



**UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA**

**Exploring the lived experiences of African immigrant students at  
tertiary institutions in the Gauteng region**

By Linah Sesheba

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for the degree**

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**UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA**

**SUPERVISOR: DR T.A. THOMAS**

**December 2021**

## DECLARATION

STUDENT NUMBER: 1001842

I declare that

**Exploring the lived experiences of African immigrant students at tertiary institutions in the Gauteng region** is my own work and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete reference.

Ms Linah Sesheba



**Signature**

10 December 2021

**Date**



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## ABSTRACT

### **Exploring the lived experiences of African immigrant students at tertiary institutions in the Gauteng region.**

Historically, the trends in literature have focused on educational migration from the less developed global South to the more developed global North and not migration *within* the global South. To add a voice to the growing South-to-South migration patterns, this qualitative study aimed to explore African immigrant tertiary students' socio-cultural and academic experiences within the Gauteng region in South Africa. The study was located within a phenomenological theoretical framework and used semi-structured interviews to explore the lived experienced of four participants. The data was analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), where four super-ordinate themes were identified. These included 1). The initial experiences of South Africa as an immigrant student, 2). Experiences relating to language use 3). 'Us' and 'them' in the university experience, and 4). The learning experiences of African immigrant students. The implications of the findings for African immigrant students and recommendations for future research conclude the study.

**Keywords:** African immigrants, Gauteng, phenomenological study, tertiary institutions



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# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1. Introduction

The migration of the human race from one society to another has existed since the dawn of human civilisation. Many of these movements originate from the search for resources, escape from danger and access to education. Stromquist (2012) argues that the rising population of some regions in the world, coupled with globalisation, have escalated these movements to such an extent that the discussion concerning migration and the experience thereof has become the most critical discussion of the past 100 years. This discussion is not isolated to migration from the less developed global South to the more developed global North, but also migration *within* the global South. Looking at the local context, Macha and Kadakia (2017) indicate that South Africa attracts more immigrant students than other African nations. As of 2014, “South Africa was the fourth most popular destination for internationally mobile degree seekers from across Africa, behind France, the United States of America [USA] and the United Kingdom [UK]” (Macha & Kadakia, 2017, p. 2). However, despite this increase in immigrant students entering South African tertiary institutions, very little is known about the challenges they may face and their varied experiences in South African tertiary institutions. For that reason, this research dissertation aims to explore the socio-cultural and academic experiences of African immigrant tertiary students.

In this chapter, the researcher will introduce the study along with the research problem and questions. The aims and objectives of the research study will be presented along with the study’s justification. The chapter will conclude with an outline of the subsequent chapters and the structure of this mini-dissertation.

## 1.2. Research problem

The dawn of democracy in South Africa witnessed an increasing number of African immigrant students’ entry into South African universities (Vandeyar, 2012). Evidently, the end of apartheid has created new opportunities for migration to South Africa that we are yet to comprehend fully (Vandeyar, 2012). The early years of democracy were marked by a trend within research that fixated on black and white race dynamics as an increasing number of black South African students entered historically white universities. Much research sought to capture this dynamic. Twenty-seven years

post the introduction of democracy; there has been a notable addition to this debate in the form of a new dynamic unfolding at schools and universities alike, namely, African immigrant students (Dominguez-Whitehead & Sing, 2015).

The growth of internationalisation within the tertiary education space makes these institutions a fertile area for xenophobia. Vandeyar and Vandeyar (2017) reveal that, although xenophobia describes as a set of prejudices against foreign-born people, it is not limited to an attitude or mindset. In the South African context, xenophobia is often aimed at people of African descent. As has been well-documented in recent years (Crush, 2008; Asakitikpi & Gadzikwa, 2015; Bello & Tunde, 2017), xenophobia has resulted in violent clashes between South Africans and foreign nationals; the most well-known being the 2008 xenophobic violence. Originating in the Johannesburg Township, Alexandra, the violence was epitomised by attacks on African foreign nationals by South Africans. The image that came to define the violence was that of Ernesto Alfabeto Nhamuave, a 35-year old father of three from Mozambique, who was burnt to death (Desai, 2010). According to official reports, the death toll rose to 62 people in nine days, a third of whom were South Africans (Crush, 2008). In addition, “some 342 shops were looted, 213 were destroyed, and 1384 people were arrested” (Crush, 2008, p. 11).

Anti-migrant beliefs and stereotyping driven by entrenched cultural, social and economic motivations and misconceptions have been recognised as leading factors behind this violence (Asakitikpi & Gadzikwa, 2015). In addition, Tella (2016) states that South Africa’s unequal society allows for anti-migrant positions to fester, as access to resources is already compromised for the local black population. Thus, these anti-migrant positions serve as a scapegoat to the fundamental issue of the shortcomings of governance and the precarious job prospects many black South Africans face. Although previous research has investigated immigrant students’ experiences internationally (Al-Sharideh & Goe, 1998; Dika & Singh, 2002; Pearce & Lin 2007; Yeh et al., 2008), there has been a lack of research that focuses on the subject of African immigrants and their experiences in the tertiary academic setting within the South African context. As Pearce and Lin (2007) have highlighted, immigrant students are particularly vulnerable as they do not have support structures readily available (in the form of familial relationships) in the countries where they pursue their studies, as may be the case for South African students.

Furthermore, immigrant students are under enormous pressure to complete their studies within the prescribed period of a given qualification. This pressure is because study visas issued for studies at learning institutions (other than primary and high schools) are issued for the duration of the course registered for (Department of Home Affairs, 2016). Thus, failure to complete studies during the specified period may result in an immigrant student losing their study visa. This, Adebajji, Goode, and Gumbo, (2014) contend, may result in an increased sense of pressure and expectation for immigrant students. This pressure could stem from familial relationships, as they do not wish to disappoint their families and the burden of the cost of their studies on their families. The pressure could also be evident in their personal lives, as they grapple with the weight of expectation, the anxiety this may cause and the fear of losing their study visas should they not complete their studies in the prescribed time. This anxiety is a valid concern, particularly when one considers the cost of the fees at South African institutions. Immigrant students contribute significantly to the host institution's financial standing. Donaldson and Gatsinzi (2005) state that revenue created by immigrant students for the higher education sector in 2003 South Africa was approximated to be over one billion rands. The bulk of immigrant students rely on familial or personal funding to cover the costs of their studies. In 2015, the amount was estimated to have grown threefold from 2003 (Dominguez-Whitehead & Sing, 2015).

Many African immigrants may not be well-versed in using English (and/or the local South African languages) as their primary language of communication both in an academic and social context. This is particularly the case for immigrants from non-English-speaking African countries who face unique linguistic challenges in South Africa's university space. Adebajji and Gumbo (2014) argue that the determinants of access to tertiary education in South Africa tend to be different for students from Francophone countries compared to other African countries. Students from francophone African countries are more likely to be denied access to degree programmes than students from other non-francophone African countries (Adebajji & Gumbo, 2014). The students are often required to complete a pre-degree programme to be considered academically fit to be placed in their chosen degree programme in a South African higher education institution (Adebajji, Goode, & Gumbo, 2014). Adebajji and Gumbo (2014) state that there are significant differences between the curricula of higher education institutions in these students' home countries and the curricula of South African higher education institutions. This difference required them to complete pre-degree programmes to be deemed academically fit. Ultimately, these linguistic challenges may lead to severe

difficulty among Francophone, Portuguese, Arabic and other non-English immigrant students to partake in self-regulated learning. Self-regulated learning refers to the ability to understand, monitor and control one's learning environment (Sun, Xie, & Anderman, 2018). Thus, the inability to engage in self-regulated learning may ultimately result in academic dropout (Yeh et al., 2008).

In general social contexts, immigrant students' inability to converse in at least one of the leading local languages is often met with unfriendliness and discrimination (Adebanji, 2010). This inability makes it difficult for immigrant students to make friends, converse with the local students and integrate effectively. Studies have previously linked discrimination with poor psychological wellbeing. This includes the occurrence of psychological ailments such as low self-esteem and depression (Greene, Way & Pahl, 2006; Arthur, 2017; Singh, 2019). In their study on Chinese immigrant students, Poyrazli and Lopez (2007) found higher rates of perceived discrimination among Chinese immigrant students than students from the host country in USA tertiary institutions. Thus, when considering the issues faced by immigrant students while adapting to the host country, as discussed above, a clear and detailed exploration of African immigrant students' lived experiences will allow for a richer understanding of their experiences in South African tertiary institutions. They will add an essential narrative in the discussion of South-to-South educational migration that is currently missing. The lack of comprehensive literature on this topic means that this exploration can ultimately add to a more comprehensive understanding of how African immigrant individuals experience broader social issues such as xenophobia in the campus context. In addition, the current study would allow for a greater appreciation and awareness of the psychological wellbeing of African immigrant students that share these lived experiences. For this reason, this research study aims to explore the socio-cultural and academic experiences of African immigrant tertiary students using an interpretative phenomenological approach.

### **1.3.Statement of research questions**

This study aims to explore the socio-cultural and academic experiences of African immigrant students registered at South African tertiary institutions. These students are inclusive of both registered undergraduate and postgraduate students. The following questions will guide the process:

- What are the socio-cultural experiences of African immigrant students in Gauteng-based tertiary institutions?
- What are the academic experiences of African immigrant students in Gauteng-based tertiary institutions?

#### **1.4. Justifications Aim and objectives**

##### **1.4.1. Research Aim**

- The aim of this study is to explore the socio-cultural and academic experiences of African immigrant students registered at tertiary institutions in the Gauteng region.

##### **1.4.2. Research Objectives**

- To conduct an in-depth exploration of the socio-cultural experiences of African immigrant students registered at tertiary institutions in the Gauteng region.
- To conduct an in-depth exploration of the academic experiences of African immigrants registered at tertiary institutions in the Gauteng region.

##### **1.4.3. Justification of the study**

Hiralal (2015) stresses the importance of considering the interwoven importance that social and cultural factors play in students' academic achievement. There is a lack of empirical data on the African immigrant tertiary student's experience within developing countries. Although there are a few studies on immigrant students in the South African tertiary education context, particularly in recent years (Shindondola, 2002; Adebajji & Gumbo, 2014; Dominguez-Whitehead & Sing, 2015; Hiralal, 2015), almost none have looked at academic and socio-cultural experiences in conjunction with each other. The local studies below have focused on African immigrant students and the impact that xenophobia has had on them (Shindondola, 2002), challenges experienced in higher education (Dominguez-Whitehead & Sing, 2015), French-speaking immigrant students' academic experiences in private higher education institutions (Adebajji & Gumbo, 2014) and immigrant student mobility in the higher education space (Hiralal, 2015).

The majority of the international studies within this field have focused on student mobility, particularly from the global South to the global North. Thus, there remains a gap in the literature regarding South-South students that focus on the tertiary space. The bias toward the West is because,

until recently, the trend has been for people to move from developing to developed countries for higher education opportunities (Dzansi, 2006; Macha & Kadakia, 2017). Hence, research findings within the study of immigrant students have been shaped by the global North. Although there are a growing number of study opportunities in the global South that are attracting many African immigrants, the South African tertiary education system attracts vast numbers of immigrant students, which Macha and Kadakia (2017) attribute to it being the “most extensive and [of the] highest quality on the African continent”. (p. 3)

The evidence presented above does show that African immigrant students’ experiences are an understudied phenomenon within the academic literature in the developing world. For that reason, they warrant further investigation. Thus, for this study, the focus will be on the socio-cultural and academic experiences of the African immigrant student in the tertiary institution context of South Africa.

## **1.5. Definition of concepts**

In this subsection, concepts central to the current study are defined to clarify the context in which the concepts will be used in this study. Important to note that these concepts will be defined as per the findings of the relevant literature. However, these definitions will only be used as a starting point and not limit the lived experiences of the participants of this study, as the participants’ experiences will likely reveal more.

### **1.5.1. Academic Experiences**

The term academic experience can be understood to include several concepts. These concepts include (but are not limited to) academic self-efficacy, academic achievement and resilience. Qin et al. (2008) state that the academic experiences of immigrant students cannot be understood outside of the academic factors that immigrant students have had to negotiate throughout their educational trajectories. The authors further highlight academic self-efficacy, academic achievement and resiliency as fundamental cornerstones in these educational trajectories. Thus, this study will aim to gather data encompassing these terms but not be limited to this. Pearce and Lin (2007) indicate that immigrant students are likely to complete their studies in their host countries despite the challenges they may experience and attribute this primarily to academic self-efficacy and resilience. Self-efficacy

is a concept well studied within various areas of psychology (including but not limited to addiction, dietary behaviour, alcohol abuse). However, in the academic context, academic self-efficacy is understood to refer to “learner judgements about one’s ability to attain educational goals successfully” (Elias & MacDonald, 2007, p. 2520). Resilience is more complex. Various understandings of resilience can be found within the literature. The most relevant definition for this study is presented by Masten (2001). In this definition, resilience refers to “a class of phenomena characterised by good outcomes despite severe threats to adaptation or development” (Masten, 2001, p. 228). Therefore, students must preserve and maintain a high level of intrinsic motivation and performance, despite severe threats and conditions resulting in poor performance and ultimately dropping out of school (Trigueros et al., 2019). This understanding is particularly relevant in understanding how immigrant students attain positive academic outcomes despite the challenges experienced. Bücken, Nuraydin, Simonsmeier, Schneider, and Luhmann (2018) state that “academic achievement is a central indicator of positive psychological functioning and is a variable of interest when identifying the characteristics of high-performing education systems” (p. 83). Academic achievement is critical to the central developmental goals students often set for themselves (Steinmayr et al., 2016). Studies have previously found that academic achievement is associated with higher self-concept (Guay, Marsh, & Boivin, 2003) and higher self-efficacy (Zajacova et al., 2005). The terms defined in this section all form part of academic experiences.

### **1.5.2. Socio-Cultural Experiences**

The term socio-cultural broadly refers to “language, law, values, religion, and family background within societies that affect individuals’ thoughts, behaviours, and feelings” (Njok & Edinyang, 2014, p. 690). Larson and Marsh (2005, p. 339) extend this understanding further by defining the term socio-cultural as the consciousness of experiences negotiated by individuals concerning their past. This definition lends itself to the idea that each person is the “aftermath of a societal, ethnic, assertive and chronological interplay of forces prevalent at a particular time in a particular place” (Larson & Marsh, 2005., p. 339). Chow (2006) built on Larson and Marsh’s (2005) definition by adding language as a critical determinant in framing one’s socio-cultural experiences. Given these definitions, an understanding of the past and present events negotiated by African immigrant students will be explored in the current study (this will be evident in the following interview questions: “*How did your classmates and lecturers treat you initially*”? And “*How would you describe the way they treat you*”

now” which require participants to narrate their experiences of past and present events). Language frames one’s experiences as it determines to what degree one can engage with their environment (Chow, 2006). This ability to engage in one’s environment is evident in the experiences of immigrants who must navigate various local languages to gain acceptance and belonging in their host country (Njok & Edinyang, 2014). This study will also explore the experience of learning a language in the acculturation of immigrant students. *Acculturation* refers to “changes that occur as a result of contact with culturally dissimilar people, groups, and social influences” (Gibson, 2001, p. 20). The participants will be asked to explore their journey (past and possibly present journey) of learning a new language through the following question “*How did you cope with learning a new language*”? In that way, the participants would narrate their experiences of past and present events of learning a new language and how that enriched (or hindered) their lived experiences in the host country. Adebajji (2010) indicates that socio-cultural experiences are often intertwined with the academic experiences of immigrant students. For that reason, this study will explore both the socio-cultural and academic experiences of African immigrant students.

### **1.5.3. Tertiary Institution**

The World Bank (2018) defines tertiary institutions as “establishments that offer post-secondary education, including public and private universities, colleges, technical training institutes, and vocational schools” (p. 3). Within the current study, the term ‘tertiary institution’ refers to an accredited public university.

## **1.6. Structure of the mini-dissertation**

The remainder of this dissertation will include the following chapters:

Chapter 2: Literature review

With this chapter, an overview of the literature that informed this study is discussed and critically evaluated. Various studies that have looked at immigrant student populations are thus highlighted in this chapter in relation to the current research.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Underpinnings

The theoretical underpinnings of the study are discussed in this chapter. Thus, it is here that an in-depth discussion regarding phenomenology and its applicability to the lived experiences of African immigrants is extended upon.

#### Chapter 4: Methodology

This chapter identifies the research methodology that will be utilised in this study. Included in this discussion is the rationale for using qualitative methodology, the sampling procedure used, the process of collecting the data, quality assurance and finally, several ethical considerations.

#### Chapter 5: Findings

In this chapter, the findings of the study are presented. A description of each participant is provided. Each super-ordinate theme that was derived from the analysis process is presented along with the accompanying subordinate themes. Accompanying quotes are included to support the identified themes further.

#### Chapter 6: Discussion of Findings

In the final chapter of this mini-dissertation, the interpretation of the findings will be explored. This interpretation incorporates relevant literature to provide an integrated account of the findings in light of themes noted in the study and the literature. This section includes the study's conclusion, and several strengths and limitations to the study are discussed. The mini-dissertation concludes with possible implications and recommendations uncovered in the study.

### **1.7. Conclusion**

This chapter provided an overview of the research. The context of the research problem and the aims, objectives, and justification of the study were stated. A brief description of the research questions was provided, followed by an outline of the chapters of this research. The following chapter will discuss the literature relevant to the study of the socio-cultural and academic experiences of African immigrant tertiary students.

## **Chapter 2: Literature review**

### **2.1. Introduction**

The previous chapter introduced the reader to the current study. The purpose of this literature chapter can be explained in three reasons. Firstly, the researcher will present an overview of immigration according to South African literature and clarify the current study's application of the immigrant student term. Secondly, to establish what problems are experienced by immigrant students by their immigrant status according to existing literature. Lastly, the research will situate the African immigrant student, the main subject of this study, within the broader context of immigration and migration in South Africa.

### **2.2. Categories of foreignness**

It is important to note that various categories of non-citizenship exist within legislative discourse. Thus, to begin with, this section of the literature review will situate the African immigrant within the broader phenomenon of being considered foreign. The researcher does this by detailing the various categories of non-citizenship identified by South Africa's Immigration Act (2002) and, ultimately, where these students fit within these categorisations.

#### **2.2.1. Permanent Resident**

The Aliens Control Amendment Act (1995) and the updated Immigration Act (2002) defines a permanent resident permit "as a permit to immigrate to the Republic to take up permanent residence". (p. 11)

#### **2.2.2. Temporary Resident**

The Aliens Control Amendment Act (1995) also recognises six different temporary residence permits, namely: work seeker's permit, work permit, study permit, visitor's permit, business permit and medical permit. For this study, only the study permit will be further elaborated upon by the researcher.

#### **2.2.3. Refugee status and Asylum seekers**

In terms of Section 3, chapter 1 of the Refugee Act (1998), a person qualifies for refugee status for the following possible reasons:

- Out of fear of persecution for reasons that concern race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group.
- When a person is outside of their country of origin and is unwilling or unable to give themselves to the protection of that country;
- When a person does not have a nationality and is outside the country of their former residence, is unable or unwilling, out of fear, to return to it, or;
- Due to external hostility, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disrupting public order in either part or the whole of their country of origin or nationality, is compelled to leave their place of residence and seek refuge elsewhere or;
- Is a dependent of a person described above

The Refugee Act (1998) also defines an asylum seeker as a person seeking recognition as a refugee (p. 8)

#### **2.2.4. Undocumented Migrant**

The Immigration Act of (2002) states that an undocumented migrant is a person who is in the Republic of South Africa in contravention of the Act, and these persons are deemed to be illegal foreigners. Therefore, the law mandates that they be deported.

#### **2.2.5. Immigrant students**

The Immigration Act of (2002) allows anyone who is not a citizen, does not have permanent residency, or does not have a diplomatic exemption to qualify as an immigrant student in South Africa. Students are required to acquire a temporary residence visa, and the tertiary institutions in which they are enrolled are required to check these visas before registration can occur. Important to note, the amended Immigration Act (2002), in May 2014, added that study visas will no longer be allotted for language courses, practical training or other education but only for education/studies offered by any registered institution of higher education, college or school under the Schools Act. Additionally, the Immigration Act (2002) now states that study visas can be issued for the duration of studies rather than renewing them yearly. An immigrant student enrolled at a tertiary institution is also allowed to work part-time for a period not exceeding 20 hours per week without applying for additional authorisation (Home Affairs, 2015).

### **2.3. History of immigrant student research within international and national contexts**

From the available literature, extensive academic work on immigrant student experiences and adjustment problems started and gathered momentum in the early eighties with the work of Yeung (1980). This study collected data in the USA and identified financial, language, and socio-cultural problems as the main areas that defined experiences for immigrant students.

Three critical studies were further conducted by the end of the 1990s. This includes the works of Kono (1999), Chng (1999) and Maundeni (1999). Kono (1999) interviewed international students from 13 different countries in the Americas and identified language and social factors as challenging areas for immigrant students to navigate. Chng's (1999) study identified financial aid, student service, and residence as most challenging in the experiences of immigrant students in Asia. Maundeni's (1999) study revealed that female African students abroad found their adjustment more difficult than their male counterparts in the USA and UK. This finding is consistent with that of Chng et al. (1998), who had earlier found noteworthy differences in stress levels for male and female Chinese immigrant students. Thus, making a solid case for exploring gender in the study of immigrant student adjustment.

Research continued in the twenty-first century with the works of Leung (2001), Shindondola (2002); Williams and Buttler (2003); and Wang (2004). This time, however, attention shifted towards developing economies. A relevant example of this would be Shindondola's (2002) study. This study was pioneering due to its exclusive focus on the African context. The study found that African immigrant students experienced xenophobia at Rand Afrikaans University (RAU). Notably, it recounted the abuse of African immigrant students from other African countries by police and immigration officials. Leung (2001) and Wang (2004) turned their attention to Asian students and, more specifically, those from China studying in the USA. Interestingly, the two studies produced identical results. Leung (2001) found that Chinese immigrant students felt lonelier, unlike students from other cultural backgrounds, were least confident socially, and least confident with their academic studies. Wang's (2004) study also pointed to a close interaction between the Chinese students' difficulty with academic adjustment and their ability to integrate into their new socio-cultural environment. Leung (2001) therefore recommended that when planning curricula and classes, university administrators should consider the specific needs of all cultural groups. As these studies were conducted in the more developed global North, it would be essential to understand whether these academic experiences are also found in the developing global South. Thus, academic experiences within the global South setting is a contribution that this study aims to make.

Not many corroborating studies focused on African immigrants, and those that do were almost exclusively from North America. This focus is evident in studies like that of Halter and Johnson (2014). Their study, which focused on African immigrants study in the USA, showed that, although first-generation African immigrants in the USA do well, second-generation African immigrants do not attain the same level of success. In fact, Halter and Johnson (2014) state that there is a “stratified second-generation decline” (p.31), whereby the children of recent immigrants often face downward mobility and limited opportunities for advancement. Another author, Lee (2005), reached similar findings. However, in Lee’s study, the conclusion was that academic achievement among immigrant students depends on the student’s socio-cultural experience at home and within their school setting. These authors argued that these factors relied on whether the student opted to take the acculturation or enculturation route. Acculturation can be understood as a depiction of how people negotiate their belonging within a specific socio-cultural context (Adebanji & Gumbo, 2014). Diallo (2015) describes enculturation as the process where a person learns the traditional content and integrates said content into their psyche. Thus, the author argued that first-generation African immigrant students were more likely to participate in the enculturation process, meaning they are more willing to follow their adopted country’s cultural values and expectations (Halter & Johnson, 2014; Lee, 2005). However, second-generation African immigrant students were expected to follow an acculturation process as their willingness to assimilate is seen by their parents as being negative and being “Americanised”. These competing realities between acculturation and enculturation often lead to a conflict within the second-generation immigrant student, negatively impacting their educational experiences (Diallo, 2015).

There is a lack of empirical data on the African immigrant student’s experience within developing countries. In fact, except for Shindondola’s (2002) work on African immigrant student experience of xenophobia at the University of Johannesburg, South Africa, most of the empirical studies to date have been conducted in developed countries. The bias toward the West can be explained by the fact that the trend has been for people to move from developing to developed countries for their higher education (Dzansi, 2006). Thus, the result has been that empirical findings from the Western context have shaped most realisations concerning immigrant students. For this reason, the study will focus on the socio-cultural experiences of African immigrant students. The South African perspective offers a different voice. Many African immigrant students in South African tertiary institutions are from the SADC region, where language and intercultural experiences may not differ overtly. However, it is

also possible that due to South Africa's recent experiences with xenophobia attacks, African immigrant students may feel particularly isolated and, thus, dissatisfied with their opportunities for social cohesion. Therefore, the current study will endeavour to add its voice to the literature of immigrant student experiences, particularly situated in the South African context

## **2.4. Socio-cultural experiences of immigrant students**

Vandeyar (2010) states that socio-cultural experiences encompass schooling experiences (academic and social experiences within and outside the classroom setting), language use, acculturation and identity. Larson and Marsh (2005) define 'socio-cultural' as the awareness of students' backgrounds and personal histories. The authors further state that each student is a product of "the social, cultural, political, and historical forces present in any given time and place" (p. 339). It is essential to understand that the socio-cultural experiences of immigrant students are often marred by discrimination, harassment, isolation, language barriers, social standing, cultural changes, social change, acculturation, school environment, friendships, sense of belonging, and identity (Qin, Way, & Mukerjee, 2008). For this study, however, this section will narrow its focus to the role of language in immigrant experiences, the process of acculturation, and discrimination (particularly xenophobia) and identity formation amongst immigrant students.

### **2.4.1. The role of language in the experiences of immigrant students**

A significant factor in socio-cultural experiences is language, which serves as a gatekeeper for acceptance in the host society. It also serves the purpose of forming the foundation for interaction between local and immigrant students (Vandeyar & Vandeyar, 2012). Yeung (1980) identified understanding American idioms, slang, and accents as challenges experienced by Asian immigrant students. These challenges could explain why the same students found it very difficult to participate in class discussions, use the library, write assignments, were slow to develop their English vocabulary and express themselves in English (Yeung, 1980). Moreover, Vandeyar and Vandeyar (2011) state that immigrant students are often deprived of the basic tenets of language in a new environment due to a lack of familiarity with the local languages. This may lead to their exclusion, both academically and socially. Wang and Phillion (2007) make an interesting deduction where they reveal that within the host society, "language is not just a cultural issue but a political one" (p. 95). This observation refers to the fact that those who control the school boards, the higher education institutions—all of

whom tend to be within the dominant group in society- will determine which languages are taught in schools and tertiary institutions alike. Thus, in essence, the inability of minority groups to communicate well in the mainstream socio-cultural context may lead to their exclusion at school, in social groups and ultimately in the host society (Vandeyar & Vandeyar, 2011).

Wang and Phillion (2007) further state that difficulties experienced with new language engagement can be susceptible to the acculturation process and the sense of belonging of immigrants. Taylor and Doherty (2005) argue that immigrant students who are new to their host country, especially those who cannot interact with local students because of a language barrier, are also prone to experiencing difficulties participating in sporting and recreational activities. This finding is supported by the Soudien report, where Lewins (2010) revealed that tension and thus conflict were a regular occurrence in residence life within the university context due to the discriminatory and exclusionary practices. This was typically evident in historically white, Afrikaans medium universities where these practices discriminated against and excluded students based on race, nationality, and language (Lewins, 2010). To combat this discrimination, the Soudien report recommended that residences use democratic means to allow all voices to be heard “and ensure that residences are constituted in ways that limit opportunities for dominance or manipulation by particular groups of students” (IRTC, 2019, p. 88-89). Cultures may differ because of the historical identities of institutions, and it would be interesting to see what the current study findings reveal, considering the current study participants are all in historically white institutions.

It is important to realise that African immigrant students are often not seen by fellow students and lecturers alike as any different from local black South African students but are understood differently because of their accent. Their accent may be viewed as a significant identifier that ultimately separates them from the local black students (Aikhionbare, 2007). The implication is that all accents, whether “valid” or not, are then used as the ultimate tool to identify and therefore “mark” a student as being foreign and thus, “Other”. This marking has had many repercussions in the past, as evidenced by the 2008 xenophobia attacks (Crush, 2008). Therefore, this study will also explore the role of language in excluding or including immigrant students in the higher education space.

Language contributes to immigrant students’ sense of belonging. In conversing in their home languages, immigrant students can maintain a sense of connection to their home countries and cultural identities by regularly communicating with fellow students from their home countries and family

members. This viewpoint is supported by Allen et al. (2012). Their study found that West African students at American universities utilised indigenous languages to maintain or establish connections to their West African heritage and negotiate their experiences with American culture in a place where engaging with others in their home language was not an option. Therefore, the extent to which an immigrant student feels a sense of belonging when facing language barriers in their new environment does play an essential role in their level of acculturation, as Yeh et al. (2008) highlighted in their study.

#### **2.4.2. Understanding the acculturation process in academic environments**

Acculturation can be understood as a depiction of how people negotiate their belonging within a specific socio-cultural context (Adebanji & Gumbo, 2014). Acculturation of immigrant students occurs when they are connected to one or more cultures in addition to their own culture. This interplay of cultural forces is apparent when individuals express their identities to show the extent of their connections to ethnic leanings (Berry, 1995). The route to acculturation involves grasping and embracing the prevalent cultures and traditions of the host institution and society. Berry's (1997) bidimensional model of acculturation provides a comprehensive application of this acculturation process. The basis of the model suggests that people can acquire particular facets of the host country's culture while still maintaining the culture of their country of origin (Berry, 1997). In this way, the model embraces one's ability to interweave aspects of the host country's heritage with that of the country of origin; this is called biculturalism (Berry, 1997; Berry, 2003). In the model of acculturation, Berry (1997) posits four distinct characteristics of receiving-culture acquisition and heritage-culture. Schwartz and Zamboanga (2008) describe these as follows:

Assimilation (acquires the receiving culture and discards the heritage culture), separation (rejects the receiving culture and retains the heritage culture), integration (acquires the receiving culture and retains the heritage culture), and marginalisation (rejects the receiving culture and discards the heritage culture) (p. 276).

Furthermore, Jogee, Callaghan, and Callaghan (2018) argue that the unsuccessful adaptation to the higher education environment is associated with acculturative stress. Acculturative stress refers to a potentially severe consequence of one's inability to successfully integrate into a new environment

which displays itself as feelings of depression, anxiety, identity crisis, isolation and despondency (Jogee, Callaghan & Callaghan, 2018). These experiences are evident in the work of Al-Sharideh and Goe (1998). The authors conducted a study that investigated how certain aspects of the social environment provided by an American university impacted the psychological wellbeing of immigrant students. Using disproportionate sampling to avoid the likely exclusion of countries with fewer students, the authors found that loneliness, unfamiliarity with American traditions, norms and values, and importantly, loss of social status were prevalent issues. Remarkably, loneliness, unfamiliarity with American traditions, norms, values, and feelings of loss of social class correlate strongly with self-esteem. This finding may imply that the self-esteem of each immigrant student could play a vital part in encapsulating the immigrant student's experience.

Adebanji and Gumbo (2014) state that the acceptance of an academic environment by immigrant students can be regarded as their integration into that academic institution. Therefore, the researchers argue that the extent to which a student embraces the acculturation process, and begins to accept the institutional norms and values as their own, can be described as academic acculturation (Adebanji & Gumbo, 2014). Of course, acculturation can be viewed as more than simply the route to learning new customs and doctrines; it necessarily includes the capacity of immigrant students to outgrow their home-grown culture and assimilate into a novel culture. Accordingly, the extent of an immigrant student's acculturation is usually an indicator of the degree of that student's integration into their university context (Yeh et al., 2008). The extent of the sense of belonging that immigrant students who face language barriers have concerning a particular academic domain is a predictor of their level of acculturation (Yeh et al., 2008). Thus, an exploration of the acculturation of African immigrant students, which forms part of the current study, is essential because it assists in understanding their identity formation and acceptance of their newly adopted environments (Adebanji & Gumbo, 2014).

#### **2.4.3. The role of xenophobia and race in the experiences of immigrant students**

An essential issue to factor in the discussion of the South African context is xenophobia. Amusan and Mchunu (2015) define xenophobia as the fear and dislike of foreign nationals. They argue that the causes of xenophobia are often rooted in fear, aggression and hatred of perceived strangers (Others) within a particular society, combined with the feeling of insecurity (Amusan & Mchunu, 2015; Tafira 2011). This insecurity of the domestic population stems from the belief that

outsiders will take away the finite resources which they are still to receive or take advantage of themselves. Thus, these anti-migrant positions serve as a scapegoat to the fundamental issue of the shortcomings of governance and the precarious job prospects many black South Africans face. Scapegoating is also prevalent in academic settings. Qin et al. (2008) state that strong work ethic, academic excellence and academic commitment often predispose immigrant students to prejudice from local students who may blame immigrant students for their academic misfortunes. This unwarranted blame, in turn, influence social relations between immigrant and local students (Qin et al., 2008).

Locals may also accuse immigrants of “building colonies in host countries that divert resources from, compete with, and undermine the values of poor indigenous peoples” (Williams 2013, p. 89). Often, xenophobia manifests itself when there is instability, particularly in the economy. Marginalised members of an unstable economic community will tend to be the ones who react negatively towards the presence of foreigners (Amusan & Mchunu, 2015). Nonetheless, perpetrators of xenophobia are diverse and come from all walks of life, social standings, and various groups in a country. This explains why some politicians may use inciting and racially charged language when speaking of migrants in the country (UNHR, 2015). It is a manipulation tactic politicians employ to stir their electoral voter base, the same voter base responsible for keeping them in office. This is a common occurrence recently seen in the political landscape. As recent as 2018, South Africa’s Democratic Alliance (the second biggest party in the country), indicated in September of that year that immigration and stricter border control would be one of the core pillars of their election campaign (Hairsine, 2019). Additionally, Hairsine (2019) states that the African National Congress (the governing party in the country) held a rally in March 2019 where President Cyril Ramaphosa pledged to resolve the issue of undocumented migrants who “just arrive illegally in our townships and rural areas and sets up businesses without licenses and permits” (p. 3).

Despite its recent prevalence, xenophobia has a much longer history. The issue of xenophobia and, in essence, migration to South Africa is an inevitable consequence of longstanding labour migration patterns in mining and agriculture (Crush 2008; Landau, Ramkathan-Keogh & Singh, 2005). Migration played an enormous role in the pre-transition history of South Africa. During the centuries of white minority rule, the previous governments recruited black Africans from southern Africa (and beyond) to work on the nation’s mines and farms as cheap, unskilled labour. This meant

that black South Africans often had to compete for work with Africans who often were severely underpaid and exploited due to their immigrant status (Amusan & Mchunu, 2015). After the end of white minority rule in the early 1990s and the beginning of the democratic process, Gordon and Maharaj (2015) state that South Africa enjoyed fairly high economic development and political freedom. Therefore, prospective immigrants saw South Africa as an attractive destination for immigrants from all over the continent. However, this period of economic growth did not filter down to all black South Africans. Many black South Africans' economic and educational opportunities saw little improvement in the two decades post-democracy, and they were still required to compete with fellow Africans for economic opportunities (Crush, 2008). Thus, this lack of opportunities fuelled the insecurity that saw xenophobic attacks thrive in post-apartheid South Africa.

An argument that contextualises the lack of access to opportunities perspective is the one Mudimbe (1988) puts forward in his work entitled: *The Invention of Africa*. Here, he points to the lasting impact of colonialism in Africa. One such impact is the inclination by some South Africans to look down on other Africans from other parts of the continent. As Koenane and Maphunye (2015) reveal, "in the case of South Africa, the brutal systems of colonialism, racial segregation, and apartheid had, over centuries, inculcated a negative attitude of disdain and hatred of fellow Africans from beyond the Limpopo". (p. 84). The results were that very few black South Africans, because of the relative isolation from the rest of the continent due to apartheid, truly understood the socio-cultural context of other Africans (Koenane & Maphunye, 2015). This lack of understanding furthered the divide between black South Africans and other Africans. Thus, as this divide is most evident in black South Africans' relationships with black Africans from the rest of the continent, much of what is termed in South Africa as xenophobia can be defined as Afrophobia. The prevalence of xenophobia in the South African context in recent years and the ethnic composition of the current study's sample (majority black Africans) warrant the exploration of xenophobia (or Afrophobia) and how it manifests in participants' lives.

In 1994, there were great expectations in South Africa and the world of a new, non-racial, inclusive South Africa. However, as Badat and Sayed (2014) argue, despite the new government's commitment to transforming the education systems, inherited racial and social divisions through various transformation initiatives, few, if any, have been effective. South Africa has made some progress in promoting democratic ideals, but there are still many challenges in terms of integration.

Meaningful contact between different races is still a work in progress (Vandeyar & Mohale, 2017). In the higher education context, these challenges bring South African universities into the spotlight as administrators strive to make students of all races, students who were formerly segregated by the apartheid regime, share classrooms and residences (Vandeyar & Mohale, 2017).

The concept of race, particularly in the higher education spaces in South Africa, is linked to the institution's identity. Born from the continued slow progress of transformation in higher education, the Soudien report, a government-mandated committee that focused on transformation and social cohesion and the elimination of discrimination in public higher education, revealed that discrimination based on sex and race was rife within the sector (Soudien et al., 2008). This remains the case. This discrimination was evident during the 2015/2016 #FeesMustFall protests, where part of the call from students and academics alike was redressing the education system through decolonisation (Dos Santos et al., 2019). This call prompted many universities, such as historically white universities (e.g. the University of Cape Town), to investigate unfair discriminatory practices and racism allegations. The findings, released in 2019, found that a racist culture was present at UCT that harmed students' ability to access and perform academically in higher education (IRTC, 2019). The findings highlighted the students' experiences with white lecturers who displayed discriminatory behaviours in allocating marks, favouritism, and dismissal of black students' views and questions due to their race (Lewins, 2010). In so doing, such institutions enable the historical, race-based advantages and disadvantages to continue. The report also revealed that this racist dynamic also affected students' mental wellbeing. This racist dynamic is not unique to UCT. Many historically white universities saw their student demographic change with the arrival of democracy in 1994. This changing demographic resulted in racial tensions between students and staff alike as universities had to confront a new reality of findings ways to integrate students from very different contexts. Considering that all participants within the current study come from historically white universities, this study will explore whether race forms part of the participants' experiences.

#### **2.4.4. Identity and immigrant students**

The manner in which an immigrant student mediates their identity is intricately linked to acculturation (Yeh et al., 2008). When immigrant students negotiate their identities, they mould

hybrid identities to show the acceptance and negotiation of their home-grown cultures with the cultural traditions of the host institution (Vandeyar, 2008). McCaslin's (2009) describes identity as "the habit of questioning who an individual is in a perpetual scenario that evolves in the background of self-, societal- and ethnic confrontations." (p. 138). Furthermore, McCaslin (2009) states that identity is in part based on what people engage in, their reasons for engaging in those events, and a combination of personal and group attribution of meaning to what is being practised.

Dlamini et al. (2020) found that the issue of 'them' and 'us', and 'in-groups' and 'out-groups' is prevalent in discourse related to contestations about place and identity in South Africa. Research has shown that people form 'groups' based on shared commonalities (Dlamini et al., 2020). These formations are based on specific identities wherein people form cognitive and affective bonds within groups. These grouping mechanisms are then used as mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion in which the self (us) is contrasted with 'the other' (them) (Muller, 2008), a dynamic that is prevalent in how locals and immigrants interact with each other.

The aforementioned dynamics of experiences negotiated within the academic institution in terms of language, the acculturation process in academic environments, the role of xenophobia in immigrant students' interactions with locals and lastly, identity formation; shape the socio-cultural experiences of immigrant students in varying ways. These dynamics all operate to either uphold or impede immigrant students' experiences in an unusual cultural and academic environment. The current study will explore these elements to unravel further how African immigrant studies in Gauteng tertiary institutions negotiate these dynamics as part of their own socio-cultural experiences.

## **2.5. Academic experiences of immigrant students**

Like many African nations, South Africa is a culturally heterogeneous nation characterised by significant economic and social inequalities. Allen, Jackson and Knight (2012) state that immigrant students bring into tertiary institutions a wealth of diverse cultural knowledge, values and ideologies that are unrecognised or under-utilised in classroom instruction. Of course, one could argue that the South African classrooms and curricula do not necessarily include diverse local cultures. The dominant discourse in classrooms tends to be westernised and barely incorporates local and/or immigrant perspectives in learning. Moreover, the current climate of anti-immigrant discourse often positions immigrants, particularly African immigrants, as a threat to the country's national and

economic security (Fryberg et al., 2011). Immigrant students experience new academic challenges, such as increasingly independent research activities and language difficulties (Kim, Kim, & Kang, 2007). Immigrant students also struggle with engaging in some teaching activities as non-native speaking teaching assistants (Trice, 2003). These are challenges frequently reported in studies of immigrant students in the global North. It may be interesting to see whether these challenges are prevalent in a South African context – something which the current study will explore.

Although there is evidence of attempts to incorporate immigrant students' cultural ways of knowing in educational scholarship from European and American contexts (see González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005; Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007; Valdés, 1996), students are frequently marginalised by teaching and curricula that does not speak to who they are and what they know. This is further compounded by a system that barely speaks to local ways of learning. This results in both local and immigrant voices feeling marginalised within teaching and learning and educational research. Hence, this area warrants further investigation and could arise within this study as a result of the decolonisation movement that swept the country and university space in 2016.

Adebanji and Gumbo (2014) state that the educational experiences of immigrant students are a reflection of their academic achievements and experiences negotiated at the school level. According to Qin, Way, and Rana (2008), immigrant students are likely to succeed at school in the foreign societies in which they find themselves. Furthermore, Pearce and Lin (2007), whose research focus was on academic success among Chinese-American tertiary students, indicate that social and cultural factors play an important role in academic achievement and attainment. Pearce and Lin (2007) recognise that cultural capital plays a vital role in student academic achievement. The high educational achievement of Chinese-Americans is entrenched in their home-cultivated culture rather than through assimilation into the dominant culture (Pearce & Lin, 2007).

Researchers McBrien, Dooley, and Birman (2017) explored the academic adjustment experiences of youths in their new tertiary institutions. The study acknowledged that youths struggled primarily with library use, understanding of lectures and textbooks in addition to their unique social-emotional issues. The researchers further argue that the youth's inability to understand lectures and textbooks indicates language problems. Thus, to a large extent, Yeung's (1980) earlier findings established that Chinese American immigrant students found it very difficult to participate in class discussions, use the library, write assignments, and develop their English vocabulary and express themselves in

English. As a recommendation, Lanz (1985) then identified extended orientation programmes to reduce immigrant student adjustment problems. Decades later, Freeman, Nga, and Mathews (2017) investigated the academic challenges immigrant students face in Malaysia. That study identified specific academic challenges such as learning and study skills problems. These academic challenges included time management and stress management as the primary concerns. These were in addition to the socio-cultural impact of academic performance.

When evaluating immigrant students' academic behaviours and experiences, an argument worth considering is the congruence between the teaching styles back home and in their host institution. Salinas, Franquiz, and Reidel (2008) found that good teaching skills and good rapport between teachers and learners enabled immigrant English language learners to have a vivid understanding and keen interest in learning at school. This finding was also evident in Sibley and Brabeck's (2017) work which highlighted the importance of establishing good rapport between teachers and learners in a Latino immigrant sample. Sibley and Brabeck's work also highlighted the importance of familial involvement in education attainment. Therefore, this study will explore the emergence of accounts relating to these elements in the participants' experiences.

Using Chow's (2006) description of educational and socio-cultural experiences, Adebajji (2010) surveyed the existing literature to explore African immigrants in other cultures. This process consisted of using educational and socio-cultural experiences to locate the situation in which these students currently find themselves. Adebajji (2010) found that academic experiences hinge on several socio-cultural factors. This is evident in how academic experiences are heavily influenced by socio-cultural experiences (for example, language barriers) that confront immigrant students in their adopted societies. For this reason, this study will also focus on the socio-cultural and academic experiences of the African immigrant student as these experiences are inherently linked.

## **2.6. Conclusion**

The following can be summarised from the above literature review. Firstly, there is a glaring lack of literature on African immigrants and their experiences in the tertiary academic setting within the African context. Secondly, there are various ways in which the immigrant student phenomenon has been investigated. Thirdly, numerous factors infringe on the ability of immigrant students to adjust smoothly to their new environment. Lastly, enough evidence exists that shows that African immigrant

students' experiences are an understudied phenomenon within the academic literature, and for that reason, they warrant further investigation. Thus, the purpose of this study would be to advance the scholarship around African immigrants and broaden conceptualisations and understandings of their experiences. This will be achieved by examining African immigrants' negotiations of socio-cultural knowledge, values, and ideologies as they make sense of their lived experiences. In the following chapter, the researcher will discuss the theoretical underpinnings of the current study.

## **Chapter 3: Theoretical point of departure**

### **3.1. Introduction**

This chapter will discuss the theoretical framework of this research. The importance of situating the study in a theoretical framework cannot be overstated as it is from the theoretical framework that the research methodology (interpretative phenomenology) can be thoroughly understood.

The theoretical framework used in this research is phenomenology. There are different approaches within phenomenology, and each has its own epistemological and ontological assumptions. This chapter will introduce the two main approaches used in psychology, with a more nuanced discussion on interpretative phenomenology. To conclude, previous research that has used phenomenology in immigrant studies will also be identified and briefly discussed.

### **3.2. Philosophical underpinnings of phenomenology**

Literature is filled with varied perceptions and understandings of what phenomenology is. Van Manen (2017) states that Edmund Husserl's intention for phenomenology was "to capture an experience in its primordial origin or essence, without interpreting, explaining, or theorising" (p. 775). However, Martin Heidegger's (2011) well-known definition of phenomenology was "to let that which shows itself be seen from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself" (p. 58). In recent years, Jean-Luc Marion, a prominent phenomenologist states that phenomenology can be understood as "the study of how things show or give themselves" (p. 776). He stresses that things are not what they are because we choose to see/study them; instead, they simply are. Therefore, this highlights an essential component of phenomenology; it is not constructivist in its research approach by any means, so meaning cannot be pre-determined in "true" phenomenology. In a research context, participants' meaning of their lived experiences is merely uncovered as part of the research process. The role of the researcher is to present that meaning.

Phenomenology can be described as a philosophical attitude and a research approach (Frost, 2011). Its central premise is to seek to understand the subjective experiences of the human condition as it manifests itself in our lived world (Sotuku & Duku, 2012). The term's origins can be found in the Latin language, where the term *phenomenologia* was introduced in 1736 by Christoph Friedrich Oetinger. After that, the concept grew popular amongst many philosophers of the time (for example,

Immanuel Kant and G.W.F. Hegel) and was referred to by its German equivalent, *phänomenologia*. The German philosopher Franz Brentano, who is well known for his work in the field of philosophy of psychology, began using the term *phänomenologia* to explain what would eventually be known as descriptive psychology. He was a forerunner in describing the consciousness from the view of the self (i.e. first-person viewpoint) (Smith, 2011). It was this work that heavily influenced Edmund Husserl in his approach to the study of consciousness.

### **3.3. Descriptive (Transcendental) phenomenology**

Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) is the founding father of phenomenology, and his description of a phenomenon was that it should be allowed to speak for itself. His primary aim was to develop a science of phenomenon that would shed light on how phenomena are experienced and brought forth onto our conscious beings (Norlyk & Harder, 2010). This means that Husserl wanted to develop a science of how our world experiences shape our understanding and thinking. Husserl's earlier career pursuits focused on mathematics. This focus would profoundly impact his later study of phenomena as he sought to shape "pure phenomenology", - which he described as the universally accepted foundation of philosophy and science (Neubauer, Witkop, & Varpio, 2019). His rejection informed Husserl's shift to studying phenomena of the fundamental premise of positivism, the notion of an external reality that was objectively knowable (Smith, 2018). Instead, Husserl firmly believed that phenomena could only be studied as perceived by a person's consciousness and intuition without any form of interpretation, assumption or psychological speculation (Neubauer, Witkop, & Varpio, 2019). This position is supported by Saiti's (2012) assertion, which states that Husserl's understanding of phenomenology is similar to that of a natural scientist who has just uncovered a new aspect of our reality. Saiti (2012) further reveals that this discovery would require the natural scientist to turn to the self to discover the nature and meaning of this new dimension. For that reason, Husserl states that all objective scientific knowledge is based on the subjective self or inner evidence – clearly indicating that for Husserl, subjectivity and objectivity are intrinsically interlinked concepts in the pursuit of knowledge (Husserl, 1970).

This is how Husserl asserts that reality can only be understood as it is lived by a person (Neubauer, Witkop, & Varpio, 2019). Husserl believed that a person's lived experience of a particular phenomenon had shared features and characteristics and could be universally identified (Smith, 2018). These features, which he termed "universal essences", which he believed could be used to create

descriptions for phenomena. It was these descriptions that he thought ought to be universally applicable (Smith, 2018). Ultimately, Husserl revealed that the universal essences of the described phenomena embodied the true nature of the phenomenon (Neubauer, Witkop, & Varpio, 2019).

Therefore, the ultimate goal for a researcher engaging in descriptive phenomenology as a method is to achieve “transcendental subjectivity”. As Davidsen (2013) reveals, this is “a state wherein the impact of the researcher on the inquiry is constantly assessed and biases and preconceptions neutralised (or bracketed), so that they do not influence the object of study (p. 320)”.

### **3.4. Interpretative (Hermeneutic) phenomenology**

Martin Heidegger, a student of Husserl, challenged and built on the work of Husserl. Central to Heidegger point of departure from Husserl was his belief that individuals are naturally hermeneutic (interpretative), which empowers them to find meaning and purpose in their own lives (van Manen, 2017). This gave birth to interpretative (hermeneutic) phenomenology. Larkin, Watts and Clifton (2006) state that interpretative phenomenology aims to map out the participants’ orientation toward the world in the form of the experiences that they claim for themselves. Thus, phenomenology essentially tries to grasp how this particular participant has understood a specific phenomenon. Additionally, Lopez and Willis (2004) state that with regards to the study of human experiences, interpretative phenomenology aims to go beyond a mere description of core concepts and essences to look for meanings embedded in common life practices. Therefore, due to its focus on understanding how a phenomenon (in this case, the experience of being an African immigrant in a tertiary institution in the Gauteng region) is understood by specific participants, interpretative phenomenology was chosen as the ideal theoretical orientation for the current study.

#### **3.4.1. Understanding the concept of Lifeworld**

Although Heidegger was initially aligned with Husserl’s descriptive phenomenology foundations, a central point of contention was the focus of the phenomenological inquiry (Kafle, 2011). Where Husserl was more interested in the nature of knowledge (which spoke to a more epistemological orientation), Heidegger was much more concerned with the experience and character of being human (which highlighted a more ontological orientation) (Reiners, 2012). Thus we see how Heidegger’s famed term, lifeworld begins to take shape. The term lifeworld is described as the

understanding that “individuals' realities are fundamentally influenced by the world in which they live” (Abu Shosha, & Al Kalalkeh, 2018, p.10). Therefore, interpretative phenomenology allows Heidegger to move away from the understanding that individuals are knowers of a phenomenon to an orientation that views individuals as beings in the world with an active relationship between the individual and their lifeworld (Lopez & Willis, 2004; Yüksel & Yıldırım, 2015). This is an essential tenet of the interpretative tradition as, in the current study, the participants were not identified for their “expert” knowledge of immigrant experiences within the African continent. The basis of interpretative phenomenology would not require that as a criterion for selection. Instead, the participants were understood to possess unique perspectives as beings in the African immigrant world and, for that reason, already hold a valid experience of their engagement within that world.

### **3.4.2. Being in the world**

Another essential component of the lifeworld concept is interweaving an individual's experience of the world to their personal history (Smith, 2018). Heidegger contends that one (the experience of the world) cannot exist without the other (personal history). Furthermore, he reveals that an individual's consciousness is a combination of their historical lived experiences and the culture in which they grew up – a combination that is an inescapable part of being *in* the world (Lopez & Willis, 2004). This was evident within the current study as well. The researcher's understanding of the experience of African immigrant students could not be achieved without understanding their historical contexts. In unpacking the participants' lived experiences in the current study, the researcher posed questions that aimed to understand their previous life experiences that may have shaped their views and opinions of studying in South Africa. Questions around their experiences with learning at other institutions prior to the institutions that they were currently in were asked (i.e. *Have you lived and/or studied in any other country other than your own before coming to South Africa?*). This was done to better understand their personal history and how it informed and shaped aspects of their personal histories. In the same way, Heidegger described an individual's lifeworld as something that one could not remove themselves from. Individuals could never experience a phenomenon without referring to their historical background for further understanding and contextualisation (Bynum & Varpio, 2018).

### **3.4.3. Dasein**

The conceptualisation of the *Dasein* formed part of Heidegger's critique of Husserl's understanding of individuals only being objective observers of phenomena (Giorgi, 2017). For

Heidegger, the being was intertwined with the phenomena and that way, the concept of *Dasein* found its origins. Heidegger described *Dasein* as a means of being in the world, with its main focus being on personal experience (Horrigan-Kelly, Millar & Dowling, 2016). Heidegger explained that the process of "Being is itself a definitive characteristic of dasein's Being", presenting *Dasein* as "ontically distinctive in that it is ontological" (Heidegger, 2011, p. 32). Introducing the concept of ontology here is crucial. It meant that Heidegger positioned *Dasein* as an entity that could understand and find meaning within itself (Horrigan-Kelly, Millar & Dowling, 2016), particularly concerning other, broader contextual realities. Through this understanding of *Dasein*, the participants in the current study could be viewed as beings that intrinsically possessed the ability to find and narrate the meaning of their experiences within their tertiary institutions. However, as the researcher is acknowledged to be an active being *in* the participants' world through interviewing the participants, the researcher can thus acknowledge their role and experiences in the meaning-making process. Within the current study, this was done through reflection, particularly throughout the analysis and discussion of the collected data.

*Dasein's* assumptions make up the central components for what Heidegger termed a forestructure of understanding (Heidegger, 2011). The forestructure of understanding encompassed three aspects known as fore-having, foresight and foreconception (Heidegger, 2011).

#### **3.4.4. Fore-having, foresight and fore-conception**

Heidegger describes fore-having as the level of familiarity an individual has with a phenomenon. This familiarity is shaped and determined by one's own life experiences (Wojnar & Swason, 2007). Thus, all participants selected in this study to be identified as African immigrant students needed to be studying in the tertiary education space. This criterion enabled the participants to have the necessary familiarity with the topic under investigation. He then describes foresight as the socio-cultural context that provides the framework to interpret (Heidegger, 2011). Lastly, he reveals that fore-conception accounts for the socio-cultural context, which provides a basis for what can be expected of the phenomenon being investigated (Heidegger, 2011; Wojnar & Swason, 2007). Foresight and fore-conception were taken to account during the analysis and discussion of the findings stage of the current study. The socio-cultural questions posted to the participants (Please refer to Appendix C for the complete interview guide) provided the socio-cultural context that the researcher could use in making interpretations. These questions explored how the participants made friends,

tackled learning a new language and became accustomed to their new environments. After that, the researcher considered how their experiences and opinions shaped the interpretations made by the researcher through the reflection process. Although they may seem similar, foresight and fore-conception are distinct in that foresight simply considers the socio-cultural context during the interpretation process. In contrast, fore-conception requires one to draw from their own experiences in making an interpretation (Wojnar & Swason, 2007).

Therefore, Bynum and Varpio (2018) state that the central aim of interpretative phenomenology is to reveal and understand the deeper layers of an individual's experience of a phenomenon and the influence of an individual's lifeworld on that experience. Moreover, interpretative phenomenology aims to encourage researchers to study the accounts shared by individuals to gain an in-depth understanding of individuals' lives and lifeworlds (Bynum & Varpio, 2018; Smith, 2018).

The table below provides a comprehensive comparison of descriptive and interpretative phenomenology.

**Table 1**

*Comparison of descriptive and interpretative phenomenology*

	Descriptive phenomenology	Interpretative phenomenology
Philosophical origins	Husserl	Heidegger
Ontological assumptions	Reality is internal to the knower; what appears in their consciousness	Lived experience is an interpretive process situated in an individual's lifeworld
Epistemological assumptions	The observer must separate themselves from the world, including their own physical being, to reach the state of the transcendental; bias-free; understands phenomena by descriptive means	The observer is part of the world and not bias-free; understands phenomenon by interpretive means

Researcher role in data collection	Bracket researcher subjectivity during data collection and analysis	Reflects on essential themes of participant experience with the phenomenon while simultaneously reflecting on own experience
Researcher role in data analysis/writing	Consider phenomena from different perspectives, identify units of meaning and cluster into themes to form textural description (the “what” of the phenomenon). Use imaginative variation to create a structural (the how) description. Combine these descriptions to form the essence of the phenomenon	Iterative cycles of capturing and writing reflections towards a robust and nuanced analysis; consider how the data (or parts) contributed to evolving understanding of the phenomena (whole)

Note. Reprint from Neubauer, B. E., Witkop, C. T., & Varpio, L. (2019).

### 3.5. Phenomenology and immigrant studies

The use of phenomenology as a theoretical underpinning is not new in the study of immigrant studies. In fact, Polyzoi (1985) was one of the first to use phenomenology within her study. The study explored the immigrant experience of meaning-making in their process of assimilation in Greece using the Husserlian understanding of phenomenology. However, interpretative phenomenology only begins to appear in literature from 1996. Jonathan Smith first published his seminal work on interpretative phenomenology analysis (IPA) in 1996. In his article titled “Beyond the divide between cognition and discourse: Using interpretative phenomenological analysis in health psychology”, Smith (1996) introduces IPA's theoretical groundings in phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography. Smith (1996) also outlines IPA's use as a research method of analysis. IPA is derived from Heidegger's school of thought regarding phenomenology, leading to the rapid growth and use of IPA in psychology.

Within the study of immigrant students, a few studies have chosen phenomenology as the appropriate theoretical underpinnings of their studies. Lundberg (2014), for example, looked to explore the lived experience of a group of teachers working in big urban public elementary schools where classrooms consisted of more than 50% immigrant children in New York. The purpose of this study was to understand the culture and how that may reflect on the teachers' communication with the immigrant children and their families (Lundberg, 2014). Jhagroo (2011) focused their research on how the lived experiences of immigrant students influence their transition in mathematics classrooms. Unlike the Lundberg study, this doctoral study took place in the South global country of New Zealand. The purpose of this study was to look at the various degrees of a cultural shift within students' adopted classroom environment in comparison to what they previously knew in their home classroom environment (Jhagroo, 2011). Jhagroo published further research in 2015 that concentrated on the perspective of immigrant students in terms of the language-related challenges they encountered. In addition, the study explored the students' process of making sense of learning in the new environment where the medium of teaching was different from the student's home languages (Jhagroo, 2015).

Within the African context, studies such as those by Dzansi (2006), Shindondola (2002), and Vandeyar (2010) have also studied student immigrant experience from this theoretical departure. The work done by these researchers lends further support for why interpretative phenomenology is the identified theoretical point of departure for the current study. The theoretical framework links well with the aims and research questions of the present study, which concern investigating the participants' lived experiences. The study looked to examine the experiences of African immigrants for what they are, and this was accompanied by an explanatory account of the meaning of these lived experiences within each participant's particular context.

### **3.6. Conclusion**

This chapter introduced phenomenology as the theoretical point of departure of the current study. The difference between descriptive (transcendental) and interpretative (hermeneutic) phenomenology was outlined, and previous immigrant studies were presented. Phenomenology, at its core, can be understood as a theoretical framework that is concerned with the subjective experience of beings. The interpretative tradition, which is concerned with interpreting each experience, is the chosen stance of the current research. This choice is because interpretative phenomenology considers

an individual's experience of a phenomenon as intertwined with their historical context. Thus, an individual's cultural and social contexts become integral in understanding their lived experience.

For this reason, the current study considered the individual experience of the immigrant students who form part of the present study. The study also explored the cultural and social context of the students as part of their individual experiences. The following chapter will discuss the methodology used in this study.

## **Chapter 4 Methodology**

### **4.1. Introduction**

In this chapter, the methodological considerations that informed this study will be discussed. The chapter will begin with an overview of the research aims and objectives and describe the research approach used. The chapter will then discuss the sampling procedure used to select participants. An overview of the data collection process will be provided, and a description of the data analysis process will follow. To conclude, the ethical considerations that informed this study will be provided.

### **4.2. Research Aim**

This study aims to explore the socio-cultural and academic experiences of African immigrant students registered at tertiary institutions in the Gauteng region.

### **4.3. Research Objectives**

- To conduct an in-depth exploration of the socio-cultural experiences of African immigrant students registered at tertiary institutions in the Gauteng region.
- To conduct an in-depth exploration of the academic experiences of African immigrants registered at tertiary institutions in the Gauteng region.

### **4.4. Methodology**

The current study can be described as qualitative and situated explicitly within the realm of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Creswell (2013) describes the qualitative research process as the study of problems seeking the meaning individuals assign to a social issue. These issues are not limited; qualitative methodology has been used in various fields ranging from health to migration studies. To gain further clarity about this issue, Creswell (2013) indicates that when a qualitative researcher wishes to gain further clarity about a social issue, they use a particular theoretical lens that prioritises naturalistic data collection practices and sensitivity toward the participants under study. The data analysis process follows an inductive process that ultimately aims to identify patterns and themes within the collected data. Through reflexivity, the researcher's voice forms part of the shaping of the interpreted data. The final report is a complex interpretation of the identified issue, its applicability to the existing body of literature and implications for future practices.

As Willig (2013) states, in qualitative methodology, the researcher is interested in collecting data that is rich in its description of the phenomenon under study. The qualitative methodology requires a researcher to unearth in-depth and often sensitive information that participants do not often share with others. This process can mean that the data collected can be very lengthy and thick in description. Therefore, the focus is on detailed descriptions of a small number of participants' world views. Qualitative research emphasises the in-depth exploration of subjective and unique experiences; thus, the findings from this data cannot be generalised to a larger population (Creswell, 2014). Quantitative research, however, uses empirical methods to collect large sets of numerical data from a representative sample of a population to come to an objective understanding of its essence (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Therefore, the qualitative approach allows the researcher to provide a more nuanced account of each participant's unique lived experience; this is a vital component if one comes to a proper understanding of the lifeworld of immigrant students. Collecting detailed data allows for detailed descriptions and interpretations of the participants' experiences. It also provides for the voice of the participants to occupy a vital role within the qualitative research process. In that way, the researcher can delve deeper to uncover the underlying assumptions, biases, values and beliefs that inform and shape the many interactions that immigrant students may experience within the university setting.

Contrary to quantitative research, qualitative research makes knowledge claims based on a more constructivist philosophical paradigm (Creswell, 2014). Through this paradigm, the researcher can acknowledge the individual's experiences and perspectives as socially and historically constructed, thus having multiple meanings (Clarke & Braun, 2013). This understanding is particularly true when one considers that immigrant students from across the African continent may experience the same phenomena in very different ways from one another (e.g., learning a new language or experiences of xenophobia). As Neuman (2011) states, this multiplicity of meaning allows for a richer understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Neuman, 2011). Qualitative research is well suited for this study as it is concerned with the personal and social aspects of individual experiences. Furthermore, due to the study's focus on the participants' individual, socio-cultural and academic experiences, a qualitative approach will enable the researcher to explore the participants' accounts adequately and thus, answer the proposed research questions.

#### **4.5. Research Approach**

IPA is the approach used in the current study. In recent years, IPA has become one of the most widely used qualitative research approaches, particularly in psychology. Tuffour (2017) argues that this is due to the *emphasis placed on the convergence and divergence of experiences* (p.1). As the pioneer of IPA, psychologist Jonathan Smith (2009), reveals, IPA is concerned with studying rich, in-depth, lived experiences of a relatively small number of participants and attempting to provide a detailed description of each participant's life world.

IPA finds its philosophical roots in phenomenology, allowing it to be used in various fields such as sociology, health, and human sciences (Tuffour, 2017). IPA has a few key assumptions that inform its use as a research approach. Firstly, Larkin and Thompson (2012) state that IPA is idiographic, requiring the researcher to bear in mind that the participants' accounts result from engaging in the world. Secondly, it is essential to understand that IPA is situated in experience and how one makes sense of that experience. Therefore, the researcher must fully immerse themselves in understanding the essence of the experience — both the participants and the researcher's own experiences.

This immersion process highlights the importance of engaging in a continuous process of reflection as a researcher (Larkin & Thompson, 2012). Reflection allows the researcher to consistently be aware of how their thoughts, beliefs, and experiences may be at play during the research process. This can be particularly true in cases where a researcher has a personal stake or experience with the phenomenon under study. The researcher of the current study does not have any personal experience as an immigrant as they have not lived in any other country other than South Africa. However, they were acutely aware that their exposure to numerous African immigrant students throughout their university studies, many of whom are still friends of the researcher, could impact how they interpreted the data. For that reason, the researcher needed to detail their analysis process and their various reflections throughout the analysis process (See reflection boxes in Chapter 5).

Lastly, the interpretation of said experience is an essential component of any IPA-focused study which cannot simply be isolated to a particular stage within the research process (Tuffour, 2017). At any point within the research process, a researcher continuously interprets and finds meaning in the data. The process of interpreting and finding meaning in the data is a continuous one. Thus, as the researcher, it is vital that, through the reflection process, the interpretations of experiences from the study are mainly situated within the lived worlds of the participants (Tuffour, 2017). IPA is

well suited for the current research as it will allow the researcher to gain an insider perspective through the detailed exploration of the participants' personal lived experiences (Smith, 2011).

## **4.6. Sampling**

Conlon et al. (2020) describe the process of sampling in qualitative research as identifying the specific features and characteristics of individuals or instances that have been chosen as essential sources of data for a study. The researcher will discuss the criteria used to identify the current research participants in Section 4.6 below.

### **4.6.1. Sampling technique**

The participants in this study were located using a non-probability sampling technique known as snowballing or chain-referral (Sharma, 2017). The snowballing technique was selected for this study as it allows the researcher to access populations that may be hard to reach. (Penrod et al., 2003). The population of interest in the current study is that of African immigrant students studying at Gauteng tertiary institutions. The researcher can reach these populations through informants who can locate other individuals who possess the required characteristics.

The participants from various tertiary institutions were referred to the researcher by an initial contact person for the current study. This contact person was an African immigrant student and mutual friend of the researcher. Thus, they had access to other immigrant students through their friendship networks. Where necessary, further referrals were made until participants who met specific criteria were identified.

The participants had to meet specific criteria to make them eligible to participate in the current study. The requirements are outlined below.

#### **4.6.1.1. Inclusion Criteria:**

- Participants in this study were required to be registered students at any of the following tertiary institutions in Gauteng: the University of Pretoria, the University of Johannesburg, and the University of the Witwatersrand, all historically white institutions. Initially, the University of South Africa (UNISA) formed part of this list of institutions. However, the researcher did not obtain ethical clearance from them as

required by the University of Pretoria Research Ethics Committee. Thus, the list was reduced to the three universities where the researcher received the necessary ethical clearance.

- The participants could be undergraduate or postgraduate students at these tertiary institutions. However, where postgraduate students were identified, the postgraduate qualification they were currently registered for would be their first degree of study in South Africa. This criterion was included to ensure that the participants' experiences specifically related to their studying experiences and no other experiences such as working as an immigrant, which was beyond the scope of the current study.
- The participants had to be between 18–30 years old. An age criterion was included to ensure that the older participants were not selected to participate in the study. This is due to older participants being more likely to have had other experiences as immigrants (e.g. experiences from the workplace), which would broaden the scope of the research topic and questions. This is not the intention of the current study. The participants had to be citizens of an African country other than South Africa.
- The participants had to be holders of valid student permits.

#### ***4.6.1.2. Exclusion Criteria***

- The participants were required not to have acquired South African citizenship at the time of the study.

#### **4.6.2. Sample Size**

Osborn and Smith (2008) state that no correct number of participants is required in phenomenological studies. They argue that a smaller sample allows the researcher to focus on a much more detailed description of the participants' experiences which is the essence of a study utilising IPA as an approach. However, Englander (2012) does reveal that phenomenological methods advise the use of a minimum of three participants and a maximum of six participants. Hence, for this study, four participants were used. Phenomenological approaches are not concerned with sample size but rather the participant's knowledge and experience regarding the phenomenon being studied (Englander, 2012). The participants in the current study met the inclusion and exclusion criteria and offered a detailed account of their experiences as African immigrant students within the identified tertiary

institutions. These accounts were sufficient to enable the researcher to successfully answer the study's research questions and intended aims.

#### **4.6.3. Recruitment of participants**

The first contact in this study was referred to the researcher by a mutual friend after the researcher inquired. This inquiry consisted of the researcher posting a participant recruitment message in WhatsApp groups and Facebook groups to recruit participants within her broader circle of acquaintances. The researcher was informed of a few social media groups exclusive to tertiary students from particular countries. Mutual friends shared the researcher's call for participants on various Facebook and WhatsApp community groups. The researcher identified the Facebook page "TUKS Zimsoc" as a Facebook community specifically for Zimbabwean students currently studying at the University of Pretoria). Nine respondents initially made contact with the researcher via Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp. An initial meeting was held with each participant to tell them more about the study and provide them with the participant information sheet (Please refer to Appendix A for the participant information sheet).

Post the initial meeting; the researcher experienced some challenges with the requirement of participants. Two male participants revealed that they were not holders of valid study permits anymore and thus, were not registered students of a tertiary institution. One male participant was much older than he had initially stated via WhatsApp (he was 41 years) and was no longer a holder of a valid study permit. Therefore, three respondents did not meet the criteria and could thus not be selected to participate. Two other respondents showed interest during the initial meeting but did not respond to subsequent, repeated communication attempts. Therefore, the four successful respondents were ultimately selected to participate in the study. Subsequent meeting times were arranged post the initial meeting to schedule the interviews and provide the participants with the informed consent form (Please refer to Appendix B for the informed consent form).

#### **4.7. Data collection strategies**

For this study, semi-structured interviews were utilised. This technique is appropriate for phenomenological studies (Lauterbach, 2018). Semi-structured interviews use open-ended questions, which provide the basis for the participant to extend upon a particular topic (Shinebourne, 2011). The

current study made use of an interview guide. The questions in the interview guide were formulated to elicit responses that answer this study's research questions. The interview guide consisted of questions about three components, namely; 1) their general experiences in South Africa, 2) questions that pertain to their socio-cultural experiences at their respective tertiary institution and 3) questions that concern their academic experiences at their respective tertiary institutions (key questions such as *“How would you describe your experiences while studying towards your degree?”* and *“How would you describe your learning process/the way you learn?”* were posed to the participants). Please refer to Appendix C for the complete interview guide.

The questions allowed the researcher to steer the proceedings when needed, but the structure was subject to change. The priority was enabling the participants to express themselves freely and honestly (Anderson & Holloway-Libell, 2014; Englander, 2012). The interview guide questions helped the researcher explore the particular socio-cultural and academic experiences that the participants had had at their respective campuses since they started their studies at that specific university

#### **4.7.1. Data collection procedure**

Once the participants were identified, the research purposes and aims were explained briefly to each participant telephonically. After participants had expressed interest in participating, a date, time and place were discussed for an initial meeting. The researcher had an initial meeting with each prospective participant to explain the research aims and objectives, evaluate whether participants met the criteria for participation, and provide them with the participant information sheet (Please refer to Appendix A for the participant information sheet). It was also during these meetings that clashes in schedules for further meetings were identified. Each prospective participant had the opportunity to ask questions regarding the study. The permission letters obtained from the University of Pretoria were brought to the meetings if a participant wanted to confirm the study's validity (Please refer to Appendix D for the ethical clearance confirmation letters obtained from the University of Pretoria (and participating universities) for the current study). The day before the scheduled interview date, the researcher provided each participant with the informed consent form (refer to Appendix B) to allow sufficient time for each participant to read through it at their leisure. On the day of the interview, the researcher then recapped the main points of the informed consent form to ensure that each

participant understood the parameters of the discussion and that their participation in the study was completely voluntary. Any additional questions and/or concerns about the interview process were also discussed on the day of the interview. Once participants had signed the consent form and all queries were answered, the interview could begin. Each interview took place at the tertiary institution where the participant was registered not to have to travel far. In addition, each interview took place at a time and date of the participants' choosing for their convenience. Each interview took approximately 45 to 90 minutes (See Appendix C for the complete interview guide), and the researcher took notes during the interview and voice recorded each interview. Before each interview, participants were informed that there was no wrong or right answer. The researcher ensured that participants were as comfortable as possible with the interview atmosphere to the best of her ability.

#### **4.8. Data Analysis**

IPA has been developed as an idiosyncratic analysis method for conducting qualitative research within psychology (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). As the name suggests, its theoretical underpinnings can be found in the philosophical outlook of hermeneutical/interpretative phenomenology. As Smith and Osborn (2007) state, IPA aims to explore, in rich detail, how participants make sense of the personal and social worlds. As it is pitched at an idiographic level, it focuses on studying the participant at the individual level and looks to explore the detailed process of how participants come to make sense of their life experiences (Smith, 2008). Additionally, IPA stipulates that the research process is dynamic where the researcher plays an active role (Smith & Osborn, 2007). IPA fits perfectly with this study, from its theoretical underpinnings to a method of analysis. It focuses solely on individual experiences (as it is idiographic) and situates the participant's experience in the lived world (Englander, 2012) is the intention of this study.

Smith and Osborn (2007) further reveal that IPA requires an intensive qualitative analysis of detailed personal accounts. Various authors have articulated the core stages involved in analysing a study that uses IPA (Langdrige, 2007; Osborn & Smith, 2008; Shinebourne, 2011, Willig, 2013 to cite a few examples). This study used the five stages outlined by Osborn and Smith (2008) and Willig (2013). The stages are as follows:

- Stage 1: Initial encounter with the text
- Stage 2: Identifying the preliminary themes
- Stage 3: Forming clusters of themes

- Stage 4: Generating a summary table
- Stage 5: Writing of themes

The first stage of the analysis process is the reading and re-reading of the transcripts of the interviews. As Willig (2013) indicates, this stage is not yet concerned with the formation of themes. The stage results in unfocused yet detailed notes from the interview session (Willig, 2013). The researcher in the current study transcribed the interviews verbatim, which assisted in reading/re-reading and becoming familiar with the transcripts over time (See Appendix E for the interview transcripts). Transcribing the interview data also helped the researcher in gaining a head start in identifying possible initial themes. Initial thoughts and interesting points were recorded at the bottom of the page and on the left margin of each page using a pencil. Each transcript was read individually as a story of its own at this stage.

The second stage is identifying and labelling the themes that will arise from the vigorous study of the interview transcripts (Osborn & Smith, 2008). The central idea is to encapsulate the essence of the information gathered from all the transcripts through the identified themes (Osborn & Smith, 2008). Therefore, during this stage, the researcher began conceptualising the notes from the bottom of the respective pages and left margins into themes that represented the common features found in the transcripts. Stage 3 concerns the logical structuring and connection of the conceptualised themes (Osborn & Smith, 2008). This process aims to generate clusters of primary and/or sub-themes by finding similarities in the identified themes (Osborn & Smith, 2008; Willig, 2013). It was during this stage that the researcher identified specific themes as being more prominent than other themes. The identified central themes were grouped accordingly. In the fourth stage, constructing a summary table is the required outcome (Willig, 2013). This table consists of the themes chosen in Stage 3. Thus, when integrating the interview transcripts, the researcher constructed the summary table that included the predominant themes that emerged, capturing the essence of the topic being studied (Smith, 2011; Willig, 2013). The fifth and final stage consists of describing the themes and the relevant supporting quotes to demonstrate the themes.

#### **4.9. Quality assurance**

To ensure that quality is maintained throughout the research process in qualitative research, several issues require consideration. Yardley (2011) and Willig (2013) identify these as transparency, sensitivity to context, rigour and reflexivity. These will be discussed below:

#### **4.9.1. Transparency**

The literature defines transparency as the extent to which the study's conclusions are open to scrutiny by others and the participants (Demuth, 2013). This can be achieved by ensuring that the purpose of the research is thoroughly explained to the participants. This study offers a clear description of the selection process, how the data was gathered, and the steps involved in analysing the gathered data (Demuth, 2013). For the current study, the researcher allocated 30 minutes before the interviews started to recap the purpose of the research with each participant, go through the main points of the informed consent form before signing, and answer additional questions regarding the interview process. In this chapter, the researcher also provided insight into how each participant was selected and how the data was collected and analysed (Refer to Sections 4.6.1; 4.7 and 4.8). The researcher was able to do this by keeping detailed notes throughout the research process. In so doing, the research was able to meet the standard of transparency.

#### **4.9.2. Sensitivity to context**

Sensitivity to context describes the contextualisation of the research in terms of the relevant literature (in this case, literature that focuses on immigrant students). Applying sensitivity to the context ensures that the research findings can be grounded in more than what the participants of this study have said (Yardley, 2011). Therefore, the findings can be understood in light of what current literature about immigrant students reveals. Yardley (2011) further states that a critical way to ensure that a researcher meets this standard is to conduct a thorough and extensive literature review on the phenomena under investigation and by showing care and empathy toward the participants during the data collection phase. The researcher of the current study endeavoured to meet this standard by consistently checking in with the participants throughout the data collection phase and double-checking with the participants when the researcher did not understand specific points. The researcher also read extensively on the current study's topic to try and contextualise the themes that arose from the study so that they could be understood in relation to the literature. This is further evidenced by the discussion of the study findings in relation to literature in Chapter 6.

#### **4.9.3. Rigour**

Smith et al. (2009) describe rigour as the level of thoroughness and due diligence within a particular study. This relates mainly to the quality of the interviews conducted, and the sample meets the criteria identified and the detail of the data collection and analysis process (Smith et al., 2009). For the current study, the researcher struggled with aspects of rigour, particularly in identifying a

sample that met the required criteria. As the literature identified, many immigrant students will under/over-exaggerate their status as an immigrant student to fit in with their adopted communities and schools and not be “Othered” (Vandeyar, 2010). Thus, if an immigrant student lives in a community where they are the only immigrant, they may under-exaggerate their status to fit in with the other students in that community. This meant that although the researcher had initially found male participants to form part of the study, they were later unable to participate as they did not meet the criteria. Two male participants indicated that they were students when they were not holders of a valid study permit and thus, were not registered students of a tertiary institution. One male was much older than he had initially stated via WhatsApp (41 years) and was not a holder of a valid study permit. Ultimately this led to the sample being exclusively female, which was not necessarily the intention or aim of the study at the onset. Nonetheless, the researcher maintained rigour by applying the sample criteria accordingly and analysing the data accordingly.

#### **4.9.4. Reflexivity**

Reflexivity is an essential component of any qualitative research study as it highlights how the researcher engages with the research process (Osborn and Smith, 2008). As Frost (2011) states, engaging in the process of constant reflexivity as a researcher helps discourage possible impositions of meaning that can be made by the researcher and will therefore help promote the legitimacy of the findings. Throughout the analysis process, the researcher noted their insights and thoughts about each theme and subtheme experienced by a participant and how that influenced the researcher's thinking process. In so doing, it helped the researcher account for how they could be influencing and shaping the analysis and subsequent write up of the findings. These thoughts are noted in “reflective boxes” throughout Chapter five. Shenton (2004) describes this process as personal reflexivity.

#### **4.10. Ethical Considerations**

The researcher provided each participant with the informed consent form (refer to Appendix B) the day before the interview to allow sufficient time for each participant to read through it at their leisure. On the day of the interview, the researcher then recapped the main points of the informed consent form to ensure that each participant understood the parameters of the interview and that their participation in the study was completely voluntary. The researcher also addressed additional questions and/or concerns about the interview process on the day of the interview. Once a participant signed the consent form, and all queries were answered, the interview could begin. The current study

adhered to the ethical guidelines stipulated by the University of Pretoria. The specific guidelines relevant to the present study are informed consent, voluntary participation, and avoiding harm. These will be discussed in more detail below.

#### **4.10.1. Informed Consent**

The researcher provided participants with a thorough understanding of the purpose and aim of the research during the initial meeting. It was at the initial meeting that they were provided with the participant information sheet. The day before the interview, participants were given the informed consent form to provide them with enough time to read through its contents. The researcher informed participants of what the research consisted of, their role, and who would have access to their data. This information aligns with what Clark-Kazak (2017) identifies as the central tenets of informed consent. Participants were also informed that the interview would be voice recorded.

#### **4.10.2. Voluntary Participation**

Participants were informed that their participation in the current study was entirely voluntary, and they could choose to stop their participation at any point during the interview or study. The referrals system assisted in giving the participants a choice to participate in the research (as all participants in the current research initiated contact with the researcher after being informed about the study via social media. Voluntariness is defined *as* “a choice or action performed without others' influence or being subjected to any compelling external exposure” (Kilinç & Firat, 2017, p. 1462). Thus, ensuring that participants knew that their role in the study was one of their choosing and informing them that they could opt out of the study at any point without any negative consequences was necessary. This is because it increased the likelihood of honest responses by the participants. (Kilinç & Firat, 2017).

#### **4.10.3. Avoiding Harm**

Due to the nature of the in-depth interview process and how it may unearth sensitive matters that may cause discomfort (e.g. personal experiences with xenophobia), the contact details of the free Student Support services on each campus were made available to each participant. Making this information available ensured that they had the opportunity to work through any distress they may have experienced during the research process (Willig, 2013).

The researcher contacted the research ethics committee of each university where participants were studying to obtain ethical permission to interview their students. The researcher successfully obtained the required permission (Please refer to Appendix D for ethical clearance confirmation letters received from the University of Pretoria for the current study, as well as permission letters obtained from the universities where each participant was studying.).

#### **4.10.4. Confidentiality**

The researcher protected the privacy of each participant by ensuring that all personal information provided remained confidential. No names were recorded for this study, pseudonyms were used when referencing participants, thus no one other than the researcher would be able to identify the participants. All information was securely stored on a password protected hard-drive and cloud service. Consent was obtained and participants were informed that their personal information would remain confidential. Feedback regarding the excerpts used in the current study was also provided to the participants (Willig, 2013).

#### **4.11. Conclusion**

This chapter provided a description and discussion of the methodology that was used in this study. The chapter began with an overview of the research aims and objectives and a description of the research approach used. The chapter then discussed the procedure used to select participants. An overview of the data collection process was provided, and a description of the data analysis process was then followed. To conclude, the ethical considerations that formed part of this research were provided. Following this, Chapter 5 will focus on the findings generated from the analysis of the data.

## Chapter 5: Findings

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the themes that emerged from the researcher's interviews with the current study participants. A qualitative research approach was adopted, and the analysis was based on IPA. Specifically, in line with the IPA approach, this study looked at the meaning that the participants attached to their lived experiences, in light of their socio-cultural contexts, as African immigrant students in South African higher education institutions. Four super-ordinate themes and eight subordinate themes were identified from the data analysis and will be discussed below. Furthermore, the researcher will provide a brief description of each participant. Reflection boxes will be present throughout this chapter. The purpose of these boxes is to provide insight into the researcher's thoughts and potential bias noted throughout the analysis process to understand how these thoughts and potential bias may have shaped the interpretation of the data. The current study's findings are interpreted through the phenomenological lens and organised into main themes that relate to the four participants' unique lived experiences.

### 5.2 Describing the research participants

This section provides a brief description of the study participants. The current study consisted of three black female participants and one coloured female participant. They were registered students at higher education institutions situated in the Gauteng region when the interviews were conducted. The participants were originally from four different African countries, and none were permanent residents of South Africa. The researcher has used pseudonyms (P1, P2, P3, and P4) when referring to each of the four participants to protect their identities. Further information regarding the participants is reflected in Table 5.1 below.

**Table 5.1:** Description of research participants

<b>Research participant</b>	<b>Participants' background</b>
<b>P-1 (UG)</b>	P-1 is an 18-year-old Zimbabwean female student. She is a first-year student studying civil engineering. She speaks English, Ndebele, Zulu, Shona, and

<p><b>Date of interview:</b> <b>June 2018</b></p>	<p>Xhosa, Ndebele and Shona are indigenous Zimbabwean languages, whilst Zulu and Xhosa are two of the official languages of South Africa. She came to visit South Africa for the first time in 2010 and started residing in South Africa in 2018. She often travels to her home country during study breaks. The participant believes the education system in her home country is superior to that of South Africa. However, she indicated that prospects of getting a job after studying in South Africa are much better, hence her choice of enrolling at a historically white South African higher education institution. The participant lives off-campus and shares a flat with a non-student.</p>
<p><b>P-2 (UG)</b> <b>Date of interview:</b> <b>December 2017</b></p>	<p>(P-2) is a 22-year-old Malawian female student who identifies as coloured. She speaks Chichewa and English and first came to South Africa in 2014 to pursue her higher education studies. She is currently a third-year student studying international relations and politics at a historically white South African higher education institution. She has not learnt any South African languages because there is ‘no time for that’, and other students interpret for her should they communicate in a local language anyway. She is in South Africa to further her studies and advance her athletics career since she heard that the university she is enrolled in has reputable sports facilities. However, P-2’s transition as a student from Malawi to South Africa was not easy, as she had to do a bridging course in line with HESA (Higher Education South Africa) requirements. Although P-2 typically flies home during the study breaks, she would prefer to stay in South Africa during her holidays because of the travel expenses involved. However, her brother has been working in South Africa for approximately eight years, so she does not feel lonely during her holidays.</p>
<p><b>P-3 (PG)</b> <b>Date of interview:</b> <b>November 2017</b></p>	<p>P-3 is a 29-year-old female postgraduate immigrant student from Kenya. She is studying towards an Honours degree in electrical engineering at a historically white South African higher education institution. She speaks English, Swahili, and her unnamed mother tongue. Although she is currently studying in South Africa full time, she has previously been in and out of the country for work-related visits. She has been in South Africa to pursue her postgraduate studies since 2017. She studied in Kenya for her undergraduate degree. The only close friend she has in South Africa is her boyfriend. She has lost contact with her friends back home.</p>
<p><b>P-4 (UG)</b></p>	<p>P-4 is a 20-year-old undergraduate student. She is a second-year, Architecture student at a historically white South African higher education institution. Her home country is Chad. Before coming to South Africa, her family had settled in Ethiopia and then in Rwanda. She first came to South</p>

<b>Date of interview:</b> <b>August 2018</b>	Africa 10 years ago but has been in the country to pursue her studies full time since 2017. Her home language is French, and she is nearly fluent in English. She came to South Africa at an early age but has travelled significantly due to her father’s work as a diplomat. The bulk of her education has been in South Africa, although she has yet to attain residency. Her parents, brothers, and sisters have also settled in Johannesburg, South Africa. Her father is a retired United Nations officer and has travelled widely in Africa because of the nature of his job. He chose South Africa as a place to settle after his retirement in 2017. Chad was not an ideal place to settle in then because of internal political and ethnic strife.
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### 5.3 Themes derived from the analysis

Four super-ordinate themes, with eight sub-ordinate themes, are identified from the transcribed interviews – these being 1). The initial experiences of South Africa as an immigrant student, 2). Experiences relating to language use 3). ‘Us’ and ‘them’ in the university experience, and 4). The learning experiences of African immigrant students. The identified themes and subthemes are meant to capture the essence of the information gathered from the data collection process and represent common features found within the transcripts (Willig, 2013, Smith, 2004, Spinelli, 2005). Additionally, the researcher will provide their insights and reflections based on the lived experiences of the immigrant students through the use of reflection boxes throughout the chapter. A table summarising the identified themes is depicted in Table 5.2 below.

**Table 5.2:** Super-ordinate themes and sub-ordinate themes identified

Super-ordinate theme	Sub-ordinate themes
Theme 1: The initial experiences of South Africa as an immigrant student	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Are South Africans viewed as xenophobic in the African continent?</li> <li>- Experiences of covert and overt racial discrimination in South Africa in interpersonal and institutional settings</li> <li>- Mental wellbeing</li> <li>- Social experiences (friendships, isolation, integration)</li> </ul>
Theme 2: Experiences relating to language use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Language is used as an identifier and to place people within in-groups and out-groups.</li> <li>- Language as an institutional tool of exclusion</li> </ul>

Theme 3: ‘Us’ and ‘them’ in the university experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Scapegoating – the tendency to blame foreigners in general for the socio-economic ills in the country</li> </ul>
Theme 4: The learning experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The learning experiences can be positive or negative.</li> <li>- Availability of learning resources</li> </ul>

All super-ordinate and sub-ordinate themes will be discussed in the section below.

*Reflection box 1*

As a researcher, I had to be intentional about keeping notes about my views and thoughts throughout the process. Many of the themes that arose from this process resonated with me. I had similar experiences in university (some, not all), and I didn’t want to take away from my openness to understand the participants’ own stories and journeys. Listening to the recordings repeatedly between and after the transcription process helped me gain that familiarity, closeness to the data that John Smith refers to in his works. In addition, reading and re-reading the transcriptions each time with new eyes assisted me in gaining a new understanding of the data.

I do believe I greatly underestimated how time-consuming and difficult using IPA as a research approach would be. Before I began the analysis, I read extensively on the topic and somehow still felt like a fish out of water. Oftentimes, I was consumed with whether I was doing the right thing, was I capturing the participants’ experiences for what they truly were? It was a difficult hurdle to get over.

**5.3.1 Super-ordinate theme 1: The initial experiences of South Africa as an immigrant student**

The first main theme looks at the initial experiences that the immigrant students had when they arrived in South Africa. These initial experiences highlighted concerns around xenophobia and racism, battles with mental wellbeing, and navigating social experiences like gaining and losing friendships, feelings of isolation, and coping with integration in the participants’ new environment. In addition to the main theme, the researcher will discuss four sub-ordinate themes below to illustrate this main theme.

### **5.3.1.1. Sub-ordinate theme 1: Are South Africans viewed as xenophobic in the African continent?**

**P-1:** The first participant, P-1, is an immigrant student from Zimbabwe. P-1 indicates that she has not experienced xenophobia, although she has observed incidents of xenophobia now and again outside of campus. She has managed to integrate well within her university community, as most of her friends are South African:

*P-1: Ja, most of them, I can say, the majority of my friends are South Africans. Only 1 of my friends is a Zimbabwean. So, they treat you as their people; there's no problem.*

In addition, P-1 also does not experience xenophobia on campus and speaks as follows of her university as an international university, which takes due regard to international students:

*P-1: Basically, there is no problem with foreigners or stuff, because we have our international office, ah everything is just, it's nice.*

She even feels more discriminated against in her home country, where there is tension between the different ethnic groups (specifically between the Ndebele and Shona people). In effect, P1 believes that there is more prejudice in her home country between the Ndebele and Shona people than in South Africa. This reduced exposure to prejudice/discrimination in South Africa has even allowed for her to expand her language base by learning to speak Sotho (one of the official languages of South Africa).

**P-3:** P-3 is from Kenya. When talking about her experiences of xenophobia in South Africa, she draws a comparison of South Africa and her country of origin. She feels her country is more welcoming to foreigners than South Africa and that South Africans feel their country is not part of the continent at large:

*P-3: Like we've embraced them (Indians) to be a tribe in Kenya. But here, people think there's South Africa, and there's the rest of Africa.*

For P-3, it was initially shocking that South Africans were so hostile to foreigners when she first arrived in South Africa. She could not easily board local transport, especially after the xenophobic

attacks that had recently flared in various parts of the country that year (2017). In addition, she felt that South Africans have perceptions that if one is dark, then that person is likely to be a foreigner and is thus treated differently.

*P-3: it's weird because it feels like being dark here (South Africa) means you are a foreigner. That was scary, especially when I wanted to climb a taxi somewhere.*

**P-4:** P-4 is more widely travelled in Africa. She describes her home country of Chad as a place that is unstable – socially, economically, and politically. There is internal ethnic fighting between people from the north and south of the country. Even though there is internal fighting in the country, the general populace is quite accepting of foreigners. She feels that South Africa is more accepting to foreigners than countries like Ethiopia (a country where she was once a resident), where life is not easy for foreigners:

*P-4: Compared to a place like Ethiopia, for example, where it's difficult to do your own thing if you're a foreigner. Uhm, like you can't own a house, you can't own a business, things like that. Well, here in South Africa, as long as you have the right paper, you're in order and everything, you can you are allowed, you have more freedom to do whatever you need.*

*Reflective box 2:*

I found P-4's reflection regarding her thoughts on xenophobia and South African to be quite interesting. Due to our country's very public battle with xenophobic attacks in recent years, I had always assumed that other African countries must view all South Africans as inherently xenophobic. It was a surprise to learn that other countries (like Ethiopia) are perceived as harder for foreign nationals.

### ***5.3.1.2. Sub-ordinate theme 2: - Experiences of covert and overt racial discrimination in South Africa in interpersonal and institutional settings***

**P-2:** P-2 is an immigrant student from Malawi who identifies as coloured. When she first arrived in South Africa in 2014, she experienced overt and covert discrimination because of her different accent. However, her accent has changed over the years, and she can blend in more within

South African society. Such discrimination, she says, is so institutionalised that even during registration, she was treated differently by the university staff because she is a “foreigner”.

P-2 shares that she initially thought of South Africa as a “rainbow nation”. The media drove this perception in her country, which described South Africa as rich in diversity and living in harmony. This notion made her feel she would fit well into the South African environment. However, upon reaching South Africa, P-2 was stunned by the racism she was exposed to within the university. She also expressed shock at the racial divisions and covert discrimination she felt when she interacted with white students at her residence. She felt that black people, on the other hand, were more accepting and less prejudiced. Prejudicial behaviours were even more pronounced in class, where her white lecturers perpetuated these behaviours. P-2 went on to further share that, at times, these remarks were even laced with xenophobic undertones:

*P-2: [This university].....is very racist. And I told you, in Malawi, we are not used to racism. So, first, that's gonna be a shock; it's gonna be the shock of your life.*

*P-2: And in terms of my lecturers, (sic)when it was a white lecturer I could still feel the tension and everything and, uhm sometimes they make remarks when uh like I would ask a question, and then it'll be 'I'll reply you later, cause I have to think about it and everything'. And then, during the lecture, it would be like, 'who was that foreigner who asked the question'? You know, type of thing.*

What perplexed P-2, even more was the nonchalant nature of the other students when such incidents happened. It was as if it was accepted as a norm. In addition, P-2 feels that immigrants from Europe are treated with much higher respect than those from other African countries, dispelling the ‘rainbow nation’ notion and highlighting the reality of racial neo-racism. Lee (2017) describes neo-racism as a form of racism that considers a person’s values, language, and norms in addition to their physical differences. There are documented cases of this type of regional preferential treatment. Asian students in North American high education institutions experience similar racial discrimination (Le & Iwamoto, 2019). This concept will be explored further in Chapter 6 (Discussion of Findings).

*Reflective box 3:*

I found it a pretty jarring experience when P-2 shared this viewpoint of South Africans and our acceptance of prejudicial behaviours. The salience of racial prejudice/discrimination in South Africa is not something that had ever escaped me. In fact, having attended multi-racial schools my entire life, I was well aware of it. However, it was interesting to note that even immigrant students experienced it as well. It was an assumption that I held (that South Africans predominantly experienced that racial tension). This realisation allowed me to gain insight into an expanded world of racism and prejudice.

*P-2: So she actually had two passports. One of her passports was from Uganda; the other one was from the UK. So with the one from Uganda, it's the one that she applied with, and she gave it to the people, they were like 'sorry sorry we can't process you we can't process you we can't process you'. And then she came back with her United Kingdom passport, and that's when they started to take her seriously.*

Immigrant students, in essence, are treated differently. Their issues are not taken seriously. Concerning this, P-2 gives the example of the #FeesMustFall protests. According to her, it was resolved that fees would not increase for South African students but *'would definitely increase for international students'*. In addition, immigrant students get the last option for student residency placements, making it challenging to study if they are not admitted to a university.

What made it worse, according to P-2, is being a coloured immigrant student who found it difficult to integrate socially due to her racial background.

*P-2: And being an international student, and the fact that there aren't a lot of international students in res, it is very hard for me to find my place cause I'm coloured, so I don't identify myself as black. I don't identify myself as white.*

### **5.3.1.3. Sub-ordinate theme 3: Mental wellbeing**

In addition to the politics of race she was confronted with, P-2 also experienced what she described as “a culture shock” since she comes from a more religiously conservative background where indigenous cultural norms are not observed. This is in contrast to South Africa, where she was exposed to an array of cultural practices outside of her religious framework of Christianity. She

attributed this contrast to the more conservative religious norms that govern Malawi's behaviours more than in South Africa—as such, adapting to such an environment can be a complex process. She relates her friend's experience, who is also from Malawi, who could not cope with South Africa's religiously diverse environment. This inability to successfully integrate into her new environment contributed to the friend's feelings of depression,

*P-2: Well, religion is a big part of our society, but it's also socially conservative. It's like there are certain things you wouldn't say even though you are thinking it. There are certain things you wouldn't do even though you'd like to.*

*P-2: '... She doesn't interact with anyone at all; she goes home straight. And then she'll maybe uhm because she has insomnia as well, she'd probably stay up the whole night, uhm speaking to her mom back home, crying to go back home, cause that's why she cries to go, (sic) she wants to go back home. And she was about to. She was this close to dropping out cause her mom even allowed it. But her dad said no. So she's just home, and even when I go and try to chill with her, she's just like, silent, you know.*

Moreover, P-2 also expressed that the university did not provide a conducive environment for immigrant students to integrate and belong; hence, some students felt depressed. For those students who may need mental healthcare services like the individual mentioned by P2, it was difficult as P-2 felt like the university was not assisting her friend in any way. To add to this, P-2 shared that it was difficult to get such help from the university even when her friend tried to commit suicide by jumping off a building when she felt she did not fit into the university environment. Participants reported that mental illness is worse for immigrant students since they think they do not belong and are alone:

*P-2: But she's still till this day, and the thing is, the university is not doing anything about it. They know, they know she's depressed, they know like the reasons why she's depressed, cause she missed on her first semester tests because of her uhm depression. So they know this is a problem, but they choose not to do anything about it, and I'm sure like it's just the way they treat, well, students. But it's really bad for an international student because*

*maybe a normal student may have family close. But as an international student, you have no one. You are in a whole different country*

Another component of mental wellbeing that P-2 discussed was the feeling of despondency when immigrant students felt they did not fit in. This is particularly in the context of the various in-group circles that one may find themselves in (i.e. residence, friends, interest in degree, etc.). It often led to the immigrant students feeling depressed and alone. She then provides an example of a friend who stayed at a university residence. This friend found it difficult to gain a sense of belonging in her new environment, and she struggled academically with her degree. This feeling of not belonging led to her feeling isolated and, subsequently, trying to take her life. P-2 concludes her reflection by highlighting the irony of the situation – she shares that her friend’s parents sent her to live in university accommodation not to be alone. Yet, as P-2 reveals, it was the very experience of being in a university residence and feeling like an outsider that contributed to her suicide attempt:

*P-2: Alright, uhm, a girl from Angola I know, she didn't feel like she fit in, she didn't understand these res practices, and she was studying Actuarial Science, that course is very hard. She tried to jump off the building [from one of the university residences]. That's how despondent she got; she was going to jump off a building; how can that person be okay? I mean, her parents put her in residence thinking she would not be alone, but because of that environment, that's exactly what happened, she felt completely on her own, and none of us even realised it till that day.*

#### **5.3.1.4. Sub-ordinate theme 4: Social experiences (friendships, isolation, integration)**

**P-1:** P-1’s initial thoughts about South Africa when she was still in Zimbabwe were that of a crime-ridden country, based on media reports in her country. Because of these perceptions, she still feels unsafe in the country and will not even think of walking at night because of the ‘constant gunshots’ that she hears from her flat. This fear is a new experience to her as she has always felt relatively safe in her native Zimbabwe. However, as she cannot afford a flat closer to university and out of the city centre, she is forced to become accustomed to her environment.

P-1 also feels that, contrary to what family and friends in Zimbabwe had told her, her experience is that South Africans are more accepting of each other and migrants/international students than Zimbabweans are in her country. On how her experience of South Africa compares to her experience of Zimbabwe, she had this to say:

*P-1: What I can say ne? At home we are, we are not, like what I can say, we are blinkered, people there, you have open minds here. Because at home, to tell the truth, I don't think we welcome international students the way they do here. Because at home we have this Shona thing and Ndebele thing. Antagonism has been reported between the Ndebele and Shona ethnic groups in Zimbabwe (Santos, 2018). P-1 is Ndebele].*

Despite the lack of tolerance amongst Zimbabweans mentioned by P-1, she does deem it necessary to still go home during her study break. This desire is influenced by the types of friendship ties she has back in Zimbabwe, which she feels are stronger than those in South Africa. This reasoning makes sense, as P-1 is still a first-year student.

Speaking of her friendship experiences, P-2 (a third-year student) feels that coming to South Africa made her lose her childhood friends. However, she also believes that she has gained new friends in her new environment. The other students accepted her, and therefore she fitted into the new environment very well. However, she also feels that racial perspectives consume South Africans since they typically enquire about her race before accepting her into their circles; something that does not happen in her home country of Malawi:

*P-2: It's like they like to put people in categories, and once they categorise you, it's like, 'Okay, so she's gonna chill with these people'.*

In addition, P-2 also expressed that being an international student, far from their home environment's familiarity and support networks, further compounded their feelings of isolation. It is this feeling of isolation that exacerbated the other issues faced by an international student (for example, feelings of depression):

*P-2: [Being an international student]... It just amplifies the isolation, and it amplifies the depression, as you can imagine.*

The university, according to P-2, has a lot of wrongs that need to be corrected. She then provides a summary of such issues:

*P-2: [...] there are no support systems in [this university], for international students. What else would I say? You are going to find it very hard to fit in with culture itself, and the fact that there are no support systems, and it's very hard to uhm make friends which, all of this together, would probably make you want to leave*

*P-2: [...] Yeah, what else would I say? Ja, I just wish there was more support for international students. They don't actually hear about you, there could be a xenophobic attack happening right outside, and there's nothing the university would do because it's off their premises.*

**P-3:** P-3 initially had positive thoughts about South Africa before she came to the country – these thoughts are that South Africa is well developed, a good tourist attraction, and has diverse cultures. However, those thoughts soon changed when she started studying in South Africa. The economy was not as she had initially believed it was, and the residents were not as welcoming of immigrants as she initially thought:

*P-3: The economy, I've seen how it has had its ups and downs since I came here, but the matter that shocked me the most was the way the South Africans were welcoming us it wasn't very good because when we arrived in January and then February, there was a whole xenophobic thing again.*

However, P-3 also feels that South Africans are connected to their culture and traditions and have not allowed the Western culture to dilute their way of life. However, she also feels South African cultural norms are dying, as expressed in the way women dress (on-campus) and cases where prominent politicians are heard to be violating women. She also expressed shock at how men behave

towards women, referring to the moral decay in South Africa, where even school uniforms go way above girls' knees, unlike the more reserved Kenya where dressing, abortion, and access to condoms are controlled for individuals under the age of 18.

*P-4: Yeah, so I don't know maybe the way that you guys as South Africans have been brought up, maybe the culture here is different from the culture I talk about. Culture in Kenya, we know we are talking about tradition, you know, uhm... Our tradition requires you to, you know, cover-up, you know uhm, touching a woman is just a no-no, walking around in campus wearing all these other things is just, not right. Cases of, you know, hearing on the news that this guy has this uhm maybe this prominent member of parliament has assaulted, you know, a girl, it's a shocker.*

**P-4:** P-4 has been exposed to different cultures in Africa. Before coming to South Africa, she initially thought of the country as well developed and not like any other country in Africa. To her, South Africa was like a first-world country and not dominated by dusty streets like those found in other African countries. Despite these initial thoughts about the country, her friends warned her that South Africa would not provide her with the security needed due to xenophobia. Thus, P-4's sentiments about South Africa changed after heeding the warnings of her friends. As a result, when her family got to South Africa, they were quite apprehensive of their new environment:

*P-4: So when we came here, we were very much like, 'can we go out of the house, do we lock all the doors, everything everything'. And then we're like, guys, we are becoming paranoid, this doesn't seem right.*

Eventually, P-4 realised that the issue of crime in the country was exaggerated, and she and her family could settle into the country.

### **5.3.2 Super-ordinate theme 2: Experiences relating to language use**

The second main theme looks at the language experiences of the participants and how these experiences decide whether the participants are accepted or rejected by different circles. In addition, this theme also explores the manner in which these experiences contribute to participants' feelings

of inclusion and exclusion. Two sub-ordinate themes will be discussed below to illustrate this theme.

**5.3.2.1. Sub-ordinate theme 2: Language is used as an identifier and to place people within 'in-groups' and 'out-groups'.**

**P-1:** P-1 is well conversant in two South African languages (Xhosa and Zulu) and has made friends with South African students that speak Zulu and Sotho. She manages to communicate with them effectively as they both understand Zulu. However, she cannot speak Sotho well, and when her friends converse in Sotho in front of her, she sometimes feels excluded. She, therefore, does feel excluded at times based on language differences during her stay in South Africa.

**P-3:** P-3 cannot speak any local languages, though she is willing to learn. When she first came to South Africa, she wanted to learn Zulu. P-3 shared that she considered it an advantage to learn such a language because it is considered rude. For example, if you get into a taxi and you do not greet people in their language. Language, according to her, is used locally as a means of categorising people into in- or out-groups.

*P-3: I don't know. I want to learn Zulu but, I also want to learn Venda because I hear Venda is almost close to what we speak back in Kenya. Like if a Venda person speaks, they say that we can hear. But I'm trying to learn Zulu also, in fact, the greetings cause when you get into a taxi, I saw you are supposed to say 'hi' properly, or they think you are a problem and they will treat you differently.*

**P-4:** P-4 has not learned any local South African languages either. As such, she feels discriminated against as a black individual who cannot speak a local South African language. P-4 shares that black South Africans often assume that she can speak at least one of the local languages. Once they discover that she is not conversant in any indigenous South Africa language, they then assume that she is a foreigner that does not display the appropriate manners as she only wants to speak English. However, she has enrolled for a semester course in Zulu at her university to learn to speak at least one local language.

*Reflective box 4:*

P-4's observation about South Africans views about language really stayed with me. It made me realise how I, as a black South African, often assume that black individuals I initially encounter are conversant in one or the other indigenous languages of the country. I will often greet and offer pleasantries to black people in isiZulu or Setswana. Although I don't necessarily assume that individuals who did not respond are "rude", it never occurred to me that they may not automatically understand me. This made me realise the power of language in including and excluding others, even unintentionally.

### ***5.3.2.2.Sub-ordinate theme 2: Language as an institutional tool for exclusion***

**P-2:** P-2's first experience as a student at her university residence was marked with being forced to learn 'initiation' songs in a language she did not understand. She felt quite intimidated and was quick to recognise the antagonism between black and white students, based on language differences:

*P-2: And it was like they wouldn't even explain exactly what they were saying. They would say something in Afrikaans, and I must repeat it, and it's a language I am not even well versed in. And then uh I could see from the beginning when I came here that there was a, there was a division between blacks and whites.*

Additionally, P-2 attributes her exclusion in sporting and university residential activities like the *haka* to languages used (The *haka* is a residence greeting war cry that the students need to use at various sporting events and activities). She has felt excluded from some sports meetings when Afrikaans, a language she does not understand, was used throughout the sessions. She thinks that the university language policy must change since some courses are still conducted in Afrikaans. After interventions by various stakeholders during and post the #FeesMustFall protests regarding this policy, some lecturers opted to hold lectures for Afrikaans students on weekends, where P-2 believes that lecturers might also be discussing semester tests and exam answers with the Afrikaans speaking students. Ultimately, this would disadvantage the non-Afrikaans speaking students, according to this participant.

*Reflective Box 5:*

P-2's thoughts and feelings were a lot to process, mainly as this was after the #FeesMustFall protests across the country. Having not had the personal experience of knowing lecturers who are discussing academic content with the Afrikaans classes and not the English classes during my time as a student, it made me incredibly sad and empathic towards this participant's reflections and how it may have impacted the experience of many English speaking students on campus. The #FeesMustFall protests began in 2015 and questioned the "Rainbow Nation" rhetoric which had dominated the South African political landscape since the end of apartheid. The Fallists movement highlighted the continuing impact of South African's colonial and apartheid past on the country's inadequate democratic present – particularly for the youth. As Mpofu-Walsh (2021) states, "*South Africa's universities, their colonial monuments, and financial barriers became prisms through which apartheid's afterlives were sharply refracted*" (p. 1). The movement tackled issues of financial access to education for the missing middle, the role of colonial figures in modern-day universities, the insourcing of university ground workers, and the language policy of former Afrikaans-medium speaking universities. For the first time in post-democratic South Africa, these issues became the country's central political debate during that time. What made it even more tragic and disheartening to me was hearing the participant say that this was simply "accepted as the norm". I was very moved by this account.

### **5.3.3. Super-ordinate theme 3: 'Us' and 'them' in the university experience: Scapegoating**

The third main theme looks at the complex relationship that exists between immigrant students and South African students. Specifically, this theme will look at Scapegoating, which refers to the tendency to blame foreigners in general for the socio-economic ills in the country (Santos, 2018). This theme will be discussed below to illustrate the overall theme.

P-3 shares that a shocking revelation for her was how the 2017 xenophobic occurrences quickly exposed a culture of scapegoating amongst her fellow South African students. She reveals that she did sometimes overhear students share resentment about immigrant students and their potential to take up the available employment opportunities in the country. She also described how immigrants were blamed for being too studious. She then contrasted this to her experiences in her

native Kenya, where Kenyans have fully embraced migrant groups (like Indians). This scapegoating was particularly difficult to understand for P-3, considering that the issues that immigrant students were being blamed for often were not caused in any way by the immigrant students.

*P-3: The economy, I've seen how it has had its ups and downs since I came here, but the matter that shocked me the most was the way the South Africans were welcoming us; it wasn't very good because, in 2017, there was the whole xenophobic thing again. And that was hard because sometimes you hear other students in the cafeteria talking about how foreign people are taking jobs. So that was a bit of a shocker because back in Kenya, we have a lot of migrants, yoh from Somalia to Indians. We even joke at home that Indians have even have been recognised as the 45<sup>th</sup> tribe in Kenya (Laughs). Like we've embraced them to be a tribe in Kenya. But here, people blame foreigners for everything, the economy, the jobs, studying too hard – things that don't even involve us. It's a shocker.*

#### **5.3.4. Super-ordinate theme 4: The immigrant students' learning experiences**

The fourth main theme looks at the learning experiences of the participants. Two subordinate themes illustrate this theme—the first looks at how learning experiences were viewed positively or negatively. The second describes the availability of learning resources and how that has enriched the learning process is also highlighted.

##### **5.3.4.1. Sub-ordinate theme 1: The learning experiences can be positive or negative.**

**P-1:** P-1's learning experience during her first-year studies has been a positive one thus far. She shares that her experience completing advanced levels in her native Zimbabwe during her high school career has provided her with a competitive edge in her first year of academics, particularly physics and mathematics. This competitive edge is evident, P-1 reveals, in the fact that the work she is currently doing in her first year is similar to the work she did whilst in high school.

*P-1: Ja, our high school, is very good because what we are doing here is more like what we did in our high school. [...] So it's an advantage for me, [...] Ja because they are struggling, especially in physics and maths.*

She, however, does not have direct relations with lecturers because of the sheer size of her classes. Her classmates have accepted her as one of them and not as an immigrant student. Thus it was easy for her to join various study groups for the modules that she struggled with. P-1 shared that she could make friends within a week of being on campus, which allowed her to learn about tutorial groups that she now attends with her friends twice a week. By attending these tutorial groups with her new friends, she achieved good marks for most of her modules and received great academic support for her studies.

*P1: I go to classes. One class is two hours long, imagine; then, I have tutorials at least twice a week. Then there are also 18 tutorials that the first years can go to for 'extra work', not compulsory. But they help me to pass my modules well. These tutorials are great because if there ever comes a time where you fail all your modules, they will check if you attended these tutorials. If you were attending, they say they won't chase you away.*

**P-2:** P-2's learning experiences at her higher education institution have not been very positive. She describes her experiences as being defined by an inflexible culture from the lecturers where students are not allowed to share their opinions in their work. Instead, she feels that the South African university system forces students to memorise their work without any critical thinking being expected of them. Unlike the experiences from her country whilst she was completing her A-levels, South African universities teach students to study to pass semester tests and exams. Because of her negative overall learning experiences, she would not recommend to any other immigrant student to come and study at the university that she is enrolled in:

*P-2: I know I find that uhm because they made it so rigid, it's..., I wouldn't actually learn the work, it's like I memorise the work because that's what they want us to do.*

*P-2: [...]. I'd be like, 'just run away', just never, yoh, I would never, I would never, not even to my worst enemy, not even to that girl I hated in high school...*

#### 5.3.4.2. Sub-ordinate theme 2: Availability of learning resources

**P-3:** P-3 finds the learning experience in South Africa vastly different from that of Kenya, her home country. In Kenya, she says, students have to go to the library to gather their study content physically. In contrast, in South Africa, this is readily available through university and other online learning and library platforms. This availability of learning materials makes it easy to prepare for classes before attending. She also finds that the lecturers in South Africa interact more with the students, giving more meaning to the learning experience. She attributes this interaction to the smaller-sized classes for the modules she attends. Also, adjusting to a new learning environment has been easy. As a postgraduate student, P-3 has the added advantage of having gained work experience whilst in Kenya.

*P-3: There is a difference, in terms of how the content is delivered [...] Ja, there's more uhm online content, there's more access to the library, from using the internet because for us, the library was majorly physically you have to go there and get a book and stuff. Of course, there was the internet, but it is not as widely available as it is here [...]. Then uh, the way the course is being delivered is also different because you can get to know many things beforehand before you go to class. Uhm, the way the lecturers conduct the lectures is so different because they sort of, there's more accountability I'd say, there's more personal touch with the students.*

**P-4:** P-4 shared that her learning experience has been positive, especially since she was exposed to an advanced curriculum that gave her a competitive edge. She mentioned that her course exposed her to a module that allowed her to experience content that prepared her for postgraduate studies at other universities. Thus, enrolling at her current university has made her future studies easier, particularly in comparison to students from other universities who will only gain this exposure at the postgraduate level:

*P-4: Yes, because what happened is that uhm, in the first year, we are apparently the only South African university who has landscape architecture in undergrad, all the others, it's a postgrad thing. Uhm, so interior architecture is also quite a recent thing in South Africa. So it's really exciting to learn about this now; imagine how much easier it will be for me*

*compared to the people from other universities when I do postgrad. So I really appreciate that exposure.*

*Reflective box 6:*

The participants' reflections regarding their learning experiences were an unexpected finding for me. My assumption before this research was that the most significant transition difficulty that the participants would experience (outside of xenophobia) would be in their academics and learning. I was thus surprised to see that only one participant found it difficult to navigate/adjust to the learning environment in the South African HEI landscape.

#### **5.4. Conclusion**

This chapter presented the findings from the interviews that the researcher conducted with the current study participants. Four super-ordinate themes and eight sub-ordinate themes were presented. The focus of the presented themes was the lived experiences of the immigrant students at their various higher education institutions. The purpose of these themes was to provide the reader with some insight into the participants' unique experiences. In the sixth and final chapter, the themes will be contextualised in relation to the existing literature.

## **Chapter 6: Discussion of Findings**

### **6.1. Introduction**

This chapter discusses the findings that arose from the exploration of African immigrant students' lived experiences at Gauteng-based higher education institutions. Moreover, these findings will be discussed in conjunction with existing literature to contextualise the participants' experiences further. Thereafter, the concluding summary of the study findings will be provided, followed by the current study's limitations. The chapter will close with some recommendations for further practice.

### **6.2. Summary of Findings**

This study aimed to explore African immigrant students' socio-cultural and academic experiences registered at South African higher education institutions. The research questions that guided the study were: What are the socio-cultural experiences of African immigrant students in South African tertiary institutions? What are the academic experiences of African immigrant students in South African tertiary institutions? By exploring the participants' lived experiences, four super-ordinate themes and eight sub-ordinate themes were identified. The themes primarily described the lived experiences of the immigrant students at their various higher education institutions. Four super-ordinate themes, with eight sub-ordinate themes, were identified from the transcribed interviews – these being 1). The initial experiences of South Africa as an immigrant student, 2). Experiences relating to language use 3). 'Us' and 'them' in the university experience, and 4). The learning experiences of African immigrant students. The discussion below entails an interpretation of the study findings in conjunction with existing literature.

### **6.3. The initial experiences of South Africa as an immigrant student**

The first super-ordinate theme highlighted concerns around xenophobia and racism, battles with mental wellbeing, and navigating social experiences like gaining and losing friendships, feelings of isolation, and coping with integration in the participants' new environment. Three out of four

participants shared that their initial thoughts of South Africa were of a rainbow nation where different race groups thrived in this diversity. Thus, they expected foreigners to be welcomed with ease. All participants were surprised to find that their actual experiences of South Africa were marred with xenophobic outbreaks, a struggling economy and racial tensions.

The existing literature highlights that the participants' experiences have been as a result of a unique context within the country. In 1994, there were great expectations both in South Africa and the world of a new, non-racial, inclusive South Africa. However, as Badat and Sayed (2014) argue, despite the new government's commitment to transforming the education systems, inherited racial and social divisions through various transformation initiatives, few, if any, have been effective. South Africa has made some progress in promoting democratic ideals, but there are still many challenges in terms of integration. Meaningful contact between different races is still a work in progress (Vandeyar & Mohale, 2017). In the higher education context, these challenges bring South African universities into the spotlight as administrators strive to make students of all races, students who were formerly segregated by the apartheid regime, share classrooms and residences (Vandeyar & Mohale, 2017). However, with the growth of internationalisation, a new dynamic of immigrant students has been added to the already complex racial dynamic in South Africa.

One of the participants was particularly stunned by the racial divisions she was exposed to in her university. As a coloured student, she became acutely aware of other students' focus on her race, something that she did not experience as much in her home country (Malawi). She also expressed shock at the racial divisions and covert discrimination she felt when she interacted with white students at her residence. She noted how immigrant students from European countries were given preferential treatment over immigrant students from Africa.

The experiences of this participant highlight the reality of racial neo-racism. Lee (2017) describes neo-racism as a form of racism that considers a person's values, language, and norms in addition to their physical differences. Studies have shown that immigrant students from non-Western, low-income, developing countries are more likely to be exposed to this form of discrimination than those from developed, European countries, Australia, and North America (Lee, 2017; Marginson et al. 2010). This unequal treatment pattern is often laced with racial undertones as students from non-

English speaking and developing countries are targets of discrimination over others. Moreover, this understanding of racial discrimination also suggests that immigrant students of similar race, norms, and values to each other may experience more significant difficulties than immigrant students of a different race and norms and values (Lee, Jon, & Byun, 2016).

Additionally, as the only coloured person in this study (the other three participants were black), this participant shared that the focus on her ethnicity highlighted an interesting disjuncture in racial classification within the continent. In Malawi, the coloured racial category was abolished in the post-independence constitution (Adhikari, 2009). Thus, in her home country, she was viewed simply as being Malawian. In coming to South Africa, she was confronted with having to re-categorise herself in a way that she had never had before, creating an issue of competing identities between locals and non-locals. As a means of identity, race featured a lot in some of the participants' interaction with other students – often, the issue of racial tension was most jarring for the participants. In reality, the use of race as an administrative category remains prominent within the post-1994 South African context, which, as Erasmus (2010) argues, can lead to specific ways of identifying and understanding individuals whilst negating others.

On the other spectrum, one participant, in her reflection, lamented how darker skin tones were automatically associated with being a foreign national. Stereotypes like the darker you are, the more likely you are to be a foreigner points to ingrained discriminatory practices used in South Africa as a means of Afro-racial classification, as seen in the participant's experience. In the broader context, this also links to discussions around colourism. Coined by Alice Walker in 1983, the term colourism can be defined as a specific prejudicial bias based on the varying hues of one's skin colour (Okazawa-Rey, Robinson & Ward, 1987). This bias is often present both across races and within a particular race and manifests through the preference of lighter-skinned individuals over darker-skinned individuals (Walker, 1983). Colourism is inextricably linked to white supremacy. In South Africa, this is evident from the apartheid era, where the government of the time instituted various legal frameworks to create and build racial divisions that allowed for discriminatory practices based on skin colour (Gillborn, 2006; Dhillon-Jamerson, 2018). Laws such as the Population Registration Act (No.30 of 1950) formalised racial categories (i.e. black and white). Also, these laws, in line with policies of the apartheid government, introduced the 'coloured' category (Adhikari, 2009). By

introducing this category, a distinction was created that allowed the government to strengthen and apply each race group's hierarchical social status in society (Erasmus & Ellison, 2008). Each race group existed on a continuum, where the closer one was to whiteness, the likely they were to have societal privileges and freedoms. The closer they were to blackness, the less likely they would have any societal privileges and freedoms (Erasmus & Ellison, 2008). Thus, this classification allowed individuals with lighter hues to be viewed favourably, even in the post-apartheid era. Therefore, even with the participants in the current study, it is clear that the conceptualisation of blackness as inherently "bad" and whiteness as inherently "good" is further cemented by the participant's own experience. P-2 highlights how a friend with both Ugandan and British passports was discriminated against by when she presented her Ugandan passport when applying for a study visa but was given preferential treatment when she returned with her British passport. Thus, lighter to white European immigrants are treated more positively than the darker, African immigrants.

Participants' experiences with race were not isolated to fellow students. One participant also shared experiences of discriminatory behaviours based on their status as a foreigner from a white lecturer at a historically white university. The white lecturer would delay answering her questions and would refer to her as 'the foreigner' during classes. This experience highlights the feasibility that ethnic prejudice is not simply isolated to historically white universities; something that differs from what the literature reveals.

The concept of race, particularly in the higher education spaces in South Africa, is linked to the institution's identity. Born from the continued slow progress of transformation in higher education, the Soudien report, reflecting the findings of a government-mandated committee that focused on transformation and social cohesion and the elimination of discrimination in Public Higher Education, revealed that discrimination based on sex and race was rife within the sector (Soudien et al., 2008). In recent times, this remains the case. This discrimination was evident during the 2015/2016 #FeesMustFall protests, where part of the call from students and academics alike was the redress of the education system through decolonisation (Dos Santos et al., 2019). This call prompted many universities like the historically white universities, like the University of Cape Town (UCT), to investigate unfair discriminatory practices and racism allegations. The findings, released in 2019, found a racist culture present at UCT that harmed students' ability to access and perform in high

education (IRTC, 2019). The findings highlighted the students' experiences with white lecturers who displayed discriminatory behaviours in allocating marks, favouritism, and dismissal of black students' views and questions due to their race (Lewins, 2010). In so doing, such institutions enable the historical, race-based advantages and disadvantages to continue. The report also revealed that this racist dynamic also affected students' mental wellbeing. This is not unique to UCT, which highlights that these institutions have similar issues with race and racism (Luescher, Loader, & Mugume, 2017; Kamanga, 2019; Le Grange, 2019; Ayford & Zaiman, 2021). However, many historically white universities saw their student demographic change with the arrival of democracy in 1994.

However, in historically black universities, race dynamics were not as important as ethnic prejudice. Singh (2013) study found that 42% of students at historically black institutions had experienced discriminatory behaviours in South Africa. Specifically, the students shared how lecturers and service staff had excluded them by using local languages which they could not understand, referring to students as "kwere-kwere" (meaning foreigner) and denied them access to postgraduate accommodation due to their "foreigner" status (Tsai 2006; Singh, 2013). Therefore, this highlights the characterisation of xenophobic behaviours (instead of racist ones) with black South Africans, particularly in historically black higher education institutions. Yet, in the current study, a different narrative was evident, as all the participants were enrolled in historically white higher education institutions.

Xenophobia was a common theme in the experiences of all four participants of this study, although each participant's views were different. Half of the participants viewed South Africa as incredibly xenophobic, whilst the other half felt that other countries in the continent were more xenophobic than South Africa towards foreigners (i.e. Ethiopia) or displayed more ethnic discrimination towards their countrymen (i.e. Zimbabwe). Evidently, the participants' experiences were shaped by their initial expectations and experiences back home. The two out of four participants whose home countries were inclusive and accepting of other ethnicities were the ones who experienced South Africa as xenophobic. The other two participants exposed to ethnic tensions in their home countries and/or other countries in the continent found South Africans to be less xenophobic. However, the existing literature highlights a particularly concerning issue with xenophobia in South Africa and the higher education space. The growth of internationalisation within

the tertiary education space makes these institutions a fertile area for xenophobia. Vandeyar and Vandeyar (2017) reveal that, although xenophobia is described as a set of prejudices against foreign-born people, it is not limited to an attitude or mindset. In the South African context, xenophobia is often aimed at people of African descent. As has been well-documented in recent years (Crush, 2008; Asakitikpi & Gadzikwa, 2015, and Bello & Tunde, 2017), xenophobia has resulted in violent clashes between South Africans and foreign nationals; the most well-known being the 2008 xenophobic violence.

Originating in the Johannesburg Township, Alexandra, the violence was epitomised by attacks on African foreign nationals by South Africans. The image that came to define the violence was that of Ernesto Alfabeto Nhamuave, a 35-year old father of three from Mozambique, who was burnt to death (Desai, 2010). According to official reports, the death toll rose to 62 people in nine days, a third of whom were South Africans (Crush, 2008). In addition, some 342 shops were looted, 213 were destroyed, and 1384 people were arrested (Crush et al. 2008). South Africa has had sporadic occurrences of xenophobia since the 2008 violence, and half of the participants in this study were exposed to the 2017 violence that occurred in the Pretoria CBD, Sunnyside and Acadia region (Bello & Tunde, 2017). As foreign nationals, they felt afraid to go into the city CBD or use public transportation for fear of being “exposed” as a foreigner and questioned the university’s responsibility towards keeping its students safe. It is these practical experiences that likely shaped their views of the country and its higher education space.

Although not as prevalent amongst this study’s participants, one participant highlighted the impact of mental wellbeing on immigrant students’ ability to integrate successfully into their new environment. The participant reported that mental illness is worse for immigrant students since they think they do not belong and are alone. Furthermore, feelings of dependency and loneliness resulting from not fitting in were a vital component of this participant’s reflection. A critical element in this participant’s thoughts was the impact of the cultural and religious disconnect between the participants’ host country and her experience of South Africa on her ability to integrate into her new environment. In South Africa, she was exposed to various cultural practices outside of her religious framework of Christianity. Her home country of Malawi was not as diverse, and thus, she found it challenging to adapt to her new environment, which contributed to her feelings of depression. Much of this participant’s experiences are supported by Berry’s acculturation model (Berry, 1997). Acculturation

can be understood as a depiction of how people negotiate their belonging within a specific socio-cultural context (Adebanji & Gumbo, 2014). Acculturation of immigrant students occurs when they are connected to one or more cultures in addition to their own culture. Berry's (1997) bidimensional model of acculturation provides a comprehensive application of this acculturation process. In the model of acculturation, Berry (1997) posits four distinct characteristics of receiving-culture acquisition and heritage-culture. Schwartz and Zamboanga (2008) describe these as follows:

Assimilation (acquires the receiving culture and discards the heritage culture), separation (rejects the receiving culture and retains the heritage culture), integration (acquires the receiving culture and retains the heritage culture), and marginalisation (rejects the receiving culture and discards the heritage culture). (p. 276)

Evidently, the above-mentioned participant's experiences fit that of the marginalisation category. She was unable to seek solace in her cultural practices and could not assimilate to the cultural diversity she faced in South Africa. Instead, she felt isolated and alone. Furthermore, Jogee, Callaghan, and Callaghan (2018) argue that the unsuccessful adaptation to the higher education environment is associated with acculturative stress – a potentially severe consequence of one's inability to successfully integrate into a new environment which displays itself as feelings of depression, anxiety, identity crisis, isolation and despondency.

In general social contexts, immigrant students' inability to converse in at least one of the leading local languages is often met with unfriendliness and discrimination (Adebanji, 2010). This inability makes it difficult for immigrant students to make friends, converse with the local students and integrate effectively. Studies have previously linked discrimination with poor psychological wellbeing. This includes the occurrence of psychological ailments such as low self-esteem and depression (Greene, Way, & Pahl, 2006, Arthur, 2017, Singh, 2019). In their study on Chinese immigrant students, Poyrazli and Lopez (2007) found higher rates of perceived discrimination among Chinese immigrant students than students from the host country in USA tertiary institutions.

#### **6.4. Experiences relating to language use**

The second super-ordinate theme looked at the language experiences of the participants and how these experiences informed whether the participants were accepted or rejected by different circles. In addition, this theme also explored how these experiences contributed to participants' feelings of inclusion and exclusion.

The study participants were well aware of the significance of learning the local languages and how that contributed to their ability to successfully integrate into their new environments. Despite this, three of the four participants indicated that they could not speak any local language, although all three expressed a willingness to learn a local language. A motivating reason behind this desire to learn a local language was the discrimination they experienced as black individuals who cannot speak a local South African language. From these reflections, it is evident that language plays a significant role in the assimilation process. Individuals are often accepted or rejected in a new environment based on their ability to converse with the local population using the local language. This is particularly the case for African immigrants more than Asian or European immigrants, as African immigrants are often assumed to be conversant in a local language due to their race.

The language was also used as a means of exclusion within the university residence space. One participant revealed she had to learn 'initiation' songs in a language she did not understand (Afrikaans) at her historically white university. This participant attributed her feelings of exclusion from sporting and university residential activities to the language used. From this experience, it is clear that language was used as an exclusion tool that decided the level of interaction the participant could have in her new environment. The literature supports this viewpoint by highlighting language's role as a gatekeeper for acceptance in the host society. It also serves the purpose of forming the foundation for interaction between local and immigrant students (Vandeyar & Vandeyar, 2017). Wang and Phillion (2007) make an interesting deduction where they reveal that within the host society, "language is not just a cultural issue but a political one" (p. 95). This observation speaks to the fact that those who control the school boards, the higher education institutions – all of whom tend to be within the dominant group in society- will determine which languages are taught in schools and tertiary institutions alike. Thus, in essence, the inability of minority groups to communicate well in mainstream culture may lead to their exclusion at school, in social groups and ultimately in the host society (Vandeyar & Vandeyar, 2017). Moreover, immigrant students also experience academic challenges when teaching activities are conducted in a language they do not understand, solely

because the lecturer assumes that all students, primarily if a class consists of black African students, understand indigenous languages. Vandeyar and Vandeyar (2014) report that this is particularly prevalent in South African schools, as they report on one of the student's experiences:

Language is an issue. It marks you as an immigrant. For instance, when people speak in Zulu, I don't understand, and I'm quite assertive, and I tell them excuse me, I'm here, please speak English, let's all understand. They continue speaking in Zulu, and then they say I am a makwerekwere and should go back to my country. This is the land of the Zulus. (Kevin, Zimbabwe). (p. 6)

Vandeyar and Vandeyar (2014) further report that language is used to entrench social exclusion to deliberately exclude immigrant students from some social or academic activities like group work (Vandeyar & Vandeyar, 2014). This finding is supported by the Soudien report, where Lewins (2010) revealed that tension and thus conflict were a regular occurrence in residence life due to the discriminatory and exclusionary practices. This was typically evident in historically white, Afrikaans medium universities where these practices discriminated/excluded students based on race, nationality and language (Lewins, 2010). To combat this discrimination, the Soudien report recommended that residences use democratic means to allow all voices to be heard "and ensure that residences are constituted in ways that limit opportunities for dominance or manipulation by particular groups of students" (IRTC, 2019, p. 88-89). This recommendation remains painfully relevant to this day.

Three of the four participants spoke of their isolation and loneliness in South Africa. Their connections to their home countries were mediated by the regular use of their home language. In addition, the participants' cultural identities were also mediated by regularly communicating with students from their own countries and forming study groups comprised of immigrants with language commonalities. These experiences were akin to African students' experiences in a study conducted by Allen et al. (2014), where West African students at American universities utilised indigenous languages to maintain or establish connections to their West African heritage and negotiate their experiences with American culture in a place where their language was not an option. Therefore, the extent of the sense of belonging that immigrant students who face language barriers have does play

an essential role in immigrant students' level of acculturation, as Yeh et al. (2008) highlighted in their study.

## **6.5. 'Us' and 'them' in the university experience**

The third super-ordinate theme looked at the complex relationship that exists between immigrant students and South African students. Specifically, this theme described Scapegoating, which refers to the tendency to blame foreigners in general for the socio-economic ills in the country (Santos, 2018).

This theme was prominent in the experience of half of the participants. The first participant shared how the 2017 xenophobic occurrences quickly exposed a culture of scapegoating amongst her fellow South African students. She reveals that she did sometimes overhear students share resentment about immigrant students and their potential to take up the available employment opportunities in the country. She also described how immigrants were blamed for being too studious. She then contrasted this to her experiences in her native Kenya, where Kenyans have fully embraced migrant groups (like Indians). This scapegoating was particularly difficult to understand, considering that the immigrant students did not cause the issues that immigrant students were being blamed for often.

However, the participant's experience can be understood in light of the existing literature. In South Africa, contestations have also been based on the fight over finite resources, especially in socio-economically deprived areas (Dlamini et al., 2020). As such, sections of South African communities have been quick to blame immigrants for various socio-economic woes they are faced with, through what some researchers refer to as the scapegoating hypothesis (Morris, 1998; Tshitereke, 1999; Tella & Ogunnubi, 2014). This hypothesis places immigrant students in a vulnerable position as they and they alone are to be blamed for South Africans' misfortunes. Thus, they are bound to be faced with xenophobic sentiments not only from society at large but also from their fellow students and even their higher education institutions.

Anti-migrant beliefs and stereotyping driven by entrenched cultural, social and economic motivations and misconceptions have been recognised as leading factors behind xenophobic violence (Asakitikpi & Gadzikwa, 2015). In addition, Tella (2016) states that South Africa's unequal society allows for anti-migrant positions to fester well, as access to resources is already compromised for the

local black population. Thus, these anti-migrant positions serve as a scapegoat to the fundamental issue of the shortcomings of governance and the precarious job prospects many black South Africans face.

The second participant referenced an experience with a lecturer who discriminated against the participant based on her foreign status. The experiences she spoke of displayed a type of discrimination typifying group-based inequality, where the class is made up of South African students and the other students who ostensibly only need to be tolerated as if they are second-class students. The literature supports this viewpoint. In a study about identity formations in South Africa, Dlamini et al. (2020) found that the issue of ‘them’ and ‘us’, and ‘in-groups’ and ‘out-groups’ is prevalent in discourse related to contestations about place and identity in South Africa. The participant’s experience with her lecturer typifies institutional, race-based discrimination, where immigrants from non-African countries are more accepted than those from other African countries. Koenane and Maphunye (2015) describe the hatred of immigrants of African origin as Afrophobia and attribute it to the notion that black immigrants are partly or even wholly responsible for the economic ills that the poor are facing in the country. This then puts immigrant students in a particularly vulnerable position, where they feel excluded and are outsiders.

Research has shown that people form ‘groups’ based on shared commonalities (Dlamini et al., 2020). These formations are based on specific identities wherein people form cognitive and affective bonds within groups. These grouping mechanisms are then used as mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion in which the self (us) is contrasted with ‘the other’ (them) (Muller, 2008). In this study, one of the study participants attests to this construct when she says, *‘It’s like they like to put people in categories’* – implying that local South Africans have a way of categorising people as *‘others’*. However, the irony is not lost as participants themselves continually refer to South Africans as *‘they’* and *‘them’*. This points to the intricacies of identity formation and the formulation of ‘in-groups’ and ‘out-groups’. Not only is this manifested at an individual level, but one of the participants viewed this as a nationwide construct ingrained in South African life. This highlights, as Steenkamp (2009) argues, the long-lasting impact of South Africa’s isolation during the apartheid years on South African’s views of their place in the continent.

## 6.6. The immigrant students' learning experiences

The fourth and last super-ordinate theme described the learning experiences of the participants. Specifically, it looked at how learning experiences were viewed positively or negatively. Additionally, this theme described the availability of learning resources and how that has enriched the learning process.

The participants' learning experiences were predominately positive. Three out of four participants shared that they were exposed to a curriculum that gave them a competitive edge; they could learn in an engaging class setting due to fewer students than they would have had back in their home countries. They had access to comprehensive and advanced learning resources. When the participants were exposed to challenges in their academic lives, they could successfully navigate them due to their resilience.

Literature highlights that immigrant populations are often resolute about doing well in their studies due to various factors. This resilience is known as academic self-efficacy (Liu et al., 2020). The behavioural psychologist Bandura has widely studied the self-efficacy subject (Bandura, 1977; 1986; 1993). Zimmerman (1993) defined academic self-efficacy as a student's belief about completing academic tasks, whilst Bandura emphasised that self-efficacy helps individuals deal with challenges in reaching their goals (Bandura, 1986). Empirical research supports the theory by showing that domestic (Lent et al., 1984) and immigrant students (Poyrazli et al., 2002) with higher levels of academic self-efficacy achieved higher grades and persisted in their academic major longer than those with lower perceived academic self-efficacy. Leea and Ciftciba (2014), for example, studied the adaptation and efficacy of immigrant students in the USA and found that immigrants relied on social support and assertiveness in maintaining academic self-efficacy when faced with the challenges of being in a foreign environment. In the current study, almost all the students asserted that they were faced with institutional challenges. They shared that their issues were not taken seriously at an institutional level, and there were not many support mechanisms available to assist immigrant students who faced challenges. Despite these challenges, some immigrant students have adopted effective coping strategies to form their own study groups, discuss assignments with friends and decide what study methods work best for them.

The above observations support those by Leea and Ciftciba (2014) in their USA study. Their study found that students tended to form study groups to enhance their academic performance, but again, these study groups were mostly comprised of immigrant students. Leea and Ciftciba's (2014) study also found that immigrant students were more inclined to perform better academically than local students.

## **6.7. Conclusion**

The purpose of the current study was to explore the socio-cultural experiences of African immigrant students at South African higher education institutions and understand their academic experiences at these institutions. This was achieved through investigating the immigrant students' lived experiences using an interpretive phenomenological approach or IPA. This approach allowed this study to gain an in-depth understanding of each participant's lived world and enabled the researcher to derive a variety of meanings from the experiences of the research participants. The researcher, in essence, was able to grow from the reflexivity associated and required with this research approach.

The approach used during the analysis phase involved identifying commonalities from interviewee transcripts. This resulted in the identification of super-ordinate themes and subordinate themes. There were commonalities in immigrant students' experiences in South Africa and their host institutions. What came out of the interviews was that these students were particularly vulnerable, and institutional structures in South African society and their host institutions contributed to their experiences. They encountered challenges such as language difficulties and hostilities from other students, lecturers, and other authorities at their institutions. These hostilities bordered on xenophobia and racism and cast immigrant students as the 'out-group'. As such, some students experienced feelings of depression, loneliness and despondency. They then sought solace in mechanisms such as isolation or building relations with local immigrant student networks or through constant communication with close relatives in their countries of origin.

In addition, the notion of South Africa as a rainbow nation which the students held before coming to the country, was soon dispelled as the immigrant students, more often than not, met a different South Africa than they had anticipated. They found the socio-cultural experiences of the country challenging to navigate as it was not what they had initially envisioned for their time in South

Africa. The participants found that the country was fraught with social ills that immigrant students were wary of navigating. A negative light was then cast on the rainbow nation imagery often associated with South Africa. Despite these challenges, all the immigrant students interviewed were intent on completing their studies. Almost all of them reported an improvement in their academic results during the course of their studies. This is linked to academic self-efficacy, a subject that has widely been studied in educational psychology circles. Even though the external environment posed noticeable challenges, the students showed resilience and a resolve to make the best of their academic experience as immigrants in South Africa.

The main contribution of this study lies in its locality. The majority of the international studies within this field have focused on student mobility, particularly from the global South to the global North. Thus, there remains a gap in the literature regarding South-South students that focus on the tertiary space. The bias toward the West is because, until recently, the trend has been for people to move from developing to developed countries for higher education opportunities (Dzansi, 2006; Macha & Kadakia, 2017). Hence, research findings within the study of immigrant students have been shaped by the global North. The evidence presented above does show that African immigrant students' experiences are an understudied phenomenon within the academic literature in the developing world. For that reason, this study adds an important voice within South-to-South student mobility experiences.

## **6.8. Limitations**

There are three limitations noted for the current study. Firstly, the study included the predominance of female participants in the chosen sample. Thus, the experiences described in this study are from the female perspective.

The second limitation relates to the nature of the study and the role that bias play. As is the nature of any qualitative study, a researcher brings in their own bias that needs to be identified and subsequently acknowledged throughout the research process (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Thus it is likely that another researcher may have analysed and interpreted the data in a different way which may have resulted in varied findings based on the role that their bias and perspectives may have

played. Therefore, the findings presented in the current study are one possible narrative of the lived experiences of African immigrant students at South African higher education institutions. Qualitative research is such that the existence and possibility for varying truths as filtered through the lens of one's own experiences is endless (Smith, 2007).

Lastly, the participants' institutions were all based in Gauteng (specifically Pretoria and Johannesburg), limiting the scope of the current study. In addition, the number of participants that formed part of this study was limited and may not reflect the population under study. Future studies could increase the number of participants by widening the inclusion criteria. In this way, additional information and perspectives may be gained.

## **6.9. Recommendations for further practice**

- It could be argued that immigrant male students negotiate their experiences in South Africa differently from their female counterparts; thus, a study focusing on male experiences could be explored in future studies.
- The role of gender in how immigrant students navigate the higher education space in South Africa could also be explored in a study that included the experiences of both male and female immigrant students.
- Two out of four participants (50%) in the current study were from southern Africa. More participants from Francophone African countries, where English is not the predominant language, could result in varied experiences and thus warrant further investigation.
- The number of participants that formed part of this study was limited and may not reflect the population under study. Future studies could increase the number of participants; in this way, additional information and perspectives may be gained.
- As this study focused on African immigrants based within the researcher's proximity (Gauteng), the current study used higher education institutions that were only in the Gauteng region. It would be helpful to explore African immigrants' experiences from institutions outside of the Gauteng region. It could be argued that smaller communities, which may be less heterogeneous, may lead to experiences different from an immigrant student from a larger metropolitan province like Gauteng.

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## Appendix A: Participant Information Sheet



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

**Faculty of Humanities**

**Department of Psychology**

**May 2017**

### **Participant Information Sheet: Invitation to Participate in Research**

Dear Participants,

I am an MA Research Psychology student from the University of Pretoria. I would like for you to participate in a research project about African immigrant students. The project will specifically be looking at the subjective experiences of immigrant students at a tertiary level institution and, additionally, their academic experiences as well. I will conduct in-depth interviews to find out more about your experiences. The interview should take about one hour. By taking part in my study, you will be providing invaluable information. The result of this study will be disseminated in the form of a MA dissertation and journal articles and conference papers, and other research outputs. No personally identifiable details will be released.

### **Voluntary Participation**

Please be aware that, although I do value your participation, you will in no way be forced to participate in this research project. There will be no negative consequences should you choose not to participate or discontinue your participation during the study. You are allowed to say no to taking part in the in-depth interview or answering certain questions without repercussion. You will be informed before participating in any activities to ensure that you will understand what will be required of you, and you will be asked to confirm your consent to participate.

### **Risk of the research and maintaining confidentiality**

Although the in-depth session will be tape-recorded, all personal information provided will remain confidential. I will not be recording your name on any administrative paper as pseudonyms will be used. Thus, no one will be able to identify you as a participant in this study. Only the research team will have access to your personal information. When you are answering any questions, I kindly request that you be as open and honest as possible. Please know that there are no right or wrong answers. Although it is not anticipated, should participating in this research result in any distress, please note the information regarding free counselling service provided in the tear-off at the end of the information sheet.

### **Future Research**

All interview material (recordings and transcripts) will be stored in Room 11-24 of the Department of Psychology at the University of Pretoria for 15 years for possible future research.

### **Benefits of the research**

While there are no direct benefits to participants from the research, taking part in this study might bring about new and helpful ways of thinking about the topic. However, there is no guarantee that this will happen. In the long run, by sharing my findings with partners in other institutions, I hope that this research will add to the body of knowledge on the topic.

### **Questions, queries or concerns**

If you have any concerns or questions about the research, you are welcome to speak to me. You can contact me at [lnsesheba@gmail.com](mailto:lnsesheba@gmail.com). Further contact details are provided in the tear-off at the end of this information sheet to be kept for personal use.

(Tear off here)

---

Contact information:

Tel: 073 102 9789

Email: [lnsesheba@gmail.com](mailto:lnsesheba@gmail.com)

- South African Depression and Anxiety Group (free counselling service): (011) 234 4837
- Centre for Psychological Services and Career Development (PsyCaD)-University of Johannesburg: +27 11 559 4555/ 0800777000
- University of Pretoria Student Support: 012 420 2333.
- 24-hour Crisis Line: 0800 0064 28
- Counselling and Careers Development Unit (CCDU) - WITS: 011-717-6032/ 011-717-6033

## Appendix B: Informed Consent Form



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

**Faculty of Humanities**

**Department of Psychology**

### **Informed Consent Form of agreement between student researcher and research participant**

I \_\_\_\_\_ (participant's name), hereby agree to participate in a project titled Exploring the lived experiences of African immigrant students as approved by the ethics committee of the University of Pretoria. The purpose of the study has been fully explained to me, and I understand what is required of my participation.

#### **I understand that:**

- The researcher is interested in exploring the lived experiences of an African immigrant student population in the Gauteng region.
- I am participating out of free will, and that I am not being forced to do so in any way.
- I may stop my participation in the study at any time should I not want to continue with no negative consequences for me.
- I am willingly participating in a research project where the intent is not necessarily to benefit me personally.

- I am aware that my participation in the research will include participating in an in-depth interview about my experiences as an African student immigrant. The interview will be for a period of about 45 minutes -1 hour.
- I have been made aware that the in-depth interview will be voice recorded. The audio recording and transcription of the data will be kept safely on a password-protected computer that belongs to the researcher. Once the research process is complete, the data will be deleted from the computer. Copies of the files will be kept securely in the Archives Office, room 11-24, in the Department of Psychology at the University of Pretoria.
- This consent form will not be linked to any recordings made, and my answers and identity will remain confidential.
- All interview material (recordings and transcripts) will be kept in Room 11-24 of the Department of Psychology at the University of Pretoria for 15 years.
- I am aware and give permission for the information collected in this study to be used in other research studies and/or future research outputs, presentations and publications, if applicable. I am aware that my personally identifiable details will be changed in order to maintain confidentiality should this occur.

I have received the contact information of persons to contact should I need to speak about any issues that could arise

All my questions about the research have been answered, and I agree that my responses can be used for the research.

**Please complete the following:**

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

# Appendix C: Interview guide



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

## INTERVIEW GUIDE

### INTRODUCTION

Thank you so much for being so willing to participate in this study. The aim of this interview is to explore your personal experiences at this institution. During the discussion, I would like you to explore, in as much detail as you possibly can, the various experiences that you have had in your time at tertiary. I am interested in hearing your honest, frank views, experiences and opinions in response to the questions. If you are confused about any questions I ask, please let me know.

### CONFIDENTIALITY

The information you provide in this discussion is strictly confidential. No names will be used in reporting research findings. This is a safe environment for you to share your experiences. Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview.

<b>Interviewer:</b>		<b>Date of</b>	
		<b>Interview:</b>	
<b>Group code:</b>		<b>Tertiary institution</b>	

### Questions

1. What name would you like me to call you?
2. How old are you?
3. What languages do you speak at home?
4. When did you come to South Africa?

5. What were your reasons for moving here, and how did your move come about?
6. Have you lived and/or studied in any other country other than your own before coming to South Africa?
7. (if applicable) How did you experience your stay in that country?
8. What are your general perceptions about South Africa?
9. What are your general perceptions about South Africans?

Socio-cultural questions

10. Please describe your experiences at your institution since you have been there
11. What does a typical day on campus look like for you?
12. Did you find it easy to make new friends?
13. What language do you speak with your new friends?
14. How did your fellow classmates and lecturers treat you initially?
15. How would you describe the way they treat you now?
16. (if applicable) Did your experiences differ a lot from those that you had at your home institution?
17. (if applicable) How did you cope with learning a new language?

Educational/academic questions

18. How would you describe your experiences studying for your degree?
19. How would you describe your learning process?

## Appendix D: Ethical clearance confirmation letters

**Institutional Research and Planning Unit  
University of Johannesburg**

30 November 2016

Linah Sesheba

Dear Linah Sesheba

### **Permission to conduct research at the University of Johannesburg**

Permission is granted that you may conduct part of your research at the University of Johannesburg. Please keep in mind that the following principles apply:

- The UJ is in no position to logistically support you in your research, and we do not have the capacity to help you to identify the participants for your study.
- You may not use/include the name of the University, or make it possible to uniquely identify the University, in your study.
- You must notify me when you plan to start with your research at the UJ.

Yours sincerely,

**Prof CM Fourie**  
Head: Institutional Research and Planning Unit  
Division for Institutional Planning, Evaluation and Monitoring

[nfourie@uj.ac.za](mailto:nfourie@uj.ac.za)  
011 559 2093  
ARing G11  
APK Campus

OFFICIAL ADDRESS | Cnr Kingsway and University Road Auckland Park  
PO Box 524 Auckland Park 2006 | Tel +27 11 559 4555 | [www.uj.ac.za](http://www.uj.ac.za)  
Auckland Park Bunting Campus | Auckland Park Kingsway Campus  
Doornfontein Campus | Soweto Campus





22 November 2016

Ms Linah Sesheba  
Student number 10001842  
University of Pretoria

**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**

**"Exploring the lived experiences of African immigrant students at tertiary institutions in the Gauteng region"**

This letter serves to confirm that the above project has received permission to be conducted on University premises, and/or involving staff and/or students of the University as research participants. In undertaking this research, you agree to abide by all University regulations for conducting research on campus and to respect participants' rights to withdraw from participation at any time.

If you are conducting research on certain student cohorts, year groups or courses within specific Schools and within the teaching term, permission must be sought from Heads of School or individual academics.

Ethical clearance has been obtained.

  
Nisoleen Potgieter  
Deputy Registrar



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Humanities  
Research Ethics Committee

9 November 2016

Dear Prof Maree

**Project:** Exploring the lived experience of African immigrant students at tertiary institutions in the Gauteng region  
**Researcher:** LN Sesheba  
**Supervisor:** Ms TA Thomas  
**Department:** Psychology  
**Reference number:** 10001841 (GW20161009HS)

Thank you for the application that was submitted for ethical consideration.

I am pleased to inform you that the above application was **approved by the Research Ethics Committee** on 8 November 2016. Data collection may therefore commence.

Please note that this approval is based on the assumption that the research will be carried out along the lines laid out in the proposal. Should the actual research depart significantly from the proposed research, it will be necessary to apply for a new research approval and ethical clearance.

The Committee requests you to convey this approval to the researcher.

We wish you success with the project.

Sincerely

**Prof Maxi Schoeman**  
**Deputy Dean: Postgraduate Studies and Ethics**  
**Faculty of Humanities**  
**UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA**  
**e-mail: tracey.andrew@up.ac.za**

Kindly note that your original signed approval certificate will be sent to your supervisor via the Head of Department. Please liaise with your supervisor.

Research Ethics Committee Members: Prof MME Schoeman (Deputy Dean); Prof KL Harris; Dr L Blokland; Dr R Fassitt; Ms KT Govinder; Dr E Johnson; Dr C Panebianco; Dr C Puttergill; Dr D Reyburn; Prof GM Spies; Prof E Taljard; Ms B Tsebe; Dr E van der Klauw; Mr V Sithole

## Appendix E: Interview transcripts

### P1 TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEWER: It's working, fantastic. How do I pronounce your name?

INTERVIEWEE: P1...

INTERVIEWER: P1, I kept saying P1 then I saw it was a "d" so okay, cool. Are you okay with me calling P1?

INTERVIEWEE: That is fine, no problem.

INTERVIEWER: Fantastic.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you so much. Okay so I'm just going to ask a couple of questions. And if you feel like uncomfortable with answering the questions you tell me and we go on to the next question. The idea is to just get a good sense of your experiences, not only just as an African immigrant in South Africa, but as an immigrant who's in a South African University.

So I want to focus a lot on your educational so your academic experiences, your social experiences and specifically those two but obviously this will speak to your psychological experiences. So my questions will relate a lot around that.

INTERVIEWEE: That is fine.

INTERVIEWER: So let's just start off... how old are you?

INTERVIEWEE: I'm 18.

INTERVIEWER: Okay and how many languages do you speak?

INTERVIEWEE: Let me say four to five.

INTERVIEWER: Four to five, my goodness that's a lot. What are the languages you speak?

INTERVIEWEE: English, Ndebele, Zulu, Shona and Xhosa.

INTERVIEWER: Nice... So you are Zimbabwean if I remember? And are you Ndebele, Shona?

INTERVIEWEE: Ndebele.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, cool stuff that is why you know all the Nguni stuff. When did you come to South Africa?

INTERVIEWEE: 2010.

INTERVIEWER: 2010, so did you do your schooling here?

INTERVIEWEE: No, I was just visiting, I did my schooling in Zimbabwe then I came here on full bursary as from...

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

INTERVIEWEE: When I came here in 2010 / 2011 it was during the holidays, I was visiting my mother, coming with my father and my younger brother.

INTERVIEWER: So your mother's been here for a long time?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes since 2008, she's now a permanent resident, she's now South African

INTERVIEWER: Nice, nice...

INTERVIEWEE: So she's the one who changed our documents, my father's documents, my younger brother and I, I am paying local fees, not foreign.

[cross talk 02:25]

INTERVIEWER: Okay, that must be much better, because I have heard it is a bit expensive...

INTERVIEWEE: It is a bit expensive.

INTERVIEWER: Is it a double?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, it's a double, a hundred and something instead of paying fifty something.

[cross talk 02:39]

INTERVIEWER: Yes it is a lot of money. But then your father?

INTERVIEWEE: My father is based at home, for a long time he did go... he was a business kind of man.

INTERVIEWER: Back in Zimbabwe, did he also come or...

INTERVIEWEE: He's visiting.

INTERVIEWER: So he stays that side full time. So when you go home or let's say like when the Varsity closes now now, where do you go?

INTERVIEWEE: I go to Bulawayo where there is my mother and father's house.

INTERVIEWER: So that is home to you?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, that's home.

INTERVIEWER: That's cool. And then when you I mean obviously you say you were visiting your mother a lot from 2010 but then you only came to stay here this year?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: You came to stay here because of school?

INTERVIEWEE: Because of varsity.

INTERVIEWER: So why did you choose to come to varsity here at Wits?

INTERVIEWEE: My mother is the one who knew these things. To tell the truth I wanted to go to UZ, the University of Zimbabwe, I wasn't blessed with these varsities but my mother said this varsity has a good education, when you are finished you are likely to get a job, those things.

Then she applied in June because I wrote some exams that side in June, she used those results on the applying forms then I got a place.

INTERVIEWER: Okay that is fantastic. When you were studying that side you were doing O Levels I think they call them or A Levels? What's the difference between the two?

INTERVIEWEE: A levels.

INTERVIEWER: What is the difference between the two?

INTERVIEWEE: Ordinary and Advanced Levels.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so do you have to do Advanced Levels when you get to a certain grade?

INTERVIEWEE: For you to go to varsity you have to do Advanced Level, if you do Ordinary Level you go to technological...

INTERVIEWER: Like a Technicon?

INTERVIEWEE: Right you won't go for varsity.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think maybe doing, like I don't know, your first year now how have you managed academically? Have you managed to keep up with the work? Do you feel like you're prepared sufficiently by your high school education?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, the high school is very good because what we are doing is more like what we did in high school, we are repeating the same thing. So for me it is an advantage. For them the matric isn't that...

INTERVIEWER: So you find that your classmates are struggling?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, especially physics, maths, they are struggling.

INTERVIEWER: Shame man, which course are you studying?

INTERVIEWEE: Civil Engineering.

INTERVIEWER: Civil Engineering... so do you see yourself actually pursuing a career in engineering?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, in four years time, three years from now.

INTERVIEWER: Even said with confidence, that's good. What exactly in Civil Engineering would you like to do?

INTERVIEWEE: Structural Engineering, structures the first year they are in hell. I don't know maybe I will manage but if not maybe Water Management. I don't want to be in Construction now, for [inaudible 05:55:0] they look down on if you are late, if you are in Construction you see? That is why I don't want to Construction.

INTERVIEWER: So in Structural what is the difference?

INTERVIEWEE: In Structural we are dealing with doors, lights, things like steel, like manufacturing those big structures.

INTERVIEWER: But then if you manage... I am just imagining it in my mind, you can correct me if I'm wrong so when the people who manufacture like the railways, I suppose you have to design it wherever, somewhere and when you are designing it are you drawing it, are you using software?

INTERVIEWEE: We are using CAD, next year we are going to do CAD.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

INTERVIEWEE: Computer design, something like that drawing using the software, for now we are drawing using our [inaudible 06:51:0].

INTERVIEWER: So you have to be able to draw then?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: I have no drawing ability...

INTERVIEWEE: It is just a matter of knowing, you will be using those drawing sets. You won't be using your hands.

INTERVIEWER: Okay so that's where you see yourself going?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Then when you did your high school education in Zimbabwe, what kind of school was it? Was it a girl school or was it a co-ed school

INTERVIEWEE: My Ordinary Level it was a girl school, my higher level, advanced, it was mixed.

INTERVIEWER: It was mixed. Was that a bit of a strange thing for you?

INTERVIEWEE: It was very strange, I was afraid of the boys and the staff. I got chosen in my final year but I did two years for Advanced Level. [Inaudible 07:46:0].

INTERVIEWER: Was it a boarding school?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, since Grade Five I was boarding.

INTERVIEWER: Can you imagine, it must be so awkward.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, but you get used to it, Grade Five, Six, Seven [inaudible 08:02:0].

INTERVIEWER: Then when you went to... when you came here are you staying in a residence or are you staying in a flat?

INTERVIEWEE: Flat...

INTERVIEWER: Is it an individual flat or are you sharing?

INTERVIEWEE: I am sharing.

INTERVIEWER: And how are you finding that?

INTERVIEWEE: It's not that bad, when we started but I think later on I will have to be alone.

INTERVIEWER: Is the person that you are sharing with studying the same thing as you?

INTERVIEWEE: No.

INTERVIEWER: Is it near campus or?

INTERVIEWEE: I walk 30 minutes.

INTERVIEWER: 30 minutes, that sounds far.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, it sounds far.

INTERVIEWER: Sounds a little bit far especially with what's been going on around the Campuses, it is a little bit scary.

So if you, since you have been coming here this whole time, let's start from when you came you said from 2010, whenever you came here how was your experience, how would you describe it?

INTERVIEWEE: To tell the truth I think this country is more developed than our country, I can say that.

INTERVIEWER: Is it?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, it's more developed, the roads, the infrastructure, it's far much better than our own Zimbabwe. Even people here I think they have too much freedom than us.

INTERVIEWER: So you guys don't have a lot of freedom?

INTERVIEWEE: To such an extent that you can protest and do that, we don't do that at home.

INTERVIEWER: You are not allowed to protest?

INTERVIEWEE: No it's something awkward.

INTERVIEWER: So if you were to try to protest because the school fees are too high, what would happen in Zimbabwe?

INTERVIEWEE: They will arrest you or do something like that, they won't tolerate it.

INTERVIEWER: That is rough, I can't imagine, I suppose I am used to this. Now that you are here full time, how have you found it? Because then you have come only for the school holidays, has your experience changed since you have been here full time?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, I can say that, now I appreciate that, I am here for almost four years. It's not bad to tell the truth, it's not bad.

INTERVIEWER: And what would you say was your [inaudible 10:36:0] before you ever came here, what was your ideas your perceptions about South Africa as a country?

INTERVIEWEE: I thought that South Africa was a country full of crime, you see on the television, you think these people, there is a gunshot that side, it is something else. I was afraid to tell the truth.

INTERVIEWER: I can imagine, now that you are here do you feel the same way?

INTERVIEWEE: No I am used to it but I won't walk at night, those things, I won't take risks but I am now used to it.

INTERVIEWER: You are used to it, it takes a bit of getting used to it being in any new environment. That is the country what were your ideas about South Africans as people?

INTERVIEWEE: I have no problem with them of course here and there, I can say there's [Xenophobia? 11:44:0] problems.

INTERVIEWER: Did you think that you will experience Xenophobia before you came?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: But now that you are here would you say... how do a lot of people treat you, South African people.

INTERVIEWEE: I can say majority of my friends are South Africans, only one of my friends is from Zimbabwe. They treat you as their own people, there is no problems.

INTERVIEWER: They have never said, "Oh you are a Zimbabwean", or something like that came up?

INTERVIEWEE: No.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. So now we have been talking about South Africa, in terms of your experiences here at Wits, how would you describe those experiences?

INTERVIEWEE: So far I think it is an international varsity there is no problem with foreigners or staff because our international offices [inaudible 12:48:0] in this place.

INTERVIEWER: Have you managed to find your way with ease or when you first came here did you struggle to like really navigate finding buildings?

INTERVIEWEE: The first week was hell, this building is very big. Even today I don't know some places. Maybe after Monday I will stroll around and see this is this...

INTERVIEWER: So you are finishing your exams on Monday?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: You are so close, how have your exams been they been thus far, your exams?

INTERVIEWEE: So tricky but I am hoping I will pass.

INTERVIEWER: Does Wits have... what do they call these things? Subs, you know Subs?

INTERVIEWEE: Supplementary's, they have a certain percentage, I heard they have.

INTERVIEWER: So far you haven't been getting a sub, you have been passing only?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: That's good. And so when you are here obviously not at exams it wouldn't be a typical day, when you have lectures, how would you describe a typical day for you?

INTERVIEWEE: It's always packed I don't want to lie because it is from 08h00 to 17h00.

INTERVIEWER: That's like a job.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes it's packed.

INTERVIEWER: So what do you do, do you go to classes, tutorials. Just describe it a bit for me.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes we have got classes almost one module is two hours long then we have got for the tutorials on second days, maybe twice a week and then we have for the first years, they are ADU tutorials the ones for extra work.

INTERVIEWER: So if you want to, it's not compulsory.

INTERVIEWEE: But if it comes to a time when you failed almost all your modules they check that you were attending those ADU tutorials, they won't chase you away but if you were not they will say you did not put in any effort.

INTERVIEWER: That is true.

INTERVIEWEE: So I can say they are doing justice for us first years.

INTERVIEWER: So do you basically just go to class then because that is what I am hearing you say you... from eight to five.

INTERVIEWEE: no there is a lunch from ¼ past one to ¼ past two and then between the modules there is a 15 minutes break.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, each module?

INTERVIEWEE: Each module even within that second module.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, okay.

INTERVIEWEE: Because you can't breathe...

INTERVIEWER: Okay so they let you breathe at least. When you got here you said have some South African friends and Zimbabwe friends. Did you find it easy to make friends? How long did it take?

INTERVIEWEE: Only a week.

INTERVIEWER: A week? That is amazing. How did you make the friends, how did you find them?

INTERVIEWEE: There is this friend, we always got lost together, "Where is the next lecture?" something like that and then we have got close to each other.

Then the other one I was sitting next to him, this Zulu guy, in the lecture and then he introduced me to this Zimbabwean lady as Talent is [Sian's? 16:38:0] sister.

INTERVIEWER: Oh yes, what a coincidence, I thought you knew Talent directly.

INTERVIEWEE: I knew the younger sister.

INTERVIEWER: So the rest of the crew you met them by introduction?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Okay and you guys are still close now like the friends you made or?

INTERVIEWEE: [Inaudible 17:05:0] we don't click here now, we are no longer that close because what I can say, what I have analysed is the first years we were busy but they want to pass alone, something like that? At first we were a group and then they realized I am not scoring I am not going to pass [inaudible 17:25:0] pass the things then they started.

INTERVIEWER: So you started growing away, I didn't realise that. So you guys would share each other's like you would say I got this...

INTERVIEWEE: I got this years ago, so we wrote the first test, guys I have got this you see?

INTERVIEWER: So when they found out it was you getting the good marks they were just like [inaudible 18:00:0].

INTERVIEWEE: She is wasting our time see? You never know the [Inaudible 18:02:] especially us girls.

INTERVIEWER: That is so true, that's very true.

INTERVIEWEE: Because I am no longer close to [Talent's sister? 18:08:0] because of that, she is moody, I don't know why.

INTERVIEWER: At the end of the day you can't control people's feelings.

INTERVIEWEE: Seriously.

INTERVIEWER: So are you still close... you had your original circle but are you still close with anyone in that group?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes I am still close with the Zulu guy and the Sotho guy, you know the guys don't give much problem, not like us ladies.

INTERVIEWER: That's good that you still manage to keep some of them close. So you say that it is the Zulu guy and the Sotho guy. So then what language do you speak when you are all together?

INTERVIEWEE: But with the Zulu guy I can speak Zulu but I can't speak Sotho.

INTERVIEWER: That's what I was thinking, how do you guys communicate...

INTERVIEWEE: For the Sotho guy we can speak in Zulu, the Zulu guy is from KZN, the Sotho guy is from the Free State.

INTERVIEWER: So he speaks proper Sotho, I can imagine then you can't even...

INTERVIEWEE: So I can't even say any words there.

INTERVIEWER: So doesn't he feel a little bit excluded when you guys are speaking Zulu?

INTERVIEWEE: When Tanya, [Khanyisa? 19:22:0] and I are speaking he is just quiet because of this.

INTERVIEWER: He can't hear Zulu?

INTERVIEWEE: He can but ...

INTERVIEWER: He can't say back, I am with you, definitely. Okay. Then so with your friends circle you say you were doing much better academically but then when you got to your class would you say that anyone treated you differently?

INTERVIEWEE: No, no, in class we would just greet each other because of the [inaudible 20:01:0] hello, hello, that's all.

INTERVIEWER: So there's a lot of interaction with your fellow classmates? But I don't know if this is the case but do you ever find out in class how everyone is doing academically? [Inaudible 20:20:0] got the highest mark for this test.

INTERVIEWEE: Ai, you can't.

INTERVIEWER: They Won't do that, it's a bit of a high school thing to do I guess.

INTERVIEWEE: No, you can't because they send your results on your own [inaudible 20:34:0] on your own student number, you can't see it.

INTERVIEWER: I suppose then it helps not having a lot of competitiveness in the classroom because that is so unproductive. So you would say then that since you got here until now, would you say that people have generally treated you the same? Out of your friend circle obviously, like your class mates and your lecturers.

INTERVIEWEE: I am happy, what I can say, we are a class of 250 so I am happy for now, the lectures they just see the face, they don't know who is who.

INTERVIEWER: They don't.

INTERVIEWEE: They just see the faces and know they always see her but I don't think they know who is this one and that one. Even if we write a test it's just our student number, I don't think they know us, the face only.

INTERVIEWER: Of course, for sure.

INTERVIEWEE: Maybe second and third year it's a smaller class I believe.

INTERVIEWER: So in the one classroom there's 250 of you guys? That's a lot of people hey?

INTERVIEWEE: Imagine, that's a lot.

INTERVIEWER: Now that you have been here a couple of months, would you say that what you have experienced here with your interaction here with other people and with school would you say it is all that different from your experiences back when you were at home?

INTERVIEWEE: It is different.

INTERVIEWER: How is it different?

INTERVIEWEE: What I can say ne? At home we are, we are not, like what can I say, we are blinkered, people here have open minds. Because at home to tell the truth I don't think we welcome international students the way they do here. Because at home we have this Shona thing and Ndebele thing.

INTERVIEWER: Like travellers and...

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, they speak in that language, they don't use English but here you rarely hear people speaking in Sotho, they speak in English so now you become familiar with those people. Imagine I go to a certain group and I hear them speaking Sotho I will just bounce back and say I don't belong so at home I can say there is that problem.

INTERVIEWER: So you stay in your circles you never really mingle with other people. That is difficult.

INTERVIEWEE: It is difficult at home.

INTERVIEWER: If I am understanding you correctly it is easier to mingle this side with new groups than it is back home. Interesting.

INTERVIEWEE: Because if I was a foreigner at home I was going to face challenges, back here it is just like...

INTERVIEWER: Okay, you said you know the four languages but did you know them before, like the Xhosa, Zulu?

INTERVIEWEE: Xhosa, Zulu, when I was visiting meeting friends, see when you are young you go outside and play with people.

INTERVIEWER: True, so since you have been at varsity have you learned any new language?

INTERVIEWEE: I am trying to talk Sotho.

INTERVIEWER: That is nice of you so you can talk with your friend.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes I can greet and ...

INTERVIEWER: That's good that helps a little bit with interaction.

INTERVIEWEE: Then where my mother stays they are Tswana so I am trying to speak Tswana because Tswana and Sotho they are more like the same.

INTERVIEWER: That is very true. With the passing of your father does that mean when you go home and since your mother's here, who do you go to?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, we are going home my mother is closing on the 30<sup>th</sup> so what I did, when I was waiting for my results I wrote the provisional for driving because in our country the varsities they open in September. My friends are still at home, so I was planning in that period of time I will be doing driving. So I passed theory.

INTERVIEWER: Awesome.

INTERVIEWEE: I am waiting for the car to come, so I want to go and do the park, since I have started that side instead of sitting. Because the provisional is only for a year, next year you have to write again. So my mother is coming on the 20<sup>th</sup>, we are going to plan everything because we didn't finish everything, we were in a hurry.

I had exams in a week or so, so we came back and my mother is a teacher so she has to come back, set the exams, so we are going there to finalize those things in the house.

INTERVIEWER: So it's still very murky, you don't know yet.

INTERVIEWEE: Maybe I will be alone whilst I am waiting for my mother because my young brother is also a boarder.

INTERVIEWER: So it's you and your young brother, is there anyone else? Now you have to see what is going to happen with the house, I suppose that will be... you will have a bit more time. When do you open at Wits?

INTERVIEWEE: 24<sup>th</sup> July.

INTERVIEWER: A lot of time still, I miss those days.

INTERVIEWEE: I must still go and finalize which is which.

INTERVIEWER: And since your father has passed away, did you find it difficult to come back to Wits or did you feel like maybe... because it sounds like you have a lot more friends at home.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes that's true, I have a lot more friends at home.

INTERVIEWER: So the social body is there at home.

INTERVIEWEE: That is why I still think I have to go, I am leaving on Wednesday, I am going home on Wednesday. Obviously, but maybe second year, third year I will say I don't want to go because I will be used to it.

INTERVIEWER: You will be used to this environment.

INTERVIEWEE: But for now people are going home, my friends are going home, of course I have friends but I cannot say they are friends like the ones at home, they don't know me well as yet.

INTERVIEWER: Because of the fact that there's been less time?

INTERVIEWEE: That's true imagine those ones since I was young, we went to school together.

INTERVIEWER: You have done everything together, I can imagine. With your degree you spoke about how the exams were a bit tough but how would you say in general, how have you found your degree.

INTERVIEWEE: It needs a lot of study, there is a lot of work I won't lie but the module that was giving me a hard time was the drawing module, that one was very bad.

INTERVIEWER: Yes and how did you cope with that one?

INTERVIEWEE: I was getting the 50's but after a struggle.

INTERVIEWER: Would you go to study groups?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, Khanyisa and Tanya did drawing at school so they were assisting us.

INTERVIEWER: Okay you didn't do any drawing?

INTERVIEWEE: No, okay so that is why it is a bit stretched.

INTERVIEWER: But you passed that is all that matters at the end of the day.

INTERVIEWEE: We are finished our module at least next semester there is no drawing.

INTERVIEWER: Oh is it? I would think that drawing is essential if you are going to be using it...

INTERVIEWEE: I also thought so but there's no drawing, second year there is only CAD but they say is also only a semester then after that they are civil, civil, civil.

INTERVIEWER: I would think that civil is a drawing...

INTERVIEWEE: I also thought so but no it is not the case.

INTERVIEWER: You are going to learn I suppose, you will see what it's all about. How would you say you study best? Do you like to do flash cards, do you study in a group best, how do you learn best?

INTERVIEWEE: I like flash cards I can say that, studying alone, if I am alone I do better than when I am in a group because in a group I start chatting, sharing stories blah, blah. I don't like a group I can say that. But sometimes for group discussions you hear something which you didn't study or which you did study but just passed over it, that's true.

INTERVIEWER: So even though you do best individually you also still use the group situation?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes the groups.

INTERVIEWER: Yes that's good, you complement both sides of the equation. And then if you had a choice, if you could start over again would you still choose Wits as the university to go to?

INTERVIEWEE: I would choose UCT.

INTERVIEWER: UCT? Why do you say that?

INTERVIEWEE: Because they say the standard of UCT they are higher so I don't know how true is that. But they say the standards at UCT...

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

INTERVIEWEE: But for the fact I am getting my Honours on the fourth year that is best because for UCT you will get your Honours on the fifth.

INTERVIEWER: Really?

INTERVIEWEE: They say that Wits is the only South African university that gives Honours in fourth year in Engineering.

INTERVIEWER: Because the other universities are a four year degree.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: I know with TUCS that is the case, Engineering is a four year degree and then if you want to do Honours you have to do the fifth year.

INTERVIEWEE: But here I will do my fourth year I will leave with my Honours and then fifth, Masters.

INTERVIEWER: Wow, I know with Engineering at TUCS it's not a science degree it is a B Engineering at Wits is it a B Engineering as well?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: I wonder how ... that means they must just pump you guys with a lot of work then?

INTERVIEWEE: That's maybe why it is challenging.

INTERVIEWER: They don't like spread it, maybe that is why it is so challenging for people then?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, it's true.

INTERVIEWER: Because if you spread the work over a few years then maybe you would manage but you would still choose the four year option.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes I think that's the best.

INTERVIEWER: So you wouldn't go back because I remember initially when we started you said before your mother intervened you wanted to go to the university at home?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes with friends, you know when you are with friends, hey guys we are going to this university [inaudible 31:55:0]. So I was surprised when my mother said, "You have got a place at Wits", oh Mom!

Then I had to calm my mother you know, she hated this fact of September thing, she said, “Oh, my daughter what do we have to do and all this money, must come and start in February”, so we had to come and my father said go, please.

INTERVIEWER: So your father also wanted you to come this side. Any your friends did they go to the University of Zimbabwe or did they go...?

INTERVIEWEE: They are going in September.

INTERVIEWER: So they are going to go?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: So are you the only one from your friends circle back home who left?

INTERVIEWEE: I am the only one so they are waiting to see me, what’s happening, is anything changing because when I am going they always ask when are you finishing exams, when are you coming home?

INTERVIEWER: Yes, yes.

INTERVIEWEE: Because they wanted to see me during, after the funeral, I said I can’t make it, I have to come back, I couldn’t see any of the friends.

INTERVIEWER: Did they come to the funeral? No?

INTERVIEWEE: Only two of them, some of them they didn’t manage because some they stay like PE, [inaudible 33:13:0], so it’s far.

INTERVIEWER: So it’s very far...

INTERVIEWEE: Because it was boarding schools, it was far to come.

INTERVIEWER: So it’s not very convenient for them necessarily to come there. But now they will see how you are, do you think you have changed though?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, obviously.

INTERVIEWER: You never know, six months is not a long time...

[cross talk 33:34:0]

INTERVIEWEE: Varsity changes you because there are some things, I have changed, if they are observing they will see that I have changed.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think it's for the good or the bad, the changes you see?

INTERVIEWEE: I am more mature...

INTERVIEWER: You have matured.

INTERVIEWEE: Because some things I normally did if I am thinking of them now I say ah... what was I doing?

[cross talk 34:04:0]

INTERVIEWEE: I have changed it is true, varsity changes you.

INTERVIEWER: We have to grow, we all have to grow.

INTERVIEWEE: That is true.

INTERVIEWER: It will be interesting to see how... what you think when you finish the whole process, when you get your Honours how you feel you have changed, will you think it's for the good, will you think it's for the bad. It will be very interesting to see.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Well thank you so much for your time, that was all I have for you, we have gone through all my questions. Do you have any questions that you want to ask me?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes I wanted to ask you as a psychologist. You studied the mind of a person?

INTERVIEWER: No, we study the mind but it's also more than anything it's the behaviour of the person which...

INTERVIEWEE: Through speech?

INTERVIEWER: So you study... what we do is you look at how people behave in certain situations which gives you almost a prelude into what they think. So if you are a kind of a person who, whenever you are upset with someone you always turn your back towards them. Every time you are angry... That becomes a prelude into your mind even if you don't say it necessarily, your behaviour tells me that this is what you do when you are feeling upset. So it is those connections between your behaviour, your emotions and your thought processes.

There are different forms of psychology, there is even something called biological psychology where you go into the neurological workings of one's mind and how certain stimulus in the environment stimulate the brain in a certain way.

INTERVIEWEE: Because my mother always says, “I think psychology my daughter”, when I am lying to her. You see as a teenager you do something, when you come back home, “Where were you?” [inaudible 36:00:0] my mother says I think psychology [inaudible 36:07:0] what’s up with the psychology.

INTERVIEWER: People always...okay, the biggest misconception about psychology is that psychologists can read your mind, it’s a lie, we can’t read your mind.

INTERVIEWEE: Serious?

INTERVIEWER: We can’t read your mind.

INTERVIEWEE: I thought you could, so you do [philosophy something? 36:20:0] okay, because I was having also a fear that...

INTERVIEWER: Did you hate it?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes because it was more of how people they were teaching us [inaudible 36:38:0].

[cross talk 36:40:0]

INTERVIEWER: It’s exactly that, I think they try to teach everybody a bit of that. Do you think you find it is the way you have to think in philosophy that you find difficult?

INTERVIEWEE: No it is not difficult as such, if you grasp it there is [inaudible 37:02:0], ambiguity... I got 90% for that.

INTERVIEWER: Amazing.

INTERVIEWEE: If you give yourself time to learn concepts if this is that...

INTERVIEWER: You just didn’t like it. But I can’t read your mind, I can look at your behaviour and I can get a very good idea about what you are probably thinking but that is if I have sat with you for a long time.

I am a research psychologist, I am not a therapist type but that’s what therapy is about, you get insight from the way you behave and then of course we basically feed back to you what you are showing us

INTERVIEWEE: Okay I thought if you exchange words with someone you tell them this person is like this, this person...

INTERVIEWER: There are mannerisms, actually anyone can do this, you can pick up people’s mannerisms and figure out that this person is lying to you but you learn that through engaging with that person on a constant basis. It’s not like there’s a secret tool that I have and then I can get into your brain and then [inaudible 38:07:0] know what you are thinking.

I think that's what people think, that's why people get nervous about talking to psychologists like this one can get into my brain. If I could get into your brain I wouldn't have to sit here and have an interview with you, you see what I mean?

Think about it that way, I think it will give you certain... your mother is just telling you so that she can... you know how mothers are. Thank you so much for your time.

INTERVIEWEE: You are welcome.

## P2 TRANSCRIPT

P2 = Participant 2

INT = The Interviewer

1 INT: So, in terms of your name, you okay with me calling you by your  
2 first name?  
3 P2: Yes  
4 INT: Okay awesome.  
5 And how old are you?  
6 P2: 22  
7 INT: Oh, so young  
8 P2: No I feel old, I feel ancient, but any ways  
9 INT: You are a baby.  
10 Uh and in terms of languages at home what do you speak?  
11 P2: Chichewa  
12 INT: Chichewa. Is that the only language that you speak?  
13 P2: Chichewa, English yeah  
14 INT: Uhm at home?  
15 P2: Yeah at home  
16 INT: Oh, cool  
17 So when did you come to South Africa?  
18 P2: I came here about 4 years ago  
19 INT: 4 years ago? And was it for studies, or?  
20 P2: Yeah it was for studies  
21 INT: So do you go home during the holidays, or do you stay around?  
22 P2: Yes, I go home uhm during the June holidays and the December  
23 holidays, because my mom wants it that way, but any ways  
24 INT: (*Giggles*) if it were up to you would you stay?  
25 P2: Yeah I would I actually would  
26 INT: Oh okay. Is it do you find it more convenient to stay here, or  
27 do you just prefer to be here?  
28 P2: I just find it more convenient, cause going home for 2 weeks  
29 then flying all the way back. What's the point? What is  
30 actually the point?  
31 INT: I can imagine it's expensive  
32 P2: Ja, quite  
33 INT: Ja hey.  
34 And when you decided to come here it was obviously uhh for  
35 education, but did you come with any siblings, or family?  
36 P2: No no, it was just me  
37 INT: It was just you?  
38 P2: Yeah, but my brother lives in Joburg so it's not like I'm very  
39 far away from family, and my aunt also lives in Joburg  
40 INT: And your brother and aunt, do they uh have they lived in  
41 Joburg for a long time, or?  
42 P2: Yeah my brother has been there for 8 years. My aunt, yoh she's  
43 also back and forth, so she's here then she's in Malawi and  
44 then she's here  
45 INT: So, it's a back and forth that thing?

46 P2: Yeah  
47 INT: And so when you decided, okay it's time to go to University,  
48 what made you choose Tuks specifically?  
49 P2: For me it was cause I was a very athletic person, when I was in  
50 high school, and the thing is I wanted a place where it  
51 actually uh it like fosters your athletic side as well as your  
52 academics, and I saw like online that Tuks was the only place  
53 that actually did that  
54 INT: Hmm  
55 P2: Yeah so for me...  
56 INT: We even have a high school  
57 P2: Yeah exactly, so for me it was just Tuks Tuks Tuks, like it was  
58 literally the only place I applied, it was just Tuks  
59 INT: Wow are you serious?  
60 P2: Ja like I was like Tuks  
61 INT: You went by faith hey  
62 P2: I really did. I really did yoh. God has favored me  
63 INT: At least hey  
64 P2: It could've gone so badly, it could've gone so badly  
65 INT: It could've, I mean that's why they try and encourage all the  
66 students apply in different places, acquire for places, even  
67 though you know your heart is at a place, because if you in a  
68 situation come now, and they say, "no provisional acceptance,  
69 we might consider you in the beginning of the year", it sucks  
70 P2: But for me it's like uh in my heart, I don't know I'm very  
71 different when I say that this is the way it is, it's usually  
72 the way it goes  
73 INT: That's amazing, you speak it into the universe  
74 P2: Exactly, exactly you speak it into the universe and it will  
75 come  
76 INT: Ja  
77 Ja I know what you mean. So, either than South Africa, have you  
78 lived anywhere else?  
79 P2: I lived in Kenya but I was too young to remember  
80 INT: Oh okay  
81 P2: Yeah, and Malawi  
82 INT: Malawi, okay perfect. Now, I have to ask you, when you've been  
83 here, you can't tell me about your Kenyan experience, but once  
84 the 4 years that you've been here, tell me a bit about your  
85 experiences  
86 P2: Yoh hey, uhm okay let me start uhh first day I got to the  
87 University  
88 INT: Ja  
89 P2: First day I got to the University I was accepted to res, and it  
90 was ja it was Erika, yeah it was Erika first. And then  
91 while I was at Erika, uhh like you know how the hakas are  
92 meant to like intimidate you and everything  
93 INT: Ja  
94 P2: It was like that. And then they told us that we have to learn

95 all these songs, in languages I don't even understand

96 INT: Hmm

97 P2: And it was like they wouldn't even explain exactly what they  
98 saying. They would just say something in Afrikaans and I must  
99 just repeat it, and it's a language I am not even well  
100 versed in. And then uh I could see from the beginning  
101 when I came here that there was a, there was a division between  
102 blacks and whites

103 INT: Hmm

104 P2: And being an international student, and the fact that there  
105 aren't a lot of international students in res, is very hard for  
106 me to find my place cause I'm coloured so I don't identify  
107 myself as black and I don't identify myself as white

108 INT: Hmm

109 P2: So yeah that was res

110 INT: Ja

111 P2: And then something actually happened when I first got to the  
112 university

113 INT: Hmm mm

114 P2: It was a case of uhm, I was accepted to the University fully,  
115 and then it was okay now you have to get your HESA  
116 certificate. Do you know what HESA is?

117 INT: No

118 P2: Higher Education South Africa

119 INT: Oh yes I do actually know that certificate

120 P2: Yes, and the requirements for HESA are different from the  
121 requirements of the University. So HESA said no, so I couldn't  
122 come to the University

123 INT: Wow

124 P2: So what I had to do was I had to do an extra course, uhm at  
125 Varsity College and then I came back, which was pretty, it was  
126 pretty hectic

127 INT: Wow. So you could've actually been here much earlier?

128 P2: Yeah I could've been here earlier. So, I had to do an extra  
129 course, came back and then yeah when I came back I got into  
130 modelling, but now I'm like well versed and well I've been here  
131 for a year, so I understand South Africans and everything. But  
132 it was it was culture shock the first time, cause in my country  
133 we are very reserved, and then to come to South Africa, where  
134 everyone is just, like...(snaps fingers)

135 INT: ... (Laughing)

136 P2: That's how that's the only way I can describe it, like everyone  
137 is just (gestures)

138 INT: Ja

139 P2: So, I came here, uhh one of my friends came here as well and  
140 actually she didn't fit in at all, and I know she suffered  
141 from, she's also from my own country, she suffered from  
142 depression and everything because of her experience here as  
143 well

144 INT: Shame man  
145 P2: Ja it's really really bad  
146 INT: So, its' that, it's that heavy it's that heaviness of having to  
147 deal with people who you not only just not familiar with them  
148 but the way that they respond to you is so different  
149 P2: From the way, traditionally, people respond to you  
150 INT: Oh it's so terrible  
151 So you say that traditionally well not traditionally, you say  
152 that uh in Malawi the society is a bit more uhm conservative?  
153 P2: Yeah  
154 INT: You mean socially conservative, or like, are you talking about  
155 religion, or?  
156 P2: Well religion is a big part of our society, but it's also  
157 socially, it's like there are certain things you wouldn't say  
158 even though you thinking it, there's certain things you  
159 wouldn't do even though you'd like to  
160 INT: (*Giggles*)  
161 P2: So, ja  
162 INT: But you'd think looking at that looking at from at least that  
163 point of view, has it been then positive the way that you've  
164 adapted?  
165 P2: Yeah  
166 INT: Have is been received uh positively by your family, by your  
167 friends back in Malawi?  
168 P2: Ooh actually me and my friends in Malawi we kind of split apart  
169 INT: Is it?  
170 P2: Yeah because obviously a new environment and I'm changing, and  
171 they are in a new environment and they changing, cause uhm in  
172 my school it was a lot of international people, so when they  
173 were done with their degrees, they also branched out, so did  
174 the Malawians, so it's like work in completely different  
175 environments and we come back together, it's like I don't know  
176 who they are  
177 INT: Hmm  
178 P2: You know, and they don't know who I am anymore. But here I feel  
179 like I fit in, meeting new friends, I'm enjoying it  
180 INT: That's nice man. And your mom and your brother, how do they  
181 find your change?  
182 P2: They find it good, I feel like I changed like I wasn't very  
183 vocal in the past, about issues I actually find important, but  
184 now  
185 INT: That's good  
186 P2: Ja  
187 INT: And in terms of South Africans, how would you say you perceived  
188 South Africans coming into the country? So before you  
189 interacted with them?  
190 P2: Very vocal, very racialized, I mean the first question I get  
191 asked whenever I meet someone is, "what are you? Are you black,  
192 are you are you, what are you"?

193 INT: That's true that's true

194 P2: It's like they like to put people in categories, and once they  
195 categorize you it's like, "okay so she's gonna chill with these  
196 people"

197 INT: Yeah

198 P2: Type of thing

199 INT: There isn't that kind of uhh dynamic back in Malawi?

200 P2: No, well, personally I don't think so

201 INT: You don't, I suppose from your experience?

202 P2: Ja I don't think so

203 INT: And in terms of South Africa as a country, what did you think  
204 of it coming, before coming in?

205 P2: Oh, I thought rainbow nation

206 INT: Really?

207 P2: Oh I bought it I bought those adverts, I was like rainbow  
208 nation. I was like this is where I need to be

209 INT: So do they advertise things uh about South Africa in Malawi?

210 P2: We have like DSTV and you know

211 INT: So you get it from the shows particularly?

212 P2: Hmm

213 INT: I find it so interesting, okay cool.  
214 So now when we look at specifically here at Tuks, what would  
215 you say your experience has been at Tuks, particularly with  
216 making new friends and uh of interacting with your lecturers,  
217 that kind of dynamics

218 P2: Uhm whenever I speak to, okay I'm going to start with white  
219 people, cause ja res, I was in res like white people kind of  
220 rule res. It was very uhm, they wouldn't say it, but you could  
221 feel the racial tension you know

222 INT: Hmm mm

223 P2: You could always feel the racial tension. It's like, ja. And I  
224 also felt, what else can I talk about? Black people are very  
225 friendly

226 INT: Hmm

227 P2: And in terms of my lecturers, I could when it was a white  
228 lecturer I could still feel the tension and everything and, uhm  
229 sometimes they make remarks when uh like I would ask a  
230 question, and then it'll be "I'll reply you later, cause I have  
231 to think about it and everything". And then during the lecture,  
232 it would be like, "who was that foreigner who asked the  
233 question?", you know type of thing

234 INT: Woow

235 P2: And it was like, "wow"! But everyone else is just chilled about  
236 it, and it's like "guys" ...

237 INT: ... "Did you not hear that?" (*giggles*)

238 P2: (*Giggles*), he said it was the foreigner.. ja

239 INT: Woow

240 P2: So...

241 INT: That's so that's so uncomfortable

242 P2: It is very uncomfortable. It is very uncomfortable  
243 INT: Ja ja that's very uncomfortable. And I'm just thinking, what  
244 would make you like based on what exactly because?  
245 P2: Before like, uhm, my accent was quite different back then  
246 INT: Oh okay so your accent has also changed  
247 P2: Ja my accent has also changed  
248 INT: I wouldn't even I wouldn't pick you out of a car and say,  
249 "she's definitely not from South Africa"  
250 P2: Yeah exactly  
251 INT: I would say maybe no you coloured, but then there's so many  
252 coloured in South Africa, I wouldn't assume  
253 P2: That's true. I had a very very different accent. I was about to  
254 say something else. What else, Tuks? Tuks?  
255 Yeah, even the way uhm when you first come and you sorting out  
256 your administration and everything, the way they treat you as a  
257 foreigner? You can pick it up  
258 INT: Hmm  
259 P2: You can really really pick it up  
260 INT: What do you mean by that?  
261 P2: I mean like, uhm I don't know if it's with everyone but if  
262 there's if there's like a problem, they'll be like "sorry",  
263 then they'll just bounce you around from one person to the  
264 other. And I know with uhh another one of my foreign friends,  
265 its uhh how can I say... they have preferences in foreigners.  
266 So one of my friends uhm, she applied here, she got in, and  
267 then she was sorting out her Visa, but the Visa process for her  
268 with her uhm with her country, it takes a very long time to  
269 process, so she was uhm missing out on lectures and everything.  
270 INT: Hmm  
271 P2: But Tuks does have this thing where they say, uhm if you  
272 waiting on your Visa and you have that uhm thing that proves  
273 that you applied for a Visa and you can still study here  
274 INT: Yes, okay  
275 P2: So she had she actually had 2 passports. One of her passports  
276 was from Uganda, the other one was from the UK. So with the one  
277 from Uganda it's the one that she applied with, and she gave to  
278 the people, they were like "sorry sorry we can't process you we  
279 can't process you we can't process you". And then she came back  
280 with her United Kingdom passport, and that's when they started  
281 to take her seriously  
282 INT: (Giggles) Woow  
283 P2: And that's when she got processed, and ja  
284 INT: Wow, wow. And this is one person, and they didn't..  
285 P2: ... This was the same person  
286 INT: They didn't wonder why does this person have 2 passports?  
287 P2: No  
288 INT: Wow. That's very sad hey  
289 P2: It is very sad, you can feel it  
290 INT: Cause that's a clear, so I see what you saying, the basically

291 if it's a if you're an international student from more of the  
292 European countries, you get a bit more preferential treatment  
293 P2: Like they treat you more professional, let me just put it that  
294 way. And another thing is uhm I've noticed that international  
295 student issues aren't taken seriously here  
296 INT: Hmm  
297 P2: Like even with the whole fees must fall situation, it was like  
298 uhm of, what was the resolution? Ja the resolution was fees  
299 wouldn't increase for uhh certain kinds of South Africans, but  
300 fees would definitely increase for the international student  
301 INT: Hmmm  
302 P2: You don't know whether like the background of that  
303 international student  
304 INT: It's so true  
305 P2: And it was like, it was just South Africans and, no one even  
306 brought it up that, "hey, what about the international  
307 students?" They just accepted that okay cool, that means that  
308 fees won't increase for a certain uhm certain type of family  
309 within a certain bracket for South Africans, which is that's  
310 the way it is. No one even continued fighting  
311 INT: Were there any uhh like groups on campus who maybe then voiced  
312 voiced this? Nothing?  
313 P2: Nothing. I didn't hear I did not, and I am very politically  
aware I did not hear anything  
314 INT: Ja  
315 P2: Even DASO was like ah but  
316 INT: At least we've won like one thing  
317 P2: Hmm  
318 INT: That's so sad, because I'm just thinking uhm in 2015 I remember  
319 there were a lot of uhm international students who were  
320 involved in protests  
321 P2: Exactly, it's like  
322 INT: I mean the fight the fight was right there  
323 P2: It was our fight as well, until that point and then it was all  
324 our fight, then sorry, you guys just  
325 INT: Oh guys I mean at the end of the what do you expect, it's so  
326 sad, like then what's the point, you can't ask me to also join  
327 the protest if then I'm also not going to get anything out of  
328 it  
329 P2: Nothing. Maybe the only thing that we got out was uh  
330 registration fees doesn't increase for like everyone, cool  
331 INT: That was for everyone thing, not just your income bracket. It  
332 didn't matter, which I mean, it's not really can't say even  
333 it's a benefit per se  
334 P2: And even another thing I've noticed is uhm, when it comes to  
335 applying to res, it's like they they they have a quota for  
336 black people and white people but not international students.  
337 And if you think about it, how hard would it be, you coming to  
338 a place you don't even know, and now you have to look for a

339 res, well uhm accommodation, and the University is just like,  
340 "we will just treat you like you're a normal South African"  
341 INT: Uhh I don't know if uhm from your experience, do you know how  
342 many like not like number wise but in terms of proportions, are  
343 there a lot of internationals at your res, or like res's in  
344 general?  
345 P2: No, there were probably, in the first-year group, there were  
346 probably uh 5 internationals when I was in ja in the first-year  
347 group, I'm not saying the whole res  
348 INT: Oh yeah yeah  
349 P2: Cause those are the people we interacted with, it's not like I can  
look at someone and be like, "they probably international"  
350 INT: Ja I get what you mean I get what you mean  
351 P2: And I don't know...  
352 INT: But that's still like just 5?  
353 P2: Just 5  
354 INT: Wow  
355 P2: So yeah  
356 INT: So obviously then you obviously wouldn't then have exposure to  
357 other international uh, you didn't have exposure to other  
358 internationals because they just weren't there!  
359 P2: Yeah well if they were, I didn't know about them, and it was  
360 like uhh also it's when you first, I just think Tuks can do a  
361 better job introducing international students to the  
362 University. When you first show up to res, uhm ja obviously,  
363 obviously it's nice to be treated like everyone else, but at  
364 the same time it would be nice if people remember that you are  
365 not from this country, and you know how there's a Haka that  
366 deals with certain situations, maybe like a sub-portfolio for a  
367 certain Haka could be making sure that international students  
368 feel comfortable  
369 INT: Hmm  
370 P2: And it's uhm, like I said different cultures, we we are all  
371 different and everything, especially coming from a different  
372 country here. One thing that could happen to actually make sure  
373 that uhm we are united despite our diversities, is also  
374 introducing them to a certain society, you know?  
375 INT: Hmm. Is that what you mean?  
376 P2: So they are able to socialize better, otherwise they'll end up  
377 like our friend who's depressed and she's literally about to  
378 drop out. I I know (*sigh*) I might have fit in more, but I know  
379 it's very hard to fit in as an international student  
380 INT: Hmm. So what does Tuks, in your experience, provide for the  
381 international community?  
382 P2: Ah! What does it provide? Well uhm welcoming day  
383 INT: Okay  
384 P2: Where they just introduce you to the University, and then you  
385 get to inter... well there's international welcoming day  
386 INT: Okay

387 P2: You get to meet other international students, and you go to,  
388 what was it? It was like Gold Reef. You just go for a trip  
389 there and you come back, and then people, ja.

390 INT: I haven't been there

391 P2: Ja. So we have that, and that's all I can speak of

392 INT: Wow

393 P2: No like that's all I can speak of. Otherwise it's like, "ayt  
394 cool", your everyone else

395 INT: Are there any like uhh like support services that you know of?

396 P2: Ja there are, there's like UPI, but it's not like they  
397 very vocal about their presence you know

398 INT: Hmm

399 P2: So, you don't know, you don't know about them, you basically on  
400 your own

401 INT: Woooh ja ne

402 P2: Tuks ne

403 INT: *Um'hlolo nje lo* (it's just shocking), it's shocking shocking

404 P2: (*Laughing*)

405 INT: And then let's let's now go back to your day on campus. When  
406 you start, like it's a Monday, what does a typical day look  
407 like for you?

408 P2: Uhm wake up, eat breakfast, well shower eat breakfast, come to  
409 lectures, chill with my friends then go study, go home

410 INT: So, it follows basically the same pattern that uhh every day

411 P2: ... Student

412 INT: So when you look at someone like your friend, what do you think  
413 is then different with her situation in terms of her every day?

414 P2: With her everyday...

415 INT: ... Interactions

416 P2: ... It's probably uhm wake up, maybe like think about a whole  
417 bunch of stuff that, you know, she can't control. And then go  
418 to her lectures, and then go home straight. She doesn't  
419 interact with anyone at all, she goes home straight. And then  
420 she'll maybe uhm, because she has insomnia as well, she'd  
421 probably stay up the whole night, uhm speaking to her mom back  
422 home

423 INT: Ja

424 P2: Crying to go back home, cause that's what she she cries to go  
425 back home. And she was about to she was this close to dropping  
426 out cause her mom even allowed it. But her dad said no.  
427 So she's just home, and even when I go and try to chill with  
428 her, she's just like, silent you know

429 INT: Hmm

430 P2: It's just the the the I don't know what broke her cause back  
431 home she was a very lovely person, but here

432 INT: She doesn't even she doesn't interact with other people very  
433 much

434 P2: Not at all

435 INT: (*Sigh*) So with your South African friends, what languages do

436           you do you speak to them in?  
437   P2:   English  
438   INT:   Just English?  
439   P2:   English obvious  
440   INT:   *(Laughing)* hehe  
441   P2:   And then like uhm maybe when somebody makes a comment in  
442           whatever language, they like "ah shucks, Jody, this is this is  
443           what they said", you know  
444   INT:   *(Giggles)*  
445   P2:   But it's fine. I, I really don't mind people speaking their  
446           languages and everything, but it's uh ja I like the fact that  
447           they actually explain it to me so I don't feel left out  
448   INT:   Hmm. And do you speak any other South African languages now  
449           that you've been here? *(laughing)*  
450   P2:   No, no. There's no time for that  
451   INT:   *(Laughing)*, oh the way you say it even it's funny  
452   P2:   No no  
453   INT:   And then, with your lecturers I mean like, has do you think your  
454           relationship with your lecturers, has evolved? Do you see a  
455           difference to the way they treat you, from when you first started  
456           to now?  
457   P2:   Not really  
458   INT:   They still treat you the same? There isn't any evolution?  
459   P2:   Nah there's no evolution, maybe the comments and that but that's  
460           because you can't really tell if I'm South African at this point  
461   INT:   Ja  
462   P2:   But ja it's basically the same  
463   INT:   Still that awkward vibe? Same thing with res?  
464   P2:   With res, wooh with res I actually dropped out of res cause I  
465           couldn't take the tension anymore, and ja  
466   INT:   Ja  
467   P2:   But uhm one thing I forgot to mention is, even in meetings, where  
468           it was like a sports meeting, uhm when I was a first year, the  
469           first days uh I was there. We had a sports meeting and the Haka  
470           was literally like "oh yeah you not South African, and what-what-  
471           what", and I was like "yeah I'm not", she was like "cool cool  
472           cool". Everyone showed up for the other for the meeting, and then  
473           she just goes, "argh guys I'm not very good in English, so I'm  
474           just going to say everything in Afrikaans". And then the whole  
475           meeting, like the whole meeting was in Afrikaans  
476   INT:   Woow  
477   P2:   The whole meeting was in Afrikaans  
478   INT:   Wow woow. And she knows that there's people who can't..  
479   P2:   And I've seen nothing has changed with the University as well,  
480           well to say that they don't care about international students,  
481           because even when those xenophobic attacks were happening right  
482           there in Sunnyside, which is very close to our University  
483   INT:   Very very close  
484   P2:   They did not, any measures, nothing. It was just ordinary day you

485 know

486 INT: I mean there's even busses that go to that area, like Arcadia and  
487 there

488 P2: Ja there's...

489 INT: ... And they didn't think maybe we should just help our students  
490 out?

491 P2: No! No they didn't, they didn't, but ja

492 INT: It's still basically the same. That's really sad

493 P2: It's really basically the same

494 INT: Hmm

495 P2: Yeah with the lecturers nothing has changed. What has changed?

496 INT: And then your degree, specifically your degree, do you think, I  
497 mean I don't know, how are you finding your studying your degree  
498 here?

499 P2: I like it, cause I chose International Relations

500 INT: Oh that's nice! (*giggles*)

501 P2: So yeah I really like my degree. There's basically no favoritism,  
502 cause there's not even any lectures in Afrikaans, it's fully  
503 English

504 INT: Awesome

505 P2: For my major modules, but I know for Engineering they still have  
506 Afrikaans uhm Afrikaans lectures

507 INT: I thought Afrikaans was...

508 P2: ... No, uh you see what the University did was...

509 INT: ... Hayibo, I thought I really thought Afrikaans was no more a thing  
post the Afrikaans must fall movement

510 P2: Baby girl, like what happened was, they had the meetings and  
511 everything in on Afrikaans must fall must fall.

512 INT: Ja

513 P2: They did uh a draft on a policy and the University said they  
514 adopted the policy, and the policy basically was, the people who  
515 have started in Afrikaans, learning in Afrikaans, lectures in  
516 Afrikaans, they can finish in Afrikaans. But the first years,  
517 cannot have Afrikaans lectures

518 INT: Oh okay

519 P2: It's only gonna be in uh what was, it's only gonna be in  
520 tutorials. But, Afri-forum came with uh with uh with lawyers  
521 and what-what-what, and now the lecturers the first years started  
522 lectures in Afrikaans

523 INT: No!

524 P2: The thing is about those Afrikaans lectures, it's like, I know  
525 that for a fact they also got weekend lecturers. So they get  
526 lectures on weekends, and they their their lecturers do tell them  
527 what's gonna be in semester tests, and what's gonna be in exams

528 INT: So specifically, the Afrikaans group?

529 P2: Ja the Afrikaans group...

530 INT: ... Gets weekend lessons and they don't even make it an option for  
531 English classes?

532 P2: No

533 INT: (Sigh)  
534 P2: I know that's deep right?  
535 INT: And it's still continuing and it's just one of those things  
536 P2: Hmm  
537 INT: I don't, did they put it an indictment or did they say no guys,  
538 uh for now the first years?  
539 P2: I think that's the word, indictment  
540 INT: That is oohh wow  
541 P2: Tuks! Welcome  
542 INT: Wow wow. I mean I think, so that means if it's still continuing  
543 for them, I would imagine that it's still continuing for all the  
544 other degrees that offered Afrikaans. When will this ever end?  
545 P2: That's the thing, I've noticed with South Africa it's divided and  
546 it's like it wants to say divided  
547 INT: So sad hey. Like I literally  
548 P2: It's sad  
549 INT: And you know what? What's a bit disappointing is that I've  
550 literally cause I'm from the outside I just read all the things  
551 and there's no mention of that. So I would be out of the perception  
552 that, oh Afrikaans is now uh not a thing anymore  
553 P2: That's the thing. Tuks, instead of actually solving the situation  
554 they just wanna like hide it under wraps. I mean you haven't heard  
555 about the suicide, you know, at all. There's been suicides cause  
556 people, like there's some girl ...  
557 INT: ... Woooooh you just telling me things now  
558 P2: ... I know (giggles), let me stop let's go back to ...  
559 INT: ... No no no tell me tell me this is actually could fit in a lot  
560 P2: Alright, uhm some girl she didn't feel like she fit in, and she  
561 was studying Actuarial Science, that course is very hard. She  
562 tried to jump off the building on madelief, the res. She  
563 tried to jump off  
564 INT: Wow!  
565 P2: You don't hear about it. You...  
566 INT: Is she okay?  
567 P2: Hmm?  
568 INT: Is she okay?  
569 P2: how can that person be okay? I mean her parents put her in residence  
thinking she would not be alone but because of that environment, that's exactly  
what happened, she felt completely on her own, and none of us even realised it  
till that day. We don't know, but she didn't kill herself, so...  
570 INT: Yeah.  
571 P2: Yeah she made it, like that far, but doesn't mean she's okay  
572 mentally  
573 INT: Ja  
574 P2: That's another thing about Tuks. Uhm if you want to go for, what's  
575 it called, psychiatrist, yeah, it's a long process to actually  
576 see a psychiatrist, plus sometimes ...  
577 INT: ... Why?  
578 P2: I think someone said you actually have to pay for the psychiatrist,

579 when it should be free  
580 INT: Isn't it uhm I'm pretty sure that if you go to student, what is  
581 it, student support, they pay they make you pay now?  
582 P2: I think, someone told me that you have to pay but I know the  
583 process for actually getting one, is very very long  
584 INT: Okay, ja that is true  
585 P2: It's very very long  
586 INT: Cause they'll tell you there isn't a lot of uhm capacity  
587 P2: Hmm  
588 INT: They are bit under capacitated, so then you get on a, what a wait  
589 list  
590 P2: And as international student, when you're going through uhm like  
591 depression, like my friend, you can't like you can't go there.  
592 And what if you don't have the funds to actually see a proper  
593 psychiatrist? What happens to you? Exactly what's happening to  
594 her  
595 INT: You have to rely on other sources that are outside of Tuks  
596 essentially, something like a life-line or  
597 P2: The only reason she actually got a psychiatrist is because uhm  
598 her aunt works for a company, and this uhm the company's  
599 psychiatrist it's like it's for her aunt and her family members  
600 type of thing  
601 INT: Ah that's amazing  
602 P2: So she was able to go there. And it was bad because uhm the psy...I  
603 don't know if I'm using the appropriate word, you can tell me  
604 INT: No don't worry  
605 P2: It is a psychiatrist right?  
606 INT: So, there is a psychologist and a psychiatrist  
607 P2: Ja a psychologist, yes that's the word. I knew...  
608 INT: There are people who go to psychiatrists particularly because I  
609 mean they prescribe your medications, they deal with mental health  
610 from a very uhh, you have an illness, so let me give you medication  
611 for it  
612 P2: Maybe it is a psychiatrist cause she she is getting medication  
613 INT: You can also get medication from a psychologist, but what uhh  
614 psychologists mostly advise to advocate is the mind, body balance,  
615 that it's not just you getting the pills but the fact that you  
616 need to realize, there's an issue in your life and you need to  
617 deal with that issue and not become essentially dependent on  
618 medications. There's a bigger picture, so the first let's say  
619 start with the bigger picture. Obviously if you have something  
620 like Schizophrenia, something like a really heavy psychiatric  
621 condition, there's nothing we can... not that there's nothing you  
622 need to be on medication. But a psychologist would advocate for  
623 you to be on medication, as well as therapy, psychiatrists'  
624 therapy, don't care what therapy  
625 P2: Okay  
626 INT: As you can see, I'm very biased, so  
627 P2: Yeah it's fine

628 INT: You can also speak to a psychiatrist probably word it a bit  
629 differently, but that's basically the difference  
630 P2: The case... Psychologist  
631 INT: So it's a psychologist  
632 P2: So it was so bad that she felt uhm she didn't feel like she  
633 belonged in South Africa, so much that she almost tried to commit  
634 suicide  
635 INT: Hmm  
636 P2: Her herself she almost tried to commit suicide. And then the  
637 psychologist made her sign some some form that says, "I, (\*\*\*) ,  
638 will not consider...", like a  
639 INT: Ja, it's like a declare  
640 P2: Ja a a  
641 INT: You say it's like a promise note I call it  
642 P2: Exactly  
643 INT: To say, "I won't do this"  
644 P2: But she's still till this day, and the thing is the University is  
645 not doing anything about it. They know, they know she's depressed,  
646 they know like the reasons why she's depressed, cause she missed  
647 on her first semester tests because of her uhm depression  
648 INT: Hmm  
649 P2: So they know this is a problem but they choose not to do anything  
650 about it, and I'm sure like it's just they way they treat, well,  
651 students  
652 INT: It's very sad actually hey, really sad  
653 P2: But it's really bad for an international student cause maybe a  
654 normal student may have family close  
655 INT: Exactly  
656 P2: But as an international student you have no one. You are in a  
657 whole different country  
658 INT: Exactly  
659 P2: So it just amplifies the isolation and it amplifies the depression  
660 as you can imagine  
661 INT: And you all by yourself  
662 P2: And it amplifies, it just...  
663 INT: ...You you you, and no, okay at least I can go home to mother or  
664 dad or something and just have a conversation  
665 P2: Exactly there's no brother there's no sister  
666 INT: It's really quite sad. And your learning process, do you think  
667 being at Tuks has I mean contributed to a more productive learning  
668 process or do you feel that you just learn the way you learn and  
669 the way that you've been taught by lecturers, doesn't influence  
670 you at all?  
671 P2: I actually don't like the learning process here, because uhm when  
672 I was in A levels, it was more uhh practical, you know. And  
673 here, it's well what I've seen from my course, it's become a thing  
674 of, "this is the way it's set on the paper, this is exactly the  
675 way it should  
676 INT: Hmm

677 P2: It's not (*sigh*), how can I describe it? Its rigid

678 INT: Rigid?

679 P2: It's very very rigid

680 INT: Hmm

681 P2: And I'm used to ja, something more flexible

682 INT: Ja

683 P2: You know, where uhm and it's only now where it's changing, in my  
684 third year where they tried to make it more flexible, where we  
685 can put our opinion. But it's gotten to a point where I find it  
686 hard to put my opinion cause now I've become so used to this  
687 rigidity

688 INT: Ja, hmm

689 P2: Ja

690 INT: Ja that is so true

691 P2: That's what I think about the learning process

692 INT: Okay no, good news is that it gets better at least in Masters and  
693 in Honours, you have to think for yourself, you can't just

694 P2: I hope so. But you ca imagine the change going from flexible to  
695 rigid, and then now they asking you to go back to flexible

696 INT: Ja, its going to be very, the adjustment I can imagine. And I  
697 heard people actually say that it's a bit difficult the way that  
698 you are taught in first year, and second year, or third year  
699 depending if it's a 4 or 3 year degree. Then out of nowhere they  
700 like, "okay so what do you think"?, and you like "what do you  
701 mean?"

702 P2: I know I find that uhm because the made it so rigid, it's a it's,  
703 I wouldn't actually learn the work, it's like I memorize the work,  
704 cause that's what they want us to do

705 INT: Hmm, so true

706 P2: Yeah, so I memorize the work, and now if you actually ask me what  
707 did you learn in first year, I won't be able to tell you cause I  
708 memorized it for the semester tests, for the assignments and for  
709 the exam

710 INT: And mind you, you actually like what you are doing

711 P2: Exactly! I actually do, I actually do

712 INT: Imagine when you are studying something for the sake of just  
713 studying it hey

714 P2: Hmm

715 INT: Very very very dismal. Ja I mean at the end of the day you need  
716 to take to the workplace practical skills, you can't cram your  
717 way through a meeting, uhm "let me just refer to my textbook  
718 quickly"

719 P2: That's one thing I really think needs to change, it shouldn't be  
720 a memorizing type of thing

721 INT: Ja. And my final question for you is, do you think I mean not do  
722 you think, would you recommend another learner another  
723 international student to come to Tuks?

724 P2: Oh no, not at all. I'd be like, "just run away", just never, yoh  
725 I would never I would never, not even to my worst enemy, not even

726 to that girl I hated in high school, would I be like, "come to  
727 Tuks"  
728 INT: Wow!  
729 P2: "It's amazing"  
730 INT: So when they say like, okay but why? What would you say?  
731 P2: I would say it's because uhm, like what I imagined Stellenbosch  
732 to be, Tuks is very racist. And I told you in Malawi we are not  
733 used to racism. So, first that's gonna be a shock, it's gonna be  
734 the shock of your life. Two, there's no support systems in Tuks,  
735 for international students. What else would I say? You are going  
736 to find it very hard to fit in with culture itself, and the fact  
737 that there's no support systems, and it's very hard to uhm make  
738 friends who would probably make you want to leave  
739 INT: Hmm  
740 P2: Ja. Four, what else would I say? Ja I just wish there was more  
741 support for international students. They don't actually hear  
742 about you, there could be a xenophobic attack happening right  
743 outside, and there's nothing the University would do because it's  
744 off their premises  
745 INT: Ja, it's very sad. It's actually very very sad. Cause should it  
746 happen inside, then they'll be forced to deal with it, but that's  
747 highly unlikely  
748 P2: But if it's outside..  
749 INT: Well that's all I have for you.  
750 Thank you, you were very very helpful.

### P3 TRANSCRIPT

P3 = Participant 3

INT = The Interviewer

751 INT Are you comfortable with me calling you by your first name?  
752 P3: Yeah, no problem  
753 INT: No other name you'd like me to refer to you by?  
754 P3: No, it's okay  
755 INT: And, how old are you?  
756 P3: 29  
757 INT: 29. And what are you studying?  
758 P3: Electrical, honours  
759 INT: Electrical. How are you finding it?  
760 P3: Uhm, interesting  
761 INT: Is it?  
762 P3: Hmm mm  
763 INT: Do you wanna go into the whole profession?  
764 P3: Yeah sure sure  
765 INT: That's nice. And how many languages do you speak?  
766 P3: 3  
767 INT: And they are?  
768 P3: English, Swahili, and my mother tongue  
769 INT: Swahili. I love Swahili, I like listening to Swahili  
770 P3: Ja it's fine  
771 INT: So, when did you come to South Africa?  
772 P3: In January  
773 INT: In January?  
774 P3: Hmm mm  
775 INT: Was it your first time coming to South Africa?  
776 P3: No  
777 INT: Oh okay. How when else were you in South Africa?  
778 P3: Last year. I came for work last year  
779 INT: Okay. And is this the first time that you live live full time  
780 in South Africa, or did you live here at another point?  
781 P3: Nah this is the first time. The other times were just uhm  
782 coming in for like 2 weeks and then you go back  
783 INT: Okay cool  
784 And in terms of your reasons of for you coming here, you came  
785 here specifically just for your honours degree?  
786 P3: Yeah, for the honours, masters especially like to finish the  
787 whole  
788 INT: Oh you wanna go the whole route?  
789 P3: Yeah  
790 INT: Awesome  
791 And have you studied anywhere else in the continent?  
792 P3: Just Kenya  
793 INT: Just Kenya?  
794 P3: Ja  
795 INT: So that's where you did your undergrad?

796 P3: Hmm mm  
797 INT: Perfect  
798 And in terms of, so so let's uh when you first came here, how  
799 did your experience of studying in Kenya, compared to  
800 experience of studying here, in South Africa?  
801 P3: Hmm, the difference would be... there was a difference, there is  
802 a difference, in terms of how the content is delivered  
803 INT: Okay  
804 P3: Ja, there's there's more uhm online content, there's more  
805 access to the library, from by using the internet because for  
806 us the library was majorly physically you have to actually go  
807 there and get a book and stuff.  
808 INT: Oh is it?  
809 P3: There was a internet of course but it is not as not as uhh wide  
810 as it is in UP  
811 int: Okay  
812 P3: And then uh the way the course is being delivered also is  
813 different because you can get to know a lot of things before  
814 hand, before you go to class  
815 INT: Hmm hmm  
816 P3: Uhm the way the lecturers conduct the lectures is so different  
817 because they they sort of, there's more accountability I'd say,  
818 there's more personal touch to the students  
819 INT: Okay  
820 P3: Yeah in Kenya we have big classes with many  
821 students with this one lecturer, so getting even a whole other  
822 lecturer we wasn't possible. But here there's a lot more  
823 Time with the lecturer. Ja so  
824 INT: Nice. And before you came here, so like this is even before you  
825 came here for work and everything, what was your general  
826 perceptions about South Africa as a country?  
827 P3: Uhh I would say the I used to view some of it as a country that  
828 has grown economically  
829 INT: Okay  
830 P3: Diverse cultures, very great tourist attraction  
831 INT: Ja  
832 P3: Uhh so I really had a good perception of South Africa  
833 INT: Okay. And how would you describe your perception of South  
834 Africa now that you've been here for a while?  
835 P3: It has changed!  
836 INT: (*Laughing*), how so?  
837 P3: It has changed because uhm, a part of it has changed, the part  
838 where there is a lot of tourist attraction, that still remains  
839 INT: Ja  
840 P3: The economy, I've seen how it has had its ups and downs since  
841 I came here, but the matter that shocked me the most was the  
842 way the South Africans were welcoming us it wasn't very good,  
843 because The economy, I've seen how it has had its ups and downs  
since I came here, but the matter that shocked me the most was the way the

South Africans were welcoming us it wasn't very good, because in 2017, there was the whole xenophobic thing again. And that was hard coz sometimes you hear other students in the cafeteria talking about how we foreign people are taking jobs. So that was a bit of a shocker, because back in Kenya we have a lot of migrants, yoh from Somalia to Indians. We even joke at home that Indians have even have been recognized as a 45th tribe in Kenya (Laughs). Like we've embraced them to be a tribe in Kenya. But here, people blame foreigner for everything, the economy, the jobs, studying too hard. It's a shocker

844 P3: Like we've embraced them to be a tribe in Kenya. But here, peopl  
845 Think there's South Africa, and there's the rest of  
846 Africa

847 INT: Hmm

848 P3: Yeah, so I think there's that divide which was a shocker to me,  
849 I didn't expect it

850 INT: You didn't expect that at all

851 P3: No

852 INT: I never knew there were Indians in Kenya

853 P3: There's so many Indians, Somali's. We have we've got like you  
854 can't even tell it's very hard for you tell

855 INT: The differences of it?

856 P3: Ja! We are so mixed in there, and people are very willing to  
857 help. In South Africa, yes people are willing to help but  
858 there's that I think that whole thing in I was pretty new here

859 INT: Ja

860 P3: It was ...

861 INT: It was a bit of a ...

862 P3: Ja it just shocked me so much

863 INT: Are you talking about the xenophobic attacks that were here in  
864 Pretoria?

865 P3: Yeah in Pretoria

866 INT: I've heard about it because I'm so much in Joburg now that I  
867 never even

868 P3: Ja, yoh cause even the scholarship the guys who (\*\*\*) any of  
869 the scholarship were telling us not to even move around and  
870 stuff, and not to get into taxis cause you cannot even be sure  
871 because they I don't know how you guys tell that we are  
872 foreigners but somehow...

873 INT: There's like there's always these rules that say if you don't  
874 know what an elbow is in Zulu. Mind you, you know how many  
875 people don't know what an elbow is in Zulu? I probably don't  
876 even know what an elbow is

877 P3: (Giggles)

878 INT: It is just it's a very skewed way, cause sometimes you find  
879 that just because a person is like dark, they'd say that person  
880 is foreign

881 P3: Yeah

882 INT: There's so many dark South Africans. It's a problem

883 P3: Yeah

884 INT: And in terms of, so you've described what you thought of South  
885 Africa, but in terms of South Africans, what did you think of  
886 South Africans as people, before you came?  
887 P3: As people?  
888 INT: Ja, like what did you think, how are South Africans, before you  
889 came?  
890 P3: Oh ja before I came I just used to think you guys are these  
891 uhm happy, cultural centered people, and uhm you embrace you  
892 just embrace everyone. And your like you're have got very  
893 strong cultural roots, cause of your whole tradition. You guys  
894 even speak Zulu, eve in like in class you guys are taught in  
895 your own language. So I really thought of you guys as different  
896 from the other countries that are more moving away from the  
897 culture  
898 INT: Hmm  
899 P3: I thought you guys are really good at embracing your culture  
900 and  
901 INT: Do you find it is that the case in Kenya where people are  
902 moving away from their cultures?  
903 P3: Ja we do we do that a lot  
904 INT: Is it?  
905 P3: Ja, a lot of things have been Westernized  
906 INT: Oh so everyone is like moving towards more like the Western  
907 thing?  
908 P3: Ja, sure sure. But you guys seem to be you sort of seem to be  
909 self-contained in a way, yeah. So you use your own stuff. You  
910 don't allow the influence of the other people to come in  
911 INT: And then now? Now that you've been here for a while?  
912 P3: Uhm now that I've been here for a while, I still see that the  
913 culture is there but it's there is there are some shockers  
914 because when I came here I expected culture is so much there  
915 that uhm you know the way your student, you know like I wasn't  
916 expecting to hear cases of (\*\*\*) rape, HIV. I mean I really did  
917 research much on the statistics of HIV and the culture of the  
918 (\*\*\*)PR), and students, you know, what students are in school  
919 are doing  
920 INT: Ja  
921 P3: Uhm I sort of thought that you guys were traditional, but a bit  
922 of that I see is not very true  
923 INT: Hmm  
924 P3: Yeah, so I don't know maybe the way that you guys that South  
925 Africans have been brought up, maybe the culture here is  
926 different from culture that when you talk about culture in  
927 Kenya, we know we are talking about tradition, you know, uhm.  
928 Our tradition requires you to you know, cover up, you know uhm,  
929 touching a woman is just a no no, walking around in campus  
930 wearing all these other things is just, not right. Cases of,  
931 you know, hearing on the news that this guy has this uhm maybe  
932 this prominent member of parliament has assaulted, you know

933 INT: Ja

934 P3: You know those things were not, are not really common, up east  
935 and west of Africa

936 INT: So you find that they were a bit more like uh we're not as  
937 conservative?

938 P3: No, no

939 INT: As you thought we were?

940 P3: Yeah yeah. There is there is a part of conservativeness, it is  
941 there in terms of uhm how you treat each other, like just person  
942 to person. But there's a big there's a bit of a divide on how  
943 ladies behave, how men behave towards ladies. It still is a bit  
944 of a shocker

945 INT: Yeah, I see what you're saying. Its even a shocker for some of  
946 us, who have been here for a while

947 P3: Ja sometimes I just look around and I'm like yoh, and students  
948 goes to school and say they want this, and the other day I saw  
949 condoms. I'm just thinking, "oh my God" (giggles)

950 INT: (Giggles) really

951 P3: Yooh, in Kenya in Kenya I mean we are

952 INT: So if you go to a public toilet you wouldn't find condoms in  
953 Kenya?

954 P3: You will but not for our age is 18. Like when you go to high  
955 school you cannot, even our uniform, it's prescribed your skirt  
956 has to be below the knee, it can never come above the knee

957 INT: Ja

958 P3: Yeah. Like you know you have to cover up, condoms are restricted,  
959 things like abortion an what, I think we're just, we are a bit  
960 more maybe say, let's say backward

961 INT: Is it? Let's go conservative

962 P3: Yeah

963 INT: So, I mean, it's actually very interesting that you saying that,  
964 but looking at uh the institution where you studied, do you see  
965 differences in terms of your institution back at home, and here  
966 at Tuks specifically?

967 P3: In terms of uh?

968 INT: In terms of the culture

969 P3: Arhh no I think campus is campus

970 INT: It's basically the same

971 P3: Because guys smoke, guys drink, guys sleep around. I don't think  
972 campus has any difference, yeah it's the same, same same. They  
973 the ones that I'm talking about it's the external environment

974 INT: Ja

975 But your experiences at Tuks so far how have they been?

976 P3: Hmm it's good I think it's fine. In terms of how students behave  
977 or?

978 INT: So like since you've come here. How have you found it? Have you  
979 found it easy to mingle with people, to integrate with people?  
980 Like that kind of a thing?

981 P3: Ja sure sure, because uhm majority of the students we interact

982 with are mostly uhm, I would say, foreign students

983 INT: Is it?

984 P3: Ja

985 INT: Your class particularly or like just all the people that you

986 interact with there in engineering?

987 P3: Cause mostly I interact with my class

988 INT: Okay

989 P3: And uh we have a research group so we have an office

990 INT: Oh

991 P3: And the office is just full of Chinese, Zambians, Zimbabweans,

992 Kenyans

993 INT: Wow okay

994 P3: Yeah. We had one South African then he got a job and he left, so

995 INT: Hmm okay

996 P3: And then the people that we come in with mostly for the

997 scholarship, you know the scholarship gathers from all over

998 INT: Oh okay

999 P3: So to see, to interact with South Africans has been, yoh

1000 (laughing)

1001 INT: (Laughing)

1002 P3: And then you see the guy, the guy that guy, and who else? And

1003 then the guy that was in our class, like just 2 people. Those are

1004 the only South Africans

1005 INT: Just 2 people?

1006 P3: Ja. The rest of the guys, I think it's also mostly because in

1007 class, we don't meet them much

1008 INT: Hmm

1009 P3: They we have (\*\*lock-quicks), you know how UP does with (\*\*lock-

1010 quicks)?

1011 INT: Yes

1012 P3: So they come and then they go. So we really I really don't haven't

1013 had time to interact with them much

1014 INT: Wow

1015 P3: I would I'm still really trying to get a South African friend,

1016 but yeah I wouldn't uh there I can't I can't judge

1017 INT: (Giggles). On an everyday basis, what does a day look like for

1018 you?

1019 P3: A typical day would be me waking up, uh going to the office, where

1020 we study from, in the electrical department. Interact with the

1021 people around in the office, mostly Chinese, Kenyans and the other

1022 people from Rwanda or wherever. And then just come back. I'm a

1023 typical just introvert. I just go to class come back to the house,

1024 which (\*\*). And I when we go to parties, mostly its Kenyan

1025 parties

1026 INT: (Laughing)

1027 P3: Or if it's not a Kenyan party, it's a master card organized party,

1028 and master card has uh yeah South Africans and master card are a

1029 few. And where sometimes master card will call, ask for a party,

1030 the South Africans they stay home, so they are mostly at home

1031 INT: Ja

1032 P3: Now interacting (\*\*\*)

1033 INT: So you are constantly interacting with

1034 P3: Yeah with the foreigners

1035 INT: With different foreigners

1036 P3: Yeah yeah

1037 INT: Okay. Have you found it easy to make friends, I mean regardless

1038 of where they're from, have you found it easy to?

1039 P3: Yeah, sure sure.

1040 INT: But uh (*giggles*) only interacted with 3 South Africans?

1041 P3: Yeah so far it's just 3 South Africans. Now the other ones are

1042 from are in church but we are not very close. We are just hi hi,

1043 but not as close as

1044 INT: Okay. Are your friends uh do you speak a common language like

1045 English with your friends? Or do you speak a certain language?

1046 P3: We speak English, mostly English. But the Kenyans of course we

1047 speak Swahili

1048 INT: Okay

1049 P3: Ja

1050 INT: So, how did you say your lecturers first treated you when you

1051 arrived here?

1052 P3: Uhh I would say it's okay they were okay. Yeah all of us were

1053 just (\*\*\*) (*bird noise*)

1054 INT: There wasn't any?

1055 P3: No, plus they are Chinese (*laughing*)

1056 INT: Your lecturers are Chinese?

1057 P3: Ja

1058 INT: Oh okay

1059 P3: Uhh let me see, no there was one, the first one was Chinese,

1060 second Indian, third Chinese, fourth Chinese

1061 INT: No ways

1062 P3: Ja

1063 INT: Why there's so many Chinese there?

1064 P3: I think it's the department. The research group I'm in, the the

1065 leader of the research group is Chinese. So I think it's quite

1066 (\*\*tasteful)

1067 INT: Oh okay

1068 P3: So it's sort of neutral

1069 INT: So they were just... okay okay

1070 P3: Yeah

1071 INT: And obviously you still continued that they, what they still

1072 wanted to know you, they've still treating you the same way

1073 P3: Ja, yeah. I think also the research group has really had diverse

1074 people, from South Africans to to Malawi where it's really been

1075 diverse, so we were really treated neutrally

1076 INT: So have you by any chance started, I mean I know it's still new

1077 but have you stated to learn a new language?

1078 P3: Uhh, not really, no no no. Cause when I came here, the first thing

1079 I wanted to do was to learn Zulu, I just like I have to sing in

1080 Zulu (*giggles*). I do know some few songs but yeah that's it.  
1081 So I'm still trying to learn Zulu  
1082 INT: Why Zulu particularly? Many people always say Zulu  
1083 P3: I don't know.  
1084 INT: There are so many languages but everyone always mentions Zulu  
1085 P3: I don't know I want to learn Zulu but I also want to learn Venda  
1086 cause I hear Venda is almost close to what we speak back in Kenya.  
1087 Like if a Venda person speaks they say that we can hear. So I've  
1088 not really seen somebody but I'm trying to learn Zulu also  
1089 INT: I will send you some words  
1090 P3: Ja, yoh, in fact the greetings is, haah cause when you get into  
1091 a taxi, I saw you are supposed to say hi  
1092 INT: Yes you must  
1093 P3: Yeah  
1094 INT: It's just considered rude if you just come in  
1095 P3: If you don't, ja and then you don't say hi (*laughing*)  
1096 INT: They'll be like "haibo, what's wrong with this one?"  
1097 P3: Haah but its been fine it's been fine  
1098 INT: And in terms of the actual now degree, how would you uhm describe  
1099 how its been here, have you found it to be easy to adjust to the  
1100 content, or is it been like a bit more of a struggle?  
1101 P3: Uh no it's pretty smooth. The struggle I had at first was  
1102 concentrating on my studies, because I used to work back in Kenya,  
1103 I worked for about 5 years  
1104 INT: Woow 5 years?  
1105 P3: Yeah I worked for 5 years before I came here. So, from an  
1106 environment of working and I was a (\*\*spanagal), to sitting down  
1107 was hard, but my studies were pretty much okay  
1108 INT: So you like studying?  
1109 P3: Like, no  
1110 INT: Like now that you've gotten into the swing again?  
1111 P3: No no  
1112 INT: You feel like it's something that you enjoy?  
1113 P3: In this phase?  
1114 INT: Ja  
1115 P3: It's fine but it's a phase, like it has to end  
1116 INT: (*Laughing*)  
1117 P3: I am not I'm not a, I think I used to be when I was in undergraduate  
1118 uh, but now I really just want to get it done over it  
1119 INT: You had to do it, or? I mean cause you say you wanna go all the  
1120 way to PhD level. So do you have to go all the way to PhD level?  
1121 P3: Uhm I do have to go because the reason I want to go there is so  
1122 that I can sort of have more time for myself and my family. Back  
1123 in Kenya where I used to work, depending doesn't matter where you  
1124 were, like whether you're a manager or what, most of the time you  
1125 spend in the company. So, you I will I would work for almost 12  
1126 hours, in the place yeah  
1127 INT: Wow  
1128 P3: And that is why I just I saw the easy option is one is not the

1129 easy but the other option for me would be to start my own company  
1130 or start lecturing  
1131 INT: Okay  
1132 P3: For me to be able to lecture I need a Masters. I also need a PhD  
1133 to get a better advantage  
1134 INT: Exactly  
1135 P3: So when I saw that, I work for 4 years and it was at first it was  
1136 fine, but later on you realize you don't have a life. If I decided  
1137 to start a family while working there, I don't think I would've  
1138 given my children enough time. So, for me education is a chance  
1139 for me to do something else apart from adhering to the to those  
1140 12 hours working there  
1141 INT: So in terms, your plan is after you finish your PhD is to go back  
1142 home and lecture, or what exactly?  
1143 P3: It's to get into employment  
1144 INT: Okay  
1145 P3: And while doing that, also do the lecturing part time, so that  
1146 it's almost sort of giving me options. If I see that the  
1147 employment option doesn't work well for me and my family, then I  
1148 can quit and go and do lecturing because you know lecturing is  
1149 flexible  
1150 INT: Exactly, hmm  
1151 P3: Yeah so it's just away of me to have options  
1152 INT: Okay, but are you you are planning to go back home? Are you  
1153 planning to continue on here?  
1154 P3: To?  
1155 INT: To continue, like working here in South Africa, or?  
1156 P3: That's what that was my plan originally because I really do love  
1157 the country. Yooh I think after, I don't know what happened, I  
1158 don't know I just saw you guys dancing in your clothes, Zulu  
1159 costumes, then I was like "yeah, this country is nice". But then  
1160 uhh I think the reality is, the us, working here is a process.  
1161 INT: Hmm, I suppose  
1162 P3: Ja  
1163 INT: But what do you mean exactly by that?  
1164 P3: Getting the work permits, getting the permanent residency, and  
1165 sometimes we had career fares here. And we would go to the  
1166 companies and ask them, "we are foreigners can we apply?" Some of  
1167 them would just tell us outright, "no". Don't even think about  
1168 applying, because  
1169 INT: Wow  
1170 P3: Being a foreigner, they say it's hard it's sort of a burden, so  
1171 we were like, "if we get a work permit, then what?" Then they are  
1172 like, "if you get we can consider you", but then they really don't  
1173 give you much hope. The companies that gave us much hope they  
1174 were there was (\*\*Lafaj and there was LDB, and there was  
1175 Helowaisa). Yeah so uhm, it's still is it's something that I'm  
1176 considering, but you know sometimes home is always best, so when  
1177 you I see that uhm it's getting hard, then I'll rather just go

1178 back. But I'm still trying, I'm still trying  
1179 INT: Let's see what will happen  
1180 P3: Ja  
1181 INT: So, in terms of a support system here, do you have people that  
1182 you can go to if you've had a long day or a hard day or?  
1183 P3: Hmm, ja sure sure  
1184 INT: Well then and those are?  
1185 P3: Uhm my boyfriend is here  
1186 INT: Okay  
1187 P3: Uhh, basically I would say him because you know friends? Okay I  
1188 really tend to judge a lot, I don't know. But getting somebody to  
1189 actually trust is not an easy thing to do So I keep in touch with  
1190 my friends back in Kenya. Yeah we talk a lot, and those are the  
1191 ones that I can actually rely on much, but here of course I do  
1192 have friends just normal friends  
1193 INT: But it's not that confiding kind of a friendship, where you tell?  
1194 P3: No here, here no. It's just my boyfriend  
1195 INT: And would you say, you just mentioned your friends now, has your  
1196 relationship with your friends uh back at home changed in any  
1197 way, now that you're not there anymore?  
1198 P3: Yeah yeah  
1199 INT: Do you see a difference?  
1200 P3: Yeah it does because we sort of lose touch on the common things  
1201 we used to have. Back in Kenya, you're close to somebody and the  
1202 things that are happening around you are common  
1203 INT: Yes  
1204 P3: So you sort of have things to talk about, to catch up about and  
1205 stuff. But then when you're far away, even the timing sometimes  
1206 to talk, the issue that you guys can talk about, sometimes they  
1207 fade away so I've sort of remained with those friends that I was  
1208 with really really close to. Yeah but the rest they sort of follow  
1209 INT: Hmm.  
1210 P3: We'll make new ones when we go back, or we'll get the ones that  
1211 we get here, you know  
1212 INT: You've only been here, 7, 8?  
1213 P3: 8 months  
1214 INT: 8 months, you know, so you'd make a whole new set of friends  
1215 P3: Yeah yeah, and I'm beginning to make new friends, I mean it's  
1216 it's interesting though  
1217 INT: So in terms of actual, the friends friends, are they mostly the  
1218 ones there at the research uh office?  
1219 P3: No  
1220 INT: Or you have outside friends as well?  
1221 P3: (Giggles), outside friends outside friends  
1222 INT: Oh okay  
1223 P3: Outside friends because the ones in there are mostly there are  
1224 people who are doing post-doctoral, I don't know those things you  
1225 know, PhD and then  
1226 INT: Yes and then you go after your PhD

1227 P3: (Laughing), so really of talking about here. So most of them are  
1228 the ones that we were in the same class with, the others they're  
1229 in the same class with, and others we just meet around in the  
1230 corridors

1231 INT: So do you think like living like in a place like this where there  
1232 is a lot of like students, has it helped you to actually make  
1233 friends, better than like living in a normal flat that's a bit  
1234 further on, like in Sunnyside, where there's more workers and  
1235 stuff?

1236 P3: Yeah yeah it does help. I think if you're new, in a place, you'd  
1237 rather get like live in a place where there's more people, and  
1238 then after that you can move forward

1239 INT: Ja

1240 P3: I can imagine of you're new and you just go live on your own wooh  
1241 you can die of isolation because how you... unless you make friends  
1242 at work, which is possible

1243 INT: Ja it's possible

1244 And how would you describe your personal like learning uh process?  
1245 Like how do you learn best? Like in your studies, and all of that?

1246 P3: How I learn best is hmm in isolation, I like studying alone. And  
1247 then I like also having discussions with my friends, which is  
1248 what we normally do when we have an assignment. I do the readings  
1249 then later on go have a discussion, or consult, there is no person  
1250 to discuss with

1251 INT: Hmm

1252 P3: Yeah

1253 INT: And do you think your learning processing has evolved from when  
1254 you started in undergrad to now?

1255 P3: Hmm, okay not too much. I think what we used to do in undergraduate  
1256 is what we are doing pretty much here. Yeah study and then go  
1257 discuss

1258 INT: Ja

1259 P3: It's only that now we have more resources, to use

1260 INT: Ja. That is all that I have for you, thank you so much

## P4 TRANSCRIPT

P4 = Participant 4

INT = The Interviewer

1261 INT: But is your course treating you okay?  
1262 P4: Uhh I just went through a really really tough week but  
1263 otherwise ...  
1264 INT: Is it?  
1265 P4: Great ja  
1266 INT: Engineering week?  
1267 P4: No, engineering week was last week but uh with architecture you  
1268 don't really follow the engineering week, ja  
1269 INT: Oh okay, I thought that everybody just, who's under Faculty  
1270 P4: Ja. I think it's uh mainly the engineer ones cause even the  
1271 information people don't always follow engineering week  
1272 INT: Is it?  
1273 P4: Ja  
1274 INT: You are teaching me new information today, that I did not know  
1275 P4: (*Giggles*) Ja because sometimes we'll be stressing our lives and  
1276 then the engineers are just chilling (*giggles*)  
1277 INT: I think it's so nice they get a week where you just do all the  
1278 tests, and the rest of the time you can just do ...  
1279 P4: ... Ja your normal stuff  
1280 INT: Because honestly having to do like test today, 2 weeks another  
1281 test, and then 1 day after that it's another test. It's  
1282 annoying  
1283 P4: Ja and this time it's routine (*giggles*)  
1284 INT: Exactly, uhhh. But uh, it's okay if I call you by your first  
name right?  
1285 P4: Ja  
1286 INT: Okay  
1287 P4: No problem  
1288 INT: And how old are you?  
1289 P4: I'm 20  
1290 INT: Uhh so... Did you just turn 20?  
1291 P4: No I turned 20 in Jan but I still (*believe*) (*giggles*)  
1292 INT: Are you still used to that 18, 17? ...  
1293 P4: ... Ja the teens, yes  
1294 INT: (*Giggles*) Oh my God I think now that... cause I'm gonna turn 26  
1295 this year, now I'm facing 30 I'm so scared to say the word "30"  
1296 P4: ... "30" ja (*giggles*)  
1297 INT: But I, but I digress. what languages do you speak at home?  
1298 P4: Uhh French  
1299 INT: French, uhh you only speak French?  
1300 P4: Uh French and then I think because we spend so much time in  
1301 South Africa, but with my siblings sometimes we will start  
1302 talking in English, especially ja when we talk about (2  
1303 tutoring) stuff, or if we have friends that are at home we'll  
1304 speak in English

1305 INT: So you said siblings, you have siblings here in like? ...  
1306 P4: ... In South Africa  
1307 INT: Are they anywhere...everywhere in South Africa, or Pretoria?  
1308 P4: They are all in Johannesburg  
1309 INT: Oh okay. You are all by yourself here? (*giggles*)  
1310 P4: I'm here (*giggles*)  
1311 INT: So why did you choose to come to Tuks then?  
1312 P4: To Tuks? Uhm because uhh I think I wanted to like change a  
1313 little bit from staying at home all the time  
1314 INT: Ja  
1315 P4: And also I quite like the department here, so that's why I  
1316 chose  
1317 INT: Did you go and do like your research, like on different  
1318 faculties at Wits, UJ?  
1319 P4: It is that I wanted to do architecture  
1320 INT: Ja  
1321 P4: That was with my first choice everywhere, so I applied to the  
1322 ones that are I thought had a potentially good like  
1323 architecture department  
1324 INT: Ja  
1325 P4: And uh I actually came for the open day just to check it out a  
1326 bit more, and I quite like the vibe here, so I was like "okay  
1327 why not"?  
1328 INT: Not a lot of students actually do their research hey, they just  
1329 go "well..."  
1330 P4: ... Whoever takes me (*giggles*)  
1331 INT: Whoever takes me at this point (*giggles*)  
1332 P4: Ja I kind of like to look into things before  
1333 INT: Yeah  
1334 P4: Just to get a decision  
1335 INT: You really should though, well like you sitting there you like  
1336 "uhh I should've gone there or I should've..."  
1337 P4: Hmm but I'm starting to see quite a lot of benefits from coming  
1338 to UP for architecture  
1339 INT: Really?  
1340 P4: Yes, because uhh the way they structure the course, because we  
1341 are a part of the uhm of the engineering faculty, uhm so we are  
1342 actually are diploma and there is a BSc, and uh compared to the  
1343 others which is not a BSc and then since we doing BSc  
1344 architecture, uh we have quit a few modules that are quite uhh  
1345 either engineering orientated or biology type of orientated, so  
1346 we have quite a balance of everything  
1347 INT: It's very diverse cause then now you doing the building stuff  
1348 and then a bit of biology, that's very very nice. And now my  
1349 pen falls to the ground weeeeeh. Okay  
1350 And how long have you been in South Africa?  
1351 P4: Yoh! okay I think it's going quite 10 years now  
1352 INT: What? 10 years? Woow so you've been here full time 10 years?  
1353 P4: On and off 10 years, but 4 years full time

1354 INT: So you went and did your schooling here and all of that?  
1355 P4: Yeah  
1356 INT: Okay cool. And you've gotten have you gotten your permanent  
1357 residence?  
1358 P4: Uhm no when we arrived, we directly applied for that bit we are  
still waiting  
1359 INT: Alright, so what were your reasons for coming to South Africa?  
1360 P4: To South Africa? Uhh the thing is that my dad retired a year ago,  
because  
1361 he was working in a uhh an African branch of the UN, and then  
1362 uh when he retired he ... he tired he was trying to see where we  
1363 should go because since we've been moving all the time cause of  
1364 his job, he was trying to see where we could settle down. My  
1365 siblings are all older than me, so uh my brothers were already  
1366 in University, 1 of them was in University, the other one was  
1367 uh I think he was doing his matric before going to (UST), and  
1368 my sister was in Grade I think she was finishing Grade 10  
1369 INT: Hmm  
1370 P4: Uhm yes, so and I was quite little (*giggles*) still  
1371 INT: So you used to it here?  
1372 P4: Ja so he was trying to see a country where we could settle down  
1373 because back home uh you know, uh the home country, is quite  
1374 difficult to settle down in terms of schooling and University  
1375 and things because with sometimes there's civil war and then as  
1376 well some things happen  
1377 INT: Hmm  
1378 P4: So it's hard to have a proper life, ja. So that's how he he  
1379 came a few times to South Africa during one of his work things,  
1380 so he was like "uhh maybe we should go there", and then you  
1381 guys can settle down, do your stuff without worrying ja  
1382 INT: Okay. And uhh you from Chad is it?  
1383 P4: From Chad  
1384 INT: I have literally never met someone from Chad. You are the first  
1385 person  
1386 P4: (*Giggles*) Ja not a lot of people know people from Chad, it's  
1387 quite small  
1388 INT: How are the people in Chad?  
1389 P4: Uhmm?  
1390 INT: How are the people in Chad?  
1391 P4: People in Chad uh they're quite uh I would say interest... like  
1392 they are quite open I would say  
1393 INT: Ja  
1394 P4: Uhm usually they they quite like foreigners so there's no issue  
1395 with that. But it it's between themselves that there's  
1396 (*giggles*) tension between the...  
1397 INT: Really?  
1398 P4: Ja because of especially between North and South, that tension  
1399 of cultures always ja  
1400 INT: Oh okay, hmm. So it's like uh ethnic divides?

1401 P4: Ethnic divides ja  
1402 INT: Okay  
1403 P4: So the ethnic groups that are quite close to each other, for  
1404 example like my mom's ethnic group and my dad's ethnic group,  
1405 uhm they're quite like similar uh overall, even though  
1406 sometimes the language some things are different and things  
1407 like that, but uh overall they're okay. Well there might be  
1408 another one like a little bit up uhh (after chereef river) that  
1409 they have a different group also over there, and its quite  
1410 different. But I think the major major opposites are North and  
1411 South, because the South is mainly very more like African  
1412 culture like the what, want to say African culture, let's say  
1413 more of the Cameroon, not Cameroon but let's say ...  
1414 INT: ... How do you say, is it Chadian? (*giggles*)  
1415 P4: Ja uh let me say this way. The North is more of an Arabic type  
1416 of culture, having more Muslim and Arabic and then the South is  
1417 different  
1418 INT: Oh okay. It's like Nigeria  
1419 P4: Hmm?  
1420 INT: Cause Nigeria's also has the North is like more like uhh  
1421 there's more Muslims and stuff like that  
1422 P4: Hmm mm, it's that tension  
1423 INT: Yeah  
1424 P4: But it's also cause of colonization, I think that's what  
1425 different at  
1426 INT: Hmm yeah the troubles of Africa always doubting that hey  
1427 P4: (*Laughing*)  
1428 INT: Okay so your mother and your father are from the North or the  
1429 South?  
1430 P4: From the South  
1431 INT: Both of them are from the South?  
1432 P4: Yes  
1433 INT: Okay. Okay cool. So have you ever went and studied anywhere  
1434 else either than here?  
1435 P4: Yes  
1436 INT: Okay  
1437 P4: Uhh most of our life we stayed in Ethiopia  
1438 INT: Oh okay  
1439 P4: Ja and then we moved to Rwanda afterwards, and then from Rwanda  
1440 we moved here  
1441 INT: Jeesh you moved around hey  
1442 P4: (*Laughing*)  
1443 INT: And how was it? How was it studying in Ethiopia and Rwanda?  
1444 P4: Uhm Ethiopia, I was quite little cause when we left there I was  
1445 only 7  
1446 INT: Okay  
1447 P4: Uhm but uh it was also an experience it's a different type of  
1448 uh because Ethiopia is all the way to the East and uh the  
1449 culture as well is very different. They have their own they're

1450 very individualistic so it's a it's as if you go there you like  
1451 "wow it's another bubble"  
1452 INT: Hmm  
1453 P4: Uhm so it was quite interesting actually to study there, but we  
1454 uhh throughout our lives we were always in the French system or  
1455 the or a French speaking school  
1456 INT: Okay  
1457 P4: Uhm so we didn't know exactly how the schooling outside of that  
1458 was, in Ethiopia  
1459 INT: Okay  
1460 P4: Uhm but it was fun it was interesting, and then moving to  
1461 Rwanda, uhm I think what was really nice there was uhm, the  
1462 people are very friendly in Rwanda and uh it's a very nice  
1463 country in terms of its uh location like the region where it is  
1464 in  
1465 INT: Yes, ja  
1466 P4: Also the temperature, the climate, everything is just very like  
1467 tropical but it's not like that harsh tropical, its that nice  
1468 tropical yes fine apples and everything  
1469 INT: (*Giggles*) Argh it's nice (\*\*\*)  
1470 P4: Yeah it's a very like small country but very interesting in its  
1471 own way, ja  
1472 INT: Okay. And so when you came to South Africa, what would you say  
1473 were your initial perceptions about South Africa as a country?  
1474 P4: As a country?  
1475 INT: Ja  
1476 P4: Uhm before coming, uh I had a friend who was in the same school  
1477 as me in Rwanda, and uhh she so for holidays her family used to  
1478 come here quite often, so they she used she used to bring me  
1479 back uhh like pictures and things like that, I was like "that  
1480 looks so nice, it doesn't look like Africa at all" (*laughing*)  
1481 INT: (*Laughing*), is it?  
1482 P4: Yes cause we were used to like dust and uh you know this type  
1483 of environment where your roads are not always tarred and  
1484 things like that you don't have shopping malls necessarily. You  
1485 have the market place and that's it. So we were like "oh wow  
1486 this it looks really different it looks like Europe"  
1487 INT: (*Giggles*)  
1488 P4: And then the other part her other friends were like "oh but if  
1489 you go to South Africa, be careful of insecurity, insecurity,  
1490 xenophobia" (*laughing*)  
1491 INT: They told you, you must know what's gonna happen  
1492 P4: So when we came here, we were very like "can we go out of the  
1493 house, do we lock all the doors, everything everything".  
1494 And then we like guys we are becoming paranoid, this is not  
1495 right  
1496 INT: It's not a way to live  
1497 P4: Yeah exactly. Everywhere there is insecurity, it's not only  
1498 South Africa. Okay crime levels are high but still we can't

1499           just be living (\*\*\*), so we relaxed quite a bit and (*giggles*)  
1500 INT:   Eventually  
1501 P4:   Yeah and you realize that it's there's a they make it way  
1502       bigger than what it actually is. Well it is an issue but not  
1503       "woow don't go there"  
1504 INT:   So is it like reported a lot on uh in like Rwanda, Ethiopia? Is  
1505       it something that you see all the time on the news?  
1506 P4:   ... On the news (*giggles*), not necessarily on the news or maybe  
1507       it's cause I was quite little so I didn't always really check the  
1508       news. Uhm but mainly from family friends or things like that, ja  
1509 INT:   (\*\*\*)For like South Africa, hmm okay okay  
1510 P4:   (*Giggles*) okay okay  
1511 INT:   I get you I get you. And in terms of actual South Africans, what  
1512       did you think about South Africans?  
1513 P4:   South Africans themselves?  
1514 INT:   Ja  
1515 P4:   Let's say uh, what I found interesting, but I guess it happens  
1516       everywhere, is that as soon as you're black, people think that  
1517       you know the language directly  
1518 INT:   Jaa  
1519 P4:   So then they'll directly speak to you, and if you like that you  
1520       show that you can't really communicate, they'll either think 2  
1521       things; okay you're a foreigner that's fine, or they'll be like  
1522       oh she's rude she thinks that she can she'd only speak English,  
1523       and she doesn't wanna speak her home language. But I feel it's  
1524       not my fault, I just literally don't know, but I'm trying to learn  
1525       (*giggles*)  
1526 INT:   Yeah I get what you're saying I get what you're saying. So you  
1527       are trying to learn? What are you trying to learn exactly?  
1528 P4:   Uhm well we, my sister and I, well actually all my siblings, my  
1529       parents are like since we are living here for a long time, you  
1530       guys better learn, so uhm ja we took some lessons, but then it  
1531       was difficult to follow with school work and things like that, so  
1532 INT:   Ja  
1533 P4:   But I tried again when I came to University last, last year. We  
1534       have we have this space in our uhm schedule where we need to take  
1535       something from outside of our faculty  
1536 INT:   That's good  
1537 P4:   For one thing, so it can be anything cause they want us to  
1538       experience different stuff. So I decided to go in the language  
1539       side because I like languages so I took siZulu for like uh first  
1540       semester  
1541 INT:   Nice! Okay, and now that you've been here for a while and you've  
1542       experienced it, what would you say you think of South Africa and  
1543       South Africans?  
1544 P4:   As a whole?  
1545 INT:   Ja  
1546 P4:   Let's see. I really like the country to be honest, cause uh it  
1547       has lots of opportunities

1548 INT: Ja  
1549 P4: Compared to a place like Ethiopia for example where if you're a  
1550 foreigner, its difficult to do your own thing. Uhm like you can't  
1551 own a house, you can't own a business, things like that. Well  
1552 here in South Africa, as long as you have the right paper, you're  
1553 in order and everything, you can you are allowed you have more  
1554 freedom to do whatever you need  
1555 INT: That's nice  
1556 P4: Uhm so ja. It's quite a nice country to be in. And people are  
1557 also really helpful, so  
1558 INT: Really? So you found in general that people are more helpful than  
1559 you thought they would be?  
1560 P4: Yeah. Sometimes there is this barrier of, okay, cause for example  
1561 I didn't have an ID for a long time, because uhm my all my siblings  
1562 when they came they had the right age to have an ID already, so  
1563 they managed to do that my parents as well, but I was too young  
1564 to get an ID. I only got my ID actually this year, because uhm  
1565 well everybody else I think got theirs like at 16. Is it 16?  
1566 INT: Yes it's 16  
1567 P4: It's 16, yes. So that was kind of stopping me a lot of the time  
1568 because I had to always have my passport papers with me  
1569 INT: Hmm  
1570 P4: And then uhh, there are things I couldn't do cause it blocked me  
1571 if I didn't have an ID, so that was a little bit difficult. But  
1572 uhh either than that, uhh (\*\*\*)  
1573 INT: I can imagine that you wanna do this but uhhh, oh sorry  
1574 P4: Even now because I register with the University with my passport  
1575 right?  
1576 INT: Ja  
1577 P4: So when I wanna get the Fundi card and everything, my passport  
1578 doesn't go through (*giggles*)  
1579 INT: That can cause you a lot of anxiety hey  
1580 P4: And I was like oh well, it's not like life and death, so its fine  
1581 INT: Ja. But I can imagine if that's your only way like, that's what  
1582 you need to get your like your laptop or whatever, then they like  
1583 "sorry, no"  
1584 P4: (*Giggles*). Even for my drivers, it was a hassle because I had to  
1585 go the long way round just to get the paper that tells me, "okay  
1586 she is allowed to do it because her passport is valid" (*giggles*).  
1587 So it's a lot of paper work  
1588 INT: Ja  
1589 P4: Uhm ja  
1590 INT: Ja I can imagine. And now how would you describe your institutions  
1591 here at Tuks?  
1592 P4: At Tuks?  
1593 INT: Ja  
1594 P4: Uhm in terms of?  
1595 INT: In terms of like, let's say if you're looking at it from a point  
1596 of view of wen you came to University, you had ideas of what

1597 University would be like and how you'd be treated and all of that.  
1598 And obviously now that you've been here for like what, a year and  
1599 8 months, how have you found that reality like okay now I'm living  
1600 now I'm here, going to class everyday, uhh I'm making friends,  
1601 I'm doing all these things. How has that journey been like for  
1602 you?

1603 P4: Uhm I would say when I started University I didn't know what to  
1604 expect at all. I was like, okay

1605 INT: You didn't have any expectations?

1606 P4: I was like I don't know what it is like, I only know in high  
1607 school, so uhm it's about going into the unknown. And then I  
1608 couldn't really ask my siblings cause they haven't been to  
1609 University here at Tuks, and then they studied way different  
1610 things that I'm going to study. So they can't be like, "okay you  
1611 gonna do this that", but it will be different

1612 INT: It's not going to be the same

1613 P4: And none of them went to the same University as well, so all of  
1614 them had different experiences (*giggles*)

1615 INT: Which is great

1616 P4: Ja. So I was like, okay especially that I'm alone here, let's see  
1617 how it goes. Uh, but uhm I think what made it quite a nice  
1618 transition was perhaps res, because uhm at least it gave that  
1619 little bit of, "okay you have a place to go back to, and you have  
1620 people, faces that you kinda know when you go back in your  
1621 apartment, you know people.

1622 INT: Yes

1623 P4: And the transition into your care, people can actually direct you  
1624 and be like, okay so you'll have this and the registration process  
1625 it wasn't that hectic. Uhm and overall I guess the transition  
1626 goes quite fast, and then as soon as you start with school, you're  
1627 going

1628 INT: You're going

1629 P4: Ja

1630 INT: It's classes all the time

1631 P4: Classes, everything like that. I did think I was going to get a  
1632 bit more free time but no (*giggles*)

1633 INT: So tell me, how does a day for you look like when you're on  
1634 campus, how does it look like, what do you get up to?

1635 P4: Usually all our classes start like at half past 8, and then  
1636 usually our faculty is let's say 60% practical work and 40% all  
1637 the rest

1638 INT: Wow

1639 P4: So you spend most of your time in the studio, or doing your  
1640 practical things

1641 INT: Okay

1642 P4: The thing is that your 40% that is left, if you neglect that then  
1643 it can cost you a lot

1644 INT: Hmm

1645 P4: So they'll refer you to presidents, maybe for those people's votes  
and things like that to look at. But they won't try it necessarily, well  
1646 sometimes they do but you see they attempt not to change  
1647 you're coming from  
1648 INT: So you've seen have you seen your design style evolve since you've  
1649 been uhm since your first year to now?  
1650 P4: Uhm I guess so, uh I think now I'm starting to see more into the  
1651 details of the rules, even though I'm not a really detailed person  
1652 cause if I did I was going to perhaps choose interior cause they  
1653 focus a lot on detail, the presentation  
1654 INT: It's all about presentation  
1655 P4: I'm not an interior person at all. I didn't choose landscape  
1656 because I felt that it was going to be uhm too funneled at the  
1657 beginning. I'd rather do the normal one, the general one then  
1658 afterwards maybe, if I really want to  
1659 INT: So interior and (\*\*\*) they fall under architecture?  
1660 P4: Yes because what happened is that uhm in first year, we apparently  
1661 the only South African University who have landscape architecture  
1662 in undergrad, all the others it's a postgrad thing. Uhm so  
1663 interior architecture also quite a very recent thing in South  
1664 Africa, uhm but they put in their architecture cause it's  
1665 different than interior design, uh cause they focus more on, they  
1666 use architectural principles to do what they do  
1667 INT: Okay  
1668 P4: So the interior architecture, in first year, it's like  
1669 engineering, everybody does the same thing. So whether you chose  
1670 landscape wharawhara, everybody does the same thing, cause they  
1671 need to put you all on the same level  
1672 INT: Have the same base?  
1673 P4: Yeah same base, the teach you the same thing, then after do it.  
1674 So from second year onwards you follow which ever you choose, uh  
1675 then you have landscape of architecture, then you have interior  
1676 INT: Okay. So you just a normal  
1677 P4: Ja the general, we never know how to call it because we like  
1678 normal, and the others are like, so we not normal  
1679 INT: (*Laughing*)  
1680 P4: We even decided to call ourselves the normal, not normal cause we  
1681 didn't know what to call or we call it general I guess  
1682 INT: Ja  
1683 P4: Our first year studio march..  
1684 INT: So the open one, the open one?  
1685 P4: Ja a studio march there last year used to call "architecture", he  
1686 used to always do movements, "architecture" was everybody. And  
1687 then "architecture" is the (*laughing*)  
1688 INT: Oh so you guys are like the  
1689 P4: The architecture, and then the architecture  
1690 INT: Its so very cool  
1691 And how many people are in your class cause it seems like it's a  
1692 very small group?

1693 P4: Uhm last year we were 88, and then there were people who dropped  
1694 out and the people will do other stuff. But this year,  
1695 architecture, we're supposed to be 54, even though there are some  
1696 people I haven't seen in forever  
1697 INT: (*Giggles*)  
1698 P4: They just appear when its time to give work then disappear again  
1699 INT: Ja  
1700 P4: So we are supposed to be 54, and then interior, I think they are  
1701 like 7, and landscape I think they are 11  
1702 INT: That's very small hey  
1703 P4: Its very small. Normally the department accepts a 100 people in  
1704 total  
1705 INT: Oh okay  
1706 P4: Uhh but then, people do not come or go to other Universities or  
1707 things like that. Uhh but usually have space for 25 in interior,  
1708 25 in landscape, and 50 for architecture  
1709 INT: Ja  
1710 P4: And the thing is that a lot of people fell back, didn't decide to  
1711 continue, or changed courses or some people never showed up. Uhm  
1712 then a lot of the interior people are not there, and a lot of the  
1713 landscape as well  
1714 INT: Its very little  
1715 P4: Yeah its very little, compared to they were supposed to be 25 but  
1716 now you have 11 people  
1717 INT: That's ja, less than half  
1718 P4: Yes, and the architecture we are 54 because a few people that  
1719 were in landscape and interior decided to switch to architecture,  
1720 and they were like no, it's just 4 more people, it's okay  
1721 INT: Hmm  
1722 Okay, so how would you describe then your learning process?  
1723 Like how do you study best?  
1724 P4: How do I study best?  
1725 INT: Ja  
1726 P4: Haah, it actually depends on what the work is, which module it  
1727 is, and uh how intense and difficult it is (*laughing*)  
1728 INT: How do you know you need to be intense then in that module?  
1729 P4: Intense?  
1730 INT: Ja  
1731 P4: Okay. Sometimes if its uh, like if they are all intense their own  
1732 way, but I guess it depends how far I am from finishing it  
1733 INT: Hmm  
1734 P4: For example, if uhh just in the time I need to get it done as  
1735 well. Uh so for design for example, I'm always like rushing  
1736 because (\*\*\*) (*laughing*)  
1737 INT: Ja  
1738 P4: Well that's because I'm a very slow designer, like I take time  
1739 and be like, "okay but if I do this maybe this will work", I think  
1740 I over-analyze and then I'm like, oh but  
1741 INT: I won't finish this thing

1742 P4: Exactly. So, I think I'll need to reach decisions faster but  
1743 that's my own thing now  
1744 INT: Yeah  
1745 P4: So for design, usually, uhm when it's the beginning phase, it's  
1746 more relaxed because it's more idea phase and things like that.  
1747 So usually the last week where it's all about production,  
1748 production, production, so that's where everybody shuts  
1749 themselves somewhere and just produce produce produce produce  
1750 INT: No talking  
1751 P4: Ja no talking, just go. Uhm and then for the other modules, I  
1752 like to usually study uhm like sit at a desk and properly do my  
1753 notes, and focus that way. I know that last year I used to study  
1754 a lot in the library but I can't remember why  
1755 INT: *(Laughing)*  
1756 P4: Because this year, I'm not going there at all  
1757 INT: So you don't like the library at all?  
1758 P4: I think maybe I got tired of always having to do the distance  
1759 INT: Ja, it's such a big distance hey  
1760 P4: Because sometimes uhm there are that, I know I used to carry like  
1761 lots of files and I was okay with carrying them, but I don't know  
1762 why this year not so much. Uhm and I think maybe last year I  
1763 didn't concentrate as much in my room, as I did there. But this  
1764 year I managed to really concentrate in my room. So I guess I  
1765 really didn't need to  
1766 INT: Evolution! Good  
1767 P4: Yeah, I don't need to go back anymore, and I know that sometimes  
1768 I used to stay till very late, and I didn't enjoy just walking  
1769 back in the middle of the night, and like at 1 o' clock walking  
1770 back. So I was like okay maybe I should find a way to just study  
1771 there  
1772 INT: And make it work in your room, so that you don't have to walk.  
1773 Makes sense  
1774 So overall you'd say you are enjoying your degree then?  
1775 P4: I am, even though this year I was like, "why am I doing this?"  
1776 Then I'll be like, "go back". Actually I reached that point where  
1777 I was like, why are you doing this again. Usually it never lasts,  
1778 it is just like a few hours of honouring, "why am I doing this.  
1779 If I wasn't ding architectural, what would I be doing?" Like girl  
1780 you wouldn't be doing anything, so just  
1781 INT: *(Laughing)*, just keep going  
1782 P4: Just keep going. You're like, "do you wanna do engineering? Ah  
1783 no, okay, then that's what you're doing".  
1784 INT: Ja exactly  
1785 P4: Even though engineering was my second choice, but then since  
1786 architecture, I was like "yey", I'm like, "okay". And now when I  
1787 listen to my engineering friends, I'm like "yoh okay, I really  
1788 don't wanna be doing calculus all the time"  
1789 INT: Ja. So you're happy with your choice? Okay cool  
1790 And if you had a oppportunity to choose again, or even maybe

1791 recommend another international student to come to Tuks, would  
1792 you do that?  
1793 P4: Yes, I would actually. Uhm there's quite, well some people I  
1794 know, there's quite a few people actually who are international  
1795 students. And uhm I'm quite okay, so  
1796 INT: You even integrated well  
1797 P4: I think so  
1798 INT: Ja, you have integrated very well, better  
1799 P4: Uh I've been here for quite a long time. Uhm a lot of them  
1800 actually just only came to South Africa to study, so they  
1801 haven't been here that long. But it seems like they are fine  
1802 INT: Hmm  
1803 P4: Even some of them, know places that I haven't been before  
1804 INT: "Like what are you talking about?"  
1805 P4: Exactly, I'm like "woow". So I guess when you come you just,  
1806 and if you meet the right people and you have the right attitude  
1807 I guess it works  
1808 INT: That's very true. A right attitude is everything  
1809 Okay. That was the last question for you. Thank you so much