Eastern Illinois University

The Keep

Fall 2020

Adjustment to Life in America: Black African Graduate Level Students

Denver Daniels
Eastern Illinois University

Adjustment to Life in America: Black African Graduate Level Students

Denver Daniels

Eastern Illinois University

November 9, 2020

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to examine what challenges Black African graduate students face when adjusting to life in the United States. A secondary concern was to examine what coping strategies were used during the transition. A qualitative approach was used to interview the participants and through coding, develop themes related to their time as graduate students.

This study concluded that there were a number of issues that Black African graduate students face. The students reported that they experienced homesickness, culture shock, and discrimination during their time at school. Specific themes also emerged as to how they coped with these distressing experiences. Students utilized the following coping strategies: 1) support groups, 2) religion, 3) calling home, and 4) food acquisition. The study also found that students expressed shifting perspectives of their surroundings and being "othered" by groups they expected to join.

.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my mother, Tina Daniels. She has supported me and my collegiate career, and without her support I doubt that I could have made it this far. She has been there for me whenever I need her, ready with a shoulder to lean on if I should need it.

I also dedicate this thesis to the students that I have worked with who I had such a privilege to get to know and learn from throughout my career. This thesis was inspired by you my friends.

To my friends who have let me call or text you about this thesis, thank you. I owe you all so much, and I love you all for it. Your unending support means the world to me.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I would like to thank Dr. Richard Roberts for advising and giving me unending support and belief during this time. I had no idea at the beginning of this process where I would end up, but I had you along for the journey. Thank you for your support.

Second to my thesis committee, I'm so glad I had you there for me. Dr. Angela Glaros, you helped me keep focused and gave me so many new ideas. I'm so glad that I got to know you in my freshman year, you have helped me exponentially on my journey through academia. You have now assisted me with two separate research projects during my academic career, and I can never be grateful enough to you for that. To Mrs. Krishna Thomas, you have been such a help during this time. You supported me academically and professionally. You checked in with me and made sure I was making progress, giving me advice and the drive to get this done. Thank you both.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1

Introduction

In the 2018-2019 academic year, international students contributed more than $45 billion to the United States (Institute of International Education, Inc., 2020). While the United States benefits from international students in an economic sense, our universities also benefit from the sheer number of international students that arrive. One such benefit of international students being present on campuses is the increase in multiple cultures, thus widening world views of both the international students and domestic students. International students bring an outside view to domestic students who may have only experienced their own internal culture while also expanding their own worldview in the process. In this regard, international students can be integral to the cultural growth of a university.

However, the number of international students has been steadily declining. In the 2018 academic year, the percentage of international students in the United States dropped more than 6% from the previous year, and this drop has occurred for three straight years beginning in 2015 onward (Anderson & Svrluga, 2018). While it is unclear why the population of international students has been declining, universities need to be aware it is happening at a continuous pace. This decline will not only affect the university financially, it may also affect how the students who are still attending universities in the United States transition to their new life away from home.

This transition to the United States universities comes with some unique issues that international students experience. International students report that they suffer from

homesickness, culture shock, and discrimination when adjusting to life in the United States (Constantine, Anderson, Berkel, Caldwell, & Utsey, 2005). Constantine et al. also found that transition issues that international students face can hinder them both academically and emotionally. International students may find it hard to adjust to life at their new university when being hindered in other aspects of their lives. Likewise, it can be difficult for international students to receive the same support as domestic students for similar issues (Baba and Hosoda, 2014).

Though it is important to look at international students as a whole, this practice can also be problematic. People do not experience the same things, and often experiences can be influenced by where you are from, what you look like, or who you know. In this respect international students are no different. This study will specifically focus on Black African graduate international students. As Banda (2018) noted, Black African students often go overlooked in collegiate systems today. Banda was one of those Black African students who personally went through the discrimination and culture shock that so many others experience. By looking at this population, College Student Affairs Professionals may be able to better help this particular populace.

Black African graduate international students are an often-overlooked part of the student population. As Banda (2018) stated, international students are often are overlooked by the people who are supposed to be teaching them during their time at American universities. As an underserved population it is important to examine this group as they transition to the United States university system. Understandably, they are adjusting to life outside of their home countries and examining what methods they use will help student affairs professionals better serve this population. Black African graduate international students may use specific methods of

acculturation and adjustment from are different from other international students in the same position. These students not only have to deal with the discrimination other black students face, but additionally the discrimination that international students face. Looking at their coping strategies may help future Black African students better adjust to the transition to college and better inform those professionals charged with assisting them.

Purpose of Study

In this study I examine what types of adjustments, if any, Black African graduate students make when transitioning to the United States, and in order to inform colleges and universities what they can do to help. This study will also look into what techniques, if any, those students use on their own in order to ease the discomfort of adjusting to living in a new culture. The outcomes will help student affairs and higher education professionals understand and better support Black African international students with their educational goals.

Research Questions

Looking to understand more thoroughly some of the difficulties that Black African international students face when they are living in the United States, I interviewed students to answer the following questions:

RQ1: What are Black African graduate students' experiences in their transition to a midsized Midwestern public institution?

RQ2: What techniques, if any, have black African graduate students utilized during their transitional period.

RQ3: Do the issues that graduate level Black African students face in transitioning change over time?

Significance of Study

Understanding how students from other cultures live and experience life in the United States can not only help student affairs professionals, but it can also help future international students during their own adjustment periods. This study focused specifically on the results from a midsized institution in the Midwest, and specifically on Black African international students who may be combatting homesickness, culture shock, and discrimination. This study also observed how these students cope with these adversities, and how universities can better help them overcome such adversities in the future.

Limitations of Study

The study was conducted using qualitative methods. This type of study generates a number of different data sets which are then parsed together. This can create an extended time frame for researchers to complete the data separation. There are a number of limitations that go along with the type of semi-structured interviews that will be used. Almeida, Faria, and Queirós (2017) indicated that structured interviews present problems such as "very rigid, low flexibility in the response's choice, difficult to obtain detailed data, and preparing an interview can become time consuming" (pg. 379). Gathering participants was also difficult for the researcher, as the study took place in a midsized midwestern university. While there are students matching the parameters that attend these types of universities, their number is not high. This study was conducted in a rural area, and that can also limit the number of participants.

Definition of Terms

Adjustment.

"No matter what his or her expectations, nearly every student encounters obstacles he or she didn't anticipate during the transition to college… the changes leaving home demands can lead

to feelings of sadness, loneliness and worry" (NC State University, 2020). Specifically, within this study, referring to the amount of time getting used to living in the United States.

Culture shock.

"Culture shock describes the impact of moving from a familiar culture to one that is unfamiliar. It includes the shock of a new environment, meeting lots of new people and learning the ways of a new country" (University of Washington, 2020).

Homesickness symptoms.

"When students leave home to attend college, many leave behind their support system, a sense of familiarity, and level of comfort... Sometimes we might find it distressing if we can't physically go there when in need of security and comfort" (Penn State Beaver, 2020). There can be various expressions and/or symptoms manifesting.

International students.

"Students who have crossed a national or territorial border for the purpose of education and are now enrolled outside their country of origin" (UNESCO.org, 2020). Any non-domestic student in a given country. In this proposed study it will refer to non-United States domestic students.

Domestic students.

"Domestic students are American citizens, naturalized U.S. citizens, permanent residents, refugees, or asylees" (Wichita State University, 2020). A student who has either been born in the United States or has applied and received their citizenship to the United States.

Chapter II

Review of Literature

Chapter II includes the literature that has helped illustrate specific needs and solutions that have been considered, concerning the main issues facing international students when adjusting to life in the United States. These issues include homesickness, culture shock, discrimination, how international students help the United States, how students deal with adjusting to life in the United States, and specific cultural differences that can affect a student's adjustment.

US Institutes of Higher Learning and International Students

Choosing colleges to attend can be an arduous process. From trying to determine what area to major in, to where to live results in a myriad of choices. It can often become overwhelming trying to make the best choice. These choices ring no less true for international students hoping to study abroad in the United States (Constantine, Anderson, Caldwell, Berkel, & Utsey, 2005). There are many academic choices for international students to make starting with the application process, visa requirements, and what university and what country will best suit their particular needs.

International students have long been a major boon for colleges in the United States, providing a boost to the economy in exchange for a college education away from home. "International students contributed more than $30 billion to the United States economy in the 2014-2015 academic year" (Barta, Chen, Jou, McEnaney, and Fuller, 2015, para. 5). The authors also posit that in at least 19 countries international students contribute .20% -.25% to the total states' Gross Domestic Product (GDP); a substantial amount of money added to the economy strictly through recruiting international students. And in 2015, it appeared these numbers would

only be growing, because in that year, 4.8% of student enrollment in the United States were international students compared to the 1.7% of enrollment of international students in 1970 (Barta et al., 2015). Although this figure represents a growth in numbers since the 1970s, there has been a steady decline in international students in more recent years.

In 2018 the percentage of international students in the United States dropped by more than 6% (Anderson & Svrluga, 2018). Anderson and Svrluga stated that 2018 was the third straight year of enrollment decline by international students. They noted that "many schools attributed the trend to problems with student visa delays and denials" (2018, para. 3). Goodman, Anderson and Svrluga (2018) stated that the drop in enrollment is simply a result of other international colleges increasing their recruiting: "We're not hearing that students feel they can't come here. We're hearing that they have choices. We're hearing that there's competition from other countries, and that, in this very sophisticated, very competitive market for the first time, we have real competition" (2018, para. 16). While many college professionals deny that the drop bore any relation to government's policies on immigration, it is important to note that if there is a problem with student visa delays and denials, the federal government is responsible for distributing visas. The United States Government Bureau of Consular Affairs webpage says: "United States law generally requires visa applicants to be interviewed by a consular officer at a United States Embassy or Consulate. After relevant information is reviewed, the application is approved or denied, based on standards established in United States law" (2018, para. 1). Students go to the nearest embassy or consulate to interview with their personal documents, and then, based on the most up-to-date policies, are either approved or denied their visas to enter into the United States.

When looking at the data of international enrollment rates dropping, Cabrera, in a quote from Anderson and Svrluga's article, stated, "While other countries work hard to attract international students, we are managing to send a message that talented foreigners are not welcome here, just when we most need them" (2018, para. 5). In an interview conducted by Anderson and Svrluga (2018), Angel Perez, Vice President For Enrollment and Student Success at Trinity College, had to work firsthand with worries of parents and potential students.

> The very first question that every reception *[sic]* (orientation) opened with was "Why would I send my child to the United States to study right now, given the political climate and the animosity toward international students?" That was a very difficult question to answer (2017, para. 13).

Perez is indicating that parents are worried for their children due to the relationships that the United States has with other regions of the world.

It is also important to remember that it is presently a tumultuous time for colleges when it comes to dealing with the political tensions in the United States. It is not a coincidence that one of the major conflicts between white supremacists and the local community during 2017 happened on a college campus in Charlottesville Virginia. Public colleges have long been at the center of protests as they are one of the few places people know they can gather to speak their mind. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) stated "The right to free speech is not just about the law; it's also a vital part of our civic education" (para. 3) in relation to protesting on campuses. Because of issues like the Charlottesville riots, international student enrollment has been impacted negatively. For example, the University of Virginia, the campus where the protests happened, saw a decline in undergraduate international applications the following academic year, dropping by almost 200 applications, while their domestic student applications

rose by almost 1,000 applications (University of Virginia Enrollment, n.d.). In any country the political climate has a large effect on the decisions that international students make to what college they attend.

Adjustment Issues

International students often face difficulties when it comes to adjusting to life in the United States. They have to deal with not only the "usual" student issues that domestic students face, for example transitioning from high school to college, but also issues that accompany travel to another country to go to a University. Homesickness, culture shock, and discrimination are issues students must live through on a daily basis and can hinder international students significantly (Constantine et al., 2005).

Homesickness

Constantine et al. (2005) detailed that many students felt that homesickness was one of the most difficult barriers to overcome when studying in the United States. The difficulties students reported were largely being away from a solid support system like their families. Constantine et al. noted that students were able to deal with their homesickness if they found other students that they could talk to, be it other international students or domestic students. Mesidor and Sly's 2016 study on international students, noted that international students felt more comfortable with adjusting if they surrounded themselves with support systems, such as other students to interact with. These barriers can be particularly hard for international students to face as they do not have those built in support systems that domestic students may have. Their families are often further away than ever, making it harder to contact them for that support new students desperately need.

Culture shock

Researchers also found that culture shock was a major problem when students are trying to adjust to life in the United States. Adjusting to the new culture that they are living in caused major strife for international students. Constantine et al. (2005), named culture shock as one of the biggest concerns for international students during their stay, as most students become overwhelmed with the cultural differences around them. Lam (2017) spoke about how hard it was for them, as a student from Hong Kong, to get used to the culture in the United States. That seems to be a recurring issue to not only the student specifically sought out by Lam, but also experienced by the other international students that they interviewed in that study.

Discrimination

Another major issue that impacts international students is discrimination in their host country. In the past and current political climate in the United States, many students say that they are worried about experiencing some type of discrimination by their peers or authority figures. Zong and Batalova (2018) stated as much, positing that immigration policies and rhetoric from the government ranked among the top reasons students look at a country to study in. Banda (2018) detailed life in the United States as a person from Africa. The author wrote about how hard it was living through discrimination not only in their professional life, but also in the classroom. Professors refuse to lecture about Africa, a whole continent, because they "didn't know enough" about it. Banda spoke about how this alienates African students who are in classes like these, as it glosses over their own culture. Boafo-Arthur (2014) also wrote about discrimination that international students from Africa face. Boafo-Arthur mentioned Berry's Theory of Adjustment, which details how students may adjust to life in the United States when

facing this kind of hardship in their life. Boafo-Arthur also looked at how, in some studies, international students are lumped together. Boafo-Arthur pointed out that not all international students are treated the same, and it follows that not all international students will develop the same either. Lee (2007) also studied this phenomenon of racism towards international students with a wider range of backgrounds.

> Our study revealed that students from the Middle East, Africa, East Asia, Latin America, and India endured far greater difficulties in United States institutions than students from Canada and Europe. We call this discrimination neo-racism, which we suggest is attributable to skin color as well as culture, national origin, and relationships between countries. (p. 28)

Lee pointed to the fact that international students of color experience more discrimination and difficulties in the United States, something that my study also examines. Gebhard (2012) agreed with the idea that not all international students will develop the same. Gebhard took extra steps to make sure that the students that were participating in the study felt comfortable and accommodated. They made sure that the students were able to express themselves using notebooks at home to keep track of their thoughts, and they even brought in translators to help the students feel more at ease when answering their questions.

Aids to adjustment

International students find themselves forced to adjust to homesickness, culture shock, and discrimination and learn to navigate those issues. These factors can directly impede how a student socializes and learns while they are away from their country of origin. It is important therefore to examine not only what students are trying to overcome, but what tools they can use to help themselves adjust. Some adjustment tools that have been suggested by the literature

include getting access to their cultural food, to just "keeping an open mind" (Chavoshi et al., 2017) when travelling to a new country.

Constantine et al. (2005), not only identified what type of hurdles international students have to maneuver in their everyday lives, they also worked to find solutions to how students can overcome their many obstacles. One of their foremost suggestions was finding a support group to utilize throughout the college career. Baba and Hosoda (2014) took that idea one step further. They suggested that colleges themselves make support groups for international students, or at the very least, set up support groups during orientation for the students to utilize throughout the semester. Their study found that international students actually do better academically if they had a perceived social group that they could commiserate with. They hoped that by giving students a support group right away the international students could have an easier time adjusting to their new life in the United States. Mwangi et al. (2018) also found that international students are often frustrated with how colleges deal with the initial adjustment period.

Participants discussed campus internationalization being a major goal of their university, but not feeling like they were a prioritized part of that plan. For example, two main issues highlighted were unmet expectations/unique needs of international graduate students and, perceived gaps in the inclusivity of African cultures. None of the student participants felt that their campus prioritized the needs of international students. (p. 59)

Studies like Mwangi et al., (2018) and Baba and Hosoda's (2014) show that some international students want more involvement from their colleges. The literature on this topic often shows that a solid support system was what international students needed in order to adjust better to life in the United States. Some students in Gebhard's (2012) study even mentioned that they like to put up posters or banners representing their home country.

Not all of the researchers agree, however. For example, Chavoshi et al. (2017) had an entirely different take on adjustment. They proposed that international students simply need to "keep an open mind" about their host country, and instead of positing that they find support groups, they suggested that the onus was on international students to get over their adjustment hurdles on their own. If all of the students were native English speakers, they may not have the same experiences as those who are not native English speakers. Where most agree that international students may need outside support, Chavoshi et al. (2017) looked at international students as individuals who needs to lean on themselves to make the adjustment alone.

As Mesidor and Sly (2016) found in their study, international students benefit from having groups of people supporting them in their new host country. Studies show that students adjust better to their new environment if they have at least one group of people they can turn to in order to feel more comfortable. Chapdelaine and Alexitch (2004) found that students also benefit from having people from similar cultures in order to adjust to life in a university setting faster.

> Specifically, findings revealed that as the degree of cross-cultural differences increases between international students' countries of origin and the host society, the degree of interaction with hosts decreases. Similarly, results indicated that as the size of co-national group increases, the degree of interaction with hosts decreases… In both cases, the amount of cross-cultural training that international students could receive from host members is limited, thus leading to higher degrees of culture shock. (p. 180)

International students, when faced with a large degree of difference between their home country and the United States, and if they interact with a group of students from their home country, are more likely to spend time out of touch with the local culture and will experience

more homesickness. Because they experience this need to find support, students are seeking out help by national groups, but the support of other international students should not be downplayed. Hayes and Lin (1994) went a step further and found that international students often experience a severe social loss when they are adjusting to life. This severe social loss is directly related to how proficient they are in English. If they have a lower proficiency in English, it is harder for them to progress in national student groups. If this happens to an international student, they will sometimes seek out other international students to commiserate and relate to. Hayes and Lin (1994) also noted a "pattern of social response", namely that some groups have separate functions from each other.

> Students benefit by interacting with national students and international students.
> Complicating the situation, however, is the observation that international students can typically belong to several different social networks, each of which serves a distinct psychological function. (p. 7)

When it comes to adjustment to colleges in the United States, English proficiency is one of the biggest factors which affects students. Olaniran (2009) found that "international students' problems are complicated by cultural differences as they enter the host culture with cultural communication competencies suitable for their native culture. Therefore, cultural stress such as that experienced by international students presents a communication problem" (Olaniran, 2009, p 70). When students enter a host country, they are greatly helped by their ability to speak the local language. If a student is studying in the United States and does not speak English, not only will they have trouble learning in classes, but they will not experience an adjustment to that culture.

English proficiency

International students' English proficiency can vary based upon what country a student is coming from, how English language is viewed in the home culture, and how it was taught in school. English proficiency can be a major aspect of a student being admitted into a college in the United States. Many schools are requiring a Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), or an International English Language Testing System (IELTS) scores in order to receive an admission to the college. These tests are put in place in order to ensure that a student will be able to take and understand courses taught in English. (IELTS TOEFL, 2020)

While English does help students succeed in their classes in the United States, how does it affect students adjusting in their personal lives? Poyrazli et al. (2004) looked at how stress can deteriorate a students' health and found that English proficiency does affect how a student adjusts. "Results indicated… that students with higher levels of English proficiency and social support tended to experience lower levels of acculturative stress" (Poyrazli et al., 2004, p. 79). It seems that if students have a higher level of English proficiency they are more likely to feel less stress in adjusting to life in the United States.

Yeh (2003) studied this phenomenon and found similar results:

According to our results, self-reported English language fluency was a significant predictor of acculturative distress. Specifically, higher frequency of use, fluency level, and the degree to which participants felt comfortable speaking English, predicted lower levels of acculturative distress among international students in our sample. (p 23)

Yeh also made an interesting conclusion based upon the results of the study. "We believe this finding is associated with the fact that higher English fluency may be related to smoother interactions with majority group members" (Yeh, 2003, p. 23). They proposed that students who

were able to speak English were able to identify more with the culture of the United States, and those who did not, from Asia, Africa and Latin/Central America, were unable to click with the culture as well. "English language is also inextricably linked with culture. Perhaps relatedly, our results also indicate that European international students were significantly less likely to experience acculturative distress than were students from the geographic regions of Asia, Africa and Latin/Central America" (Yeh, 2003, p. 23). It can be extrapolated from this idea that even if a student has a high English proficiency, they still may have difficulty in their acculturation process. It may not only be English proficiency that is playing a role here, but also stark differences between cultures. If a student is having trouble finding a social group to connect with, even with their English proficiency, they will have a more difficult time with their adjustment processes.

Andrade (2006), also looked at a student's English proficiency levels in their demographics section, but also addressed the reasoning for using this demographic. Andrade theorized that a student who has a higher English proficiency will be able to adjust to life in the United States faster and easier than students with a lower English proficiency. United States is oriented toward English speakers. A student who has a good support system in the United States will have an easier time adjusting to life away from their country of origin.

English proficiency has a large role to play in helping students adjust to life in the United States. It not only helps students feel more connected to the culture that they are living in, but it may also help students find social groups, which are also vital for students' adjustment. Poyrazli, et al. (2004) found that "Results indicated that English proficiency and social support did uniquely contribute to the variance in students' acculturative stress" (p 79). But not all social groups are made equal. Poyrazli et al. (2004) found that "International students who socialized

primarily with other international students tended to experience poorer adjustment outcomes" (p 74). They also suggested that "international students' ability to achieve their academic goals… is significantly influenced by the nature of their interactions with members of the host culture" (Poyrazli, 2004, p. 74). Yeh (2003) found much the same result from their study. "We found that social connectedness and social support network satisfaction were both significant predictors of acculturative distress" (Yeh, 2003, p. 23). If a student was not well connected with social groups, or if they were well connected but were not satisfied with the group, they were more likely to feel unfulfilled with their acculturation.

Theories

Theories are necessary to put into context how humans interact and develop, both with each other and on their own. The theories focused on during this study were developmental theories that may impact student transitions to both higher education and to the United States. For this reason, three theories were reviewed that reflect on the transition needs of students. The theories included for review are Social Cognitive Theory, Critical Race Theory and Acculturation Theory. All of these theories address different aspects of the lives of the international students I interviewed.

Social cognitive theory

Social cognitive theory is the theory of how a person looks at themselves and how they define who they are. This theory is used in communication professions as well as in educational settings. Chang (2016) defined social cognitive theory as "Social cognitive theory... takes cultural diversity into account and puts the interaction between personal factors (e.g. Self-efficacy, outcome expectation, personal goal) and contextual factors (e.g. barriers, support) into the model" (p. 46). Chang (2016) believed that in order to look at international students, theorists

need to not only look at how people self-determine, but also what outside factors influence them to do so. Chang believed that it is "critical for researchers to know more about how different types of self-efficacy influence individuals' satisfaction in different domains. For this Chang looked to self-determination theory. Social cognitive theory defines self-determination theory (SDT) as:

> SDT articulates a meta-theory for framing motivational studies, a formal theory that defines intrinsic and varied extrinsic sources of motivation, and a description of the respective roles of intrinsic and types of extrinsic motivation in cognitive and social development and in individual differences". (2019, par 2)

As Chang adamantly stated throughout the process of the study, it is important to know what outside factors are influencing international students. If a student is unhappy with their support group it can affect how they perceive their satisfaction with their academics, friends, personal life, and other relationships.

Critical Race Theory

When looking at the hurdles facing international students today, it is important to also examine race. Race can be a determining factor that determines group affiliation. Most midsized universities have clubs and groups dedicated to not only international students, but specific racial groups within the campus community. Critical Race Theory is the theory that people of color are affected in their everyday lives by race and race discrimination. Theorists of Critical Race Theory include things like "progressive political struggles for racial justice with critiques of the conventional legal and scholarly norms which are themselves viewed as part of the illegitimate hierarchies that need to be changed (https://cyber.harvard.edu/bridge/CriticalTheory/critical4.htm, para 1)" in the theory. Critical

Race Theory has roots in social sciences studies, with theorists looking at society and the culture people inhabit. Focusing on Black African international students can give a unique insight into this theory. Mwaura (2018) noted that this theory was particularly interesting to their own study "These theoretical approaches were relevant to this study since they explicitly attend to culture, ethnicity, race, class, and gender that affect Black African international students in the United States system of higher education" (p. 2). Critical Race theory can apply not only to Black African International students, but for the purpose of this study it will be focusing on that population specifically.

Acculturation Theory

Mwaura (2018) not only looked into Critical Race theory, but also Acculturation Theory. Acculturation Theory focuses on how a student adjusts to life in their new culture from the perspective of psychology. There are multiple paths that a student can take while they are adjusting, and thus there are many outcomes that are possible within this theory. According to Celenk & van de Vijver (2011), acculturation is defined as "the process of cultural change that occurs when individuals from different cultural backgrounds come into prolonged, continuous, first-hand contact with each other" (p 1). Because people have so many facets to their life, it is often difficult to determine how much their outside interactions are affecting how they are acculturating. Celenk and van de Vijver created a model to help better predict how a student will acculturate to a new culture and how that will affect the outcome. The model showed that first a student has certain conditions need to be present. These conditions are "Characteristics or the receiving society, characteristics of the society of origin, characteristics of the immigrant group, perceived inter-group relations, and personal characteristics" (Celenk & van de Vijver, 2011, p. 1). Next is the choice a student must make which is either adopting the current culture or

continue with their own culture. Finally, are the outcomes. The outcomes also have certain

conditions that can either all or some be present. "Psychological well-being, socialcultural

competence in ethnic culture, and sociocultural competence in mainstream culture" (Celenk &

van de Vijver, 2011, p. 2). These outcomes can depend on what acculturation conditions were

present, and how much a student decided to adopt their current culture. These conditions and

outcomes can be seen in Figure 1.

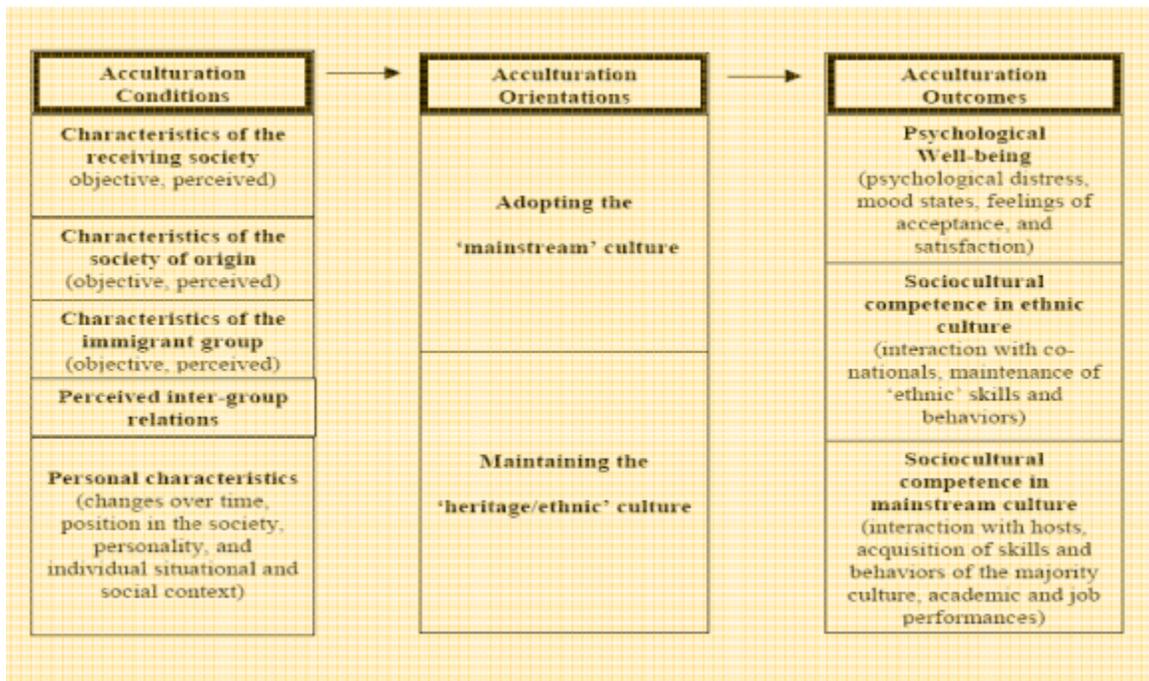| Acculturation Conditions	Acculturation Orientations	Acculturation Outcomes
Characteristics of the receiving society objective, perceived)		Psychological Well-being (psychological distress, mood states, feelings of acceptance, and satisfaction)
Characteristics of the society of origin (objective, perceived)	Adopting the 'mainstream' culture	
Characteristics of the immigrant group (objective, perceived)		Sociocultural competence in ethnic culture (interaction with co-nationals, maintenance of 'ethnic' skills and behaviors)
Perceived inter-group relations		
Personal characteristics (changes over time, position in the society, personality, and individual situational and social context)	Maintaining the 'heritage/ethnic' culture	Sociocultural competence in mainstream culture (interaction with hosts, acquisition of skills and behaviors of the majority culture, academic and job performances)

Figure 1. (Celenk & van de Vijver, 2011 p 2).

Chapter 3

Method

The United States hosted 24% of the total international students studying abroad in 2017 (Zong and Batalova, para. 1). Based on these numbers, it is not surprising that student affairs professionals can see the importance of understanding the difficulties that international students experience. These international students make up a large amount of our college population, and they go through their own unique experiences. Because of these unique difficulties, the need to take special steps in selection of respondents, research, and data collection is important.

Design of the Study

The nature of the study was a qualitative semi-structured study. I conducted individual one-on-one interviews in a private setting. These interviews were recorded, and transcribed the interviews while making efforts to code the identity of the interviewees so as to keep them anonymous. As a qualitative study I hoped to find in-depth answers to the research questions, ultimately trying to get honest and open answers from the interviewees. A qualitative study is the best method to get at the heart of those answers according to Almeida, Faria, & Queirós (2017). They found that qualitative research puts the researcher in the "internal point of view" (p. 371) when conducting the study, and that is the type of in-depth analysis that is needed for this sensitive topic. Almeida et al., found that with an interview a researcher can spend more time with their participants, and thus can receive a more expansive and complex answer from the participant than one would get with quantitative data collection.

Participant Sample Model

The study utilized purposeful convenience sampling in order to achieve the desired sample. Because the study focused on a small part of a larger population that is readily available

to myself, the participants will be able to be selected individually. This is necessary because of the narrowness of the study itself. The desired participants are Black African graduate level international students. This of course reduced the participant pool, and so I used purposeful sampling to pick those who participated in the study.

Participants/Sample

I selected students who met the criteria of the study parameters. Black African international graduate students have a unique experience, and the researcher sought to find out and make sense of their transitional experiences. This population was chosen specifically because there have been few studies about this particular population of students, and it is important to recognize that they go through unique challenges. The population is also a minority among the overall international student population at the particular university being studied.

Participant 1: First year graduate level student from Angola.

Participant 2: First year graduate level student from Ghana.

Participant 3: Second year graduate level student from Cameroon.

Participant 4: First year graduate level student from Nigeria.

Participant 5: Second year graduate level student from Ghana.

Site

The site of the study will be a mid-western midsized university. The university is located in a rural town, with one office aimed at specifically helping international students. The international student population currently makes up 1.7% of the graduate level students. International students on campus have the opportunity to join multiple registered student organizations, intramural sports, and to visit the nearest international food stores, 50 miles away from campus. The campus itself is situated in a midsized town for the area, and the town itself is

surrounded by farm fields on all sides. This university is valuable to look at as the international student population is a minority, not only in the college, but also among the population of the city itself.

Research Instrument

The responses were gathered using interpersonal one-on-one interviews in a private setting. The questions followed the general outline of the research questions, but more pre-determined protocol questions were used along with active listening shape the discussion.

Data Collection

The data itself were gathered by giving one-one-one interviews with the participants. The interviews were transcribed and the identifiers within the interviews were modified to ensure participants anonymity. These interviews were then processed, and the themes were taken from the responses to those interviews.

Treatment of Data

I conducted interviews that were both audio and video recorded. The interviews took place in a private setting. The recorded interviews were kept on a flash drive that only the researcher and the thesis advisor have access to. Transcripts made of the data were kept on a password protected computer with access limited to the research. The data and audio and video recordings will be deleted after three years, following the IRB policy. All of these policies are to ensure the privacy and anonymity of the participants.

Data Analysis

I transcribed the interviews from the flash drive. After transcription, the notes were organized via data sets on a spreadsheet, to see if there were any obvious themes or similar

answers from the participants. The data was then be sorted with the appropriate guidelines, which were dependent on the types of themes that are present in the transcriptions.

Summary

The research utilized qualitative methodology to collect the data. The interview questions were designed to get to answer the research questions. The interviews were conducted using a purposeful and convenient sampling techniques within the Black African graduate level international student population at a midsized midlevel university. The participants were interviewed using a semi-structured design. The data was collected and coded in order to discover themes while maintaining the anonymity of the participants.

Chapter IV

Results

This chapter focuses on summarizing the qualitative research that was completed in an effort to see how graduate level black African students adjust to life in the United States. This chapter will focus on the themes that were found during the evaluation of the interviews done. There were five participants that were interviewed for this study. The results are representative of those five participants and their experiences in higher education in the United States.

Research Question #1: What are black African graduate students' experiences in their transition to a midsized mid-western public institution?

This research question received two separate themes among the five participants. The participants discussed how they found different support groups once they arrived, how those groups have developed throughout their time here, and how religion has helped them adjust.

Support Groups

All five participants talked about the development of social support groups that they made during their time in the United States. These support groups came in many shapes or sizes, made up of both international students and non-international individuals. Participant Five talked about how they felt about the social group that they have joined, and how it made them feel connected:

> So, I call it my "second family" here. So, I'm pretty much used to them, we call ourselves family, even when I'm at home with my uncle they ask "Where are you?" I'm like "I'm home, with my uncle". Yea, I have my own here. They are my support group, so when I feel sad or homesick, I have a group of people I know I can hang out with.

This sentiment was shared among the other participants in varying degrees. Participant 1 and Participant 2 both defined their social groups as being made up solely of other international students. Both mentioned that the groups were not made up of other Africans, but an amalgamation of students from different countries. For example, Participant 1 meets with students who play soccer, and mentioned that there were students from almost every continent. "Except American students, everybody else loves soccer. Most people come to play, people from Asia, Africa, Europe, and South America. We don't have really Americans, what's up with American's? Where is your soccer?" Participant 2 talked about how he met with mostly other international students and got most of his knowledge of Americans from his one American coworker.

Participants 3 and 4 had different experiences, however. When asked if the group was made up of international students, Participant 3 said laughing "No, no. They are domestic, they are as white as you". The group that she found was a solid support group made up of non-international people, specifically people outside of the college. Meanwhile Participant 4 found himself orbiting a group of mostly African students. He said and his friends would hang out at "Nigerian parties", called that since he and most attending were from Nigeria. Though, "There was a couple of guys from Zimbabwe, Cameroon too came".

Religion

One theme that occurred during the interviews was religion. Each participant brought up the topic of religion unprompted, revealing a side of transition that African students struggle with. Of the five participants, two talked about either losing their faith at one point or struggling to find the right church for them. All participants self-identified themselves as Christians, and all

spoke passionately about their experiences in religion. Participant 2 was the first to speak about

how excited they were about finding a church in their new area saying:

> First off, [Name] Catholic church, they've been very supportive to international
>
> students. Their doors are always open. Whenever you need to go get groceries, or
>
> whenever you need somebody to talk about the Christian life, I will also say, [Name]
>
> Campus Ministries, they've been super supportive to international students.

He was excited about how quickly the local church had integrated international students

into the congregation. It is true the [Name] Catholic Church in particular works closely with the

community's International Office, providing food and shelter during orientation week.

Participant 2 also spoke about how exciting he found the fact he could go wherever he wanted

for worship, and that his friends could go wherever they needed to as well:

> I have good friends who are Indians, and I've approached them and go to their place, and
>
> they've shown me their gods, we talk about religion, you know, culture and stuff like
>
> that, so, on campus, I have a better support group when it comes to faith…(cont.)
>
> Well, back home we are super religious. Super. But, here, it is based on you as an
>
> individual. But back home it is just a societal thing. But here, individualism. You believe
>
> it objectively. There is no pressure to be religious, you're free to open up a bit.

Participant 3 spoke about how close she became with a family in the congregation, going so far

as to call them her own family during her time here:

> So, there's a couple at church and the man said to my sister "You are my daughter" I'm
>
> not their daughter. And a few months after the wife said "Honey, they are leaving us out
>
> of the picture, do you want to be my daughter?" And I was like "yea" and she turned to

her husband and she was like "But she's my daughter, she's not yours." So, we have this kind of family.

These types of connections with the churches were very important to the participants, often coming up when participants were asked about what connections they had in the United States. Participant 5 actually brought up her congregation when asked what type of support groups she relies on, going so far as to call them her "second family". She was happy to talk to the interviewer about her congregation and mentioned how much she tells other people about her church family.

The other two participants have not had these types of experiences here in the United States. Participant 1 would like to have a church to go to but says that he has not settled on one in the area. He also mentioned that he has been searching for one, but none of them have felt right to him yet. He said that "church was a big part of my life back home" but now he feels a disconnect with that part of his life here. Participant 4 spoke about how he used to be a religious person earlier on in his life. He also compared the type of enjoyment he got out of his classes to the type of enjoyment he used to get from his beliefs:

> I mean like, I told someone that I am not, I used to be Christian I used to gather, I don't do that anymore. But when I was a kid I was going to church, there was sanity, there were things the preachers were saying that made sense, and now it doesn't make sense anymore. And I told someone that I've not, it's been a long time that I've heard someone talk sense like that that I heard in that leadership class.

When looking at religion in relation to the participants, each of them brought up the topic when asked about feeling like they belonged somewhere. All felt at one point in their life that their beliefs helped them connect with their surroundings. Even the participant who is no longer

religious used religion as a way to view his acculturation to the new environment that he found himself in. This type of mechanism the participants used to adjust to the United States was unforeseen, but fascinating.

Research Question #2: What techniques, if any, have black African graduate students utilized during their transitional period?

When asked about how they coped with homesickness that accompanies living in the United States for the first time, there were two themes that emerged. The participants seem to take the initiative in trying to adjust and deal with homesickness on their own, but whether those methods were realistically available to them is another matter.

Calling Home

The most viable method of dealing with their homesickness was contacting people in their home country. Most participants discovered that calling family members reduced their loneliness, and so they called as needed. Participant 1 noted that he contacted his family every day. "It's either through phone, calling home, calling my mom and dad, texting them constantly. My brother, we talk almost every weekend and sometimes throughout the week… my relationship (with his brother) is very important to me, and we make sure we connect, and talk, we pray together." Participants talked about how important it was for them to stay in contact with their family, and how hard that can be when their family is such an enormous distance away from them. The average time difference for the students and their family was about 6 hours. Participant 1 said that this could sometimes cause a chasm in his communications. If he wanted to call and speak to them instead of texting he would wait until the weekend. Usually when he had time off from classes and it was already night-time in his home country. "I'm not dying, so, let my family sleep" was the motto for him until the weekend when he could call during the day.

Participant 3 also discussed briefly that she had a group chat with various family members back in Africa. They keep each other updated in a constant stream, everyone in the same group text.

Participant 5 had a different experience from the others and acknowledged this herself. Participant 5 had family in a city about 3 hours away. So, when she got homesick, she would go to see them instead of calling or messaging the rest of the family in Africa. "If you're an international student who doesn't have any family at all in the U.S., it gives you a different kind of experience. As opposed to someone who has an uncle or an auntie or a distant relative." She said before the family was there, she would often get more homesick during the school breaks when there was no one on campus and she was alone. During those times she would call and text the family in Africa, like the other participants discussed doing. But now during breaks she goes and visits her family in the city instead, and that has reduced her calls and communications with her family still in Africa.

This type of communication can be costly when the participants are in different countries. Some of the methods that are used to keep costs down include online applications or phone apps that use the internet instead of phone data. Participants 1, Participant 3, and Participant 5 all mentioned the app WhatsApp in relation to their contact. WhatsApp is a free app for the computer and phone that uses the internet to send messages and calls. "WhatsApp has been the go-to app" said Participant 1, who uses that the most with his family in lieu of other forms of contact. In today's modern times students are using the technology they have to keep homesickness at bay.

Food Acquisition

Due to the lack of representation in small communities, like the one the participants live in, it is often hard to find food that is not the "traditional" American cuisine. If you do find food

from other cultures, it has often been "Americanized" in some way, i.e. fast food. International students make up a minority population in the area, and African students are part of an even smaller minority within the international student population. They are unlikely to find any sort of fast food shop that has their favorite food. The college community area does have some "non-American" restaurants, such as Thai, Chinese, Japanese, and Mexican restaurants, but no African ones. So instead the students who do want to have their cultural food in their diet have to make it themselves or go without.

Food is often a cultural cornerstone, one that can provide a comfort for people who find themselves homesick. Participant 3 talked about how she and her sister would save food for months so that when they were feeling upset, they would have something to eat to comfort themselves with.

> This is like treasure you don't eat it all the time. You put it in the fridge, in the freezer, really at the back and then you eat. And so, I had a whole freezer just for Cameroon food to be sure that it was you know, froze. To be sure that we could keep it for a long time. She'd (her mother) be like "it's not been eaten, it's not nutritious anymore" and we don't care we just want the taste.

Participant 3 talked about how the most accurate-to-home food that her and her sister had was food sent to them from family members. She used to receive food via mail from her mother in Cameroon and brought home food from a "Holy Days" feast she attended in a nearby large city with her family. Participant 5 had a similar situation; she has family in the nearby city who she goes to for comfort as well as food from home.

> I was really struggling with most was the food, so I always try to like, get something from Walmart, and this was freshman year, I didn't have a car, depending on the shuttle,

that kind of thing, trying to find a bit of home in Walmart to make something that you

can eat. That was the struggle, and I'm living off campus today, so that's good now. But,

for me, outside of school times during the break, I go to be with my uncle and auntie and

little cousins, so that helps me feel ok during breaks.

These two participants both spoke about how important it was that they had some sort of family

nearby because they were receiving food from them.

As Participant 5 stated above, she did try to create her own version of her cultural food

from American ingredients. Later on, she spoke about how that experiment went.

Walmart doesn't have the spices, at all. So, and the funny joke we always say is, even if

you find the right ingredients to find Ghanian food in the U.S. it still doesn't taste like

home. So, you just have to compromise. Because, we as internationals we recognize the

huge distinction in taste in food, we even make this joke like "chicken doesn't taste like

chicken in the U.S." Seriously! Even bananas! I remember once a Nigerian girl was

telling me that the bananas taste like chemicals, this is not real fruit. Things are different

based on how they were grown. So even if you cook it with all the ingredients that you

find, it still doesn't taste like home, with all the flavors and the smells and it's a

compromise.

Like Participant 5, all of the other participants tried to make traditional meals from their home

countries, to varying degrees of success. Participant 1 spoke of how the quality and accuracy of

the meal would depend on where you went shopping and how much you spent on ingredients.

"Some of my favorite food is almost absolutely impossible to find here, and if there is, anywhere

to find it, I'm sure it will be very, very expensive because they need to be imported." As

Participant 5 noted, one of the only places in the nearby area the students have access to for food

is a local Walmart, and that does not have a lot of the specific ingredients for African food. Participant 3 found the suggestion that she could make accurate African style food laughable when asked.

Interestingly enough, two of the five participants were very adamant that the food that they created on their own were accurate representations of home. Participant 2 was very excited about his recreation of peanut soup he likes to share with others. "I've not seen something close to what I have back home, but I will take the ingredients here and try to make things from Africa and make it here." He was surprised about how good it came out and was happy to speak about his success. Participant 4 has also found success but suspects that is because of where he does his shopping.

> I have a younger brother here, he's going to here too, so basically he goes to Chicago almost every weekend. He has a girlfriend there too. I think there are African stores there so you can buy food there so some stuff I bought from last year I still have. So, I make the food and I eat the African. Not closest to (the African food), I mean the same.

He was adamant that his food was exactly the same as what he could find back home. Participant 4 was so happy about his results that he had a number of photos of the food on his phone and pulled them up to show during the interview.

Research Question #3: Do the transition issues that college graduate level black African students face change over time?

As students evolve during their time at college their stumbling blocks begin to shift and change with them. Two different themes emerged when looking at this type of shift, how the students' perspectives of the United States changed, and a growing feeling of being different from everyone around them.

Shifting Perspectives

When living in the United States it sometimes can be hard to tell how the media portrays the country to the outside world. This media effects how people living outside of the U.S. see us and how we live. This perspective is often challenged when people travel to the U.S. and see what it is like to live there. It is no different for international students travelling to study in the U.S. All five participants spoke about how they had been influenced by the U.S. media and how that changed when they arrived in the U.S. to study. Some participants felt that the media had let them down, somewhat disappointed by the state of the country. Others were pleasantly surprised by the people that they met.

Of the participants that found the U.S. lacking was Participant 1. He said that most of his outlook came from Hollywood.

I think the U.S. does a very good job of hiding it's mishaps by the type of movie it puts internationally… In general, my understanding of the U.S. before coming to the U.S. was that it was like Hollywood or Silicon Valley or New York, and that's it. There wasn't nothing in between. Everything was tall building, skyscrapers, and life was amazing. But living in the US is a completely different story. There are some issues that people outside of the US are not aware of, and people inside of the US are less aware of. I used to think Americans were very smart, this is not an insult, but the general or average American seems to be very less much less… to put it in a nicer way, it's very disappointing to comes to the US, a country that tends to brag about being the best in the world and find people to be very uneducated and less intellectually challenging. See a lot of people don't really think in a constructive or political way, and there's so many social issues that just, you know, it just makes my jaw to drop. Just like, what?!

Participant 4 had a similar outlook on the U.S. that was based on Hollywood stereotypes. "I mean you watch American movies, and it's like, American people are very friendly." Both he and Participant 1 seemed to have a very positive outlook on the U.S. that was informed by the media and Hollywood, but when they arrived their perspectives changed. The U.S. was not as glamorous or friendly as what they were expecting, and soon they became disenchanted with the country they had travelled to. Similarly, Participant 5 had her outlook influenced in a positive way when she was in her home country. But unlike Participants 1 and 4, Participant 5 saw some of the less attractive sides of the U.S. and found herself understanding the country more.

> I start going on field trips for geology and I get to see places in Pennsylvania, like this whole mining area, where it looks like this really, really poor place that looks just like so many poor places in Ghana. So that exposure really broadened my horizons and made me see that. So, there are actually places that look like anywhere else in the world. Not everywhere is perfect, at all. So, I was glad to have that exposure.

Participant 5 found that her perspective of the U.S. made the place more real. Instead of having an idealized version of it, holding the U.S. on a pedestal, she realized that in a lot of ways the U.S. is just like every other country. As she says "Not everywhere is perfect."

The other two participants, Participant 2 and Participant 3, found that they also had a sort false idea of the U.S., just in the opposite direction. Participant 2 said that he used to say "Oh they (U.S. citizens) are not welcoming, so once they are in Africa they become welcoming. But when I came here, my view changed 360 Degrees. I said, wow, these people are very, very welcoming." He and his friends even joke now that "once you are in this country, the likelihood of you going to heaven is high." Similarly, Participant 3 says that she and her friends now tell people to study in the U.S. instead of warning them away like she did in the past. To her and her

friends back home the U.S. was very self-centered. "I met other people who were just like, "Me, myself, and I, us American". And I was like, Ugh, "My god this is not the only country in the world." It took meeting an American while she was studying in the U.K. to change her mind and give the U.S. a chance. And from what she said in the interview, she is so glad she did.

Feeling Othered

In this study there was one particular aspect that occurred with two of the participants. Both expressed discomfort about the views that they held, but both felt it necessary to talk about their experiences with the African American community that was on campus. It is important to note that both students spoke about a feeling of misunderstanding when they approached and interacted with the community on campus, and both felt that they had been let down in some way.

Participant 4 was disappointed that there was a lack of interaction between African international students and African-American people on campus. He spoke about how rude the African-American women were to him and his African peers, "the African-American females, like nine and a half of them out of ten, I mean the only way I can describe it is they're rude." At one point, Participant 4 became so passionate and animated about this perception that he began hitting the table in frustration. This type of interaction was completely unexpected to him, and it hurt him to the point that he and his friends now actively tell people in his home country not to interact with African-Americans when they arrive to the U.S.

> Right now, I tell people, I've been telling people, and I'm going to tell many other
> people, I mean I'll say "Avoid the African Americans" that's what a lot of the Africans
> are starting to say. Avoid the African Americans, especially the females. They are rude, I
> don't know what they're problem is, it's *makes crazy motion to head*, it boggles me. I

mean I feel really bad. You know you say hi to someone and the person is ignoring you? You're walking with someone, and this African-American girl was walking home, and they wouldn't even say hello! And their body language is "Don't even bother". I don't know. I don't know what their problem is.

It seems that a lot of the hurt stemmed from a type of rejection that Participant 4 felt, not only on a social level, but on a deeper personal one as well. Participant 4 spoke of how he expected to fit in and get along with the African-American community on campus and was deeply hurt when that did not happen. "You know you come in and see a black person and say, "Ok this person is a brother, this person is a sister, this is someone from Africa"" but it seems that they are not, and that cognitive dissonance that occurs because of this is distressing to both him and the other participant who spoke about it.

Participant 4 was first to bring up police brutality against black individuals. He had strong opinions about the realities of black individuals and spoke about his experience and feelings during the interview.

You know these issues you read about them (African Americans) being marginalized in America, but I have the impression they are part of the problem or something. If you feel like you are a victim all the time and you let that, I mean, take for example, let's talk about police and racial profiling. I've watched a lot of videos of policemen stopping African Americans. And even I would think it was as simple as just, comply with whatever, if the policeman wants an ID, even if he is racially profiling you, why not just do it? I mean, why does he ask for your ID and the next thing you go ballistic "You're racially profiling me", he has a gun, so why not just save yourself and just *motions as if handing an ID* "Ok, here is my ID" and then get out of there. But, they escalate things,

you know like? I mean, if a policeman stops me *motions as if handing an ID*, if I have

done nothing wrong then I do everything I need to do to get going.

As with the issues he spoke about earlier, Participant 4 was very animated and passionate as he

spoke about the topic at hand. As stated before, Participant 4 brought up this topic on his own

during questions about surprises of adjustment to the U.S. As he spoke it was very evident that

Participant 4 did not identify himself as "African American", but instead as "black" and those

two things are very different, both in definition and in his personal opinion.

Participant 5 was intimately aware of the Black Live Matter movement that occurred both

globally and on campus while these interviews took place, "That's been the changes I've

seen…the whole "Black Lives Matter" thing started." When she referred to the movement as

"the whole Black Lives Matter thing" I asked if that was a sentiment she could relate to. In

response participant 5 said the following:

Yea. For me, I don't know, I don't know if it's just the fact that I'm straight up from

Africa? I mean I didn't grow up here, so I didn't get the whole, African American

experience, but I've met a variety of African American students. I've met people who are

well learned, and all, and I actually realized that they act a little differently from people

who come straight up from, like for example, South Side of Chicago in how they

approach life. And I've seen one thing that I honestly don't agree with, this whole

attitude of like, they're being oppressed, being oppressed people, that kind of thing. I

mean I understand it, I've had that experience, the racist experience I had, it made me

pull away from everyone, so I understand what it feels like. But, for me as a person, and

my values, I just believe in the fact that you should not allow what other people say about

you influence your perspective in life or how you even approach life, or just your general

attitude. If they think that you're black, you're black so that makes you less of a human

being, that's their own opinion, that's not you. So just keep going with life, and just keep

doing you, and just, yea. But, I just see this whole attitude of we're oppressed, so we need

to talk about it, and feel like, yes, we are oppressed and go on this whole propaganda

"Black Lives Matter" what that kind of thing. And I understand. The police in Chicago,

the cops and all shooting, yea, it's not nice, but. Also, there's this other side of I wish

they would let go of that mentality and just keep doing life and forget if their being called

not even human just cause you're black, let it go, just move on with life. Because at the

same time, President Obama got to be president! So, what's the difference between you

and him? We're both black so it all depends on your own mentality and where you want

to be in life. And not allowing anyone to talk down to you. So, yea, that's what I think

about it.

Participant 5 expressed the opinion that oppression is all about the mentality of the people who

are being oppressed. She was against the Black Lives Matter movement as a whole, going so far

as to call the protests and the anger against policy brutality "propaganda". Participant 5 has been

in the U.S. about 5 years at this point, and has witnessed many things during that time. She has

experienced a racially motivated moment and has been profiled by individuals in the area

because of her race. But she has also seen the Black Lives Matter movement begin and expand

during that time, and as a whole she does not agree with it. She also took a moment to express a

phenomenon that she has experienced personally, a rift she sees between African international

students and African-American students.

Yea. Cause when I came, I wasn't hearing about Black Lives Matter, and then I started

hearing it, especially from the news from Chicago. And then I started seeing it on

campus. And for me I just see it as, I don't know if I sometimes have a different experience in the U.S. because I'm really from Africa? Because when I came, I had this notion that, I got to know that, sometimes there is this feud between African Americans and Real Africans. Because the African-Americans feel like the Americans like Real Africans more than them because we are the "true deal" *air quotes*. And we usually do better in school, and we get better jobs, that's what I heard. I don't know if I can say it's true or not, some ways I would say maybe, I don't know. But, when I came, I realized that in my freshman year in the halls, there were some African-American girls, but I never clicked with them at all. The African American girls that I could relate to and all, I usually met them in church and stuff. And, for them, the ones that I met in my hall, I know that our ways of life seem pretty different, even the way we talk. They'll consider someone like me as "proper" *air quotes* because I speak English, and this is the way I talk back home in Ghana, so I was like hearing a different type of English being spoken by African Americans as opposed to Americans. And you see some African Americans who speak like I'm speaking right now, so it's like what's this whole extension? That kind of thing. I don't know. Yea, and I never could click with them, sometimes I feel like when immediately they realize that I'm speaking like this, that whole fashion of "Oh you think you're proper?" that kind of thing.

This rift has obviously affected Participant 5 deeply, and it would seem, is starting to weigh on Participant 4 as well. These two students came to the United States hoping to connect in some way to the African-American students but found themselves struggling to maintain that connection once they arrived. Both participants were very passionate about the topic and expressed confusion and upset about the disconnect that they were feeling. It was something that

they had not expected, but had affected them in a real way. This topic came up during the questioning of what the students observed to have changed during their time in the United States. The other three participants focused solely on how their perspectives of the U.S. had changed, none of three mentioned having an opinion of the Black Lives Matter movement nor the police brutality issues that the other two did.

Chapter V

Throughout the course of this research a qualitative methodology was used. This method was selected in order to explore the experiences of the individuals in an effort to more fully understand the outlook and mindset Black African graduate level international students have. There were five international students who identified themselves as being black and studying at a graduate level in college. There was an effort to answer the following questions: 1) What are black African graduate students' experiences in their transition to a midsized mid-western public institution? 2) What techniques, if any, have black African graduate students utilized during their transitional period? 3) Do the issues that graduate level black African students face in transitioning change over time? Chapter V looks at the findings of the study in relation to the information in the literature review, what recommendations can be made for student affairs professionals, and recommendations for further research into this topic.

Discussion of Findings

Chapter IV posited three research questions, and there were two themes that presented themselves to each question. Within the first research question (What are black African graduate students' experiences in their transition to a midsized mid-western public institution?), two themes emerged: "finding support groups" and "how their religion helped them adjust". Under research question two (What techniques, if any, have black African graduate students utilized during their transitional period?), two themes emerged which were "calling home" and "food acquisition". The final research question (Do the transition issues that graduate level black African students face change over time?) revealed two themes: "shifting perspectives" and "feeling othered".

Research Question 1: What are black African graduate students' experiences in their transition to a midsized mid-western public institution?

Transitioning to college can be difficult. International students not only have to deal with the issues domestic students face such as roommate conflict, adjusting from high school to college, etc., but they have additional roadblocks to overcome. Constantine et al. (2005) noted that international students also often combat homesickness, culture shock, and discrimination from domestic students. This first question was in place in an effort to see what specific issues, if any, the black graduate level international students from Africa face during the first part of their transition.

Baba and Hosoda (2014) and Constantine et al. (2005) found in their studies that an important adjustment aid is finding a support group. Having someone that the students can turn to and find support, helped international students adjust to life in a new country. Baba and Hosoda (2014) also found that students not only adjusted better, they actually did better academically if they had a support group there for them.

When discussing the transition to life in the United States the participants spoke of the different groups that they began acclimating into. Participant 5 specifically used the term "support group" when speaking about the group they found. These groups were vastly different for each participant, but all found people they felt they belonged with. Participant 1 meets with a sports-oriented group of international students, people from many different countries coming together to play non-collegiate soccer. Participant 2 has a group of other international students as well, gaining his knowledge of domestic students from his American coworker. Participant 3 hangs out with specifically people outside of the college, "They are domestic, they are as white as you." Participant 4 only grouped up with other African students, though the countries were

vast, they all were African students. Finally, Participant 5 has what she calls "a second family" of people she met at church.

All of the participants spoke about how this kind of group, people they could turn to when they needed it, reduced their homesickness by a great degree. They felt that these groups of people would support them, however they needed it. Some of these groups were found within the college, and some were not; both types of groups were effective in the adjustment to the participants.

Participant 5 was one of several participants to mention the importance of religion to adjustment. All of the participants spoke of Christianity, and all spoke about their experiences in their religion as a part of their adjustment. Participants 2, 3, and 5 all spoke about how religion had helped expand their support group. In particular, Participants 3 and 5 called the people they met at church part of their "second family". Participant 3 had people she called her "parents" while Participant 5 spoke about her "uncle". The participants felt so supported by their faith and their congregation that they have developed deep familial bonds. Participants 1 and 4 spoke about religion, but in a different way than the rest. Participant 1 lamented about how he had tried to find an appropriate church in the area to go to but had not found one that had met his needs yet. He wondered aloud why he could not find one and mentioned how important his religion was to him. Participant 4 however, did not speak favorably about religion, saying it was something he used to participate in back in Africa. He spoke about how it used to make him feel, hopeful and inspired, and that he was beginning to get some of those feelings back in some of his classes.

All of the participants spoke up about how they sought out support during their time here in the United States. They felt that this support helped them adjust as well as socialize. These

groups were not limited to classroom groups or groups of friends but included people from outside of the college environment. The participants also acknowledged how religion had affected their lives, and how it shaped their stay in the United States.

When looking at the results of the study for research question 1, one can begin to see the participants through social cognitive theory. Some participants already know who they want to be and are seeking out others to come to terms with that self-image. Others are beginning to look at themselves from a new perspective as they adjust to living in the United States. The international students that were interviewed also can be seen through the lens of Self-determination theory. Looking at the outside factors influencing the students, like pre-college religious beliefs, researchers can see how factors not controlled by colleges can affect how a student will feel welcome in their new environment.

Research Question 2: What techniques, if any, have black African graduate students utilized during their transitional period?

The purpose of Research Question 2 was to see what international students did in order to reduce adjustment struggles and homesickness during their stay in the United States. Many studies suggested different ways on cutting down on these difficulties. Gebhard (2012) found that students want to have proper representation in their everyday lives, and often cannot find that. To counteract this feeling, students will seek out things that remind them of home, such as food, posters, banners, country flags, etc. When doing the research two things that impacted the transitional period was lack of culturally known food and being able to contact home.

The participants spoke passionately about their lack of cultural food and how that affected their adjustment to living in the United States. Participant 3 felt the need to save food that was sent over to her from her mother, to the point of buying a special freezer for her

"comfort food". When asked she admitted that these meals were often saved until she was feeling upset or homesick, saying it was like a "treasure" that was to be saved for desperate times. Participant 5 said that her struggle to find cultural food was her biggest setback with getting adjusted. "Trying to find a bit of home in Walmart" was troubling, as they often did not have the right spices or meat for the African dishes. Now she relies on this cultural food from her family in the country she can visit and save the food from. Participant 1 also lamented the lack of proper ingredients in the nearby shops, and if there were ingredients he could acquire, they were expensive because they needed to be imported. Because of this he no longer has what he calls his "favorite food" and spoke in depth about how he missed it.

One aspect that was presented by multiple participants that was unexpected was the ability to cut down on their homesickness by simply calling their families back home. Technology has progressed to the point that now international students can contact their family without the need for a phone or a data plan, they simply get on the internet and send messages. Limited research has been done taking into account the advances in technology, and so it was an unexpected element the participants brought to the discussion.

Participant 1 spoke of how he contacts his family every day through texting and online applications, such as WhatsApp. This was best for him, and other participants who stated it helped with monetary expenses. WhatsApp is an application that can be used on the computer, or phone on WiFi, and runs like a normal phone program. Users can text or call, join group messages, send photos, and even receive links to websites. Participant 3 said that her family back home in Africa has a huge group chat, everyone uses it and they have a constant stream of communication at all times so everyone is kept in the loop. Participant 5 used to rely on this form of contact with her family in Africa but has cut down on the use-age now that her family is living

closer. She still spoke about how contacting her family was a technique she used to eliminate her homesickness.

Acculturation theory can be utilized in these situations to look at how these factors affect student adjustment. The students are beginning to adjust from living in one cultural background for the majority of their lives and find themselves in a completely new realm of experiences. Some students believe themselves successful in their acculturation, like the students who are determined to get just the right recipe made correctly, and some are not.

Research Question 3: Do the transition issues that graduate level black African students face change over time?

Research Question 3 was used to see if there were any obstacles that occurred after the initial adjustment phase, obstacles that impacted the students' comfort and making them reassess their place in the United States. While speaking about this question the participants brought up two factors that affected them: "their perspectives of the United States shifting during their stay" and "feeling othered" by aspects of society.

Chang's (2016) study of international students looked at Social Cognitive Theory. Chang looked at how students self-define and found that it can often be affected by the environment that they are in. The Social Cognitive Theory began with self-determination and stated that a person's self-determination can be altered through their experiences, both social and environmental. While travelling people will mentally and emotionally prepare for the environment they are going to, and when that environment is different it creates a cognitive dissonance that can affect the preparedness and confidence of the travelers in themselves and in their new environment.

The United States that is presented to international people can be vastly different from the country itself. Participant 1 noted that before he arrived in the United States, his view was mostly

based on Hollywood. He quickly became dissatisfied with not only the area he was in, but the social environment as well. He was expecting to find people living in cities like New York or Hollywood, both of which are hugely different from the midsized, mid-western town he was in. As far as the people, "it's very disappointing to come to the US, a country that tends to brag about being the best in the world and find people to be very uneducated and less intellectually challenging." While he and Participant 4 felt that they were disappointed in the country they had landed in, Participant 5 found that she was happy to rearrange her ideas of the United States. While she had also been influenced by the media, she found during school trips that the United States was a lot like other countries, and that was ok.

Participants 2 and 3 spoke of how they had been warned away from the United States, not by the media, but by their friends. But upon arriving, both had experiences with unexpectedly friendly people here, who helped them change their minds. Participant 2 said that he and his friends joke about how, "once you are in this country, the likelihood of you going to heaven is high." Participant 3, while not as ecstatic about the country, seemed happy that she was able to have her perceptions of the United States changed once she arrived.

While not every participant openly spoke about feeling "othered", the two that did spoke passionately and in length about the affect it had on them. This particular aspect, feeling out of sync with the African American community, was an upsetting experience for the participants. Both Participants 4 and 5 spoke about how they were expecting to make friends with African-Americans on campus, and either were rejected outright in their attempts, or found that their ideals did not match up with those that they met. It seems that in all attempts that were made, both participants found themselves being rejected by a community that they were hoping to be embraced in. This had a negative outcome on both participants. Participant 4 spoke about how he

now will tell his other African friends, both in the United States and back at home in Africa, not to even speak to African-American girls, and that they are "rude". He also had the opinion that police violence in the United States was often escalated by African-American people themselves. It was soon clear during the interview that Participant 4 feels a gap between the identification of being African-American and black. To him, he is black, and African, and he is not the same as those who are black and African-American.

Participant 5 spoke of the local Black Lives Matter events and protests, and how she did not support them. She even went so far as to say that African-American people, especially those who are not "well learned" have an attitude of "being oppressed" or that they have a mentality of "being oppressed people". She spoke about how African-Americans need to let go of that mentality, "just keep doing life and forget if they're being called not even human just because you're black, let it go, move on with life." Participant 5 also spoke of President Obama, and figured, if he could be black in the United States and become president, then what was the difference between him and all African-Americans in the United States?

Both participants were deeply affected by their perceived slights from the African-American community. Participant 4, when speaking at points, would slap his hands on the table for emphasis. He became upset and angry at the people that he had tried to reach out to in the past. Similarly, Participant 5 became emotional as well, speaking about the struggles she had in making friends with people in a community she'd hoped to be a part of. This aspect was unexpected to the study, but it became apparent that the participants had been deeply affected by it, and as such, needs to be explored in future studies.

I believe that Critical Race Theory would be useful in examining the results of research question 3. Students from Africa often face difficulties that are detailed within the theory, racial

justice, scholarly norms, and hierarchies within society. While Critical Race Theory is usually

used to examine the experiences of African American individuals, students from Africa face

similar struggles when coming to the United States. As detailed above, students may have

reactions different from what is expected of them, and that can cause strain in their relationships

with other people of color on campus.

Recommendations for Student Affairs Professionals

International students are often an overlooked demographic of a university and/or

college. Because of this they can feel underappreciated or ignored by the administration.

International students are a boon to the universities and colleges they attend and may need more

interaction than they are currently receiving from the Student Affairs Professionals in their lives.

The findings indicate that black African graduate level students would benefit from the

following:

1. *Social groups being implemented sooner during orientation:* International students

thrive off of solid support systems during their adjustment. If they have a group that is

established by the college, it could go a long way to helping them with the adjustment.

This idea was supported and suggested by Baba and Hosada (2014) during their study as

well. It is the hope that if a support group is in place the students may continue to utilize

them throughout their college career, or at least go a long way in making the students

more comfortable with interacting with new people during their crucial first few days in a

new environment.

One specific program that could be implemented is a mentorship program. The

Illinois Student American Veterinary Medical Association Chapter (2014) at the

University of Illinois has something they call the AVMA mentor program, where they

pair a second- year student with a first-year student and exchange contact information. All the participants are volunteer students who are eager for the privilege of helping the new students get accustomed to the college. This program has been put into place to give the first-year veterinary students someone they can rely on to talk to, someone they know has experienced the same adjustment just a year before.

2. *Establish days to find and go to shops that stock African food:* One of the biggest topics during the study was the lack of proper food. The participants at the university that was a part of the study spoke about the length and difficulties that came with finding food they were comfortable with. Food is an important cultural touchstone, and often we associate feelings with it. Many students are having to go without food they use for comfort, and this can increase the deep cultural differences they may already be feeling. Taking students (especially if the institution is in a rural area) to the stores that stock culturally relevant food they need can alleviate some of these issues. It can also be beneficial to bring students from different areas in Africa together in their search for culturally relevant food. The students will feel more connected and have a chance to interact more often with each other.

3. *Educate students on differences between black African students and African Americans:* It became clear over the course of the study that two of the students were battling a deeper problem than expected. The participants that spoke about the differences they experienced with the African American community expressed both anger and concern. There was a confusion as to why they did not see eye to eye with the African American community. There needs to be some education for students as well as professionals to counteract, or at least anticipate, the differences that may emerge

between these two communities that are present on campus. This could take form of campus-wide diversity days, having special training sessions during orientations, or working with the college diversity office in an effort to bring the campus community together.

Recommendations for Future Research

If a researcher would conduct this study again, it would be useful to talk more candidly about the differences between African Americans and Black African students. The participants in the study who spoke about this topic began speaking of their own accord about it, first being reserved but soon becoming more passionate. It is worthwhile to see how others would discuss this topic, maybe including the question as a research question would be helpful. This question would dig deeper into the feeling of seclusion and confusion the participants felt from the African American community and give researchers a better sense of why the participants felt this way.

The research would also benefit if done with more participants. As a qualitative study this research aimed to speak in depth to a specific group of students. As a researcher in a midsized, mid-western university, there was not a large sample of students to interview, and the researcher had to rely on word of mouth to gain participants. A larger group of students would give a better representation of the data as there would be a more diverse pool to draw participants from.

Conclusion

This study set out to see what challenges Black African graduate level students have when adjusting to life in the United States. The study found that the participants faced a number of challenges unique to themselves when making that adjustment. While there have been studies done on international students as a whole, Black African students have not been included in a

number of those studies. There were themes that presented themselves throughout the course of the study such as support groups, religious gatherings, calling home, and food acquisition. They were found to help in some way to the majority of the participants. Ongoing challenges the participants faced included shifting perspectives of their surroundings and being "othered" by groups they expected to join.

Higher education can be challenging for everyone, from freshmen to doctoral students and most are going to need help along the way. For some students this help can be easier to find than it is for others. Through no fault of their own, some groups have been left behind or excluded. The Black African graduate level student group has unique challenges in their time at college or university, and unfortunately, they can be easily overlooked by student affairs professionals. At a time when recruiting and retaining international students has become a serious goal of higher education, knowing about the unique challenges these students face will hopefully lead to a better transitional experience and educational outcome.

Reference

ACLU (n.d.). *Speech on campus.* https://www.aclu.org/other/speech-campus

Adjusting to college. (2020). NC State University. Retrieved October 8, 2020 from

      https://counseling.dasa.ncsu.edu/resources/self-help-resources/adjusting-to-college/

Almeida, F., Faria, D. & Queirós, A. (2017). Strengths and limitations of qualitative and

      quantitative research methods. *European Journal of Education Studies*. *3*(9) 369-387.

      DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.887089

Anderson, N. & Svrluga, S. (Nov., 13, 2018) *What's the Trump effect on international*

      enrollment? Report finds new foreign students are dwindling. Retrieved from:

      https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/report-finds-new-foreign-students-are-

      dwindling-renewing-questions-about-possible-trump-effect-on-

      enrollment/2018/11/12/7b1bac92-e68b-11e8-a939-9469f1166f9d_story.html

Andrade, M.S. (2006). International students in English-speaking universities: Adjustment

      factors. *Journal of International Education 5*(2) 131-154. Retrieved from

      https://doi.org/10.1177/1475240906065589

Baba, Y. & Hosoda, M. (2014). Better understanding of the role of social support in predicting

      cross-cultural adjustment among international students. *College Student Journal, 48*(1),

      1-15.

Banda, R. (2018). Changing the things I cannot accept: My African experience of a U.S.

      classroom. *Journal of International Students, 8*(1), 488-495. http://jistudents.org/ doi:

      10.5281/zenodo.1134353

Barta, P., Chen, T-P., Jou, D., McEnaney, C., & Fuller, A. (2015) *How International Students are Changing U.S. Colleges*. Retrieved from: http://graphics.wsj.com/international-students/

Boafo-Arthur, S. (2014). Acculturative experiences of Black-African international students. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling, 36*(N/A), 15-124. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1007/s10447-013-9194-8

Celenk, O. & Van de Vijver, F. (2011). Assessment of acculturation: Issues and overview of measures. *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture, 8*(1) 1-22 Retrieved from https://core.ac.uk/reader/10687090

Chang, W. (2016). *Predictors of international students' socio-cultural adjustment* (Publication No. N/A). [Doctoral dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee]. UWM Digital Commons

Chapdelaine, R. F. & Alexitch, L.R. (2004). Social skills difficulty: Model of culture shock for international graduate students. *Journal of College Student Development 45*(2) 167-184. Retrieved for doi:10.1353/csd.2004.0021.

Chavoshi, S., Wintre, M., Dentakos, S., & Wright, L. (2017). Acculturation motivation in international student adjustment and permanent residency intentions: A mixed-methods approach. *Emerging Adulthood, 5*(1), 27-41. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1177/2167696816643628

Constantine, M. G., Anderson, G. M., Berkel, L. A., Caldwell, L. D., & Utsey, S. O. (2005). Examining the cultural adjustment experiences of African international college students:

A Qualitative Analysis. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, *52*(1), 57–66. https://doi-org.proxy1.library.eiu.edu/10.1037/0022-0167.52.1.57

Why choose the TOEFL test? (2020). ETS TOEFL. Retrieved September 3, 2020 from

https://www.ets.org/toefl/test-takers/ibt/why/

Examples of critical race analysis: Hate speech regulation and legal education. (N/A). The

Bridge. Retrieved November 20, 2019 from

https://cyber.harvard.edu/bridge/CriticalTheory/critical4.htm

Gebhard, J. (2012). International students' adjustment problems and behaviors. *Journal of*

International Students, 2(2), 184-193. Retrieved from

https://jistudents.files.wordpress.com/2011/12/10-international-student-adjustment-

problems.pdf

Hayes, R.L. & Lin, H-R. (1994). Coming to America: Developing social support systems for

international students. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development 22*(1) 7-16.

Retrieved from **https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-1912.1994.tb00238.x**

Illinois Student American Veterinary Medical Association Chapter (2014). *Become an Illinois*

SAVMA (IChapter) member!. Retrieved from https://vetmed.illinois.edu/wp-

content/uploads/2014/04/Class-of-2023-Clinics-Supplies-Order-Form.pdf

Institute of International Education, Inc. (2020). *Economic impact of international students.*

Opendoorsdata.org. Retrieved from https://opendoorsdata.org/services/research-special-

reports-and-analyses/economic-impact-of-international-students/

Lam, L.Y.V. (2017). Life being an international student in the United States: Acculturation,

culture shock, and identity transformation. (Publication No. N/A) [Master's Theses, The

University of San Francisco]. USF Digital Repository, Retrieved from

https://repository.usfca.edu/thes/261/

Lee, J. (2007). Neo-Racism toward international students. *About Campus, 11*(6), 28-30 Retrieved

from https://doi.org/10.1002/abc.194

Mesidor, J.K. & Sly, K. (2016). Factors that contribute to the adjustment of international

students., *Journal of International Students, 6*(1), 262-282. Retrieved from

https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v6i1

Mwangi, G., A, C., Changamire, N., & Mosselson, J. (2018). An intersectional understanding of

African international graduate students' experiences in U.S. higher education. *Journal of*

Diversity in Higher Education 12(1), 52-64. Retrieved from

https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000076

Mwaura, J.N. (2008). *Non-traditional age black African international students' experiences:*

Phenomenological heuristic inquiry. [Conference session]. Adult Education Research

Conference, St. Louis, Mo. https://newprairiepress.org/aerc/2008/papers/44

Olaniran, B. A. (2009). International students' network patterns and cultural stress: What really

counts. *Communication Research Reports 10*(1) 69-83. Retrieved from

https://doi.org/10.1080/08824099309359919

PennState Beaver (2020). *Homesickness*. Retrieved October 8, 2020, from

https://beaver.psu.edu/student-life/counseling/homesickness

Poyrazli, S., Kavanaugh P. R., Baker, A., & Al-Timimi, N. (2004). Social support and

demographic correlates of acculturative stress in international students. *Journal of*

College Counseling 7(1) 73-82. Retrieved from **https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-1882.2004.tb00261.x**

Theory. (2020). CSDT. Retrieved November 20, 2019 from http://selfdeterminationtheory.org/theory/

UNESCO Institute of Statistics (2020). *International (or internationally mobile) students*. Retrieved from http://uis.unesco.org/en/glossary-term/international-or-internationally-mobile-students

University of Virginia (n.d.) *Undergraduate admissions: Detailed Admissions Table* [Interactive Table]. Retrieved October 10, 2019, from https://ira.virginia.edu/university-stats-facts/undergraduate-admissions

University of Washington (2020). *International students and cultural shock.* Retrieved October 8, 2020, from https://www.washington.edu/counseling/resources-for-students/international-students-and-cultural-shock/

Wichita State University (2020). *Domestic vs International students.* Wichita.edu. Retrieved from https://www.wichita.edu/admissions/international/current_students/student_types.php#:~:text=Domestic%20students%20are%20American%20citizens,residents%2C%20refugees%2C%20or%20asylees.

Yeh, C.J. & Inose, M. (2003). International students' reported English fluency, social support satisfaction, and social connectedness as predictors of acculturative stress. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly 16*(1) 15-28. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1080/0951507031000114058

Zong, J. & Batalova, J. (2018, May 9). *International students in the United States in 2017*.

    Migration Policy Institute. Retrieved from

        https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/international-students-united-states-2017

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Consent to Participate in Research

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Black African Graduate Student Adjustment to Living in the United States

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Denver Daniels and Dr. Richard Roberts (faculty sponsor) from the Counseling and Higher Education department at Eastern Illinois University.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Please ask questions about anything you do not understand, before deciding whether or not to participate.

You have been asked to participate in this study because you identify as a black African graduate level student at Eastern Illinois University

- **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The primary purpose of this study will be to study how international students adjust to living in the United States. The techniques that students use to minimize homesickness, navigate life in a new country, and adjust to culture shock are what will be studied.

- **PROCEDURES**

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to:

Participate in a one-on-one interview with the researcher that will last approximately one hour. During the interview, you will be asked questions about your experiences and your life in the United States up until now. The interview will be audio and video recorded and securely stored on the researcher's computer and on a USB drive.

- **POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

The foreseeable risks are discomfort that may arise in retelling personal experiences of discrimination.

- **POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY**

Participants may benefit from being able to reflect on their experiences and what they have learned from being in the United States.

This study may also benefit universities and international offices; data collected from the study may give these institutions more insight on how international students are adjusting on their own and will give insight on how these institutions and offices can better help their students.

- **INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATION**

N/A

- ## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by removing identifying information, particularly names, from the interview transcripts. Participant names will not be present on any transcript materials, nor will they be in the final research report. Only the researcher and faculty advisor will have access to transcripts and recorded interviews. If there is any identifying items brought up in the interview they will be coded so as not to reveal the personal information to anyone. The audio recording files of the interviews will be kept for 3 years and then destroyed, as required by the IRB.

- ## **PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

Participation in this research study is voluntary and not a requirement or a condition for being the recipient of benefits or services from Eastern Illinois University or any other organization sponsoring the research project. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind or loss of benefits or services to which you are otherwise entitled.
There is no penalty if you withdraw from the study and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

- ## **IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS**

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please contact:

Denver Daniels, Principal Investigator
217-581-2321
tjdaniels2@eiu.edu

Dr. Richard Roberts, Faculty Advisor
217-581-2400
rlroberts@eiu.edu

- ## **RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS**

If you have any questions or concerns about the treatment of human participants in this study, you may call or write:

Institutional Review Board
Eastern Illinois University
600 Lincoln Ave.
Charleston, IL   61920
Telephone: (217) 581-8576

E-mail: eiuirb@www.eiu.edu

You will be given the opportunity to discuss any questions about your rights as a research subject with a member of the IRB. The IRB is an independent committee composed of members of the University community, as well as lay members of the community not connected with EIU. The IRB has reviewed and approved this study.

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at any time. I have been given a copy of this form.

_____
Printed Name of Participant

_____   _____
Signature of Participant   Date

I, the undersigned, have defined and fully explained the investigation to the above subject.

_____   _____
Signature of Investigator   Date

Appendix B: Protocol Questions

Interview Question 1: Could you tell me when/if you felt welcome on campus?

Interview Question 2: How do you feel that has changed?

Interview Question 4: How have you found comfort food here?

Interview Question 5: What do you do if you feel homesick?

Interview Question 6: Has that changed from how you used to do with homesickness?

Interview Question 7: In what ways has your impression of the U.S. changed now

                that you have been here a bit longer?

Interview Question 8: Is there anything you do that makes you feel more

                comfortable?