" here does not mean a "threat of catastrophe, but a turning point, a crucial point of increased vulnerability" (Erikson, 1968, p. 96). So basically a crisis can be a time of vulnerability and of strength, depending on how the individual works through it. For example, an "identity crisis" is a normal occurrence during stage five of adolescence and young adulthood, but it can be pathological if it occurs at other periods in the life cycle if one is unable to work through it (Erikson, 1968). And it is precisely this, that this research focuses on.

2.6.2. Theory of identity formation as a paradigm for understanding migration

Freud theorized that the ego regulates our contact with reality (Freud, 1920, in Erikson, 1994). Erikson saw identity as a psychosocial concept as it is unique and particular to oneself, but also delineates what group (social, religious, political, racial), one belongs to (Welchman, 2000). In other words, one's identity is essentially an aspect of the ego as well as being integrally related to the social environment (Erikson, 1994). Identity then is a sophisticated ego function that undergoes a process of "change and development through the life of an individual" (Welchman, 2000, p. 2). It supports the ego by reducing states of anxiety by enabling one to cope with reality. Therefore, when one's identity is under threat, one experiences anxiety and may have difficulty coping.

The ego starts to form from birth through introjecting one's primary care givers on whom one "depends for its integration on the satisfactory mutuality between the mothering adult(s) and the mothered child" (Erikson, 1968, p. 159). The nature of the child's identifications with these primary care givers is dependent on the quality of the interactions between them. Identity formation then begins "where the usefulness of identification ends" (Erikson, 1968, p. 159). So the experiences of early childhood and the nature of the interactions between the child and its primary caregivers sets the foundation for identity formation.

One's identity is continuously being reworked by one's experiences and encounters with the social environment and Erikson differentiates between a personal identity and an ego identity. A personal identity refers to one's actual existence and is based on the "perception of the selfsameness and continuity of one's existence in time and space and the perception of the fact that others recognize one's sameness and identity" (Erikson, 1968, p. 50). The ego identity concerns the quality of one's existence. It is the "awareness of the fact that there is a self-sameness and continuity to the ego's synthesizing methods, the style of one's individuality, and that this style coincides with the sameness and continuity of one's meaning for significant others in the immediate community" (Erikson, 1968, p. 50). Ego identity then means that one has incorporated all of one's past experiences and that one knows who one

is, and how one fits into society. Essentially, this means that one's identity solidifies in a secure, understandable, social environment and that "one's sense of identity is developed through one's connection to others" (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989, p. 130).

So, if one is in a safe and secure environment, the ego is protected, but when one's self-certainty encounters discontinuities of development (for example due to immigration where one finds oneself in a new and unfamiliar environment), this can impact on one's sense of identity (Erikson, 1994). This can lead to a crisis whereby one's psychic structure and identity is compromised (Erikson, 1968). Confusion and disorientation in a new environment can result in a loss of ego identity whereby the "sense of sameness and of continuity and the belief in one's social role are gone" (Erikson, 1994, p. 42). As a result of this ego loss, one could expect a regression to previous stages of development, for example regression to the stage of "trust versus mistrust" which might further hinder the person from acculturating as they now see the new and unfamiliar environment as threatening and distrustful. Another result of ego stability loss (due to the problems of the individual in society) could lead to one being exposed to childhood conflicts around primary anxiety and experience quite primitive emotions (Erikson, 1994). Primary or primitive anxiety refers to those "powerful anxieties that exceed simple conflict and threaten the self, such as the fear of death, of abandonment, and of disorganization" (McCarthy, 1985, p. 181). When this occurs, one's capacity to manage one's internal life is reduced, which results in the anxiety of being inadequate and not being able to cope. Identity confusion as well as role confusion can also occur if one is unable to form a sense of identity and belonging in the new environment, so issues of identity are not just restricted to stage five of the life cycle (Erikson, 1968). Thus, acculturation has similarities with the formation of identity in childhood and adolescence as one has to integrate several identifications into one's identity (Welchman, 2000). "The immigrant, like the child, develops identifications with individuals, with groups, with images from the new context and its history" (Welchman, 2000, p. 32-33).

The focus of this research was to look at international students who are older than twenty one who may have already worked through the stage of identity and role confusion but who may have had to return to this stage due to the "crisis" that may have resulted from living abroad. They may have had to rework through the stage of

identity and role confusion or may have regressed in the sense of having to re-master earlier stages in the life cycle. This forms the central justification for using Erikson's psychodynamic understanding of identity formation to explain the impact that living abroad has on one's sense of identity.

Chapter Three

3. Method

3.1. Research design

The research design was qualitative, using the interpretivist paradigm (Coyle, 2007). Qualitative research aims to understand a person's experiences in a specific context and how they manage the situation or circumstances (Elliott & Fischer, 1999; Willig, 2001). Semi-structured interviews were used and participants were asked open-ended questions which provided more in-depth details and information than a questionnaire could gather (Allan, 1991, Smith & Eatough, 2007). Having open-ended questions allowed for probing questions where more information and understanding of the responses was required (Kvale, 1996). This study was cross-sectional as opposed to longitudinal, in that the participants were interviewed only once and not at various different periods of time (Howell, 1997). A cross-sectional study was preferred because this study was interested in the impact that living abroad has on international students' sense of identity at any particular point rather than comparing their experiences over time.

3.2. Procedure

The researcher approached the Wits International Office (WIO) and met with the Deputy Director, informing him of the proposed research. The WIO agreed to allow the international students to participate in the research and then emailed them informing them about the research and inviting them to participate in the research. Those that were interested in participating, emailed the researcher. The researcher purposively selected seven respondents in order to represent both SADC member states as well as non-SADC member states. A self-developed semi-structured interview schedule was administered face-to-face. There were seven questions in total and responses were probed to elicit more detailed information where required. Participants were interviewed in a private office in the Emthonjeni Centre at a time that was convenient for them. Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes. The interviews were conducted by the researcher and informed consent was required by the participants to firstly participate as well as to have the interviews recorded onto a

digital audio recorder. Participants were asked to complete a short demographic questionnaire. No personal identifying information was gathered and participants' names were not made known in this research report as pseudonyms were used. Where necessary, in order to illustrate some of the points or arguments, some direct quotations were used. This means that the participants' words were reported directly but given that any identifying information was excluded or disguised, it will not be possible to link quotes to individuals. The recordings were then transcribed by the researcher and the transcribed material was analysed by a combination of thematic content analysis and interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) (which will be elaborated on under the "Analysis" section). Once the research report has been marked and passed, the recorded and transcribed material will be destroyed.

3.3. Participants

The University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) was conveniently sampled due to the researcher's access to international students (Howell, 1997; Flick, 2009). Postgraduate international students from Africa were purposively sampled in order to get a varied range of African countries, including SADC member states and non-SADC member states. Only those students who were intending to study at Wits for more than six months were considered as this period of time indicates a greater commitment to the host country than a shorter stay would. Whilst qualitative research tends to use relatively small samples and even single cases in samples that are purposively sampled, there was still a need to capture similar and different experiences across the participant grouping (Allan, 1991; Flick, 2009). Thematic content analysis justifies the use of a small sample and there is also consensus that when using IPA in research in clinical psychology postgraduate programmes, a sample of six to eight participants is sufficient for analysis (Turpin et al., 1997, in Smith & Eatough, 2007). Seven post graduate international students were interviewed to get in depth, rich and saturated data which produced sufficient data for this study. Three of the participants were males, four were females and the countries they came from were Zimbabwe, Namibia, Uganda, The Democratic Republic of Congo, and Nigeria. Some of the participants had also lived in other African countries as well, other than their home country.

3.4. Data collection tool

In order to attempt to understand the world from the participants' point of view, and to make meaning of these experiences, interviews were used (Kvale, 1996). By using interviews, this allowed participants to describe what was meaningful to them, using their own words and not having to be restricted to fixed categories. A self-developed semi-structured interview schedule was drawn up to try to understand the impact that living abroad has on international students' sense of identity. The questions were open-ended which allowed for probing questions where more information and understanding of the responses was required, and to pursue the participant's concerns (Kvale, 1996; Smith & Eatough, 2007). Participants were also asked to complete a short demographic questionnaire. Interpretations were made due to the relationship between the researcher and the participants whereby the participants tried to make sense of their worlds and the researcher tried to make sense of how the participants made sense of their worlds (Larkin, Watts & Clifton, 2006; Smith & Eatough, 2007). The researcher was thus an integral part in the research. The researcher is the most important instrument in qualitative research and an important aspect of this method is the self reflection of the role of the researcher in producing the data and results (Elliott & Fischer, 1999; Lincoln & Guba,1985).

3.5. Analysis

The interviews were recorded onto a digital audio recorder and then the data was transcribed verbatim. Transcription was a necessary step in order to interpret the data because it provided a guide to the data (Flick, 2009; Gibson & Brown, 2009). A two-pronged approach was used to analyse the data in order to get an analysis from the level of description as well as from the level of interpretation, which led to the results and discussion having two layers to it. This combination of qualitative methods was used in order to get a richer analysis of the data.

Firstly, thematic content analysis was used which is a method for "identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). A theme provides "a way of linking diverse experiences or ideas together, and of juxtaposing and interrelating different examples and features of data" (Gibson &

Brown, 2009, p. 129). This more data-driven inductive approach allowed for themes to emerge from the data that were more faithful to the participants' report of their experiences in their own words (Boyatzis, 1998). Secondly, interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was used as it aims to explore in detail "individual personal and lived experiences and to examine how participants are making sense of their personal and social world.....(and) the meanings that particular experiences, events and states hold for the participants" (Smith & Eatough, 2007, p. 35-36).

IPA (whose one theoretical origin is phenomenology) tries to understand one's lived experiences and how one makes sense of them (Smith & Eatough, 2007). In other words, it tries to explore one's interpretations and meaning-making of one's experiences rather than to give an objective account of it (Smith & Eatough, 2007). IPA seeks to "understand and 'give voice' to the concerns of participants; and... to contextualize and 'make sense' of these claims and concerns from a psychological perspective" (Larkin et al., 2006, p. 102). This method is especially suited for psychological research where there is a need to "discern how people perceive and understand significant events in their lives" (Smith & Eatough, 2007, p. 36). "Often these issues are transformative and often they are about identity because individual accounts of significant experiences or events almost always impact on personal and social identity" (Smith & Eatough, 2007, p. 38). But access to one's internal world cannot be done directly, so IPA is dependent on the researcher's own insights and interpretations of the participants' internal world, which is IPA's other theoretical origin, namely hermeneutics (Smith & Eatough, 2007). Thus, a two-pronged approach to the analysis was needed to discern between the participants' account of their experiences and between the interpretation and meaning these experiences had for them. This distinction needed to be reported separately.

The following steps were taken to arrive at a thematic content analysis of the data (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Krippendorf, 1980):

(1) The material was transcribed and read several times in order to become familiarized with it. Whilst reading the material, several ideas emerged which were written down, such as, how one had to change in order to adjust to life in South Africa.

(2) Summaries of each interview were then made in order to capture the essence and experience of each participant.

(3) Similar ideas that emerged across the seven transcripts were coded, for example, difficulties with language and experiences of xenophobia.

(4) The coded material was then divided into sections falling under general themes, such as Environment, People, Identity.

(5) The themes were reviewed and reworked, for example, Environment was made up of subthemes such as Home, South Africa, Johannesburg and University.

(6) The content and quotations which best illustrated the points being made, were then organised according to the various themes and linked to the literature review.

(7) The research supervisor checked that the themes that emerged were consistent with the themes that the researcher found.

(8) The research report was produced with the discussion of results and findings to the research question.

The themes that emerged through IPA followed the same steps, except were arrived at through recurrent patterns of meaning and interpretations by the researcher of the participants' account of their experiences (Smith and Osborn, 2003, in Smith & Eatough, 2007). These themes were not labelled by theoretical concepts so as to ensure a "clear connection between the themes and the data" (Storey, 2007, p. 55). However, theoretical concepts were used in the analysis to make "maximum psychological sense of the data" (Storey, 2007, p. 55). Erikson's psychodynamic understanding of identity was used to "inform rather than to drive the analysis" (Storey, 2007, p. 56).

3.6. Ethics

The Deputy Director of WIO had been informed about the proposed research and was asked to complete a consent form in order for the researcher to approach the

international students to participate in the study. WIO then emailed the international students to invite them to participate in the research. Informed consent was obtained by explaining to the participants that the research is about understanding the impact that living abroad has on international students' sense of identity. It was made clear, both verbally and in writing, that participation in the study was absolutely voluntary and that there were no positive or negative consequences for either participating in the research or not participating in the research.

The international students who wished to participate in the research were asked to complete a consent form to participate in the study and another to consent to being recorded. Anonymity could not be assured due to the nature of face-to-face interviews, but no personal identifying information appeared in the research report and pseudonyms were used. Where necessary in the research report, in order to illustrate some of the points or arguments, some direct quotations were used. This means that the participants' words were reported directly but given that any identifying information was excluded or disguised, it will not be possible to link quotes to individuals.

Complete confidentiality could be guaranteed to the participants since it was a relatively large population that the sample was drawn from. The interviews took place at Wits in a private office in the Emthonjeni Centre at a time that was convenient for the participants. Participants could choose not to answer any question they found uncomfortable and were entitled to end the interview at any point. At the end of the interview, there was time for debriefing should a participant have required it. Although it was not anticipated, should a participant have felt the need for counselling subsequent to the interview, counselling services were made available to them free of charge at the Counselling and Careers Development Unit (CCDU) at Wits, and at LifeLine.

All information that was imparted in the interview was held privately by the researcher and the recorded and transcribed material was kept safe in a locked drawer and on a password protected computer, and was only available to the researcher and the supervisor. The recorded and transcribed material will be destroyed once the research report is marked and passed, and any subsequent

publications are finalised. It is possible that the findings of the research report may be published in a journal. Participants will be able to access the research report in the William Cullen Library at Wits and a short summary will be made available at the Wits International Office. Participants were made aware of all these steps in writing.

Chapter Four

4. Results

A two-pronged approach to the analysis was needed to distinguish between the participants' account of their experiences (analysed through thematic content analysis) and between the interpretation and meaning these experiences had for them (analysed through interpretative phenomenological analysis), the results of which were reported separately.

4.1. Results obtained through thematic content analysis

After a close examination of the data, the main themes arrived at through thematic content analysis were: Environment; People; Language; Culture; Identity; Suggestions. Some of these themes comprise of subthemes. What follows is an explanation of each theme and its subtheme(s), as well as quotes from the participants which serve as examples as to how the themes were derived at.

1. Environment

In this theme, the physical environment is associated with a wide range of reactions and experiences. The participants found themselves in four main primary physical environments which caused them to have a wide range of experiences, attitudes and behaviours with which to compare. Firstly, there is their home or homeland. Secondly, there is their move to South Africa in general, and then thirdly, moving into a more specific environment, Johannesburg, and finally even more specifically, the university.

1.1. Home

The notion of "home" or "homeland" is often described by the participants as evoking a lot of thoughts and feelings and is often drawn upon as a source of comfort. Most of the participants described it idealistically and appreciated it even more being away from it.

> P5: "When you get to South Africa and you have the experiences, you appreciate your home more...you start to appreciate things that you didn't

appreciate before about your culture about your country about things at home".

P7: "Though back at home, although we are having our own problems, I find it peaceful compared to this side".

Most of the participants felt that at home they were free to go wherever they wanted and felt accepted by the people.

P1: "At home you would run around wherever you want".

P3: "It's the familiarity, if I am in Nairobi, you can drop me anywhere and I can find my way around".

P6: "I can go in another city or another town and even if they don't speak the same mother tongue as I do or they don't speak my mother tongue but I will expect to be friendly received I will expect to be friendly, it's obvious, I can't fear anything in the DRC".

But living abroad is also described as a basis of comparison of the home environment, sometimes in ambiguous ways as one of the participants reported:

P2: "In Nigeria, they are friendlier towards everyone, even if it's not for the right reason so even if they try to dupe you or something, they are just nicer to you, they are more welcoming, so yeah, I miss that...there everyone is your aunty, everyone is your friend, everyone is like one big family...it's (South Africa) definitely much better than in Nigeria where you, ja, it's, a bit more relaxed here...another thing I noticed is that Nigerians are loud, so I don't, it's like you don't realise until you leave so I like the calmness in South Africa that you don't have to yell about everything, shout or get too excited about everything".

1.2. South Africa

Most of the participants had some warnings or perceptions of what South Africa would be like (particularly, that South Africa would be dangerous for "foreigners") before coming here and how they would need to act.

P1: “You don’t feel safe here”.

P3: “Obviously I am on guard”.

P5: “As long as you are not a South African, as long as you don’t have that green ID book you can forget that you will be free from harassment or safe”.

However, at least one of the participants felt that it was more the hype than the reality of the situation.

P2: “Before you come, everyone says it’s not safe it’s not safe, so you are already worried before you come so you have be like extra aware...when I came I knew before the sun goes down I should try to be home...but I haven’t found it like dangerous or not safe but I think it’s just an act here that people says it’s not safe that makes me worried”.

But one of the participants felt that the diversity in South Africa gave them the freedom to be whoever they wanted to be.

P3: “The one good thing I like about South Africa is the diversity, the freedom to be who you want to be”.

1.3. Johannesburg

Most of the participants found Johannesburg to be too big a city, in which they felt overwhelmed, confused, scared and disorientated.

P1: “It’s too crowded”.

P4: “Always activity always noise always busy hustling and bustling um at first I was a bit like ok, where am I going to fit in...it was like starting afresh but starting afresh in a place that already was moving...and a lot faster and a lot harder”.

P6: “Johannesburg is too big and people and too many too much people and everyone is struggling to survive...there are some places even now, I can’t go there...never no no...now I am also avoiding going to Johannesburg CBD er, the other reason is that lot of people, or traffic, I don’t like that”.

And one of the participants felt that Johannesburg was very individualistically oriented.

> P4: “What I think with Joburg they don’t quite have the community thing”.

1.4. Outside Johannesburg

Some of the participants lived in or travelled to other parts of South Africa, and so have other perspectives of South Africa, other than just of Johannesburg. A few of the participants found living outside of Johannesburg to be more enjoyable.

> P1: “I probably wouldn’t have a big problem staying...maybe not Joburg...but uh, any other smaller place I’d love”.

> P2: “I don’t mind staying on but I think I prefer a bit more rural area”.

But one of the participants found it even harder outside of Johannesburg than in Johannesburg.

> P6: “In Potchefstroom, everybody’s speaking Afrikaans and some other local languages so it was more difficult for me you know”.

1.5. University

Whilst most of the participants spent their days on campus, some of them lived on campus as well. In general, many participants said they felt safer being on campus.

> P4: “I feel a whole lot more comfortable and safe being foreign and being myself on campus than when I am off”.

> P5: “Here there is sort of protection you know, like you are sort of attached to an institution like a powerful institution, you know institutions are supposed to be powerful...there is something safe, you know the accommodation, the place, you know it’s a protected place”.

But this felt restricting to one participant as to where he could go and where he could feel safe.

> P1: “Most of the time you are confined to either your residence or campus, those two places...I think the university environment is more understanding...there is no fear”.

However, some of the participants still felt a sense of danger on campus or not being able to fit in completely.

> P3: “Here I was thinking if I go into the city that’s known, people talk how many rapes every hour brutal highjackings, gun shots and I don’t speak the language and now my university is right in the heart of the almost the city centre, it was very scary...I feel safer at the university but still you read in the school paper the Vuvuzela how there are muggings and how people get attacked at the res”.

> P6: “I found there is no integration here at Wits university”.

Most of the participants felt that the university and the Wits International Office could have done more to help them acculturate.

> P1: “You see them (Wits International Office) probably when you need to extend your permit, or any administrative stuff they need to do. Other than that they don’t really do anything”.

> P7: “I’ve never heard of someone who’s been assisted on a social level by the international office except for technical issues like with student queries”.

1.6. Outside university

All of the participants had perceptions and experiences of being off the university campus. Most of the participants felt threatened and unsafe off campus, especially in specific areas or situations.

> P1: “As soon as the sun goes down here, I don’t go anywhere, if at all, it’s on campus, nowhere else”.

> P6: “Definitely, there are some places even now, I can’t go there...now I am also avoiding the Johannesburg CBD...it’s unbelievable, Johannesburg is a big city in the world I mean, but at 11pm you need to be at your place

> because when you are outside anything can happen to you. It's unbelievable. Unbelievable. It's unbelievable".

In general, the participants found being in taxis or other public transport, as very threatening.

> P1: "In a taxi, you would rather be quiet than speaking your language or English, and they will know you are not South African...you will be attacked you will be robbed".

> P3: "Now when I get into the taxis sometimes you are actually very scared because not like people could be plotting but you don't understand, you are totally cut off you are isolated...it took me a long time before I thought I could get into a taxi and you know you just, anything that happens I am ready to go".

> P6: "I couldn't let's say, take the taxi, I couldn't, I relied on some friends for lifts here to come in Johannesburg, I couldn't put my life or my family at risk by taking a taxi or a train no, I couldn't do that".

2. People

The participants had interactions with different people, including other international students, fellow countrymen, family members, host national students, and local South Africans. Some of the participants came to South Africa on their own, whilst others had a family member(s) here or were joined at some stage by a family member(s). These different experiences are described here.

2.1. International students

Most of the participants felt they were categorized as "foreigners" and so most of them preferred interacting with other international students who were similarly categorised.

> P5: "We have formed a community here, a close community so it's easy to interact with anyone".

> P7: “I ended up with friends with people from other countries because of the situation...you always feel secure if someone is in a similar situation you are in...it helps because you’ve got someone to relax with, to talk your native language, and relax and just be your selves there without people who will find it strange...so it really helps it like gives you a sense of home...I don’t have to act up you know or you know like accommodating other people”.

Several of the participants felt a closer sense of community with their fellow countrymen.

> P6: “I have some friends here but most of them are from the DRC”.

Yet one of the participants who also felt part of a community of “foreigners”, didn’t feel the need to form a community specifically with her fellow countrymen.

> P4: “I have more friends who are foreigners than I do from home...but I never joined the Zim society, never felt led to”.

One participant attempted to refuse the categorisation of “foreigner” being imposed on her and so did not differentiate which group her friends belonged to.

> P3: “My friends are from all over the place, I don’t, to me you are a person before you come from here or you come from there”.

2.2. Family

Those participants who did not have family members in South Africa found it more difficult to cope in South Africa than those participants who had family members here.

> P2: “I am here alone for now...yeah, I don’t like being alone...it really helps a lot if you have family around...someone you know here then you can always rely on them, they can say ok try this try this but if you just come in no clue of the system I think it’s difficult”.

> P3: “I come from a tightly close knit a unit family, so it was just us (her and her sister) cut off away from everyone else so that’s the other adjustment problem, being from that tightly linked family...I always lived at home with my

parents and my sisters so that was the other thing, that was so difficult in South Africa to settle. So it was being away from home so whether it had been in Sweden, or Australia, it would have been the same adjustment problems".

P6: "(I rely) on my family, on my wife on my little daughter".

One participant said that some friendships had become like family relationships.

P1: "The post graduate pub you know and that's where you meet most foreigners as well cos that's where they feel safe...we've got common stuff to talk about...you know you always have 1 or 2 people that you are most comfortable with, you know, who become like your *brothers* for you".

2.3. Host nationals

This subtheme looks at participants' interactions with various groups of host nationals.

2.3.1. Students and staff

In general the participants said that they had few (if any) South African friends at university. Some of them citing lack of opportunities to meet them and others citing that the South Africans are not friendly.

P1: "A few South Africans...probably 1 out of 10".

P5: "I don't have South African friends".

P6: "But one thing that I didn't like at the university is that people are not that friendly at the university...at Wits for instance if you greet someone he doesn't greet you back so I stopped to greet people. I stopped to greet people...there is no integration, I found that there is no integration here at Wits university".

P7: "I have not been socializing a lot with South Africans".

One participant said that she had made friends with host national students and was able to learn the accepted social norms from them.

> P4: “I also have a lot of South African friends so just kinda getting to know them and getting to know how they do things and getting to know what’s done and what’s not done and all of that has helped me adjust as well”.

Another participant felt that people in general at the university were more accepting of her being a foreigner and that her department had made an effort to assist her.

> P2: “I think people are a bit more what’s the word, enlightened, they are not as stereotyped as outside...in my department like if they know you are a foreigner, they give you that extra help”.

2.3.2. Non students and xenophobia

This subtheme accounts for the participants’ interactions with, and perceptions of South Africans in general outside the university. It is these interactions which the participants found to be the most threatening especially if they were identified as “foreigners”. In general, most of the participants felt an atmosphere of xenophobia in South Africa.

> P1: “The perception of most South Africans, they see a foreigner, it’s almost as if they are somebody who is stealing out of their home country...you should go back to your countries you know, you are making our jobs difficult here...you will certainly be a target, because as soon as they know you are not South African...”.

> P3: “Initially you come and you find the locals are very hostile to foreigners”.

Some of the participants experienced xenophobia first hand, whilst others were more affected by the threat of it.

> P6: “I wasn’t attacked but I was affected in my mind”.

> P7: I was affected indirectly not directly...I am a bit cautious an very careful in what I do...but it has never happened to me, but I feel rather scared of that”.

Most of the participants felt they had to hide their identity so as not to be identified as a “foreigner” in South Africa. They felt people’s attitudes towards them changed

when they found out they were “foreigners”. This caused some of them to try to hide their identity and to be extremely cautious of people and their motives.

> P2: “You don’t even talk, you just want to go somewhere and blend in and it means going silently, not meeting people’s eyes”.
>
> P3: “I still feel very scared, I probably don’t want to reveal the fact that I am not from here...because I just don’t know how someone would react to me, and if that would happen, I don’t want to be the next statistic...I start to wonder whether my friends, if I decide to start to work here, will they resent me if I get a job...you start to wonder are we really friends, do they still look at me as a foreigner, am I properly integrated?”.
>
> P4: “I came last year in res with a friend of mine during that time just so I could kind of stay clear so it was a very rattling experience...you just see people withdraw into themselves and you just kind of like so we were ok until they found out I was Zimbabwean”.
>
> P5: “Ever since the xenophobic attacks you know I personally fear to be identified as a foreigner...I am so ashamed to be called a Zimbabwean not because I am ashamed of my culture of my heritage but because of the fear that I have to be treated here so I would rather say uh, don’t mention Zimbabwe because of what I fear you know what I expect the hostility sort of feelings you know”.
>
> P7: “Here we are very very careful and cautious in like when you want to associate with people”.

The participants feared several specific groups of host nationals. As was suggested above under section 1.6. “Outside university”, one prominent such group is that of taxi drivers.

> P2: “I don’t know how I would still be going using a taxi because they seem, I don’t know it’s like they started sniffing out foreigners...they only speak Zulu so that’s how they pick up if you are not a foreigner so that’s the only thing I am worried about”.

P6: “My friend told me never never argue with taxi man...so I kept quiet you know they are rude and they can do anything if you argue with them”.

There was one participant however who had positive experiences with taxi drivers.

P3: “Even though how you hear how these people have guns and they are so protective over their routes, you find that no, some are, some are unbelievable I won’t take that away from them, but some of them are like really nice fellows that you want to continue talking to”.

The second group of host nationals that the participants found to be threatening, was the police.

P4: “They can ask you for your passport they can ask you for your ID and if you don’t have it you get picked up by the police and you get thrown in jail”.

P5: “There is also police harassment you know if you are not carrying your travelling documents or your passport or your ID if you are a foreigner”.

P6: “Here you must be cautious, very cautious, because you don’t, you know I told you about those guys those fake policemen who attacked me...I can’t trust him. I can’t because you are not sure...so here appearance doesn’t change my mind about the people”.

P7: “There is also harassment from maybe the police they always want you to carry your passport even if you show them your student ID, they won’t accept it”.

3. Language

Difficulties with the local languages was a problem that most of the participants reported in integrating into South Africa. Most of the participants spoke English as their main language but they found that speaking English was a signifier of being a foreigner, and thus made them a target.

P1: “You don’t get many people around here who speak your language so you will have to do a lot with English...it’s just the general receptiveness of the

> people to you when you don't speak the language...when they discover that you don't understand, you sense a change of mood".
>
> P3: "Someone will speak to you in a local language and you say no I don't understand...so when they say what language are you speaking, I say English, and immediately they just tune you out, they don't bother with you anymore...the moment they find out the fact that you don't speak a local language it alienates you...language is a very important thing like it identifies people so already it sets you out as a foreigner".
>
> P5: "If you come in and you speak your English you know it's like you are selling yourself out you know that you are foreigner and the citizens don't like English that much".

Because of this, most of the participants tried to remain quiet so as to go by unnoticed.

> P6: "In the town, in the city, in the market, in the taxi rank, when you speak they, my friend asked me I mean he told me not to speak English in those areas better keep quiet and don't say a word in English because you can, they can easily realise that you are a foreigner or a guy not from here and be a target for the thugs and just try to keep quiet when you can".

This participant also reported that speaking English was only accepted if you were white.

> P6: "Because when I when you spoke English they ask you if you are a white man, why do you speak English? Speak your own language...the language and it was very difficult for me and you could find someone with an office I mean a gentleman in an office...you speak to him in English but he's responding in Zulu or, so it becomes difficult to communicate".

For some of the participants, being able to speak a local language enabled them to blend in and appear to be South African.

> P5: If you speak that language and I do speak that language well um you can um get your way you know and appear to be Zulu to hide yourself and to

> avoid the stares you know or to avoid some awkwardness, you know because like it's like a sort of blending, I want to blend and avoid awkwardness like...no one will look at you".

Another participant felt that he was accepted as a foreigner if he was able to speak a local language.

> P7: "They are more accepting of you if you speak their language than if you speak your own vernacular language".

One participant who had lived elsewhere in South Africa and had not spoken her native language for a long time, didn't feel herself anymore.

> P5: "For how many months have I not spoken my home language you know, and when I do speak or when I do meet someone who speaks my language, I am like, I am sounding so strange".

Most of the participants said that only when they were able to speak their home language, did they feel more at home.

> P5: "To talk your native language, and relax and just be your selves there without people who will find it strange".

> P6: "When we are among us we speak only French or some of the languages of the DRC, we don't only speak French. We feel like if we were in the DRC".

4. Culture

A few of the participants found the culture in South Africa to be quite similar to that of their home countries.

> P1: "Urban life isn't so different from what it is there at home".

In fact, one of the participants said that because the South African culture and her home culture was virtually the same, she thought that she would be able to settle here.

> P3: "Our cultures are almost the same that's why I think now I could settle here...you find out that they just have a different way of expressing

> themselves but it's basically the same, so now you see more commonness than when I initially came".

But the same participant seemed to be ambivalent about this because she also said that there were cultural differences which made it hard for her to acculturate.

> P3: "There are slight things that you will never find out and that's what makes it daunting to integrate into a community...so it's those small things that I think are interesting sometimes but you have to be constantly on guard that's the difference between being on guard like when I have to walk down the street".

Other participants said they hadn't immersed themselves with the local culture.

> P7: "I have learnt very little about their culture".

But most of the participants tried to keep some aspects of their own culture whenever and wherever they could, though this was quite difficult for some because they felt it would not be acceptable here.

> P7: "That's difficult to keep that aspect of your culture like ja it's a bit difficult because there are some things that we do back home which might not be acceptable here so you have to adjust".

5. Identity

In this theme, the participants describe the effect that living in South Africa has had on their sense of identity. The participants describe how they used to be back at home and how they are here. The participants also described what changes they had undergone, what they had learnt about themselves, and what skills they had learnt in order to survive in South Africa.

5.1. Changes

Some of the participants felt that in South Africa, they could not be the same way they were at home, describing have to inhibit or restrict their normal behaviour.

> P1: "My friends would call and ask me, hey, are you still laughing a lot like you do, you know, you still make a lot of jokes, like it's good for your health, but you know you don't get into a place and just start making jokes...I am

> probably a bit held back...people are a little too serious around here for me...if you are for one, an outgoing person, you have to be restricted here".
>
> P6: "Now I can't trust people. It's difficult for me to trust people. Difficult for me to trust people...it's better stay by myself...I stopped to greet people".
>
> P7: "It's only when I am here I have to be cautious compared when I am back home...I believe in my freedom and so that's why I am prepared soon after my studies I am prepared to go back home, and enjoy access to every corner of the country rather than coming here, you get a job, but then you are restricted, you have to be cautious".

These participants switched between identities, depending on the situation.

> P3: "It depends on who asks...so I never try to label myself because I have different...I have benefitted from both experiences living in one country and holding another nationality so it's never easy for me to decide if it's this or it's this".
>
> P2: "I say I am from Nigeria most of the time, it depends because sometimes I find like Nigerians area bit loud or I don't know, or this overpowering, so I then I am like no, I am Botswana, I am from Botswana for today but mostly I am from Nigeria...so I can easily switch...it depends on whom I am with".

Yet despite this, this participants also said:

> P2: "I don't think I've really changed".

Other participants also felt ambiguous as to whether they felt they had changed or not since coming to South Africa and still felt somewhat uncomfortable with themselves, depending on the situation.

> P4: "I am a lot more confident...I am kind of mixed now...it's a bit of a weird place to be...I did retract and become more kept to myself for a while because I was now not with people, cos I am very loud bubbly person...but coming to a whole another country a whole another cultural system, and just that adjustment, I kinda became kept to myself so even when I got here I was

> read incorrectly and a lot of people thought I was a snob at the beginning, so um I think that, becoming more introvert when I got here that was definitely an identity change for me and it was a new experience that I've um grown out of but there's still a little, it comes up every once in a while as long as I am here...whenever I go to a new area when it's a new cultural system I withdraw to myself I first assess how things are done and then you know instead of just being whereas at home regardless of where I was take to I was loud, like I was ja, whatever...I am not quite true to anything anymore I am like all mixed up and jumbled up but it's cool...I am a hybrid now, all this diversity...you feel like you just become a number in the system".

Several of the participants felt that they had to hide their identity completely.

> P5: "I have been hiding it a lot especially last year when I was working...appear to be Zulu to hide yourself and to avoid the stares you know or to avoid some awkwardness, you know because like it's like a sort of blending, I want to blend to avoid awkwardness...you have to adjust to fit in...in order to blend in".

5.2. Survival skills and self-reliance

Most of the participants said that they had to become more independent and more self-reliant in order to cope with the difficulties of living in South Africa.

> P5: "The one thing this country taught me, you know, it's a survival instinct, it's a thing that teaches you to rely on yourself and find things that work, you know for yourself, because I always imagined it's like a struggle and you have to develop the skills for self sustenance".

> P6: "Now I can go even, from what I learnt here I can go even to Russia, I think I am going to cope...I went through all those tough times and I survived. I survived".

This participant not only mentioned strategies for being self-reliant, but also emphasised similarities and kinships with many local people, in terms of becoming more aware of being black.

P4: “I was intimidated initially but I was kind of thrown in the deep end having to live by myself and having to figure out where things were on my own and stuff so I had to be brave...I was excited...having grown up being at home and being with family and that but then there is also that ok now you need to step up and grow up as well so it was a challenge as well as there was some fear to it...I am more aware of being black now than I was when I came”.

6. Suggestions

The participants suggested several ideas which they thought could have helped them to integrate better into university and South Africa. These ideas were directed at Wits in general, as well as at the Wits International Office. Many suggestions involved planned social events with a view towards integration.

P6: “To meet people to organise events more often, more often so that people can get to talk”.

P7: “There should be like an orientation for like even post graduate students as there is for undergraduates...an international function together with the local guys so you get to know each other you get to understand”.

Some of the participants felt that they would like to be taught social norms, like how to get around, and to learn about the history and culture of South Africa.

P3: “Like a little booklet can be prepared to say if you must take a taxi try and watch out for this, pay when you get in, just things on how to settle you in...if you could read it somewhere you could know then maybe you could develop a construct from this ok do this, or ja, I think that could have helped a lot”.

P5: “They should have something or someone who can give them a background to the country and heritage and culture here, the cultures here so they can appreciate the country more you know, it doesn’t have to be if you are foreign that you don’t fit in or you are an outsider, we could blend...to have trips to such places like the museums, the apartheid museum, the constitution hill, you know and stuff like that so we can enjoy the stay, yes, and we can

> um, what is the word, and enjoy the stay and appreciate and not feel so outsider".

4.2. Results obtained through interpretative phenomenological analysis

After a close examination of the data, the main themes arrived at through IPA were: Relationship between self and other; Incorporation; Ways of being; Fantasies. Some of these themes comprise of subthemes. There is some overlap with the themes that were arrived at through thematic content analysis, but the angle of analysis here is from an interpretative, intrapsychic perspective, partly determined by the psychodynamic identity-theory framework of Erikson. What follows is an explanation of each theme and its subtheme(s), as well as quotes from the participants which serve as examples as to how the themes were derived at.

1. Relationship between self and other

This theme describes the nature of the relationships that the participants had experienced both at home and in South Africa. It describes feelings of connection and dependence on others and how this impacted on their selves.

1.1. Unity

Many participants seemed to define the structure of relations with others in terms of a notion of "connection".

> P1: "Back at home, people are more *connected* to each other and doing things".

But in South Africa, most of the participants felt that they were living somewhat of a disconnected existence, whether from the mainstream society, or from others on campus.

> P4: "What I think with Joburg they don't quite have the *community* thing".

> P6: "There is no integration, I found that there is no integration here at Wits university".

However, this same participant felt that being disconnected from the mainstream society was an untenable position to maintain in the long term.

> P6: “If I keep on hating, I can’t I mean I can’t let’s say I have some years to live in South Africa, I have to live with the proper way, I have to live with the situation”.

This participant felt not only disconnected from others by not having someone to speak her home language with, but also disconnected from an aspect of herself.

> P5: “For how many months have I not spoken my home language you know, and when I do speak or when I do meet someone who speaks my language, I am like, I am sounding so strange”.

An intensified expression of connection is described relative to one’s family, here in the form of a powerful connection or “tie”.

> P4: “I keep family ties and all of that and that I think largely comes playing the role of the oldest child, so I think my role in the family and in our family community I still keep very seriously”.

But one participant who had a family member here felt that this connection was not enough, that it was not a replacement, and so still felt a great sense of disconnection from home.

> P3: “I come from a *tightly close knit* a unit family, so it was *just us* (her and her sister) cut off away from everyone else so that’s the other adjustment problem, being from that *tightly linked* family...I always lived at home with my parents and my sisters so that was the other thing, that was so difficult in South Africa to settle. So it was being away from home so whether it had been in Sweden, or Australia, it would have been the same adjustment problems”.

All the participants tried to establish connections in the sense of community integration with other “foreigners”, family members or countrymen.

> P5: “We have formed a community here, a *close* community so it’s easy to interact with anyone”.

1.2. Dependence

Most of the participants reported having to depend on family members or other "foreigners" for connection and wholeness of being.

> P6: "(I rely) on my family, on my wife on my little daughter".

But what most participants seemed to experience was a sense of having been separated or having lost a previously sense of support, reporting a difficult experience of aloneness.

> P4: "I was intimidated initially but I was kind of thrown in the deep end having to *live by myself* and having to figure out where things were *on my own* and stuff so I had to be brave...I was excited...having grown up being at home and being with family and that but then there is also that ok now you need to step up and grow up as well so it was a challenge as well as there was some fear to it".

> P5: "The one thing this country taught me, you know, it's a survival instinct, it's a thing that teaches you to *rely on yourself* and find things that work, you know for yourself, because I always imagined it's like a struggle and you have to develop the skills for self sustenance".

Some of the participants also reported failed attempts to re-establish such needed support.

> P1: "It's up to you, if you *find a good somebody* in your school who can show you around, then you are probably lucky in that experience in that case, but otherwise, it's just, you're on your own, which is not so cool".

One of the participants felt that they could depend on the university for protection and another participant said they received even more support from the university because they were a "foreigner".

> P2: "In my department like if they know you are a foreigner, they give you that extra help".

P5: “Here there is sort of protection you know, like you are sort of attached to an institution like a powerful institution, you know institutions are supposed to be powerful...there is something safe, you know the accommodation, the place, you know it’s a protected place”.

Another participant felt that they had not received enough support from the university or the Wits International Office:

P1: “You see them (Wits International Office) probably when you need to extend your permit, or any administrative stuff they need to do. Other than that they don’t really do anything”.

1.3. Self-awareness

Some of the participants seemed to become more aware of aspects of themselves from living in South Africa. Several of them became more aware of their racial identity.

P4: “I am *more aware of being black* now than I was when I came”.

And some of the participants experienced a strong sense of accomplishment of having been able to learn the necessary skills in order to survive living away from home.

P6: “I went through all those tough times and I survived. I survived”.

2. Incorporation

The participants described various feelings as to how they felt they were or were not “received”, accepted or integrated into the main body of South African society and how this compared to their sense of reception or incorporation into their own homeland.

2.1. Acceptance

Most of the participants felt fully part of their homeland, and felt welcomed wherever they went.

> P6: “I can go *in* another city or another town and even if they don’t speak the same mother tongue as I do or they don’t speak my mother tongue but I will expect to be friendly *received* I will expect to be friendly, it’s obvious, I can’t fear anything in the DRC”.

But in South Africa, most of the participants felt that they weren’t incorporated into the larger body because of the xenophobic atmosphere.

> P1: “The perception of most South Africans, they see a foreigner, it’s almost as if they are somebody who is *stealing out* of their home country”.

> P3: “Initially you come and you find the locals are very hostile to foreigners”.

> P6: “In the DRC when someone is coming from outside, everybody wants to know who is he, where he comes from, how he feels you know, people go to him to get him you know, adapted, to get to talk to him they want to find out things, how he used to how he reacts to that, but I didn’t find this here at Wits and South Africa in general”.

3. Ways of being

The participants felt that their way of being in South Africa was different from their way of being at home. Most of them also seemed to feel that the xenophobic atmosphere in South Africa had strongly impacted on this.

3.1. Restriction versus freedom

Most of the participants felt that at home, they could go wherever they wanted, but here, they felt restricted as to where they could go, when they could go, and with whom they could go.

> P1: “Most of the time you are confined to either your residence or campus, those two places...as soon as the sun goes down here, I don’t go anywhere, if at all, it’s on campus, nowhere else...at home you would run around wherever you want”.

> P2: “If I am going out I have to go out with a male friend or I can’t, I can’t go out like ladies, but if you go out like ladies you try to come back early”.

> P6: “Definitely, there are some places even now, I can’t go there...now I am also avoiding the Johannesburg CBD...it’s unbelievable, Johannesburg is a big city in the world I mean, but at 11pm you need to be at your place because when you are outside anything can happen to you. It’s unbelievable. Unbelievable. It’s unbelievable”.

Most of the participants also felt that they were free to be themselves at home but in South Africa, they felt more restricted or inhibited.

> P1: “My friends would call and ask me, hey, are you still laughing a lot like you do, you know, you still make a lot of jokes, like it’s good for your health, but you know you don’t get into a place and just start making jokes...if you are for one, an outgoing person, you have to be *restricted* here”.

> P2: “You feel you *can’t be as friendly* as in Nigeria”.

> P4: “I did *retract* and become more *kept to myself* for a while because I was now not with people, cos I am very loud bubbly person I kinda became kept to myself so even when I got here I was read incorrectly and a lot of people thought I was a snob at the beginning, so um I think that, becoming more *introverted* when I got here that was definitely an identity change for me and it was a new experience that I’ve um grown out of but there’s still a little, it comes up every once in a while as long as I am here...whenever I go to a new area (in Johannesburg) when it’s a new cultural system I *withdraw to myself*. I first assess how things are done and then you know instead of just being whereas at home regardless of where I was taken to I was loud, like I was ja, whatever”.

> P7: “I believe in my freedom and so that’s why I am prepared soon after my studies I am prepared to go back home, and enjoy access to every corner of the country rather than coming here, you get a job, but then you are *restricted*, you have to be cautious”.

But one of the participants felt rather more free and unrestricted in South Africa.

P3: “The one good thing I like about South Africa is the diversity, the freedom to be who you want to be”.

3.2. The dangerous outside

In general, the participants had strong feelings of fear, mistrust and persecution, and the environment was experienced as being hostile.

P1: “You will certainly be a target, because as soon as they know you are not South African...”.

P6: “They realise this guy is not from here if he’s from I mean somewhere else it’s easy to attack that guy than one from here, I found that, I found that”.

Most of the participants also felt that they had to be more on guard and cautious here.

P3: “Here I was thinking if I go into the city that’s known, people talk how many rapes every hour brutal highjackings, gun shots and I don’t speak the language and now my university is right in the heart of the almost the city centre, it was very scary...obviously I am on guard”.

Some of the participants even feared people (police) and places (university) they felt they should have been able to trust.

P3: “I feel safer at the university but still you read in the school paper the Vuvuzela how there are muggings and how people get attacked at the res”.

P6: “Here you must be cautious, very cautious, because you don’t, you know I told you about those guys those fake policemen who attacked me...I can’t trust him. I can’t because you are not sure...so here appearance doesn’t change my mind about the people...now I can’t trust people. It’s difficult for me to trust people. Difficult for me to trust people...it’s better I stay by myself”.

3.3. Invaded space

Most of the participants seemed to feel overwhelmed in the city and that their personal space was invaded.

P1: “It’s (Johannesburg) too crowded”.

P4: “Always activity always noise always busy hustling and bustling um at first I was a bit like ok, where am I going to fit in”.

3.4. Familiarity versus alienness

Most of the participants seemed to experience a sense of uncertainty and alienation in the new environment as compared to the familiarity of their home environment.

P3: “It’s the familiarity, if I am in Nairobi, you can drop me anywhere and I can find my way around”.

P6: “When I am outside my place or outside Wits university I tried the most to be I mean every time I look around me to see if I am safer or those kind of things and I can’t go anywhere, I can’t go anywhere”.

3.5. Disintegration

In general, most of the participants seemed to feel lost, confused, and somewhat disintegrated in the new environment.

P4: “It was like starting afresh but starting afresh in a place that already was moving...and a lot faster and a lot harder...you feel like you just become a number in the system...I am kind of mixed now...it’s a bit of a weird place to be...I am not quite true to anything anymore I am like *all mixed up* and jumbled up but it’s cool...I am a hybrid now, all this diversity”.

P6: “Johannesburg is too big and people and too many too much people and everyone is struggling to survive...lots of people, or traffic, I don’t like that”.

3.6. Invisibility

In this subtheme, most of the participants seemed to feel that they had to hide their identities by “blending in” or becoming “invisible” so as not to be identified as a “foreigner” (or a “foreigner” from a country which drew a particularly negative stereotype).

P2: “You don’t even talk, you just want to go somewhere and *blend in* and it means *going silently, not meeting people’s eyes*...I say I am from Nigeria most of the time, it depends because sometimes I find like Nigerians are a bit loud or I don’t know, or this overpowering, so I then I am like no, I am Botswana, I am from Botswana for today but mostly I am from Nigeria...so I can easily switch...it depends on whom I am with”.

P5: I have been *hiding it* a lot especially last year when I was working...if you speak that language and I do speak that language well um you can um get your way you know and *appear to be Zulu to hide yourself* and to *avoid the stares* you know or to avoid some awkwardness, you know because like it’s like a sort of *blending*, I want to *blend* and avoid awkwardness like...*no one will look at you*”.

4. Fantasies

All the participants seemed to have fantasies of what could have helped them acculturate better.

4.1. Support and integration

Most of the participants wanted more support and help from the university in order for them to be accepted, supported and integrated.

P2: “Be a bit more involved (the Wits International Office) in our lives...maybe socially, or I think maybe emails to see how we are doing or something”.

P4: “Maybe a culturally proud event and not just for international students but for South Africans as well so in a sense you are just celebrating all the different cultures...appreciate one another’s culture and be interested in one another’s culture...not just you are foreigners but everyone has a culture so it’s no longer borders that are limiting us”.

4.2. Escape

Some of the participants had feelings of wanting to escape Johannesburg, and that they could acculturate better in another place.

> P1: “I probably wouldn’t have a big problem staying...maybe not Joburg...but uh, any other smaller place I’d love”.

> P2: “I don’t mind staying on but I think I prefer a bit more rural area”.

But one participant felt that it was not possible to acculturate and that the only place to escape to, was back home.

> P7: “I believe in my freedom and so that’s why I am prepared soon after my studies I am prepared to go back home, and enjoy access to every corner of the country”.

Chapter Five

5. Discussion

Similar to the results section, the discussion involved a two-pronged approach to separately discuss the findings from thematic content analysis and from interpretative phenomenological analysis respectively.

5.1. Discussion of the findings from thematic content analysis

In leaving home and coming to a new and unfamiliar environment, the participants in the present study experienced many stressors that threatened their sense of identity (both personal and social) and their acculturation into the new environment. They responded to these stressors in several different ways. In general, most of the participants seemed to experience feelings of loneliness, hostility, alienation, and fear, and had social and financial difficulties in trying to acculturate, which is consistent with the findings in the literature (Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Sam, 2000; Ward et al., 2001). The participants however, did not report having difficulties with their academic performance or problems with their physical health. With regards to academic performance, it may be that the academic capacities and functioning of postgraduate students may be slightly more robust than that of undergraduate students. The relative absence of reported problems with physical health is more difficult to explain. It may be that the interview questions (see Appendix G and H) did not expressly lend themselves to being interpreted by the participants as asking about their physical health. Given that many participants may view their physical health as a relatively private matter, they may not have reported on it unless explicitly requested to do so.

The literature suggests that because international students' stay in the host country is temporary, they may not invest their time and energy towards acculturating, which may also influence the quality of the contact and relationships between them and the host nationals (Furnham & Bochner, 1986). But it seems that the atmosphere or threat of xenophobia in South Africa seems to have compounded this as it affected most of the participants either directly or indirectly. Most of them felt discriminated against and prejudiced against which left them feeling alienated from the host

society. The literature suggests that “refugees, asylum seekers, and other (primarily black) immigrants tend to feel unprotected and unwelcome in South Africa...(and) there is strong evidence that non-nationals living in the country suffer from systematic discrimination, social exclusion, and political alienation” (Landau, Ramjathan-Keogh & Singh, 2005, p. 29). Consistent with this view, there was a general fear amongst the participants of being identified as a “foreigner” which they felt would make them become a target for attacks.

> P3: “I still feel very scared, I probably don’t want to reveal the fact that I am not from here...because I just don’t know how someone would react to me, and if that would happen, I don’t want to be the next statistic”.

Because of the fear of xenophobia, it was even more difficult for them to build social relations with host nationals and this also dissuaded them from staying in the country after their studies (Harris, 2002).

> P7: “I have not been socializing a lot with South Africans”.

As was noted in the literature review, social relations and social support are seen to play a key role in acculturating, and being rejected by the host students greatly impedes this (Ward et al., 2001). Most of the participants tended to socialize more with other foreigners and to create discrete networks of non-nationals of a common country of origin (Harris, 2002).

> P6: “I have some friends here but most of them are from the DRC”.

This suggests that their inter-group relations were primarily one of “segregation” which supports separate development of groups (Furnham & Bochner, 1986). This seemed to have created a feeling of “in” groups and “out” groups whereby most of the participants felt that their group was marginalized and discriminated against (Duckitt, 1992; Foster, 2006). They felt they were discriminated against by the host nationals in general, as well as by specific groups as was seen in the results.

> P5: “There is also police harassment you know if you are not carrying your travelling documents or your passport or your ID if you are a foreigner”.

This quote is reminiscent of the apartheid days with the pass laws, which suggests that it was also at governmental level that they felt they were being discriminated against. Previous studies show that there is “considerable evidence that non-nationals are particular targets for police harassment and corruption” (Landau et al., p. 28). And indeed, most of the participants felt that they had been discriminated against by the government, in terms of finding employment in South Africa (both casual work and in their professional areas). They felt that they were stuck in a catch-22 position of having to both secure a work permit before they could obtain employment and having to have a job offer before they could apply for a work permit (and prospective employers were said to be reluctant to employ foreigners because of this complication). Because of this, most of the participants were unemployed and were struggling financially. This feeling of being discriminated against left some of the participants feeling mistrustful of people in general.

> P6: “Now I can’t trust people. It’s difficult for me to trust people. Difficult for me to trust people”.

Furnham and Bochner (1986) hypothesized that it would be easier for foreigners to acculturate in a culturally diverse country, but it seems that the threat of xenophobia has counteracted this as most of the participants felt that they stood out as “foreigners” and were not accepted into South African society.

Not having much social relations with the host nationals also made it difficult for most of the participants to learn the language, culture and social norms of South Africa, which is vital in order to acculturate (Ward et al., 2001). Anxiety, misunderstanding and friction seemed to arise due to communication problems and a lack of knowledge of the social and behavioural skills of the new environment (Ward et al., 2001).

> P3: “Someone will speak to you in a local language and you say no I don’t understand, and then first they say it in another language and you say I still don’t understand what you are saying, so when they say what language are you speaking, I say English, and immediately they just tune you out, they don’t bother with you anymore and you go to an office to an official and say

> please can I, and they try speak to you but the moment they find out the fact that you don't speak a local language, it alienates you".
>
> P6: "The language and it was very difficult for me and you could find someone with an office I mean a gentleman in an office...you speak to him in English but he's responding in Zulu or, so it becomes difficult to communicate".

Despite these difficulties, most of the participants felt that by relying on themselves and becoming more independent, they had managed to acquire the skills necessary to cope and survive, but that it had been a struggle. In looking at Oberg's stages of culture shock, it seems that the participants have been largely situated in stage two, that of crisis, whereby the many differences in the new culture such as language and values, have caused anxiety and frustration(Oberg, 1960, in Ward et al., 2001). It seems that this crisis has been somewhat worked through, in that most of the participants are able to function, but still do not really feel they have acculturated. The xenophobic atmosphere in South Africa seems to have contributed to most of the participants' resistance in embracing a multicultural identity. They tended to reject the new culture and become almost nationalistic regarding their own culture (Ward et al., 2001).

> P7: "It's only when I am here I have to be cautious compared when I am back home...I believe in my freedom and so that's why I am prepared soon after my studies I am prepared to go back home, and enjoy access to every corner of the country rather than coming here, you get a job, but then you are restricted, you have to be cautious".

In light of the difficulties they faced in acculturating, the participants had several suggestions for what they felt would have helped them to acculturate, such as more social support, cultural learning, and culture-based social-skills training (Sandhu, 1995; Ward et al., 2001). What most of the participants really wanted was to be accepted by the host national students.

> P4: "Maybe a culturally proud event and not just for international students but for South Africans as well so in a sense you are just celebrating all the different cultures...appreciate one another's culture and be interested in one

another's culture...not just you are foreigners but everyone has a culture so it's no longer borders that are limiting us".

5.2. Discussion of the findings from interpretative phenomenological analysis

The discussion will now focus on the intrapsychic impact that these stressors had on the participants' sense of identity.

Erikson says that identity formation "neither begins nor ends with adolescence: it is a lifelong development largely unconscious to the individual and to his society" (Erikson, 1994, p. 122). But this development can be complicated when one encounters too many changes. The threats of the unfamiliar environment may have reactivated an "identity crisis" in the participants, because in trying to adjust, they may have had to redefine themselves. But the challenge of moving to an unfamiliar environment can also offer one the opportunity for psychological growth, so this "crisis" can be a time of vulnerability but it can also be a time of strength, depending on how it is worked through it (Erikson, 1968). So how the international students work through this "identity crisis" has great implications for their selves and for their continuing development, because as Erikson said, the function of identity is to protect one's ego (Erikson, 1994). One's identity supports the ego by reducing states of anxiety by enabling one to cope with reality so when one's identity is under threat, one experiences anxiety and may have difficulty coping.

Identity confusion as well as role confusion can occur if one is unable to form a sense of identity and belonging in the new environment , so it is not just a crisis of adolescence (Erikson, 1968). Akhtar (1995) emphasises that the identity process for the immigrant is more complex than the childhood and adolescent phase, since the immigrant is at a significantly later stage of development, whereby the psychic structures are better organized, yet this is actually detrimental to the immigrant as change may be experienced as more threatening. So acculturating to one's new environment has similarities with the formation of identity in childhood and adolescence as one has to integrate several identifications into one's identity (Welchman, 2000).

Moving to South Africa meant moving away from one's family, one's friends and one's home, and it seems that for most of the participants, this led to a feeling of disconnection.

> P4: "What I think with Joburg they don't quite have the *community* thing".

What exacerbated this feeling of disconnection was that most of the participants felt rejected by the host country and its people.

> P3: "Initially you come and you find the locals are very hostile to foreigners".

Because of this, most of the participants tried to form a connection or a sense of community with other foreigners, fellow countrymen or family members.

> P5: "*We* have formed a community here, a close community so it's easy to interact with anyone".

Erikson said that one's ego is integrally related to the social environment, so if one is in a safe and secure environment, the ego is protected (Erikson, 1994). It was only in these communities that they were able to be themselves, because being part of a collective group identity served to strengthen and sustain their egos (Erikson, 1994). However, most of the participants felt that these communities were marginalized compared to the mainstream society (they felt they were the "out" group) and this exposed them to aspects of their identity that they had not really encountered before or had not thought much of before, such as racial identity and social identity.

By being collectively classified as "foreigners", most of the participants felt they had been stripped of their individual identities, which could leave one feeling that one's social role is lost and could lead one to a state of primary anxiety (Erikson, 1994). And this primary anxiety stems from persecutory "objects" in one's environment. These "objects" are both real others one experiences in the world, as well as internalized images one has of others (Watts, 2009). As we have seen in the results section, the participants experienced many persecutory objects in the new environment, and being identified as a "foreigner" led to a fear of persecution. Because of this, the participants felt that they could not be free to be themselves in the same way they were at home. And freedom of self-determination is an important

aspect of one's identity (Erikson, 1994). Because there was a fear of persecution, most of the participants felt they had become inhibited and even tried to hide or deny their identities in order to try to "blend in", or become invisible.

> P5: I have been hiding it a lot especially last year when I was working...if you speak that language and I do speak that language well um you can um get your way you know and appear to be Zulu to hide yourself and to avoid the stares you know or to avoid some awkwardness, you know because like it's like a sort of blending, I want to blend and avoid awkwardness like...no one will look at you".

But not being able to understand and speak a native local language also left the participants feeling excluded and alienated, similar to a "child who does not understand the secret language of his parents" (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989, p. 110). Because language is a central to one's identity, denying one's language is essentially a denial of one's identity (Akhtar, 1995). So living in two different linguistic worlds seems to have compounded the "split" in their self-representations. This "splitting" refers to the defence mechanism of separating things or others into "good" and "bad" (Watts, 2009). "Different self-representations might remain under the influence of different languages and express different conflicts and aspirations... adopting a new language might at times represent the acquisition of a developed identity for the first time" (Akhtar, 1995, p. 1070-1071). The ability to "manage or adapt to diverse communicative situations has become essential and the ability to interact with people with whom one has no personal acquaintance is critical to acquiring even a small measure of personal and social control" (Gumperz & Cook-Gumperz, 1982, p. 4).

Those participants who had previously lived in a country other than their home country seemed to be quite torn as to how to define their identity, which seemed to suggest identity confusion. Confusion and disorientation in a new environment can also result in a loss of ego identity whereby the "sense of sameness and of continuity and the belief in one's social role are gone" (Erikson, 1994, p. 42). They tended to switch between identities depending on the circumstance, the environment and the people they were with.

> P2: “You don’t even talk, you just want to go somewhere and blend in and it means going silently, not meeting people’s eyes...I say I am from Nigeria most of the time, it depends because sometimes I find like Nigerians are a bit loud or I don’t know, or this overpowering, so I then I am like no, I am Botswana, I am from Botswana for today but mostly I am from Nigeria...so I can easily switch...it depends on whom I am with”.

One of the participants that had been in South Africa the longest, felt that she had developed somewhat of a hybrid identity and wasn’t quite sure who she was anymore due to her lengthy immersion in a culturally diverse environment.

> P4: “I am kind of mixed now...it’s a bit of a weird place to be...I am not quite true to anything anymore I am like *all mixed up* and jumbled up but it’s cool...I am a hybrid now, all this diversity”.

Most of the participants felt that the new environment was very different to their home countries as it was hostile, and restricting, and they felt largely rejected and somewhat defenseless in comparison to how they felt at home.

> P5: “As long as you are not a South African, as long as you don’t have that green ID book you can forget that you will be free from harassment or safe”.

> P6: “I can go in another city or another town and even if they don’t speak the same mother tongue as I do or they don’t speak my mother tongue but I will expect to be friendly received I will expect to be friendly, it’s obvious, I can’t fear anything in the DRC”.

Erikson says that a radical historical change (for example, immigration) can expose one to too many changes and anxieties at the same time, which can wear one out leading to a loss of ego identity (Erikson, 1994). This can expose one to childhood conflicts around primary anxiety and experience quite primitive emotions (Erikson, 1994). This can be experienced as infinitely dangerous to the organism, as the threat of ego disintegration is built upon the fear of death, so ego disintegration can even feel like dying (Erikson, 1994). We can see this whereby some of the participants felt overwhelmed and swallowed up by the vastness of the city which is a strong contrast to how they felt back at home. So what was experienced externally (i.e. the city),

reverberates internally (i.e. on the psychic level), and so, the descriptions below could apply equally well to the physical environment as they could to the participants' inner worlds.

> P1: "It's too crowded".
>
> P3: "It's the familiarity, if I am in Nairobi, you can drop me anywhere and I can find my way around".
>
> P6: "There is no integration, I found that there is no integration here at Wits university".

Since immigration causes one to experience a state of disorganisation, one needs the capacity to reorganise, which not everyone is able to achieve (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989). When this occurs, one's capacity to manage one's internal life is reduced, which results in the anxiety of being inadequate and not being able to cope in the new environment (Erikson, 1968). Anxiety usually accompanies this state of disorganisation and the immigrant may experience a feeling of regression in that they feel helpless and unable to act effectively. As a result of this ego loss, one could expect a regression to a previous stage(s) of development (Erikson, 1994).

Most of the participants "regressed" in the sense of having to renegotiate aspects of the stage of "trust versus mistrust". They feared and mistrusted the host nationals whom they perceived to be hostile and out to get them.

> P6: "Now I can't trust people. It's difficult for me to trust people. Difficult for me to trust people...it's better I stay by myself".

And some of them also became mistrustful even of places they thought they could trust as they saw hidden dangers.

> P3: "I feel safer at the university but still you read in the school paper the Vuvuzela how there are muggings and how people get attacked at the res".

Some of the participants also displayed a similar "regression" in the sense of having to grapple with feelings more related to the stage of "autonomy versus shame and doubt" as their attempt to "blend in" and to hide their identity may be due to one not

being ready to be exposed (feelings of shame) because one is self conscious of who one is (Erikson, 1994).

> P2: “You don’t even talk, you just want to go somewhere and blend in and it means going silently, not meeting people’s eyes”.

Regression was also evidenced in the findings in terms of regression to early paranoid states whereby most of the participants felt they had to become more guarded, more cautious and more suspicious of others (Segal, 1988).

> P7: “It’s only when I am here I have to be cautious compared when I am back home...here we are very very careful and cautious in like when you want to associate with people”.

And there was a general paranoia that the university was the only point of safety in the vast dangerous ocean of their environment.

> P1: “Most of the time you are confined to either your residence or campus, those two places...as soon as the sun goes down here, I don’t go anywhere, if at all, it’s on campus, nowhere else”.

There was also a regression to feelings characteristic of Klein’s paranoid-schizoid position where the defence of “splitting” was used when the ego’s stability was challenged (Segal, 1988). Some of the participants rejected the host country and idealised the home country, in the same way that the infant sees the bad breast and the good breast (Akhtar, 1995; Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989). There was also a regression in the movement back to what Freud described as a more anaclitic operation of the ego, whereby one is more dependent on others, namely the mother or a substitute for her (Freud, 1991).

In this sense, the mother acts as a container or provides a holding environment for the child’s anxieties, fears and frustrations (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989). When anxieties surface, the “immigrant’s ego loses the support it had drawn from the familiar environment, climate and landscape – all unconsciously perceived as extensions of the mother” (Krystal & Petty, 1963, in Akhtar, 1995, p. 1062). Establishing social relations and social support in the new environment is seen to

play a key role in adjustment to the new culture (Ward et al., 2001). The immigrant needs someone who would represent an internal mother, to soothe their anxieties and fears, which is analogous to a child who is left alone and searches for his mother, to give him security and familiarity (i.e. to act as a container or to provide a holding environment). Most of the participants felt unsafe and insecure in the new environment and so became dependent on "maternal type relationships" for containment such as the university (which they saw as powerful and safe), the Wits International Office (although in this role, it was experienced as inadequate), and for one participant, family type relationships become imposed on present relationships (for example, friends came to be seen as "brothers").

> P5: "Here there is sort of protection you know, like you are sort of attached to an institution like a powerful institution, you know institutions are supposed to be powerful...there is something safe, you know the accommodation, the place, you know it's a protected place".
>
> P1: "You see them (Wits International Office) probably when you need to extend your permit, or any administrative stuff they need to do. Other than that they don't really do anything".
>
> P1: "The post graduate pub you know and that's where you meet most foreigners as well cos that's where they feel safe...we've got common stuff to talk about...you know you always have 1 or 2 people that you are most comfortable with, you know, who become like your *brothers* for you".

In essence, these regressions led to fantasies of containment and fantasies of what the participants would have liked the host environment to provide in order for them to feel safe, secure and accepted. They would have liked Wits or the Wits International Office to fulfil the duty of a protective "mother" to provide a safe environment for them, to make them feel accepted and integrated, and thus free to be themselves and experience a sense of continuity of being (Erikson, 1994). There were also fantasies of escape from the new environment, and of returning home or to a smaller, more containing place outside of Johannesburg.

The literature has shown that the emergence of a solid identity is dependent on a reformed self representation that encompasses the old and new self representation (Akhtar, 1995). The participants all seemed to experience a loss of objects, (the home country, friends, and family) but also a loss of part of the self or identity that was invested in those objects. Focusing on the past (the idealisation of the home) and the future (return to the homeland) can displace the immigrant even further and result in a fracture of the ego as the immigrant is unable to live in the present (Akhtar, 1995). By working through the loss, one can start to incorporate elements from the new environment making a closer connection between one's inner and outer worlds and if "one successfully works through the period of mourning for oneself and for objects, that encourages the progressive reestablishment of one's sense of identity" (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989, p. 97). The ego will be enriched and one might have a new sense of identity.

The participants seemed to respond in several ways to the threat to their identity. Several of them seemed to exhibit a foreclosure of identity whereby they sought protection within the group identity to protect them from the anxiety of having to restructure their personal identity (Hook, 2009). Thus, these participants seemed to be rejecting of the new environment and held strongly onto their old identities, refusing to give them up and to explore "different possible identities" (Hook, 2009, p. 300). We see this in how most of the participants associated only with other "foreigners" or family members and attempted to retain their existing identity as far as possible.

> P7: "I ended up with friends with people from other countries because of the situation...you always feel secure if someone is in a similar situation you are in...it helps because you've got someone to relax with, to talk your native language, and relax and just be your selves there without people who will find it strange...so it really helps it like gives you a sense of home...I don't have to act up you know or you know like accommodating other people".

Others seemed to be in a state of moratorium whereby due to the threat to their identity, they were exploring restructuring their identity but were still ambivalent as to committing to an identity (Hook, 2009).

> P4: “I also have a lot of South African friends so just kinda getting to know them and getting to know how they do things and getting to know what’s done and what’s not done and all of that has helped me adjust as well”.

Others felt that their identities were “mixed up” thus placing them in somewhat of a state of ego diffusion (Hook, 2009).

> P2: “You don’t even talk, you just want to go somewhere and blend in and it means going silently, not meeting people’s eyes”.

Although a few of the participants genuinely felt they had become more open to and accepting of diversity and difference, for many, this may reflect a deep need to feel accepted and to be an integral part of their social environment.

5.3. Conclusion

This research has endeavoured to explore and to understand the impact that living abroad has on internationals students’ sense of identity. It seems that the atmosphere of xenophobia in South Africa has impeded most of the participants’ acculturation to South Africa because it constantly threatened their sense of identity. A person’s identity is integrally related to the social environment and because the environment did not seem to recognize and accept them, it made it difficult for most of the participants to restructure their identities and establish a sense of continuity and social sameness (Erikson, 1994). The difficulty it seems, is that because the threats are still in the environment and constantly attacking their sense of identity, the participants still have to rely on their coping mechanisms (Timotijevic & Breakwell, 2000). Despite the constant threats to their sense of identity and the difficulties that they experienced, some of the participants felt that they had managed to cope, that they had survived and had gained some control of their lives. They felt a sense of personal growth in that they learnt to become more independent, more self reliant, and that because of this experience, they would now be able to cope in any environment.

5.4. Limitations

The researcher was forced to omit some aspects of the participants' experiences due to the volume and richness of the data as well as due to it falling outside the scope of this study. What was presented was most pertinent in addressing the aim of the study, namely, the impact that living abroad has on international students' sense of identity. It is important to indicate that the researcher's interest in this topic was driven by his own experiences of having lived and studied abroad. Therefore, the researcher's own reactions to the participants' experiences may possibly have been caused by an identification with them. Identification "can potentially cause problems in analysis: an over-identification with an interviewee on the basis of shared or analogous experiences may lead the analysis to force the data to conform to *his*/*her* experiences" (Storey, 2007, p. 54). Furthermore, the researcher, being a student in a clinical psychology training program, was particularly interested in the participants' intrapsychic worlds. Therefore it was important for the researcher to consider his own responses as this would have affected the interpretation that was brought to the data, but some aspects of the interpretation may have been unconscious to the researcher (Storey, 2007).

Although most of the participant's spoke English fluently, it was not their mother tongue. This may have made it difficult for the participants to express themselves clearly, especially since the concept of identity is a complex one. Ideally, the interviews would have been conducted in the participants' mother tongue or with the help of a translator. Although the participants seemed comfortable and willing to talk about their experiences, they may have been held back a bit, due to language difficulties, racial differences (the researcher being a white male), and feelings of mistrust (the researcher being South African). In light of this, a longitudinal study might have been preferred, with a series of interviews, whereby a more trusting relationship could have developed, which would have allowed the participants to explore their feelings and experiences more deeply.

Lastly, due to the small sample, the findings cannot be generalised to a larger population.

5.5. Recommendations

This research received tremendous interest from the international students who seemed very eager to share their experiences of living in South Africa. Unfortunately, only seven participants were required for this study, therefore many potential participants had to be turned down. Those that participated in the research expressed a great relief in having talked about their experiences and did not know that there were counselling services available to them on campus. Some of them said that they might have used the counselling service had they known about it. It is therefore recommended that the international students be made aware of the counselling services on campus and be encouraged to use it as a means of support. Another idea might be to develop a psychological intervention plan for the international students.

Furthermore, it is recommended that the university do more to try to help the international students acculturate. It seems that what the international students need from the university, is more social support, more integrated events with the host national students, more opportunities to meet host national students, and more of an open forum with the Wits International Office to be able to express their needs and concerns. It is also recommended that the Wits International Office provide the international students with more information and orientation as to life in South Africa, for example, the generally accepted social norms and etiquette.

Further research into international students' experiences in other universities and provinces is encouraged. There is also a clear need to address the xenophobic atmosphere in South Africa at higher levels, and to develop suitable interventions to combat it.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Ethics clearance certificate

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (SCHOOL OF HUMAN & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	**PROTOCOL NUMBER: MCLIN/09/006 IH**
PROJECT TITLE:	The self-reported psychological impact that a sojourn has on post-graduate international students from Africa, at a Johannesburg university.
INVESTIGATORS	Doron Zar
DEPARTMENT	Psychology
DATE CONSIDERED	24/03/09
DECISION OF COMMITTEE*	Approved

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

DATE: 06 May 2009

CHAIRPERSON
(Professor K.Cockcroft)

cc Supervisor:

Mr. Patrick Connolly
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 2010

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES

Appendix B: Cover letter to the Director and / or Deputy Director of the Wits International Office

The University of the Witwatersrand

School of Human and Community Development

Private Bag 3, Wits 2050, Johannesburg, South Africa

Tel: 011 717 4500 Fax: 011 717 4559

Date:

To the Director and / or Deputy Director of the Wits International Office

My name is Doron Zar, and I am conducting a research project for the purposes of obtaining a Masters degree in Clinical Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand. One of the requirements to fulfil the degree is to conduct a supervised research project. The research that I wish to conduct aims to look at the impact that living in South Africa has on international students' sense of identity.

In order to understand the self-reported impact that living abroad has on post graduate international students' sense of identity, I would like to invite interested international graduate students to participate in the research. I would like to request permission to carry out interviews with seven international students at Wits University, Johannesburg. Should you agree, I will then approach the international students to see who are willing to participate in the research. I will be conducting interviews with the participants, which will be recorded on a digital audio recorder. The interviews will last approximately 45 minutes. The interviews will then be

transcribed and interpreted. The results will be reported in my research report which will be handed in to the Department of Psychology at Wits. Once the research report has been completed, marked and passed, the recorded and transcribed material will be destroyed and the research report will be available to you and the participants in the Cullen Library, and a short summary will be available at the International Office.

Because the interviews will be face-to-face, I cannot assure anonymity of the participants. However, pseudonyms will be used in the research report and no personal identifying information will be used in the report. I can guarantee the participants confidentiality because I will only need to interview seven international students out of the several hundred that are enrolled at Wits. Furthermore, only my supervisor and I will have access to the recorded and transcribed material.

The international students' participation is entirely voluntary and there are no negative consequences should they choose not to participate. Participant consent will be required in order to carry out the interview as well as to record it, and the participant is entitled not to answer any questions they find uncomfortable. The participant can also terminate the interview at any time. At the end of the interview, there will be time for debriefing should a participant require it, and although it is not anticipated, should a participant feel the need for counselling subsequent to the interview, counselling services will be made available to them free of charge at the Counselling and Careers Development Unit (CCDU) at Wits, and at LifeLine.

I do hope that you will grant me access to approach the international students so that they may be able to participate in this study, and if you choose to do so, please will you sign the consent form.

If you have any questions regarding this study, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Doron Zar (Student)

Cell: 082 321 8959 Email: kdzar@hotmail.com

Patrick Connolly (Supervisor)

Cell: 082 863 2735

Appendix C: Consent form for the Director and / or Deputy Director of the Wits International Office

I, _____, Director / Deputy Director of the Wits International Office, hereby grant permission to Doron Zar to conduct interviews with international students at the university, should they consent to participate. I understand that the research is for the purpose of obtaining a Masters degree in Psychology and that the study will look at the self-reported impact that living in South Africa has on post graduate international students' sense of identity. I understand that participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that the confidentiality of the participants can be guaranteed. Furthermore, no personal identifying information pertaining to the international students will be reported in the research. I may access the final research report in the William Cullen Library and a short summary will be made available at the Wits International Office.

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Appendix D: Cover letter to the international students

The University of the Witwatersrand

School of Human and Community Development

Private Bag 3, Wits 2050, Johannesburg, South Africa

Tel: 011 717 4500 Fax: 011 717 4559

Date:

Dear International Postgraduate Student,

My name is Doron Zar, and I am conducting a research project for the purposes of obtaining a Masters degree in Clinical Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand. One of the requirements to fulfil the degree is to conduct a supervised research project. The research that I wish to conduct will look at the impact that living in South Africa has on post graduate international students and their sense of identity.

I would like to invite you to participate in the research. If you are interested in taking part, I will be conducting an interview on the university premises in a private office in the Emthonjeni Centre at a time that is convenient for you. The interview will last approximately 45 minutes and with your permission, I would like to record the interviews on a digital audio recorder. You will also be asked to complete a short demographic questionnaire. The recorded material will then be transcribed and interpreted. The recorded material will be kept safe in a locked drawer, and only my supervisor and I will have access to the recorded and transcribed material.

I will make sure that you cannot be indentified in any way in the final report. False names will be used in the research report and no personal identifying information will be included. Therefore I can guarantee your confidentiality.

The results will be reported in my research report which is to be handed in to the Department of Psychology at Wits. Where necessary in the research report, in order to illustrate some of the points or arguments, I will use some direct quotations from the interviews. This means that the words of those who take part in the research may be reported directly, but given that any identifying information will be excluded or disguised, it will not be possible to link quotes to individuals. Once the research report has been completed, marked and passed, the recorded and transcribed material will be destroyed.

Your participation is entirely voluntary and you will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way should you choose to participate or not participate in the study. Should you choose to participate, you are also entitled not to answer any questions you find uncomfortable, and you can terminate the interview at any time. At the end of the interview, there will be time for a short discussion about how you found the interview if you wish to discuss this. Although it is not anticipated that this will be likely, should you feel the need for counselling after the interview, counselling services are available free of charge at the Counselling and Careers Development Unit (CCDU) at Wits, and at LifeLine, and we can discuss these options.

If you choose to participate in the study, please will you sign the consent forms. You will be able to access the final research report in the William Cullen Library and a short summary will be available at the Wits International Office. It is possible that the findings of the research report may be published in a journal article.

If you have any questions regarding this study, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Doron Zar (Student)

Cell: 082 321 8959

Email: kdzar@hotmail.com

Patrick Connolly (Supervisor)

Office: 011 717 4547

Counselling and Careers Development Unit (CCDU): 011 717 3500

LifeLine: 011 728 1347

Appendix E: Consent form (interviewed) for the international students

I, _____, an international student at Wits University, Johannesburg, hereby agree to participate in the study and to be interviewed by Doron Zar. I understand that the research is for the purpose of his obtaining a Masters degree in Psychology and that the study will look at the self-reported impact that living abroad has on post graduate international students' sense of identity. I understand that participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that no personal identifying information pertaining to me will be reported in the research, except for the use of direct quotes where required. Furthermore, I may choose not to answer any questions I find uncomfortable, and that I can terminate the interview at any point.

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Appendix F: Consent form (recorded) for the international students

I, _____, an international student at Wits University, Johannesburg, hereby agree to participate in the study and for the interview to be recorded on a digital audio recorder by Doron Zar. I understand that all information recorded during the interview will be held privately by the researcher, Doron Zar. The digital audio recordings will be kept in a safe place and only the researcher, Doron Zar, and his supervisor will have access to the recorded and transcribed material. Once the research report is completed, marked and passed, the recorded and transcribed material will be destroyed.

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Appendix G: Semi-structured interview schedule

1. What effect has leaving your home country to come and study in South Africa had on you?
2. How do you feel you have adjusted or adapted to South Africa and to Wits University?
3. Has xenophobia in South Africa affected you, and if so, how?
4. Has your sense of identity, both personal and social, changed since being in South Africa, and if so, how?
5. Has your sense of role and status changed since being in South Africa?
6. What methods do you use to help you cope with living in South Africa?
7. Are there any other problems that you have encountered in living in South Africa?

Probing questions:

1. Do you feel any different when you are in the university campus and when you are outside of it?
2. Has your social identity changed?

Appendix H: Demographic questionnaire

1. What is your age?
2. What country are you from?
3. What is your mother tongue?
4. How long have you been in South Africa?
5. How long do you plan to be in South Africa?
6. Did you come to South Africa alone or with someone? If so, what is your relationship to that person(s)?
7. Do you live on campus or off campus?