Understanding the experiences of Zimbabwean students as foreign students at South African universities:

The case of Rhodes University

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Abstract

This thesis seeks to understand the cultural and social experiences of black Zimbabwean students, as foreign students, at Rhodes University in Grahamstown, South Africa. It examines the ways in which black Zimbabwean students negotiate the cultural, social and institutional milieu of Rhodes University, which is a former white English-medium university. In doing so, the thesis draws upon Interface theory because, once entering the university space, these students interpret the space and simultaneously negotiate their way in and through this space along cultural and social interfaces. The fieldwork for the thesis involved in-depth interviews with eighteen black Zimbabwean students at the university, stratified in terms of both gender and year of study. A focus on gender facilitated an understanding of possible differences between male and female Zimbabwean students in terms of social and cultural experiences; while a consideration of year of study allowed for an examination of possible shifts in negotiation over time, from first year to Master's level. The findings demonstrate a range of challenges faced by black Zimbabwean students while at Rhodes University, some of which arise from differences between Zimbabwean and South African society. At the same time, there are considerable differences amongst black Zimbabwean students in relation to the manner in which negotiation took place. While some students negotiate the space through active socialising and assimilating into the local world and lives of South African students as well as the university's institutional culture, other students negotiate the space through isolation and alienation. Overall, with regard to adjusting to the world of Rhodes and South Africa, students pursued different routes which, in the end, made sense to them.

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Table of Contents

Abstract……....2

Acknowledgements……...……3

Chapter 1: Introduction……...6

1.1. Introduction……6

1.2. Research context……6

1.3. Research objectives……10

1.4. Research methods……..11

1.4.1. Methodology & research design……11

1.4.2. Sampling……12

1.4.3. Research methods & data analysis ……..13

1.4.4. Challenges & limitations ……14

1.4.5. Ethics ……15

1.5. Thesis outline……15

Chapter 2: Contextualising the Study……...16

2.1. Introduction……...16

2.2. Interface Theory……16

2.3. Studying at a Foreign University……21

2.4 Foreign students attending South African universities……27

2.5 Foreign Zimbabwean students in South Africa……...32

2.6 Conclusion……37

Chapter 3: Zimbabwean Students at Rhodes University……38

3.1. Introduction……...38

3.2 Grahamstown and Rhodes University……38

3.3 Profile of interviewees……40

3.4 Reasons for coming to South Africa & choosing Rhodes University……41

3.5 Social experiences & relationships of Zimbabwean students……44

3.6 Culture in South Africa: challenges for Zimbabwean students……50

3.6.1 Rhodes University rape culture……58

3.7 Negotiating the space & adjusting to the space……60

3.8 Conclusion……..66

Chapter 4: Conclusion……68

4.1. Introduction……...68

4.2. Summary – Contextual chapter……..68

4.3. Summary – Empirical chapter……69

4.4. Relevance of Interface Theory……...71

4.5. Areas for Further Research……73

References……...…..**.....**76

Appendix 1: Example of interview schedule……..……..**....**82

Appendix 2: Example of consent forms……**...**83

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This thesis seeks to understand the social and cultural experiences of black Zimbabwean students at Rhodes University (in Grahamstown, South Africa) by considering the ways in which they manoeuvre their way through a new institutional and social space, including interacting with non-Zimbabwean (mainly South African) students. This involves investigating how Zimbabwean students, as foreigners, make sense or try to make sense of their new social environment. Though all students face certain social-cultural challenges when negotiating their way through tertiary educational institutions, and though South Africa and Zimbabwe have similar histories, it is important to identify and analyse the specific experiences of Zimbabwean students. Black Zimbabwean students, however, are exposed to different life challenges in comparison to white Zimbabwean students, and thus their experiences at South African universities are likely distinguishable from white Zimbabwean students. This is because of past events which racialised the histories of both Zimbabwe and South Africa and the latter's higher education system. Additionally, there are very few white Zimbabwean students at South African universities; hence, the focus specifically on black Zimbabwean students. In trying to understand the experiences of black Zimbabwean students at Rhodes University, it is also necessary to identify why black Zimbabweans study in South Africa, and specifically at Rhodes.

1.2 Research Context

Prior to the end of apartheid in 1994, Rhodes University was a white English-medium university which formed part of the racialised and ethnicised higher education landscape in South Africa (Mpeda & Tshiwula, 2012: 20). Rhodes was founded on colonial ideologies, institutions and architectures, intentionally mimicking Oxford University in England (Maylam, 2017: 10). In the same light, during apartheid, the laws which governed the education system in South Africa were racially determined and advantaged white people, simultaneously disadvantaging so-called non-whites. Thus:

> [A]t the beginning of 1994, South Africa's higher education system was fragmented and uncoordinated. This was primarily the result of the white apartheid government's conception of

> race and the politics of race, which had shaped the higher education policy framework that it laid down during the 1980s (Bunting, 2006: 35).

Although the policies that were implemented after 1994 have been extensively restructured – including deracialised – since 1994 (Kanyongo, 2005: 65), the legacy of the past is still experienced by the present generation of students. For instance, the past continues to hinder the access and participation of black students in higher education, with many former white universities retaining a white institutional culture. In other words, exclusion is experienced in multiple ways. At Rhodes and other South African universities, many students are burdened by academic, social, financial and institutional practices (Sennett, 2010: 167).

Rhodes University, before 1994, had an almost exclusively white academic and student body, and it consisted of a significant number of privileged white Rhodesian students (at least until 1980 when Zimbabwe became independent). Blacks were only able to attend Rhodes if they received central state permission, and subsequently they were confined to blacks-only student residences. In this way, "apartheid determined the entire student experience at Rhodes" (Satchwell, 2005: 167). For both white South African and Rhodesian students, the transition from home to Rhodes did not involve a significant adjustment, as the racialised environment at Rhodes was a cultural-social confirmation of their past experiences (Satchwell, 2005: 168).

Currently, the Rhodes student body is nearly sixty percent black (Rhodes University, 2018), mostly South Africans, who have diverse experiences and challenges. Many of these challenges became visible during recent protests at South African universities, including the high costs of university education and the need to eradicate the "prevailing institutional culture at historically white universities – a culture which was deemed to be alien to black students" (Maylam, 2017: 255). But there are also a significant number of foreign black students, mainly Zimbabweans. In 2011, there were 500 black Zimbabwean students, and this has now increased to 700 black Zimbabwean students (Rhodes University, 2018). The thesis focuses on these students.

As Cross, Mhlanga and Ojo (2011: 76) note, "there seems to be an increasing consensus in many countries about the need for the university to internationalise in the context of globalisation, especially in issues concerning programmes, research, faculty and students". Many of the countries in the developing world, including Africa, host a significant number of international students (Bhalla, 2005; Holmes, 2005; Verbik & Lasanowski, 2007). They do this for many reasons, such as to gain prestige and earn income. International mobility of students

across national boundaries is not a new phenomenon (Naidoo, 2006: 325). Verbik and Lasanowski (2007: 1), for instance, indicate that "[t]he total number of mobile tertiary education students was estimated to have reached more than 2.7 million in 2005, a nearly 61% increase since 1999". More than a decade ago, Altbach (2004: 1) noted that:

> [A]t present, about 2 million students worldwide study outside of their home countries, a number that a recent study suggests will increase to 8 million by 2025. Nations' interest in student flows across borders has increased in the past couple of decades for a number of reasons. Industrialized countries are recognizing the need to provide their students with a global consciousness and with experience in other countries in order for them to compete in the global economy.

Without invalidating this argument, it is similarly important to acknowledge the educational movement that takes place within and from the developing nations; for example, the large numbers of Zimbabwean students studying in South African universities. Mdepa and Tshiwula (2012: 27) argue that the high presence of Zimbabwean students reflects the current crisis in Zimbabwe, despite the significantly lesser tuition fees at Zimbabwean universities.

Prior to independence in 1980 in Zimbabwe, studying abroad was racially structured. White Rhodesian students increasingly came to study in apartheid South Africa. This involved a major drop in the size of the white student body at the then-one Rhodesian university. However, "if white Rhodesian students studying in South Africa were taken into account, the percentage of the total white [Rhodesian] population at university increased" (Dierdorp, 2015: 85). While there were black students at the one Rhodesian university pre-1980, some studied at 'overseas' universities in the North (often the United Kingdom) and these consisted regularly of exiles who fled the Rhodesian regime. Pasura (2010: 1449) notes an experience of a Zimbabwean in England:

> One day I went to central London. On my way back I saw a white person lying on the floor in an alley close to some shops. I kicked him slightly and asked, 'Why are you sleeping on the floor?' The white person shouted at me saying, 'Why are you here in England? Why don't you go back to your country?'

These students experienced racist encounters which took place well beyond university life, and friendships with white students were often superficial (McGregor, 2017: 62).

The notion of being a stranger or outsider, within and outside the university, is worth investigation in the case of black Zimbabwean students in the context of Afro-phobia in South Africa. There are many reasons why Zimbabwean students embark on the difficult journey of

seeking higher education away from home. These include poor governance, poor infrastructural conditions, political and ethnic problems as well as civil strife and poor security. Additionally, the lack of technology and equipment to perform important academic work is a major hindrance (Dovlo, 2003: 4). Mazzarol and Soutar (2002: 82) argue that the reasons for studying in South Africa are based on constraints within the home country which are unbearable; and these push individuals out of their homes into a foreign country, which promises some form of alleviation from their current situations.

For an international student, transitioning to a university in a foreign country is bound to entail encountering a different social, institutional and cultural milieu which is likely to be negotiated and handled in multiple ways. Furnham (2012: 10) argues that

> People have, and will always, travel to 'far off lands', different countries and regions for very different purposes. To convert and then conquer, the trade and to teach, to learn and to settle. There are many ways to categorise these travellers i.e. how long they go for (i.e. migrants vs. sojourners vs. tourists); how far they travel (near vs. far); their motives for movement (education, trade, expansion); the nature of stranger-host relations (friendly vs. antagonistic).

It is often important for these people to adapt to the new culture rapidly for them to operate effectively in their new settings. For instance, being at a university in the Eastern Cape, with a predominantly Xhosa culture, could entail processes of adjustment for Zimbabwean students. Such processes of adjustment might result in culture shock. In this respect, "[c]ulture shock is conceived as a serious, acute and sometimes chronic affective reaction to a new (social) environment" (Furnham, 2012: 14). Culture shock entails a range of frustrations pertaining to misunderstanding verbal and non-verbal communication, customs and values in the host culture.

Calling it a 'shock' does not deny the possibility of certain social-cultural continuities (Phinney & Alipuria, 1996: 139) experienced by black Zimbabwean students in South Africa; and, indeed, processes of acculturation may also arise. Further, how Zimbabwean students handle any shocks, including perhaps even disconnecting themselves from the host culture(s), likely depends on how South African students respond to their presence and interact with them. In this respect, Zimbabwean students have noticed exclusionary practices amongst South African students; for instance, "sometimes when I greet them they ignore or they answer in a very low voice. Generally some of the South African people do not enjoy seeing us in their country and I have a feeling that they do not like us, especially most South African women" (Dodson, 2010:

15). For Lazarus (2004: 607), such notions are based on South African exceptionalism whereby South Africans think they will make Africa 'behave': a notion in which South Africans see themselves as different and even superior to the rest of Africa.

In understanding the experiences of black Zimbabwean students at Rhodes University, the theoretical framing draws upon Interface theory (Drucker, 2011: 8). This theory examines the ways in which different cultural-social life-worlds come together along interface boundaries within specific societal spaces (such as university spaces). As Long (2011: 9) indicates, an interface is "a critical point of interaction between life worlds". An interface exists from the perspective of multiple cultural-social realities and experiences which are brought together in a fluid and dynamic manner (Long, 1997: 5). In entering new spaces, and sometimes as 'strangers', agents (such as black Zimbabwean students) negotiate access and their ongoing presence. Hence, interfaces become subject to ongoing and sometimes tension-riddled processes of negotiation which might reconfigure and even disrupt the institutional space.

The available scholarly literature on black Zimbabwean students at South African universities is quite thin. Hopefully, this thesis makes an important contribution to addressing this literature gap. Further, the thesis takes on added significance by using a theoretical framework (Interface theory) which is rarely used in understanding the experiences of university students in foreign countries.

1.3 Research Objectives

The main objective of the thesis is *to understand the cultural and social experiences of black Zimbabwean students at Rhodes University*. The secondary objectives include:

- To identify why black Zimbabwean students study at Rhodes University;
- To examine the various dimensions of the institutional culture of Rhodes and the experiences of Zimbabwean students within this cultural milieu;
- To consider the extent to which, and the ways in which, Zimbabwean students interact amongst themselves;
- To identify the diverse range of social and cultural encounters between Zimbabwean and other students at Rhodes; and
- To analyse the ways in which Zimbabwean students negotiate these encounters and adjust over time.

1.4 Research Methods

Since the study focuses on understanding the social and cultural experiences of black Zimbabwean students at Rhodes University, the methods and procedures that were used and followed were influenced by the qualitative research paradigm. Through the use of interviews, the research subjects were able to speak about and reflect upon their experiences. The subjects were a sample of black Zimbabwean students at Rhodes. The data collected through interviews was analysed according to reoccurring themes within the study which were consistent with the existing scholarly literature and the interview schedule. The study adhered to Rhodes University's research ethics regulations and ensured that the safety of the research participants was prioritised.

1.4.1 Methodology and Research Design

The study adopted a phenomenological research methodology (Agbedahin, 2012: 122) consistent with Interface theory, as it examines the daily encounters and experiences of black Zimbabwean students at Rhodes University: **"**Phenomenological research returns to experience in order to obtain comprehensive descriptions. These descriptions then provide the basis for a reflective … analysis to portray the essences of the experience" (Moustakas, 1994: 1). The interviewees described in detail their multi-faceted experiences at Rhodes. In addition, phenomenology is interpretive in its approach and this made it suitable for a qualitative case-study research design. Though the focus is on the experiences of Zimbabwean students and their subjective interpretations of these experiences, there is no claim to the effect that social reality is reducible to experiences as interpreted (Patton, 2002: 2).

The research design used for the thesis was the (qualitative) case-study design since this method allows for the exploration and understanding of complex daily life issues (Zainal, 2007: 1) such as how Zimbabwean students make sense of the Rhodes University space, which cannot be fully captured solely in numerical form. According to Yin (2003, cited in Baxter & Jack, 2008: 545), a case study design should be considered when:

> (a) the focus of the study is to answer 'how' and 'why' questions; (b) you cannot manipulate the behaviour of those involved in the study; (c) you want to cover contextual conditions because you believe they are relevant to the phenomenon under study; or (d) the boundaries are not clear between the phenomenon and context.

Thus, the qualitative case-study design entailed 'thick descriptions' by (and of) a delimited group of research subjects. Though this case study does not allow for statistical generalisations,

it does likely facilitate insights into the experiences of black Zimbabwean students at other previously white universities in South Africa.

The qualitative case-study was used because it is able to capture the in-depth narratives from each participant. As argued: "Qualitative methods attempt to gain an understanding of the underlying reasons and motivations for actions and establish how people interpret their experiences and the world around them" (MacDonald & Headlam, 2009: 8). This research design was applicable for this study because the interviewees articulated explicitly how they experience Rhodes University within the context of their broader social circumstances, including giving reasons and motivations for certain decisions they took.

1.4.2 Sampling

According to Kumar (2011: 42), "the underlying premise in sampling is that a relatively small number of units, if selected in a manner that they genuinely represent the study population, can provide with sufficiently high degree of probability a fairly true reflection of the sampling population that is being studied". This refers specifically to random sampling. However, the sample of black Zimbabwean students which was used for the study did not represent – at least statistically – the entire population of black Zimbabwean students at Rhodes, as random sampling was not used. Rather, non-random, purposeful sampling, including snowballing, was used to identify the interviewees from the population of black Zimbabwean students at the university. For Alvi (2016: 31), "purposive sampling is the selection of a sample based on their characteristics" (mainly, black Zimbabwean), which was the case with the selected sample. The participants were additionally chosen through the snowball sampling technique, which is also called chain sampling (Alvi, 2016: 33).

The sample was chosen by approaching one of the participants (or subjects) of the population and then asking them to refer the researcher to other subjects of the population. A 'snowball' was created because the participants referred the researcher to their acquaintances or to black Zimbabwean students who fit the more specific criteria for the study. In this regard, of significance to the study were the variables of gender and year of study. These variables, it was thought, likely distinguished the participants and shaped their experiences at Rhodes. In this way, the study additionally sought a stratified sample along gender and year of study. All students interviewed were attending Rhodes currently, but it was important to identify the negotiation of life-worlds over time by incorporating students from first year to post-graduate

studies. There was a multiple snowballing sequence followed to prevent the study from being restricted to only one social circle of Zimbabwean students. Eighteen students in total were interviewed: 9 males and 9 females; and 6 first years, 6 third years and 6 Master students.

1.4.3 Research Methods and Data Analysis

The thesis used semi-structured in-depth interviews as well as primary documents (notably relevant Rhodes University documents) as its research methods. Informal interviews fit into the sociological interpretive tradition. According to Taylor and Bogdan (1998:77, cited in Kumar, 2011: 151), in-depth interviewing involves "repeated face to face encounters between the researcher and informants directed towards understanding informants' perspectives on their lives, experiences, or situations as expressed in their own words". Further, this research method "follows a framework in order to address key themes rather than specific questions. At the same time, it allows a certain degree of flexibility for the researcher to respond to the answers of the interviewee and therefore develop the themes and issues as they arise" (MacDonald & Headlam, 2009: 40). Thus, semi-structured interviews were crucial for this study because of how they allowed for a thematically-based discussion, but one which facilitated exploring other themes as they arose. The interview schedule (see Appendix 1) consisted of thematic questions which were in part drawn from the available scholarly literature on the experience of foreign university students. Hence, informal interviews were clearly significant given the thesis objectives and theoretical framing for the thesis.

The interviews were face to face, and the participants were asked questions that would likely demonstrate how they experienced Rhodes University. The in-depth interviews allowed the study to explore the participants' experiences and how they attribute meaning to aspects of their everyday life. The interviews allowed the researcher to go into detail by asking the participants to expand on the issues that are usually taken for granted or issues that are perceived as 'the norm'. Only by exploring and unpacking these 'normal' issues, is it possible to acquire a glimpse of the sheer complexities of social reality (Beecham, 2005: 2). The interviews were not rigid and detached, as the participants felt a level of ease which facilitated their willingness to speak about matters which otherwise they typically refrain from discussing. The interviews were conducted in English and tape-recorded, and this allowed me to remain attentive as the research participants engaged with their experiences in a relatively unstructured, deep and thoughtful manner. As well, the interviews were conducted on Rhodes

University property, during working hours, at a time that was suitable for the participants. All interviews were transcribed.

The main themes that emerged during data analysis included how the participants perceived and experienced Grahamstown and Rhodes University. This included their reasons for coming to South Africa and why they chose Rhodes University and not any other tertiary institution in South Africa. The experiential based-themes were identified by way of reading and re-reading the taped interviews in the light of the interview schedule, as well as drawing upon ideas form the secondary literature. The data analysis process explored the common themes that kept on emerging and occurring across the interviews, but it also entailed considering differences of experiences within themes. Some of the key themes included institutional culture, rape culture, drinking culture, cultural shock and the friendships established while at Rhodes. Lastly, the negotiation and consequently the adjustment of each individual to their new social milieu was explored, noting both similarities and differences in relation to the variables of gender and year of study. Thus, the collected data was themed according to the identified commonalities that kept on reoccurring during the interviews. This is consistent with qualitative thematic data analysis, which is the process of identifying the patterns or themes that emerge from the data (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017: 3352). In this study, themes were identified according to the participants' responses. The similarities were grouped and themed for later use during the empirical chapter.

1.4.4 Challenges and Limitations

The data collection process was the most notable challenge of the study. Finding students as participants was a serious problem. It was particularly difficult to identify and receive the assistance of third year students, who seemed to be the least interested in the research topic (for reasons which remain unclear). Further, some of the participants became 'problematic' during interviews. For example, there were distractions by which participants would respond to text messages during an interview, or some participants wanted to be interviewed in the presence of their friends. The data collection process was also difficult because the sample called for specific types of black Zimbabwean students (by gender and year of study) – it was not feasible to change the sample and simply interview other black Zimbabweans who expressed their willingness to be interviewed. Another challenge faced involved accessing the details of the statistics of Rhodes University foreign students. The difficulty was encountered with the IT

Division in seeking to obtain very basic data about the sheer presence of foreign students at the university by country of origin.

The study was limited by multiple factors. For instance, the available literature specifically about the experiences of Zimbabwean university students in general, and the social and cultural experiences of Zimbabwean students in South African universities, is minimal. Consequently, in contextualising the specific focus, it was necessary to draw upon a much wider scope of secondary literature pertaining to the experiences of foreign students in general. Also, a larger sample (and one based on random sampling) would be more useful in the future to avoid limitations around generalising the research findings. Given financial constraints and the limited time period for the study, the sample was small and involved non-random sampling.

1.4.5 Ethics

The research adhered to Rhodes University's ethical regulations and restrictions. The participants signed a consent form (Appendix 2) which gave them the liberty to withdraw from the project at any stage of the interview. The consent form additionally informed the participants of their rights, such as being given a pseudonym. The tape recordings were deleted after the data analysis process. Further, the research adhered to the protocol of Rhodes University's research ethics committee, which requires that the participants and their safety are prioritised throughout the research. Since the participants were university students, permission from the university Registrar was required from the ethics committee. Additionally, the ethics committee required that psychological help be made available for any students who might be affected by the interviews. Help from the counselling centre was requested and granted; however, the condition was that the centre had a long waiting list and participants needed to be aware of this obstacle.

1.5 Thesis Outline

The following chapter (chapter two) provides the context for the study of black Zimbabwean students at Rhodes University. This entails outlining the theoretical framing for the thesis as well as offering a relevant literature review given the thesis topic and focus. The third chapter is the empirically-based chapter, offering a thematic description and analysis of the multiple-faceted and diverse experiences of the sampled black Zimbabwean students at Rhodes. The final chapter (chapter four) offers a comprehensive overview of the thesis and of the main arguments made.

Chapter Two: Contextualising the Study

2.1 Introduction

Coming to university can be a daunting experience for all students, whether they are locals or foreigners. It is necessary to know how foreign students in particular move around and make sense of their new space as they try and familiarise themselves with the space, while adjusting to multiple pressures such as cultural shock, academic requirements and change of social scenery. Interface theory, as discussed in this chapter, explains how individuals who are constantly moving into new spaces need to negotiate the interface, and this process is different for all individuals given their unique circumstances. The existing literature, which is also reviewed in this chapter, discusses foreign students in general and then shifts to Zimbabwean students within the South African tertiary education system. The focus of this literature review is on the ways in which foreign students (and specifically black Zimbabwean students) negotiate and adjust in their new environment.

2.2 Interface Theory

The general notion of interface conjures up the image of two surfaces coming into contact (Long, 1989: 1) and finding some degree of common ground between each other. Interface theory is designed to address the issue of how individuals negotiate the spaces that they are in. In as much as the term 'interface' suggests an image of a "two-sided articulation or face-to-face confrontation, social interface situations are more complex and multiple in nature, containing within them many different interests, relationships and modes of rationality and power" (Kontinen, 2004: 28). Thus, social interface situations involve complex and varied interests, relationships and often power dynamics (Kontinen, 2004: 28). Individuals are constantly moving around the edges of interfaces and, in most cases, they are foreigners or outsiders – at least initially – in their new environments. Inevitably, they need to negotiate access and the allowance of staying and being accepted in that environment, especially if they intend on staying for an extended period. In 1990, Brenda Laurel defined an interface as "a surface where the necessary contact between interactors and tasks allowed functions to be performed" (Drucker, 2011: 8). This was drawn upon by scholars such as Norman Long as a technological metaphor, with Long (2011: 9) presenting an interface as "a critical point of interaction between life worlds".

These definitions emphasise the importance of interfaces especially for groups of people who will be actively sharing the same space. Thus, Long (1989: 2) states that the concept implies some kind of face-to-face encounter between individuals or units representing different interests and backed by different resources. The interacting parties will often be differentiated in terms of power". Interface theory thus discusses how such individuals would need to negotiate these spaces and avoid obvious clashes (Aikenhead & Jegede, 1999: 269) which can result in the alienation, and possibly the victimisation, of some individuals. For groups such as foreign students, the negotiation of spaces allows them to obtain some knowledge about the host country and be able to develop a better understanding of the university's institutional culture, as a basis for possibly trying to 'fit into' the space. The negotiation process is meant to connect two or more groups and allow them to meet in a mutual space, though not always a mutually-constructed space.

Interface theory provides "a theoretical alternative to the well-established paradigm of being "caught-between two-worlds" (Mila-Schaaf and Hudson, 2009: 116). Negotiations along an interface are meant to connect those two worlds and create a singular world where everyone will be able to co-exist together. However, "[t]erritory is constructed, negotiated and contested at a variety of different levels" (Leonard, 2006: 233), which can result in an unstable arena or space. This instability can be detrimental for foreign individuals if they have not been able to negotiate the space in a manner conducive to their belonging, because they may have no form of refuge. The act of negotiation and the coming together of the two worlds is meant to allow the foreigners to be 'protected' because the changes will affect them as a singular unit with the locals. At the same time, the interaction between two groups of people can have both positive and negative outcomes, depending on the success of the negotiation. The undesirable outcomes have been exemplified in post-apartheid South Africa by for instance xenophobic and Afro-phobic behavior.

Additionally, interface incorporates the role of culture by conceptualising (Long, 1997: 5) it from the perspective of multiple realities and lived experiences that vary between groups. The incorporation of culture is important because of the life worlds of the different groups that come together. The two (or more) groups bring their own sets of cultural practices into contact with the possibility of clashes arising. To avoid such cultural clashes, sensitive negotiations are often necessary. For example, Zimbabwean students will bring their norms and values into an environment that is already governed by its own set of historically-constructed norms and

values. Along interfaces, it is often important especially for 'the guests' – before entering the new space – to know about the host culture and what is culturally appropriate and inappropriate, since they are the outgroup.

According to Mila-Schaaf and Hudson (2009: 116), if not politicised, a negotiated space facilitates the possibility for all parties to engage with each other and share their ideas. This would make it easier for Zimbabwean students to engage with South Africans, because negotiating the university space would be a neutral process in that it "requires an acknowledgement of the shared histories of both parties and a commitment to ongoing relationships" (2009: 116). But, in actuality, an interface may involve intimidating or confrontational interactions, particularly where misunderstandings lead to hostility and the generation of conflict (Kontinen, 2004: 28). Such a possibility may lead foreigners to avoid any process of interfacing. This might not necessarily entail deliberate efforts at confrontation or exclusion, but is a result of unintended consequences. Ultimately, in terms of positive outcomes, interfaces are negotiated in such a manner that the space will be shared amicably between the two groups. Thus, interface interaction may be deeply beneficial as the process socially and culturally joins the life worlds of the two groups.

The argument about the 'negotiated space' was developed, as indicated, to "describe the interface between different worldviews and knowledge systems" (Mila-Schaaf & Hudson, 2009: 116). A negotiated space is meant to entail a common ground where the two groups meet, without denying the risks of tensions and disputes. It is a deeply intercultural space, or "the in-between terrain where distinctive worldviews and knowledge bases enter into some form of engagement or relationship to potentially be expanded and innovated" (2009: 116). When black Zimbabwean students come to South African universities, they bring in their own culture and life-worlds to interact and (potentially) merge with the culture and life-worlds of South Africans. The process of negotiation allows different life-worlds to interact and engage with each other for the production of even new discourses and practices. However, in many situations, the spaces in which individuals have existed for some time is more often than not an inherently personal space because of historical embeddedness in that milieu. Therefore, people can become very 'protective' of their space and not allow external parties or foreigners to come and invade this space, especially if they feel threatened by those parties.

There is an interesting link between people and the understanding of their environment due to "the way we understand ourselves, our place in the larger context, and the cultural meanings infused into gestures, objects, and sign systems. Spatial proximity and how we locate ourselves in space affect every aspect of the cultural objects we create and interact with" (Farman, 2012: 14). To avoid 'intruding', it is necessary for Zimbabwean students to negotiate the spaces they enter in a delicate and sensitive manner, especially a conflictual space such as post-apartheid South Africa. With the rapid increase of foreign students in tertiary educational campuses both nationally as well as globally (Holmes, 2005: 289), and with many individuals leaving their homes for tertiary education in an even distressed state, it becomes essential for such individuals to enter their new environments in a smooth and undisturbed manner. Because of this, "the consideration of culture [and life-worlds] in the study of development and behavior" (Phinney & Alipuria, 1996: 139) needs to be foregrounded in analytical work about foreign students at universities outside their home countries. Their levels of adjustment, assimilation, disconnection and engagement with their new life-world, needs to be examined and interrogated for the experiences of the students to be fully understood.

By being in a new environment such as South Africa, specifically Rhodes University, Zimbabwean students need to navigate their environment, as well as negotiate with local students and residents. Zimbabwean students need to try and engage with the culture on a macro and micro scale: they need to engage with the South African culture, as well as the Rhodes University culture. Foreign students need to interact with culture at these levels in order for them to not experience feelings such as social alienation and cultural shock. Therefore,

> The concept of interface helps us to focus on the production and transformation of differences in worldviews or cultural paradigms. Interface situations often provide the means by which individuals or groups come to define their own cultural or ideological positions vis-à-vis those espousing or typifying opposing views (Kontinen, 2004: 29).

The transition from Zimbabwe to South Africa might not be new for all students, and the transition from private secondary educational institutions to prestigious tertiary educational institutions such as Rhodes University might not be a new experience for many of the Zimbabwean students enrolled at Rhodes. Nevertheless, this is a new transition for a large percentage of the students. Overall, whether the transition is into a somewhat familiar or alien territory, the students are still foreign and they need to transition to some extent and in some way into this new life world. In doing so, they need to acquaint themselves with the new culture and the social histories of South African students.

The benefits of negotiation between locals and foreigners is by way of reaching common understanding. However, the locals may consider that the foreign students are here to fight for 'their' limited public resources, or to compete with them and take what is 'rightfully' theirs. Because of this, negotiation is very important because it inhibits the development of significant unwanted repercussions in the future, including hostilities. Dillenbourg and Baker (1996: 187) reiterate the importance of negotiation when they state that "in Distributed Artificial Intelligence research, negotiation is almost universally viewed as a process by which conflicts (with respect to resource allocations) may be resolved".

Zimbabwean students have to negotiate this space with South African students in the context of a university institutional culture as well, so that their adjustment process can be more bearable and avoid hostile relationships arising – particularly given that South African society is a highly contested space. In other words, South Africans in and of themselves have not successfully negotiated their own spaces amongst themselves. As Leonard (2006: 235) argues, "in societies experiencing political conflict, notions of place and territory have considerable local, regional and national significance. Indeed, many disputes relating to national identity are based on competing claims to place and territory". Therefore, for black Zimbabwean students coming to South African universities, they are entering an already disputed space. For Zimbabwean students to feel welcomed, they need to interface and negotiate the space and avoid being 'othered' due to their lack of negotiation.

In this context, interface theory seems to be a most applicable theory for this research as it incorporates the issue of Zimbabwean students as foreigners who need to negotiate cultural, social and academic issues in their new milieu. This constant negotiation inevitably forms part of their experiences as foreign students at South African universities. Indeed, despite the fact that Rhodes may be encountered as a new space for South African students, the experiences of foreign students are obviously different than local students. Foreign students are burdened with subtle and troubling issues that do not necessarily affect the local students. In the end, focusing on the negotiation of life-worlds between Zimbabwean students and the South African students does not suggest that the life-worlds are completely different let alone polar opposites. But differences do exist, and interface theory allows the researcher to consider the agency of both local and foreign students in negotiating spaces, though the thesis focuses specifically on black Zimbabwean students as foreign students.

2.3 Studying at a Foreign University

Foreign students in other countries have to negotiate institutional and cultural spaces, perhaps being assimilated into or being alienated by the life-world of a foreign university. Since the students are not from that country, they need to find a way to fit in, or suffer being socially outcast as a failure to 'fit in'. Lapsley and Edgerton (2000, cited in Julia & Veni, 2012: 244) state that, for students to have successfully adapted to university, they need to adhere to the criteria of "remaining in college, enjoying psychological well-being, and performing well academically". In this context, this section provides a review of literature on foreign students globally while later sections focus more specifically on South Africa and Zimbabwean students.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) defines international students as "those who expressly cross borders with the intention to study" (2007: 4). The act of student mobility across national boundaries is not a recent phenomenon (Naidoo, 2006: 325). Verbik and Lasanwski (2007: 1) argued, over ten years ago, that foreign student mobility has become an increasingly important part of the global tertiary education landscape. Hence:

> According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), in 1980 the population of internationally mobile students was about 1.1 million. The number increased slightly to 1.3 million in 1990 but by 2009 had tripled to 3.4 million. The number of mobile students has been expected to grow to 8 million by 2020 (Altbach, 2006, cited in Chien & Kot, 2012: 1).

Verbik and Lasanwski (2007: 1) likewise indicate that "[t]he total number of mobile tertiary education students was estimated to have reached more than 2.7 million in 2005, a nearly 61% increase since 1999". Though the primary destinations are often outside the developing world, there is still a large number of students moving within the developing countries.

Globally, the number of foreign students attending tertiary educational institutions is therefore on the rise. In the United States of America, the "foreign student population rose from 547,867 in 2000 to 690,923 in 2010" (Open Doors, 2010 cited in Bista & Foster, 2011: 1). In 2010, China was the leading sending country with 30 per cent of Chinese students enrolled in the United States, while India contributed with 15 per cent of Indian students in the United States' educational sector (Bista & Foster, 2011: 1). Tertiary education has become increasingly international, and "foreign students are among the most important and visible elements of … [contemporary] internationalism" (Altbach, 1991: 305) more broadly. By the late 1980s, there were more than one million students studying outside the borders of their home countries, and

most of these students were from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development nations (Altbach, 1991:305). Sehoole and Knight (2013, cited in Olujobi, 2011: 1) argue that internationalisation is not a new concept, and it has become common in the academic realm because of globalisation, in which the world is increasingly becoming integrated (Vikash, 2000; Wilkins and Huisman, 2011, cited in Olujobi, 2011: 1). The rate of internationalisation and its effects can be seen across higher education institutions all over the world, as more and more students are enrolled in foreign countries.

Students from the developed nations do not usually choose to study in the developing countries; rather, they study within the developed countries. The increasing demand for international study is from students from the developing world, with students wanting to study in the developed nations (Altbach, 1991: 308). Thus, the most popular destinations for tertiary education are the developed countries. Studying outside one's own country has been considered as an experience reserved mainly for the elite, especially if studying abroad in European universities. The developed countries are in fact able to entice foreign students by offering many resources that universities in the developing nations fail to offer students. Even though countries in the developing nations have multiple universities, it is no secret that many universities in the developing nations lack resources, finances, technologies, staff and similar crucial dimensions that are required in the maintenance of an institution such as a university.

As Mohamedbhai (2014) argues, this is not to imply that developing nations such as in Africa are somehow backwards with regards to tertiary education. He argues that, "centres of higher learning have existed in Africa for several centuries, well before the arrival of Europeans" (2014: 60). At the same time, modern tertiary education in Africa has its roots in universities and colleges "that were created by and affiliated with European universities during the colonial period" (Mohamedbhai, 2014: 60). There is still a large portion of students from the developing nations who stay within their boundaries, for example "the Philippines is a significant host nation, as are India, Egypt and, even today, Lebanon" (1991: 308). India and the Philippines are typical examples of host countries for students from developing countries. Bhalla (2005) notes that "India hosts more than 8,000 students from abroad, 95% from developing countries" (Verbik & Lasanowski, 2007: 294). Thus, most of the foreign student body in universities in India are from the developing nations. Overall, then, students seeking better education in other countries is a phenomenon that is on a rapid rise and, as anticipated by Altbach (2006), it is not going to slow down in the near future.

There are multiple reasons why students attend foreign universities, and universities in particular countries. Geographical location, economic and political problems in countries of origin and specialised programmes offered by particular universities (Manik & Singh, 2013: 82) are important factors. For example, due to the economic and political challenges in Zimbabwe, many Zimbabwean students have enrolled in South African universities in pursuit of a better education. There are also many reasons why developing countries host foreign students. For instance, developing countries entice foreign students to their universities to better the quality and cultural composition of the student body, gain prestige and earn income (Verbik & Lasamowski, 2007: 294). Therefore, in such cases, it is beneficial for universities to have foreign students as part of their student body. South African universities indeed enrol many foreign students each year; at some universities, there are deliberate policies which aim to attract high calibre international students from the global population (Manik & Singh, 2013: 90).

Students who enrol in universities outside of their home countries are faced with additional challenges when compared to local students. Challenges that are very common amongst foreign students are "financing the education, balancing work and study schedules, finding the self-discipline to persist, and many other obstacles that can make attending college a difficult task" (Bista & Foster, 2011: 1). In and of itself, studying is very difficult and, with additional factors such as studying in a new environment, adjustment becomes a crucial factor for foreign students who want to complete their studies in time. In other words, international students have the same challenges as local students, such as familiarising themselves with the curriculum and course work. In addition to these stressors, foreign students have the challenge of familiarising themselves with their new social and cultural environment. For many foreign students, being away from home for extended periods of time can result in a certain kind of isolation; as McGregor (2017: 62) notes, "once banished, the [student] exile lives an anomalous and miserable life, with the stigma of being an outsider".

For many students, becoming an international student was not by personal choice; it was rather the direction of the circumstances which forced the students to seek higher education in other countries. In this context, Sawir, Marginson, Deumert, Nyland and Ramia (2008: 149) state that, "in crossing national borders for their education, these students leave their family and social networks and citizenship rights in the country of origin" and take on the status of 'foreigner' in the host country. There are many difficulties that these students face. For

instance, being away from home and a familiar environment can lead the student to feel socially and personally isolated. Such students need to overcome stressors such as the burden of possibly facing a new foreign language, a new curriculum, and having to negotiate an unfamiliar set of institutional rules. These variables are the underlying factors that are easily disregarded when considering the difficulties that these students face because they seem normalised in the contemporary world and, therefore, not problematic.

It is no secret that many foreign students value their quality of education (Bista & Foster, 2011: 3); hence they embark on the difficult journey of leaving the comfort of their homes and become foreign students in other countries. As such, they are continuously burdened with general as well as specific issues relating to their status of being part of an out-group. Admittedly, campus life, social activities and sports are general areas that affect both local and foreign students (Ikwuagwa, 2010 cited in Bista & Foster, 2011: 3). For foreign students, though, what is also of concern is their sheer presence in another country as well as their safety and security. Due to national legislation and the non-immigrant student visa issued to them, many foreign students have restrictions placed on them; for example, not having the privilege to apply for financial aid or to undertake part-time work (Bista & Foster, 2011: 3). Such limitations on foreign students make their university experiences more complex than local students.

Undoubtedly, tertiary educational institutions have been concerned about how to deal with "the impact of foreign students on the curriculum, on institutional resources and the like, and with the most appropriate ways of providing services to foreign students" (Collect Entrance Examination Board 1979, cited in Altbach, 1991: 314). For many major host universities, including foreign students in their intuitional planning and development has become standard. These universities have tried to provide foreign students with non-academic services that have been requested by the foreign students, in an effort to try and make their adjustment more successful and to remove feelings of isolation or loneliness (Lee, Abd-Ella & Burks 1981 cited in Altbach, 1991: 319).

Institutions which host foreign students need to prepare for the challenges these students might face, and for many reasons. One such reason presented by Andrade (2006: 131) is that "international students in institutions of higher education in English-speaking countries make valuable educational and economic contributions. For these benefits to continue, universities

must become more knowledgeable about the adjustment issues these students face and implement appropriate support services". Indeed, the rapid increase of foreign students enrolled at universities in the United States each year has placed pressure on the institutions to provide help for the foreign students which is aimed at assisting them with social and cultural adjustments: "Although research found international students to have strong academic skills, high educational aspirations, and positive attitudes toward their school, other scholars believed that international students faced many difficulties in their adjustment to higher education in the United States" (Boyer & Sedlacek, 1986, cited in Zhai, 2002: 4). Being in a foreign country as a student does not mean that students become consumed by academic activities only. International students have other needs that have to be fulfilled in the social and cultural aspects of their lives. The universities need to take the responsibility of helping these students adjust in all aspects and not just in the academic realm only.

What is thus problematic is that, despite many universities attempting to provide basic services which are designed to ease the adjustment for foreign students, the universities end up failing to provide the students with many meaningful interventions, such as emotional health-related services, which promise to be of great practical significance in assisting the students to settle in (2008: 149). In as much as universities are trying to help the foreign students adjust, their approaches also overemphasise academic adjustment at the expense of socio-cultural issues. For universities that claim to engage with development on a critical level, it is in their interest to constantly make changes that benefit the foreign students. These innovations would enable the student to adjust in academic and social spheres, to avoid this loneliness to which McGregor (2017) refers.

From the perspective of the universities, support is intended to assist foreign students with academic and social adjustments (Sawir et al, 2008: 151). For example, programmes such as orientation week or social activities planned and provided by the university are designed to help the students familiarise themselves with their new environment. But these programmes are designed from the perspective of the university. The university designs the programmes with the mind-set that they will be beneficial for the students. But these programmes cannot fully assist a student to adjust holistically. The experience of loneliness, which can sometimes develop into alienation, is experienced by all humans: "Feelings of loneliness are like feelings of joy, hunger, and sorrow; they can be managed though never completely prevented" (Rokach & Brock, 1998 cited in Sawir et al., 2008: 151). Thus, in many instances, these programmes

are basic programmes which the university implements for the sake of their image, and not necessarily for the interest of the student. This is seen in the failure of the programmes to successfully help a foreign student adjust holistically. Issues such as cultural adjustment and the prevention of experiences such as cultural shock, have for a long period been considered significant issues which negatively influence the experiences of students as foreigners (Donin, 1995; Pedersen, 1991; Sodowsky & Lai, 1997, cited in Reynolds & Constantine, 2007: 339); and they are often not engaged with on an adequate basis by university management.

Clearly, for or an international student, the transition of moving from a familiar environment, to one which is unfamiliar, has economic, academic, social, political and cultural implications. For instance, the students need to engage and acquaint themselves with the norms and value systems of the country they are now in. For the most part, this benefits the student by avoiding problems such as 'cultural shock'. Rawjee, Reddy and Maharaj (2013: 581) have defined cultural shock as "anxiety that results from losing all one's familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse", which is frustrating for the guest if the host country is not flexible or willing to assist them. In the same light, Samovar, Porter and Daniel (2011, cited in Rawjee et al., 2013: 581) argue that cultural shock is partly caused by poor communication skills which "involve the frustrations of not understanding the verbal and non-verbal communication of the host culture, its customs and its value systems". Thus, to avoid cultural shock, both the host and the guest need to cooperate to smoothen the boundaries of the interface. It is often advantageous for foreign students to engage with the host culture and its values, customs and beliefs, to avoid cultural shock, as well as to avoid isolation or disconnection.

The responsibility is often placed on the foreign student to interact interchangeably between their own culture and the host culture simultaneously (Gu, Schweisfurth & Day, 2010: 10). When students move away from the comfort of their homes and become foreign students in outside countries, they may be pressurised to adopt the new behaviours, languages, beliefs, values, social institutions and technologies of that new country (Sam & Berry, 2010: 472); or they may feel the necessity to do so. In this way, whether cultural shock takes place or not, processes of acculturation might arise. Acculturation "refers to the process of cultural and psychological change that results following meeting between cultures" (Sam & Berry, 2010: 472). Acculturation is the phenomenon which results when groups of individuals with different cultures come into constant contact with each other, which causes changes in the original cultural patterns of either group, or both groups (Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936, cited

in Sam & Berry, 2010: 473). Thus, acculturation acknowledges the reciprocity of the influence that cultural groups have on each other (Sam & Berry, 2010: 473), which can be demonstrated in multiple ways such as assimilating into a new culture.

It becomes clear then that foreign students experience the typical stressors that many students, including the local students, have while being at a higher educational institution. In addition to dealing with these typical stressors associated with university life, foreign students need to manage the challenges of being in a foreign country. Students are not confined to the university institution only; they also interact with people and institutions outside of the university. In a study in the United States by Sodowsky and Lai (1997, cited in Reynolds & Constantine, 2007: 339), they noted that the issues faced by foreign students in universities "include culture shock, confusion about role expectations in the United States, homesickness, loss of social support, discrimination, and language barriers". Thus, in the process of being a foreign student, the individual needs to consider that their interactions will not be confined to the university only.

Rather, they will be constantly negotiating spaces within the university, as well as within the public arena: "In crossing national borders for their education, these students leave their family and social networks and citizenship rights in the country of origin" (Sawir et al, 2008: 149). As foreigners, these students are pressurised by many factors to maintain the high standard of producing excellent academic results as well as adjusting socio-culturally within the host nation more broadly. Additionally, these students need to not only navigate, but also grasp the cultural norms and values of their new milieu to avoid isolation and allow the possibility of integration between themselves and the locals.

2.4 Foreign Students Attending South African Universities

The rapid population growth in the southern African region has "combined with unstable politics, escalating ethnic conflict, persistent economic decline, poverty, and environmental deterioration to shape trends and patterns of international migration in Africa" (Adepoju, 2004: 1). The population growth in conjunction with socio-economic underdevelopment and the high unemployment rate lie at the root of much international migration in Africa, as well as elsewhere in the developing world (Adepoju, 2004: 1). This has led to significant in-migration to South Africa from many parts of Africa, not necessarily for educational purposes but for livelihood and security reasons. Alongside this has been a significant rise in the number of foreign students in South Africa from the region.

Since South Africa was welcomed back into the global community as a new democracy in 1994, the tertiary education sector has become international: "Given that the internationalisation process is a response to globalisation, the process has been neither uniform nor unproblematic for various higher education institutions within the sector" (Rouhani, 2007: 470). With the dismantling of the apartheid system and the opening of South Africa to the global community, there has been a drastic influx of international students seeking access to South African higher education institutions (Rouhani, 2007: 471). The IEASA (2008) stated that, "more than one in every 10 students was non-South African at the Universities of Fort Hare and University of South Africa (UNISA) in 2008" (cited in Chimucheka, 2012: 223). These international student flows are mainly from neighbouring Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries (Rouhani, 2002, cited in Rouhani, 2007: 472). The IEASA (2008, cited in Chimucheka, 2012: 113) agrees with Mdepa & Tshiwula (2012), as it reiterates the point that, since the dawn of democracy, South Africa has been a preferred destination for students from outside the country, especially in Southern Africa, and further: "The country has become the most popular place to study in Africa and is one of the world's top twenty host nations for American students" (Chimucheka, 2012: 223).

Thus, the argument by Lee and Sehoole (2015: 843), that "South Africa is one of the emerging educational destinations in Southern Africa as well as globally" reiterates the mobility issue. On a global scale, South Africa is recognised as an upcoming educational destination for students seeking tertiary education, therefore making many foreign students expressing an interest in South Africa, as well as in South African universities. These students could possibly be enticed by the diverse socio-cultural aspects of South African society. However, what is problematic at many of the South African tertiary institutions, especially the previously white universities, is the "prevailing institutional culture … – a [white] culture which was deemed to be alien to black students" (Maylam, 2017: 255). Consequently, many black foreign students (including Zimbabwean) coming into South Africa and enrolling in South African universities, need to be prepared to deal with this institutional culture. In addition, the high cost of university education, which places an impossible burden on the working class as well as the poor (Maylam, 2017: 255), has alienated many students who seek a qualification from South African universities. In other words, the high cost of university fees has resulted in many students being excluded from South African universities. These are the unspoken inequalities that many students struggle with at South African universities.

Generally, there are two types of foreign students that are admitted at South African universities: exchange students, those who are attending for a short period of time, and undergraduate or postgraduate students – those who will stay for a longer period. The exchange students are usually from the developed countries, while students staying for longer are from the developing countries. Rouhani (2007: 472) explains that

> Although the African students tend to register for full-time undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes, the majority of European and North American students tend to be short-stay exchange or study-abroad students seeking a broader educational and cultural experience in a developing country in rapid transition.

Black Zimbabwean students fall into the longer period category, including studying from first year at a South African university.

Historically in South Africa, blacks and whites have differed markedly in culture, language, politics as well as education and socio-economic status (Rushton & Skuy, 2000: 254). Only recently, with the dawn of democracy in 1994, have the discriminatory policies at least officially ended. Regardless of past racial suppressions, "black South Africans have achieved higher literacy rates than is typical elsewhere on the African continent and many South African Black university students are from middle-class homes" (Rushton & Skuy, 2000: 254). At tertiary level, black students have been entering traditionally white universities in record numbers. These black students include black foreign students as well. Large percentages of black foreign students have entered South African universities, both traditionally white and black universities.

There are multiple motives that foreign students have for coming to study in South Africa. For example, foreign students could be studying in South Africa because of the degree they want to obtain. Chimucheka (2012: 225) states that, "universities in South Africa offer internationally recognised qualifications. The qualifications are perceived to be of higher quality by international students and are respected in many African countries". The quality of the degree and its value can be a large determining factor that can possibly make students from elsewhere in Africa to choose to study in South Africa. Foreign students also come to South African universities due to political instabilities in their own countries (Manik & Singh, 2013: 88). In the past, according to Rouhani (2007, cited in Olujobi, 2011: 2), the response of South African universities to internationalisation was varied. However, in recent years, the institutions are more aware of the importance of the internationalisation of education, and

consequently, the institutions are making conscious efforts to internationally integrate their institutions.

Regardless of the inequalities and injustices that continue to mark South African society, the country prides itself on having one of the most progressive constitutions on a global scale (Simeon, 1998, cited in Crush, 2000: 104): "The Bill of Rights guarantees a host of basic political, cultural and socio-economic rights to all who are resident in the country". Despite the Bill of Rights and other 'protective policies' for all citizens in South Africa, there is a common tendency to find groups of people who will be used as social scape-goats for the inequalities in society (Morris, 1998: 1124). For example, Morris (1998: 1124) argued twenty years ago that "African immigrants generally are being blamed for the shortcomings of post-apartheid society", and they are being used as "social scapegoats who take the blame for any social ills that happen in South Africa". Likewise, the 1998 Human Rights Watch report stated that

> South Africa has become increasingly xenophobic in recent years, with a large percentage of South Africans perceiving foreigners - especially, almost exclusively black foreigners - as a direct threat to their future economic well-being and as responsible for the troubling rise in violent crime in South Africa" (Crush 2000: 106).

In this way, many international students who come to South Africa in pursuit of obtaining some form of tertiary educational qualification are burdened by colonial and apartheid influenced inequalities and prejudices.

Many South Africans present xenophobic attitudes and behavior especially towards their neighbouring 'brothers and sisters' from other African countries. Landau, Ramjathan-Keogh and Singh (2005, cited in Manik & Singh, 2013: 80) noted ten years ago that "South Africa is a highly xenophobic society", which makes it very difficult for foreign students to try and better their lives in such a hostile environment. Thus, South Africa has been, in recent years, marked by xenophobia and Afro-phobia which is beyond the control of university institutions, and exist despite efforts by university managements to embrace the presence of foreigners at their universities. Undoubtedly, many South Africans feel that foreigners place strain on limited public resources or become employed in work which should be undertaken by locals, resulting in resentment of foreigners in the country.

In this sense, South Africa does not guarantee that foreign university students (particularly from Africa) have arrived at a safe haven. Foreign students have inevitably become victims of direct

xenophobic attacks even within South African universities. Manik and Singh (2013: 114) note that for instance that foreign African students "experienced xenophobia … when local students and sometimes staff members would speak to them in local languages such as isiZulu"; this entailed a form of exclusion in making sure that the foreign students acknowledged the fact that they were not welcomed. These discriminatory acts are perpetuated for various reasons, and the most prominent one in contemporary South Africa is xenophobia.

For foreign students, specifically black foreign students, who are attending universities in South Africa, pointing them out and discriminating against them is very easy because of their physical phenotype. Therefore, some black foreign students are easily identifiable since they stand out. In the case of Nigerians and Congolese in South Africa, even though they are limited in numbers, it is easy to 'other' them and to alienate them: "Because of their physical features, their bearing, their clothing style and their inability to speak one of the indigenous languages, they are in general clearly distinct and local residents are easily able to pick them out and scapegoat them" (Morris, 1998: 1125). South Africans discriminate against people based on their accents, their fashion sense and even their skin tone. Therefore, foreigners become easy targets for locals to use as scapegoats for social ills that occur. In this way, black foreign students are in constant 'battle' with locals. The locals feel as though foreign students are in South Africa to take what belongs to South Africans. For instance, when foreign students excel academically, local students tend to avoid congratulating them as they perceive their success as a threat to their future. Therefore, black foreign students often do not have the luxury of becoming tourists while studying; their time as students in the host country is a time of struggle for knowledge and qualifications with which hope to make their lives better (Michael, Armstrong & King, 2003: 57).

Half a century ago Fanon wrote of the 'black man' as "a phobogenic object, a stimulus to anxiety' among whites" (Matsinhe, 2011: 295). In contemporary South African society, it is a reasonable assessment to propose that South Africans are phobogenic unto themselves, and that Africa is a stimulus to its own anxiety (Matsinhe, 2011: 295). Africa's fear of itself is exemplified by the loathing of black foreigners in South Africa. This strong detestation is increasingly becoming a part of South Africa's culture and identification. Since the end of apartheid, the packaging and presenting of foreigners as *Makwerekwere* (or unwanted foreigners) has been constructed and utilised within public discourse to 'other' Africans from outside of South Africa (Matsinhe, 2011). The understanding of Africans from outside of South

Africa as *Makwerekwere* has resulted in an unconstitutionally violent and hostile relationship between foreigners and locals.

Foreign students who come to South Africa for education need to be aware that their stressors will not be caused by academic pressures only. This goes contrary to the study of American university and college students by Wan, Chapman and Biggs (1992: 608), in which they agreed with fellow scholars that, "the stress experienced by international students tends to centre on academic situations. Indeed, research indicates that, for international students, problems associated with academic experiences are the most stress-provoking and tend to be more persistent than social or personal problems' (Hull, 1978; Klineberg & Hull, 1979; Selby & Woods, 1966; Byrnes, 1966; Higbee, 1969; Sharma, 1973; Hill, 1966). Conversely, this is an argument that is not applicable in post-apartheid South Africa; it should not be overstated in this contemporary context. The social experiences can be more stressful to foreign students than their academic experience.

2.5 Foreign Zimbabwean Students in South Africa

This section examines the question of Zimbabwean students at South African universities. First though I refer to a historical study of Zimbabwean students in Europe, as it highlights a key point raised in Section 2.3.1. McGregor (2017) notes how Zimbabwean students in Europe, prior to independence in Zimbabwe in 1980, were subjected to injustices and inequalities by the host country. Her study noted how the students were not only discriminated against within the institution, but further isolated by the larger public. Zimbabwean students studying in Britain for example experienced acts of racism. In the study by McGregor (2017: 71), Zimbabwean students narrated their experiences of racism in Britain and how it affected their stay in Britain. Some students recall "encountering racism in the street, from the police, in pubs or from landlords", and thus not only within the university institutions.

This illustrates how these students felt isolated and alienated by their new environment, which are some of the difficulties that these students needed to overcome whilst studying abroad. Nonetheless, there were students who interacted with white/indigenous students in Britain. These participants summarised their interaction or their relationship with these white students as being 'distant' (McGregor, 2017: 71), referring to how the British students treated them. Therefore, there was no concrete stability or knowledge that the friendship was genuine. The friendships were more casual and social. For instance, one of the participants stated that the

only time she interacted with her 'white friends' was at student union parties or at pubs (McGregor, 2017: 71). There is minimal reference from these participants regarding any authentic relationship with the white students. This racial alienation that the Zimbabwean students felt while in Britain added to their difficult experience of being a foreign student.

From the SADC population, most foreign students in South Africa come from Zimbabwe (Chimucheka, 2012: 224). Zimbabwe is noted as the major source country for sending students to South African universities. Lee and Sehoole (2015: 827) note two out of three international students in South African universities are from the Southern African Development Community, and Zimbabwe is the leading country with students in South African universities (Lee and Sehoole, 2015: 831). Other African countries are contributing to the growing numbers of foreign students in South African universities: "In 2008, Namibia accounted for 8000 students and Botswana for over 5000, followed by smaller numbers from Lesotho, Swaziland, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Zambia, Mauritius and Angola" (Mdepa & Tshiwula, 2012: 27). Nevertheless, according to the Rhodes University statistics (2018), in 2008, Rhodes University admitted 430 undergraduate male and female African Zimbabwean students. However, in 2011, the university admitted 506 male and female African Zimbabwean students. Thus, the admission from 2008-2011 increased by seventeen per cent.

The University of Zimbabwe is "the oldest university in the country and was established in 1955" (Masvawure, 2010: 860); following independence, there was a great amount of state investment in the higher education sector, leading to a proliferation of universities. In this regard, "universities were central to attempts to Africanise the state" (Emmerson, 1968 cited in Zeilig & Ansell, 2008: 11) and "to produce 'elites' to power development" (Mamdani, 1994, cited in Zeilig & Ansell, 2008: 11). University students in Zimbabwe were for many years accustomed to a well-rounded university education but, in recent years, there has been a significant decline in quality standards in the face of ongoing economic crises.

Further, in Zimbabwe, access to higher education has been affected by various factors. The factors include the "limited number of tertiary institutions, the ability of students to pay fees and also the entry requirements" (Chimucheka, 2012: 225). Even though most applicants satisfy the minimum entry requirements, the Zimbabwean institutions of higher learning are forced to enrol only those with high qualifications due to the large number of applicants and the tight competition (Chimucheka, 2012: 225). This system is not only discouraging, but

additionally exclusionary. Students who do not satisfy these steep requirements are forced to seek higher education alternatives. At the same time, there are many Zimbabwean students who, because of quality challenges at Zimbabwean universities, choose to attend universities elsewhere including South Africa. The push-pull understanding of migration broadly is of some relevance in Zimbabwean students coming to South Africa: "The traditional push and pull model suggest students are 'pushed' out of their home county due to inadequate or inferior educational resources and are 'pulled' to a foreign country in order to obtain a better education" (Lee and Sehoole, 2015: 829).

According to Zeilig and Ansell (2008), Zimbabwean students usually leave their home countries due to political and economic conditions that shape the individual's life and interests: "Like most Zimbabweans, UZ [University of Zimbabwe] students have been deeply affected by the country's ongoing economic crisis" (Masvawure, 2010: 860), which has forced many Zimbabwean students to enrol in universities outside of the country. The political and economic turmoil within Zimbabwe has pressurised students to acquire a quality degree from outside Zimbabwe. Many Zimbabwean students studying in South Africa are not here because they want to, but rather because they must, due to the decline of the higher education sector in Zimbabwe. This means that a large portion of Zimbabwean students are not in South Africa for reasons of luxury; rather, their situation and/or circumstances have forced them to be in South Africa.

Alternatively, Zimbabwean students may leave their homes because they want to access higher quality education. In this sense, the available resources at many South African universities is a huge factor for Zimbabwean students coming to South Africa for higher education. In other words, "the inflows from the African continent are understandable given that the South African higher education sector is better resourced and more diversified than those of many other African countries, and South Africa is assumed to have the most developed higher education system on the African continent" (National Commission on Higher Education, 1996, cited in Rouhani, 2007: 472). In addition, the pool of universities to choose from in South Africa could be another motivating factor for Zimbabweans to come to South Africa.

Mda (2010: 1) as well as Lee and Sehoole (2015: 835) note the possible reasons for Zimbabweans studying in South Africa could be close proximity, historical connections, accessibility, affordability, quality of university education, high employment opportunities,

political safety and stability, family or friends in South Africa, as well as South Africa's visa process. Thus, for these scholars, studying in South Africa is informed by various reasons that depend upon the personal history of the student. It becomes imperative to acknowledge the many reasons why Zimbabwean students have embarked on this difficult journey of seeking higher education away from home, in South Africa. For example, the possible reasons for Zimbabwean students coming to South African universities may shape the experiences of the individual who studies in South Africa. Further, whether the decision to study in South Africa is individually informed, or the circumstances are choosing for them, or third parties such as parents or guardians are making the choices, the student will regardless seek a quality degree from a renowned university. Thus, these students are constantly making decisions and at times making sacrifices, many of which could be beyond their control and scope of understanding. For example, funding is a huge constraint that Zimbabwean students need to manage. Additionally, like foreign students broadly, Zimbabwean students need to adjust to subtle issues such as assimilating into (or adjusting to) the host culture for them to avoid loneliness and even alienation.

In this regard, Zimbabwean students (like other foreign students globally) have chosen to study in South Africa despite what Sakurako (2000, cited in Lacina, 2002: 24) states as 'crisis situations' which often face foreign students (including Zimbabwean students in South Africa) during their stay: "crisis situations may develop for the international student as a result of the transition to a new culture and social environment". For instance, "international students may experience extreme loneliness and culture shock or physical symptoms such as headaches, insomnia, mental exhaustion, and many other symptoms due to stress caused by adjustment to a new culture" (Lacina, 2002: 24). More generally, Zimbabwean students face many of the social and cultural challenges addressed earlier in this chapter with reference to foreign students. Clearly, Zimbabwean students who have studied and completed their studies in South Africa seem to have effectively endured through these 'crisis situations'.

It is inevitable that Zimbabwean students encounter difficulties while being in South African universities, considering the current and past character of South African society. For example, observations are made by some Zimbabwean students are that they "noticed that South African students mixed almost exclusively with people of their own race. Even in class the students would sit only next to people of their own race" (Mda, 2010: 7). This sense of discrimination or exclusion from the South African student body seems very common. Crush (2014: 4) argues

broadly: “The plague of xenophobia in post-apartheid South Africa has been variously labelled the ‘dark side of democracy’, a ‘new pathology’, ‘apartheid vertigo’ and evidence of the ‘demonic’ nature of South African society”. More specifically, he adds (Crush, 2011: 11) that “xenophobic attitudes are very strong in South African communities and public institutions and many South Africans have a particularly negative view of foreign Africans, especially Zimbabweans”. This negative view can be associated with a superiority complex presented by South Africans as being different from the rest of Africa, and as being better than other African countries, specifically Zimbabwe (Mda, 2010: 3). With this knowledge of post-apartheid South Africa and the relationship between the locals and foreigners, specifically Zimbabweans, this Afro-phobic culture influences how Zimbabwean students experience South African universities

Mda (2010: 3) illustrates these issues when she argues that

> The relationship between South Africa and Africa, or South Africans and Africans is a complex one. South Africans of all racial groups and socio-economic classes, but especially from the uneducated and lower socio-economic classes, tend to be ignorant of the continent and generally display a superiority complex over other Africans.

In doing so, South Africans evidently present an implicit claim, as noted earlier, that South Africa is not part of the African continent (Mda, 2010: 3). Many South Africans see Zimbabweans as trouble makers who are here to deplete their limited public resources, which results in them having only limited sympathy for the plight of Zimbabweans in South Africa regardless of their various reasons. Put differently, “there is a widespread assumption amongst South Africans that the country has been flooded by millions of desperate Zimbabweans who are placing intolerable strain on public services” (Crush, 2011: 3).

This superiority complex presented by South Africans, which makes them somehow ‘better’ than other Africans, especially Zimbabweans, demonstrates the ingrained ideologies of the colonial and apartheid systems within South Africans. These ideologies have created an Afro-phobic, hostile relationship to the rest of Africa. This lack of sympathy towards Zimbabwean foreigners (including students) is just another exemplar of how deeply colonised South African society remains. For instance, Bond and Lemasson (1999: 1) mention that “ideally higher education must do better to prepare its beneficiaries to think in both a global and differentiated context, help them make a cosmopolitan view, be more aware of cultural differences and promote an open, understanding mind”, rather than a closed and limited mind-set, which is

presented by some South Africans. A closed mind-set is one which refuses to understand that Zimbabweans are equally African as South Africans are. Additionally, a closed mind-set refuses to understand that Zimbabweans are in South Africa not because they necessarily want to, but rather because they must. Their current circumstances and situations force them to leave the comfort of their homes and seek a better future outside.

There are further disadvantageous and problems that Zimbabwean students need to face while being at a South African university, as noted earlier. These disadvantages are not necessarily visible and tangible; they are more systematic and institutional. Though referring to the apartheid era, Gaidzanwa (1990: 63) argues that the dominant racist culture is exclusionary and alienating, especially to black individuals, and even more specific, to the undermined and devalued female gender. This systematic and institutional culture of South African universities that Gaidzanwa (1990:63) refers to, tends to be very white and masculinist, illustrating settler militancy. Post-apartheid universities, particularly the former white universities, continued to be marked by this in many ways. This might not be obvious; however, such institutional issues are still present at South African universities, including at Rhodes University as a former white English-medium university. In and of itself, this white institutional culture is very problematic. However, it becomes even more debilitating to a Zimbabwean student who, by being foreign in the country as well as at the university, still needs to negotiate not only their new social surroundings, but additionally negotiate this institutional culture. Trying to negotiate the institutional culture is exceedingly difficult, particularly for black female students including those from Zimbabwe. According to this institutional culture, a black female Zimbabwean student needs to understand that, in all aspects, she is lower than a white South African male student.

2.6 Conclusion

Clearly, based on the literature review in this chapter, foreign students (including black Zimbabwean students in South Africa) need to negotiate their way through complex institutional, social and cultural spaces as they interface with others. The form and content of their negotiations may vary across students and may change over time, and the end-result (anywhere from assimilation to outright hostility) will also be open to variations. Interface theory has been shown to be of particular significance in understanding these negotiations and the social and cultural experiences of foreign students. In this context, I now turn to the case study of this thesis, namely, black Zimbabwean students at Rhodes University.

Chapter Three: Zimbabwean Students at Rhodes University

3.1 Introduction

This chapter is the empirical chapter for the thesis. It first discusses the general outline of Grahamstown and Rhodes University (section 3.2), as well as giving an overall profile of the interviewed students (section 3.3). The reasons why these black Zimbabwean students came to South Africa and South African universities, specifically Rhodes University, as their study destination, then follows (section 3.4). Next (in section 3.5), I consider the social experiences and social relationships of the Zimbabwean students at Rhodes; after which (in section 3.6), the diverse cultural issues faced by Zimbabwean students are outlined, including questions around xenophobia, homosexuality, institutional culture and rape culture at Rhodes University. On this basis (in section 3.7), the chapter deals with the various ways in which processes of negotiation and adjustment have taken place amongst the black Zimbabwean students.

3.2 Grahamstown and Rhodes University

Considering the history, as well as the present state of South Africa, it is general knowledge that South African soil has been through historic events which have shaped the paths of those who walk on it. In this respect, "South Africa has been the scene of a number of momentous social engineering projects from colonialism and segregationism to apartheid and, currently, the democratic transformation. All of these had profound spatial implications and left significant legacies in the geography of the country" (Christopher, 2001, cited in Irvine, 2012: 1). This is true with specific reference to South African universities as well.

In fact, infamous past events which occurred in South Africa, along with contemporary developments since 1994, have negatively affected the lives of most – and mainly black – South Africans. This becomes clear in the case of Grahamstown from the census of 2006: "Grahamstown is located in the Eastern Cape and has an estimated population between 76,500 and 124,700, while the population of central Grahamstown is close to 62,000 people" (Thornton 2008, cited in Bonnes, 2013: 209; Statistics South Africa, 2001). Thus, when inclusive of the black townships situated on the periphery of the town, the total population (of larger Grahamstown) is estimated to be 125,000 people (Jones, 2011). Of the total population, 78 percent are black, 12 percent coloured, 10 percent white, and less than 1 percent is Indian (Jones, 2011: 68). The predominant language spoken in Grahamstown is isiXhosa, while many

of the local residents also speak English and/or Afrikaans. Forty-five percent of the population is between the ages of 20 and 49 years of age, while 39 percent is under 20 years of age (Jones, 2011: 68). The Eastern Cape Province, within which Grahamstown is located, is the poorest province in South Africa and, like cities and towns across the country, Grahamstown is marked by significant levels of inequality, particularly along racial lines.

Hence, despite the town's prestige as home to many of South Africa's premier educational institutions such as Rhodes University and private secondary schools, as well as cultural events such as the National Arts Festival, the town is severely affected by the depressing economic conditions that plague the majority of the region. The economic disparities are widespread, and Grahamstown residents are critically challenged by a 70–80 percent unemployment rate (Jones, 2011: 68) which grievously affects the youth population, most notably the black youth. Roodt (2011, cited in Duncan, 2013: 38) states that

> Grahamstown East [black townships] is an economically depressed area, with high levels of unemployment and a median household income (of those surveyed) of R1 100 a month. Half of the households surveyed stated that they needed twice that amount, i.e. R2 900 or more, to 'make ends meet'.

In 2000, Grahamstown East was estimated to have a population of 97,210 people, and by 2010 the unemployment rate was estimated to be 32.9 percent, which is higher than the national average of 24 percent (Roodt, 2011, cited in Duncan, 2013: 38). This is according to the (official) narrow of definition of unemployment, which excludes discouraged work-seekers. The reality of the situation is that this high unemployment rate is likely to be much higher if discouraged work-seekers are included. Overall, almost 40 per cent of Grahamstown East residents live in conditions of poverty (Roodt 2011, cited in Duncan, 2013: 38).

Despite the many challenges associated with the poverty in the town, Grahamstown is a hauntingly beautiful region, "arguably the crucible of South African history" (Wallis, 2012: 1). Grahamstown is the historic heartland of the Eastern Cape and embodies the spirit of the many and varied cultures which met here and made their mark; for instance, the Khoi, Xhosa, Boer and British (Wallis, 2012: 5). The broad streets and old buildings of Grahamstown are the legacy of a time when Grahamstown was one of the foremost towns in the Eastern Cape Province (Wallis, 2012: 8). Now no longer the scene of overt conflict and strife, as during the wars of the 1800s, Grahamstown is a vibrant mix of diverse heritages and cultures. Forming part of the Grahamstown area, now for over one hundred years, is Rhodes University. Rhodes

University currently has more than seven thousand students, and the presence of university life heavily influences the community (Bonnes, 2013: 209), including in terms of employment.

Previously known as Rhodes University College, the institution was founded in Grahamstown in 1904. The College was founded as a colonial institution. This was reflected in the naming of the College after the foremost imperialist of the time, Cecil John Rhodes, even though he had minimal association with the Eastern Cape during his lifetime (Greyling, 2007: 23). The decision to name the College after him was taken to obtain funding from the Rhodes Trust to ensure the very establishment of the College (Greyling, 2007: 23). This money was largely derived from profits from the Kimberley diamond mines. From its very foundation, Rhodes University was linked by its name to colonialism as pursued under Segregation and Apartheid. Therefore, Rhodes University was racially founded and inevitably perpetuated the colonial and apartheid ideologies of the South African state. English and Afrikaans were compulsory languages in South Africa; a country where its majority communicated in other indigenous languages (Satchwell, 2005: 169). At Rhodes, English became the medium of instruction. The entire university experience at Rhodes was structured within the confinements of the racialised state and society. Everything about Rhodes University, and everything within Rhodes University, mirrored whiteness. However, since 1994, the institution has sought to bring about a more inclusive culture more in tune with the fact that, currently, most students are black students.

3.3 Profile of Interviewees

The interviewees of this study are eighteen black Zimbabwean students registered at Rhodes University. The interviewees consist of 50 percent male students, and 50 percent female students. One third of the participants (six) are in first year, and three of them are female and another three are male. Another third of the participants are in their third year, with two female and four male students. The final third consisted of Master's students, with four female participants and two male participants. The students are between the ages of 19 and 26 years old. All of the first-year students stated that they stay at the university residence, while only two third year students are still within the university residence system. The remaining four third year students, as well as the six Master's students, are all staying off campus at either flats or commune houses. More than half of the interviewees stated that they come from Harare, while one third of the participants came from either Bindura, Masvingo or Beitbridge (see Table 1).

Table 1: Details of Interviewees

NAME	AGE	GENDER	GRADE	LOCATION
Happiness	20	F	1st year	Bindura
Jessica	20	F	1st year	Harare
John	20	M	1st year	Harare
Kenneth	19	M	1st year	Harare
Noel	19	M	1st year	Harare
Precious	20	F	1st year	Masvingo
Abby	21	F	3rd year	Harare
Mary	21	F	3rd year	Beitbridge
Matt	20	M	3rd year	Harare
Sbo	21	M	3rd year	Harare
Zweli	20	M	3rd year	Bindura
Zola	20	M	3rd year	Harare
Amanda	23	F	MA	Harare
Pearl	26	F	MA	Harare
Shaun	22	M	MA	Rusape
Thandeka	26	F	MA	Beitbridge
Themba	23	M	MA	Masvingo
Zintle	23	F	MA	Harare

3.4 Reasons for Coming to South Africa and Choosing Rhodes University

Since the end of apartheid and the advent of a democratic South Africa in 1994, South Africa has become a new destination for African immigrants, which has added to the increasing trend of South-to-South migration globally. African immigration to South Africa has increased not only through the regular immigration of skilled professionals and other economic migrants

from distressed economies, but also through refugees fleeing conflict areas such as Angola, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan and Zimbabwe (Isike & Isike, 2012: 94). While South Africa is also a sending country, post-1994 South Africa has become a major receiving country of African migrants.

Zintle (female, Master's student) argues that she left Zimbabwe and came to South Africa because it promised increased chances of being marketable once she obtained her degree. Therefore, Zimbabweans at times feel almost compelled to leave their homes because they want a better future for themselves. Pearl, Amanda and Zintle are all females doing the final year of their Master's degree. They have varied yet comparable reasons for coming to South Africa. The commonality between them is that, they all argued that Zimbabwe did not offer them promising quality education and, inevitably, a substantial recognised degree:

> Pearl: *"I came to South Africa because of the economic and political situation in Zimbabwe… and just all the things that were happening in Zim that affected us. Everything was just going down the drain from 2008 and we needed to move or go down the drain with it".*
>
> Amanda: *"Currently in Zimbabwe I couldn't find a job. I wanted to work, so I opted for South Africa to further my studies rather than sitting at home not knowing when I will find something, if I will even find it. But I'm sure I will find a job after this degree because in Zimbabwe, if you have a masters, there is prestige to that status".*
>
> Zintle: *"Basically, for me it was all about getting a better education because back home… I don't really see how our tertiary education is competitive as compared to what South African universities are providing. So, it was a matter of seeking better education, and… increasing my chances of being marketable after graduating".*

In as much as a large portion of the participants stated that they came to South Africa because of the events that have and are still occurring in Zimbabwe, they had other reasons for coming to study in South Africa. One reason included being away from home but not too far from home, while other reasons included wanting to be in a new environment and exploring a different space. The unique reasons of each student somehow linked or had a commonality with other students' reason for leaving their home and studying in South Africa.

When asked why they specifically chose Rhodes University as a study destination, their particular reasons once again varied, but common reasons were identifiable. For instance, a common reason for coming to Rhodes University was because of the academic excellence that

Rhodes University seemingly offered. In other words, according to these participants, Rhodes seemed to be the best university to study their preferred degree. For example, the following participants are in their first year and they explain why they came to Rhodes and not any other institutions of higher learning in South Africa:

> Precious: *"[The] Journalism Department is really strong, so my dad said this is the best place to come. And everyone talks about the Journ Department to be really good here".*
>
> John: *"Initially I wanted to study Health Sciences, but I wasn't being accepted at the universities I was applying to. Then I had to change my choice and I had researched, and it said that it [Rhodes University] was one of the best in the field that I am now studying… pharmacy".*
>
> Kenneth: *"The law [degree] in South Africa I heard is more advanced than in Zimbabwe. Rhodes University promised to be a better university than most of the universities in South Africa in terms of the degree I intend to study".*

Themba, a male Master's student, additionally added that he came to Rhodes and not any other university, because he is confident in the quality of the degree obtained at Rhodes:

> Themba: *"Initially I came to do a law degree. Long story… but things changed and I was forced to change departments. But I know that all, actually most… about ninety percent of the degrees offered at Rhodes are… good. You can do something with it. It's not like other universities… you know… UJ, NMMU… it's just a good uni[versity]".*

In comparison to the total amount of students interviewed, a much smaller amount of the interviewees stated that they chose South Africa and specifically Rhodes because it was in fact recommended to them. The recommendations were usually given to the individual by family members, including a cousin who was already attending Rhodes University. The cousin offered a picture of Grahamstown and Rhodes University to the new student, explaining why it would be suitable for someone coming to South Africa for higher education. Other reasons, based on recommendations, were usually in conversations with their parents. In the end, there was an agreement between the student and his or her parents that coming to Rhodes was the best option because of the proximity and financial reasons, as well as academic reasons. For instance, Mary (female student), Matt (male student) and Zola (male student) are in their third year, and they describe why they came to South Africa. For Mary, coming to South Africa was motivated by the easy visa process:

Mary: *"The visa process was easier and it was not as expensive as going to a university overseas… so I decided to come here and avoid the hassle".*

While for Matt and Zola, coming to South Africa was a much more cost-effective choice:

Matt: *"It's obviously much cheaper coming here than going overseas. And I wanted to be away from home but not too far from home. So, coming to South Africa was the best option because it's like a 50/50 benefit".*

Zola: *"There are multiple reasons why I came here… but I enjoy travelling. I had to leave Zim and go study somewhere else… but the main reason I came here was because of financial reasons. Coming here was cheaper and being here is cheaper for my parents and they are the ones paying for my fees and living… so… yeah".*

Thus, for these interviewees, coming to study in South Africa might not have been a personal choice, but the circumstances (including the financial status of their parents) might have guided the individual's decision to study in South Africa. To further explain this point, other participants who were interviewed noted that coming to study in South Africa was not their ideal first choice; it was not what they wanted for themselves. However, it was not within their capacity to decide otherwise. There are many variables that need to be considered when deciding on a study destination as a foreign student. The financial implication is one such major variable that needs to be greatly considered. Being a foreign student is expensive, especially with universities such as Rhodes which has rigid terms and conditions that need to be adhered to by the foreign applicant before they are admitted to the institution. For instance, foreign students are expected to pay their full tuition before starting their academic year. Considering that the university tuition is quite a handsome lump sum, Matt and Zola represent a number of other Zimbabwean students' concerns with regards to the financial strain that is placed on individuals coming to foreign institutions for higher education.

3.5 Social Experiences and Relationships of Zimbabwean Students

According to Shange (2014: 1), Grahamstown has been given multiple names locally which include 'City of Saints', 'Sleepy Hollow', and 'Student City'. The small town is rejuvenated by the student population during the academic year, bringing considerable business to the town (Shange, 2014: 3). As a small town, there are limited activities on offer in which students can partake. As indicated earlier, the National Arts Festival (NAF) is held in Grahamstown in July (during academic vacation). The Festival celebrated its 44th year of existence in 2018 and is South Africa's "longest-running arts festival" (Saayman & Rossouw, 2011: 604). Considering

that the Eastern Cape is only a "middle-income province" with a high unemployment rate (Saayman & Rossouw, 2011: 604), events such as the NAF are seen as a way of generating revenue for Grahamstown as well and combating poverty in the region. Though the NAF provides a wide range of entertainment for the town, it lasts for a mere three weeks – with most Rhodes students away from Grahamstown during this period.

Given that Grahamstown has no significant entertainment places throughout the year, most students (including Zimbabwean students) view Grahamstown as quite boring. The following three male participants, two of whom are in their first year, spoke about this in the following way:

> John: *"I thought there was a beach here [laughs]; that's the only reason I came here. Grahamstown is honestly a bit boring. Dry. It's got not much to handle but it's good for education. It's very good for studying though".*
>
> Kenneth: *"Grahamstown is quiet and more suitable for academic purposes. You don't hear scandals like other places. Rhodes University is accommodative both in terms of education and society as a whole".*
>
> Shaun: *"This place is weird. From the weather, to the people, to the town… everything. It's slow. I thought Harare was slow, but Grahamstown is slower. As students, we are limited like… we can't even watch a movie or something like that".*

Some of the students, such as John (male, first-year) and Kenneth (male, first-year), added that Grahamstown is a suitable and vibrant environment for education and studying. Murray (2017) reiterates the fact that Grahamstown is indeed a place of study, hosting plenty of institutions of learning, with some of them being internationally recognised for academic excellence (including Rhodes itself). Since Grahamstown was founded in 1812, it is entrenched in the historical events of the past, from the 1820 Settlers to a 100-year-old university. Grahamstown is additionally home to other prominent and internationally acclaimed primary and high schools such as St Andrews College and The Diocesan School for Girls.

However, the social experience of being at Rhodes was captured by a large portion of participants as involving drinking and partying. It is most likely uncontroversial to argue that many universities struggle with controlling the consumption of alcohol on their campuses because, when many students enter university campuses, they enter a period of freedom and experimentation "where young people have the opportunity to test the limits previously set by

parents and schools" (Young & de Klerk, 2008: 101). The level of drinking at Rhodes University has awarded it an undesirable reputation as the 'drinking university' (Young & de Klerk, 2008: 101). The drinking behaviour is extremely visible because of the small size of the town, as well as the close proximity of retail stores (to the university) which provide the students with alcohol (Young & de Klerk, 2008: 101). The university recognises this problem and aims to dismantle this 'drinking culture'.

For students in general, Rhodes and Grahamstown is seen as boring. In this context, some students try to focus on their studies but – for many students – this means that there is nothing to do other than to drink and party. The 'drinking culture' marking the institution speaks to what many students do in their spare time. For instance, some students argue that when they are bored, they drink. In the same breath, other students stated that their academics come second in their list of priorities and that drinking comes first. They further indicated that this is the socially acceptable way to act at the university. The following students, who are in third year, exemplify the aforementioned points, as they state that:

> Mary: *"Before we go out, we have pre-drinks at Res while we get ready. By the time we get to Prime, we are already wasted [laughs]. That's the best part… getting there ON [drunk] and seeing people you know or new ones… and everything else that happens after that".*
>
> Zweli: *"Usually my friends and me will collect money and buy drinks in town… it's cheaper that way. Like… we can buy stuff for the whole weekend. When we get to campus, we start drinking and smoking. When we get high, we are ready to leave [to go to a club]".*
>
> Zola: *"If I drink on Wednesday, I will not go to my dawnie [morning lecture] the next day. I have a hangover and I don't want to be bored by lecturers. I don't even attend most of my classes. It's a waste of time because I can get the information on RU Connected".*
>
> Matt: *"Rhodes is everything they tell you about it. You hear that in Grahamstown, the students don't have anything to do that is true. All we do is drink, get drunk and turn-up [party]. It's this constant buzz of people having fun every weekend. Friday to Sunday, and even during the week with things like two for one. There's little time to focus on your books [laughs] but who cares"?*

According to Matt (male, third-year student), there is a social event happening almost every weekend. In addition, he argues that the social life can continue even during the week. Matt seems to be a 'socialite' and is in constant interaction with many other people for partying purposes. Furthermore, Noel (male) and Precious (female), who are both in first year, also agree with the above participants as they added that:

> Noel: *"There's a lot to do here, you just need to know the right people [laughs]. People who are bored are not awake… like there's an entire road dedicated to clubs… how much more do you people want? On top of that, there is no one telling you what to do… you're your own boss dude [laughs]. Just have fun man… we're still young you know… we'll be serious later [laughs]".*
>
> Precious: *"Before I came here, I was warned that I would become an alcoholic [laughs]. In a way it's true… all we do is turn-up [party]. We can go club hopping you know… Prime, to 37 to Rat [laughs] like that's when we have prepared ourselves that tonight will be a big night".*

Excessive drinking amongst the youth, including university students, continues to be a serious public concern. Alcohol is one of the most widely used substances by youth and young adults (Johnston, O'Malley, Bachman, & Schulenberg, 2009; Meilman, Presley, & Lyerla, 1994, cited in Rhodes & Clinkinbeard, 2013: 24) and has been associated with several negative health and social consequences. Excessive drinking contributes to unwanted risky behaviours, which could have possible life changing repercussions.

Conversely, not all undergraduate students are as outgoing as the above six students. For example, Happiness (female, first-year) is more reserved and much more focused on her academics. She spends most of her time at the library and not necessarily 'out and about'. Happiness further indicated that the only ongoing social experience she pursued at Rhodes, which was attending River of Life Church, has been cancelled by her academic commitments. When asked about her social experience at Rhodes, she responded by saying that:

> Happiness: *"I don't think I have a social time. I'm in the library working or I'm in my room. So… I used to go to River of Life, but then now we have ADPs [Academic Design Programme] on Sunday, so I don't go because of the clash".*

Pearl (female student) and Thandeka (female student) are doing their Master's degree, and they are also not as 'outgoing' as their fellow colleagues. They are focused on their work, in the same way as Happiness. For Pearl and Thandeka, this might be because of the sheer pressures of their post-graduate degree:

Pearl: *"As you progress, socially, not just by choice but just the structure of the studies, they force you and you become less interactive with other people and what's going on around campus. In undergrad in general you get to see and hear more about what's going on around campus and interactions around campus you're up to date. But in postgrad you're almost socially secluded from things happening on campus. They don't really affect you. You're just in your own little bubble and so now being in second year masters, it's actually narrowed down more, it's just me [and] my lab. So social interactions end up being on your phone; on social media than in person".*

Thandeka: *"All my real friends have left. There are people that I know, but that doesn't mean they are my friends. It's just me and the lab most of the time… but I look at these kids outside the Kaif [cafeteria] making a noise while we are in the library and I feel sorry for them. One day they will understand what they did to us who are trying to study in peace [laughs]".*

Broadly speaking, social experiences at Rhodes can be categorised into, on the one hand, the drinking and partying category and, on the other, those who are completely focused on their academic work. Many of the undergraduate students, especially the third-year male students, typically experienced the 'normal' social life (drinking and partying) of being at a university. Networking and interacting with other students around them was a common response that many first-year students had. However, some of the Master's students argued that their social life had become isolated without regular communication with others, especially with students from outside of their discipline. Their social life was close to non-existent because of their degree. Therefore, in summary, the variables of year of study and gender influenced the social experience of the participants. Many first-year female students became friends with each other (Zimbabwean students); especially in the first semester, they exclusively mixed and befriended Zimbabwean students only. Further, all the Master's students argued that their social interactions were not necessarily face to face or in person, as there was scarcely any time for such interactions. Their demanding degree and minimal 'real friends' at Rhodes forced them to communicate and interact with friends on social media rather than in person and going out partying.

Besides the broad social experiences of the Zimbabwean students while at Rhodes, it is also important to consider the social relationships which have been established at Rhodes by the Zimbabwean students. The participants where thus asked about their friendship circles. Did

they establish relationships solely with other Zimbabwean students or did they also interact socially on a regular basis with South African students? All of the participants stated they were friends with both Zimbabwean and non-Zimbabwean students. However, two thirds of the participants stated that initially, because of proximity and familiarity, they only had Zimbabwean friends. As time went on, they started to communicate with other students who are not from Zimbabwe. The following male students in third-year and first-year argued that their friends were diverse individuals from all over the globe. They stated that:

> Sbo: *"I have friends from all over the world. I get along with people from different countries or regions".*
>
> Noel: *"My friendship circle is mixed but it's mostly Zim students".*
>
> John: *"It is very mixed. It is very, very mixed especially the res[idence] I am in. I think we are [laughs] multi-African-national if you can say something like that. Yeah, but we are very mixed so it also helps in learning other languages. My friends, they're not just Zim".*

The female participants had similar but different encounters than the male students. For the female participants, their friends also consisted of Zimbabwean and non-Zimbabwean students. But it seems that they were more inclined to associate with Zimbabwean students at the beginning of their stay at Rhodes, with their friendship circle expanding as they became more familiar with their new environment. As Amanda and Happiness indicate, they became friends with non-Zimbabweans once they were comfortable with the environment:

> Amanda: *"I think I have more Zim friends. When you are here and you are new, the first people who you will look for are some people from Zimbabwe. I think it's more fascinating and exciting. You hear someone speaking in Shona, you want to… because you feel like you share the same views and backgrounds. But then as time goes on, you meet South African students who are also friendly... so yeah".*
>
> Happiness: *"In first semester right, it consisted mostly of Zim students and because you are in first year everyone you meet becomes your friend because you are alone. And then as time goes on, you begin to see that, no, these people are not your friends… but then now you begin to develop real friendships and you understand each other. So now I [even] have other races as friends".*

Pearl additionally had the same experience as Amanda and Happiness. The difficulty of engaging with other students in the beginning was an obstacle she soon overcame:

Pearl: *"when I got here, I only chilled with Zimbabweans. It was nice seeing people who like you and people from home… people like you. I felt close to them because I could relate. When I got lost with them… I knew that we were lost together. And another thing… it wasn't just about seeing people who are from Harare only, even other Zimbabweans. But as time goes on, you meet other people and you start moving away from your 'comfort zone'… you meet nice people… you know… South Africans [laughs] and other people who welcome you".*

Clearly, Zimbabwean students do form friendships with students from outside of Zimbabwe. Additionally, the male students seem to interact much easier with students who are not from Zimbabwe. They do not take long to create friendships. In contrast to this, the female students took more time to adapt and befriend non-Zimbabwean students. For these female students, befriending non-Zimbabwean students only started happening later on in their first year.

3.6 Culture in South Africa: Challenges for Zimbabwean Students

The initial association with Zimbabwean students involved an attempt to ease into their new institutional environment, but also the new cultural environment. The Zimbabwean students soon realised that there were significant cultural differences at Rhodes and in South Africa more broadly (compared to back home), and they were indeed struck by these differences. Befriending fellow Zimbabwean students at first likely allowed these students to stand apart from the cultural practices in order to make sense of them if not come to fully understand and appreciate them. This was one way in which they sought to negotiate their way into university life.

In this way, what they expected when arriving at Rhodes was in many cases vastly different than what was experienced, and in this context, the interviewees reflected upon their initial impressions of the place. According to Amanda who is in her final year of her Master's degree, and Sbo who is a male in third year, Rhodes seemed like a completely new world:

Amanda: *"It's [Rhodes University] a bit different… so different anyway. Culturally, it's different from my own original culture. I think it's because of the constitution, so there are things allowed here that are not allowed in Zimbabwe, so it's not too familiar. In Zimbabwe there are limits in dressing, what's expected of you. The issue of homosexuality. In Zimbabwe you can hear rumours of it, but you don't see people*

practising it or whatever. In my case, it was not ok. From where I'm coming from, they say it's not ok, so obviously I was not comfortable".

Sbo: *"Everything about this place is weird. It's not like home. You see guys with makeup… but they surely can't really be guys… no guy has makeup [laughs]. In Zim[babwe] they would be behind bars for that makeup [laughs]. But I can't say that in public here. You guys would kill me".*

Clearly, these problems are a reflection of the broader character of South African society, when contrasted to Zimbabwe; and they often led to discomfort on the part of the Zimbabwean students.

In this context, coming to South Africa, a country which prides itself in respecting a diversity of human rights, it is no surprise that many Zimbabwean students feel disorientated when they first come into contact with people who identify as anything other than heterosexual. Engelke (1999: 289) argues that some quarters of Zimbabwean society claim that homosexuality was "immoral, 'unAfrican', and, certainly, not a lifestyle choice that should be represented". The issue of homosexuality is very sensitive in many African societies and, consequently, it carries significant stigma. This means that talking anything positive about homosexual people, or praising them in any positive light, can be easily interpreted that you are one of them (Maburira, Motsi, Masuka & Chigondo, 2012: 218). According to Happiness (female, first-year), many of her Zimbabwean friends call her a lesbian for interacting with homosexual students. She stated that:

Happiness: *"Most of my friends are from Zimbabwe. But many of them started questioning me and telling me that I'm gay. They said I must speak the truth because I'm always laughing with the gay people… I just enjoy their company that's all".*

Additionally, in Zimbabwe, any form of action deemed supportive of homosexual people is usually denied or unsuccessful: "Due to stigma, prejudice and discrimination justified by religious and cultural beliefs, most helping professionals in Zimbabwe are not in any position to help gay people" (Maburira, Motsi, Masuka & Chigondo, 2012: 218). Zimbabwe has declared that it will not tolerate homosexuality, such that "politicians call them the 'festering finger,' endangering the body of the nation; churchmen say God wants them dead; the courts send them to jail" (Shoko, 2010: 634). Since homosexuality is a criminal offence in Zimbabwe, generally, many Zimbabweans have a negative attitude towards it (Goddard, 2004, cited in Maburira, Motsi, Masuka & Chigondo, 2012: 219). Furthermore, "homosexuality in Zimbabwe

has produced a 'culture of silence' around issues of sexuality and inevitably has made it difficult to locate and define such practices" (Engelke, 1999: 297).

Further, in Zimbabwe, sex of any kind is not a light topic for general conversation, especially with adults and conservative people. Abby (female, third year student) highlights this when she explained her relationship with her friends at Rhodes. She revealed that many of her South African friends where expressive and spoke out about almost anything. With regards to the topic of sex and sexuality, this is what she had to say about South Africans:

> Abby: *"You guys speak about sex like its normal… like you are drinking water. I can't do that at home. I was taught that sex is a sacred thing. It's only for marriage. I come from a patriarchal upbringing. I can't even say the word around my parents… they would think I'm doing it. It's unacceptable and we can't negotiate that".*

Jessica, also a female student in her first year, had the same sentiments as Abby:

> Jessica: *"I come from a place where I'm told to act and behave in a certain way. Then I come here, and my eyes are opened. I'm told to act in a way that is different from what I know. It's a difficult situation. I have to obey my parents… like I can't even tell them I have a boyfriend, let alone be open to them about any sexual activities we have. You then see that our culture is problematic. It's like you are enlightened when you come here…but if I'm still living with my parents, there's nothing that I can do".*

Unlike the other interviewees such as Happiness (female, first-year) and Kenneth (male, first-year) who explained that part of their social engagements included being at church, Abby and Jessica did not disclose any religious commitments or involvement in religious activities. This may be of interest because of their discomfort when speaking about sex. Further, though Abby is 21 years old and Jessica 20 years old, they still feel restricted by their upbringing, and by the cultural practices which inhibit open conversations about topics that are considered taboo with their parents, such as sex or any sexually related topics.

Besides sex and sexual orientation, some of the interviewees were deeply disturbed by the racial issues in South Africa and claimed to be victims of what they considered to be racism. They claimed that, while in Zimbabwe, they never experienced racism, and specifically white racism against blacks. Similar to all other well-resourced, historically-white universities in South Africa, Rhodes is undergoing a process of transformation to widen access and adjust the racial demographics of students and staff admitted at the institution. This includes internationalising the university by ensuring a significant body of students from the rest of

Africa. However, "despite changes to the student demographics, many black staff members and students at historically-white university campuses continue to be alienated by their experiences of racism" (Gwele, 2002; Jansen, 2009; Mabokela, 2000; Makgoba, 1997; Pillay & Collings, 2004; Potgieter 2002, cited in Young & Mayson, 2010: 16).

> Jessica: *"I faced my first incident of racism when I was here. Here racism is actually a thing. They talk about it, it's everywhere. Black people know it, white people know it. Students know it, lecturers know it. It's a bit uncomfortable. Back home we have other different races yes, but no one cares to point them out. Here, it's in your face. You have to take note of it whether you want to or not… you just can't ignore it. It's kinda overwhelming… and exhausting actually".*

Further, in the case of South Africa, racism is often linked to the growing menace of Afro-phobia, because distinctions are made between different categories of black people (sometimes purely on the basis of skin tone). Hence, Afro-phobic behaviour, in conjunction with (black-on-black) racism, is a problem within South Africa that is on the rise. Black-on-black antagonism and even violence is often directed towards other black (non-South African) Africans in South Africa. Gqola (2008, cited in Isike & Isike, 2012: 96) reiterates how black South Africans refer derogatively to black foreigners: they are considered as "the 'smelly', 'hungry', 'poor', 'illiterate' and 'uncultured' *Makwerekwere* from 'poor' Africa" and are judged as guilty for 'crime, taking our jobs and our women', and as such should be resisted" and even removed from the country. As Abby (female, third-year) put it:

> Abby: *"I'm actually disappointed with Rhodes. It's not what I thought it was. We pay so much money for all these problems [laughs]. Like… I've seen how you guys have serious issues with skin tone. The darker you are… you're a loser [laughs]; it's a shame man. Black people are side-lined by the 'yellow bones' [light toned black people] who think they are automatically beautiful. You can't be beautiful just because you have light skin… that doesn't make sense".*

The presence of xenophobia at Rhodes was constantly raised, at least by female students. The hostility that occurs is mainly in the residences as well as the dining halls. However, many other students had not experienced Rhodes or Grahamstown more broadly as xenophobic; they encountered xenophobia in the bigger cities such as Cape Town and Johannesburg. Most of the participants in fact stated that Grahamstown was a quiet and 'safer' environment, considering the crime rate in South Africa. The female participants who have experienced xenophobic

violations while in Grahamstown included Abby (female, third-year). Abby stated that the subtle, yet active xenophobic attacks were from South African students who were members of her residence. She noted that many people assumed that, because of her dark skin complexion, she is South African and therefore understands South African languages; in this case, isiXhosa. This behaviour was not just xenophobic, but additionally Afro-phobic because it was black-on-black hostility. Abby argued that these misconceptions were very discomforting and problematic:

> Abby: *"I know the Xhosa girls at res think that just because I'm a dark skin black I can understand them. When I don't respond, they start chirping in their language. Also in the dining hall when we speak Shona with my friends, they expect us to keep quiet… that's a bit inconsiderate and rude. But I'm glad I'm just here for the degree and I'm leaving after that".*

Many other Zimbabwean students encounter difficulties by being at a university in South Africa, despite its close geographical location and its historical, social and cultural similarities with Zimbabwe. For John (male, first-year) and Noel (male, first-year), the bigger cities seemed to have much more intolerant and unwelcoming people when compared to Grahamstown. These people did not hide their views and dislikes towards foreign people. John explained that, in Johannesburg, people made sure that he knows his status, that of being a foreigner; they did not hide it from him. Similarly, Noel visited Cape Town and experienced xenophobic attacks from the locals. Both students explained that there was an observable difference between the people of Grahamstown and the people of the bigger cities:

> John: *"Grahamstown is quiet. When I went to visit in Wits… I felt like an outsider. They made sure I feel it… and they don't care. That's when I knew that I made a good decision to come to Rhodes".*

Similarly,

> Noel: *"I only experienced xenophobia during the April vac[ation] in Cape Town. I was asking for directions in town… then they said I must speak their language. I told them I don't understand. They started to laugh at me and swear at me… they said I'm faking… you know… like a coconut or something".*

Clearly, the social experiences of Zimbabwean students at Rhodes are influenced by the larger South African context and the ongoing legacy of racialism. As Jessica (female, first-year) states, these experiences can be overwhelming and exhausting, and add a further burden to

pursuing a university education at Rhodes. There are multiple subtle issues, such as racism, which many international students are not warned about beforehand as it distracts from the image of the university. They may be informed about them beforehand at times, learning about this through informal means; however, this does not guarantee that they are fully equipped to deal with them.

Being in South Africa and in the Eastern Cape more specifically, which is an isiXhosa dominated area, Zimbabwean students studying at Rhodes University are also exposed to different locally-specific (ethnic-based) cultural norms and practices; as well as to other South African students with a different ethnic background. This relates not only to their interaction with the thousands of Xhosa-speaking students at Rhodes, but also with regard to staff at the university and members of the Grahamstown community. This raises the broader issue of a cultural shock, even if language is not a barrier. As one student said:

> Thandeka: *"I would say at first I really experienced culture shock. Like… from the way we talk, the cold weather-which I'm still not used to [laughs]… of course there is the issue of language barrier but I could understand Xhosa from the beginning but... the culture was the main issue. I had to take time to evolve, to grow, to accept some of the things done here".*

This coming across by Zimbabwean students of isiXhosa language and culture, as well as other cultures and hence the sheer diversity of South African society, lead to all sorts of emotions on their part. As Precious (female, first-year) and Shaun (male, master's student) put it:

> Precious: *"In Zim we don't really have the dress for our tradition, so seeing people dress up in their traditional garb is kind of nice, and your rituals, you guys acknowledge that. Whereas in Zim, it's not really a big thing".*
>
> Shaun: *"When I got here, everything was all over the place. Different languages, Xhosa and the Zulu speaking and acting like one thing. Nothing was similar to what I was used to. To some extent it's nice. But not all situations… Like the Xhosa people thinking they own this place or something".*

Jessica spoke more generally about South African diversity:

> Jessica: *"I think as a Zimbabwean coming to South Africa, I identify more now as a Zimbabwean than I did back home because… when you see South Africa from the outside, it's this rainbow nation, all these lovely things and people and the colours etc. So, when I got here culturally I was confused… is it really necessary? So many things. So many people. Even the 11 languages [laughs]. I just think it's different from home".*

South Africa is known as the 'rainbow nation', suggesting that all people are united and co-exist peacefully. However, in reality, there is considerable visible and more subtle ethnic-related conflicts in contemporary South Africa.

These expressions may not be manifestations of outright cultural shock, but the experiences of the Zimbabwean students does speak to some aspects of cultural shock as set out in the literature. According to Church (1982, cited in Westwood & Barker, 1990: 252), international students frequently encounter some form of culture shock. Church (1982) goes on to argue that culture shock can be triggered by a range of issues such as the difference in climate, food, living conditions and standards, social values, ways of behaving, styles of learning, and modes of communication, both verbal and nonverbal, all of which can be stressful for the student (1990: 252). Indeed, culture shock has been widely accepted as a serious, acute and sometimes chronic affective reaction to a new social milieu (Furham, 2012: 14): "New experiences such as these often result in a loss of culture and personal identity. Increased stress, frustration, anger, fear, or depression can be a common experience for the sojourner" (Church, 1982, cited in Westwood & Barker, 1990: 252). The foreign environment can, at times, be unwelcoming and this can lead to foreign students experiencing extreme shock levels.

Culture shock does not have to be associated with negative emotions only, as the impact of the stress depends on both the individual and the situation. Thus, the relevant variables in explaining the extent of shock could include the degree of the change that individuals experience, their personality, and the social support that is available for them (Adelman, 1988, cited in Zhou et al, 2008: 65). One of the participants who was interviewed is an exemplar of this notion presented by Adelman (1988). Zola (male, third-year) experienced culture shock in that, culturally, the space was different – but in a good way. He expressed that:

> Zola: *"When I first arrived, I was shocked… I think our cultures clash. Things are very different in Zim… we perceive things in a different way. There's a lot of freedom here… the liberty is good. It's not like Zim. Here I can do anything and I won't get into trouble. I'm not used to so much freedom and knowing that I can say anything or do anything and won't go to jail for it. Back home you need to think twice before you open your mouth… ZANU doesn't play with children".*

Thus, a culture shock may open up space for expressing inner thoughts and emotions.

In entering into a new social milieu such as South Africa broadly and the Eastern Cape more specifically, Zimbabwean students are faced with different cultural values and practices, whether around sexual orientation, sex, race or ethnicity. These values and practices become infused within Rhodes' cultural arrangements as well. These are not necessarily written down for the foreigner, as an outsider, as if they are able to easily acquaint themselves with them. In other words, there is no guide book which allows Zimbabwean students to navigate the space at their convenience and un-problematically. When and how they come across (either hearing or experiencing) such values and practices is also not pre-determined and will vary between students.

Moreover, beyond the outside values and practices which are embedded within Rhodes' present character, there are certain values, beliefs and practices which are unique to Rhodes University, and they make up its institutional culture. An institutional culture of a university can have positive and negative effects on the people within that university. Zintle (female, Master's student) and Themba (male, Master's student) have different opinions about Rhodes as an institution. They captured the two sides to Rhodes University, as a caring, yet insensitive institution, by addressing the positive and negative repercussions of the institutional culture of Rhodes:

> Zintle: *"Rhodes University has its own culture which is very unique from other universities and one of the… main things I will point out is how it tries to integrate into the [Grahamstown] community at large. In a way it does not want to separate itself from the community. It's an institution that tries to integrate people of different backgrounds because you see when you walk around campus you see people walking freely. Rhodes tries to bridge the gap between the university and community at large".*

While Zintle speaks about a supposed inclusivity at Rhodes, Themba has experienced Rhodes differently and implicitly refers to the racialised dimension of its institutional culture. He expressed that:

> Themba: *"There are still elements linked to the past regime, the apartheid regime which the university does not want to abandon which I might think they make other students feel uncomfortable. So, for instance, in the dining hall system, the issue of providing fork and knife. To other students they might feel uncomfortable because of how the system works".*

The issue of the fork and knife is problematic because it is part of the European culture and inevitably foreign to many black students. Students who do not use forks and knives in the

dining halls are seen as backwards and uncultured. By continuing with such a practice, the university imposes a culture on the student body, with those who do not assimilate into the system being labelled as deviant and problematic. Zimbabwean students need to come to terms with the complexities of the university's culture, including the claimed racism and sexism which is embodied in it. In this context, I focus specifically on the question of rape at Rhodes University.

3.6.1 Rhodes University Rape Culture

Another culture which is associated with Rhodes is the rape culture which the university is struggling to address. The South African Police Service estimates that only one in thirty-six rapes are reported (Vetten, 2000, cited in Gordon & Collins, 2013: 2). Research reveals that 30% of women in South Africa indicate that their first 'sexual' encounters were forced (Buga, Amoko, & Ncayiyana, 1996; Jewkes, Vundule, Maforah, & Jordaan, 2001; Richter, 1996, cited in Gordon & Collins, 2013: 2). In South Africa, it is estimated that one in four women are abused by their partners and a higher proportion of women are murdered by their partners than anywhere else in the world (Abrahams, Jewkes, Laubscher, & Hoffman, 2006; Abrahams et al., 2009; Van Rensburg, 2007, cited in Gordon & Collins, 2013: 2). Hence: "Approximately half of all South African women murdered in 1999 were murdered by their intimate partner, and it is estimated that a woman is killed by her intimate partner every six hours" (Gordon & Collins, 2013: 2). At Rhodes University, the majority of the student body typically consists of females (approximately 60 percent), and they are not excluded from the statistics presented by the South African Police. Female students at Rhodes consistently complain about gender inequality, sexism and sexual harassment each year (de Klerk et al, 2007: 115). The official university responses, which are almost exclusively male-driven, are deeply reactive and resistant in aiming to preserve a masculine culture. Indeed, the hegemonic masculinity at Rhodes defines women as potential conquests, to be objectified and dehumanised, perpetuating sexism and gender-violence and enabling rape, all framed within a context of patriarchy, gendered role constructions and gender inequalities (2007: 115). This is deeply troubling because "[t]he way a culture deals with rape is one of the best possible indications of how highly it values women" (Cochrane, 2006: 25 cited in, de Klerk, Klazinga & McNeill, 2007: 115), since rape is a violation that is mostly committed against women by men.

Thus, South Africa is characterised by high levels of gender-based violence and its higher education sector (including Rhodes) is not exempt from this violence (Klazinga & McNeill,

2007: 113). Rhodes University indeed is notoriously known to have a rape culture because of the "repeated experience and patterns of behaviour reinforce existing social structures and practices as 'normal' and limit the potential for change" (de Klerk et al, 2007: 115). For an institution such as Rhodes, which initially had an all-male student body before the 1940s, the development of a rape culture which undervalues women should be no surprise (de Klerk et al, 2007: 115). In this context, it is also no surprise that the only interviewees who spoke about the rape culture of Rhodes University were the female participants, who were very distraught about how common rape was in South Africa, and very unfamiliar with incidences of rape since they had a different experience at home – rape was not as common and reoccurring as it was in South Africa. They were further concerned about the way it was dealt with by the university management and relevant constituents such as the Campus Protection Unit. The following female participants defined the rape culture from their own perspectives and their experiences of incidents that they have encountered at Rhodes:

> Jessica: *"There is a difference between the calibre of people I was used to and the one that's here. Things like how men relate to women. Here it's more defined. Here the men, despite knowing all of these… consent things, they disregard them quite easily".*
> Mary: *"We are constantly being raped and objectified. Here, men will look at you and have sex with you as you walk down the road. At first, I thought something was wrong with me from the way they looked at me. Now I know… it's how they work".*
> Abby: *"Rhodes produces fuck boys. Boys who are with you just to get into your pants. It's a Rhodent thing… everyone does it and its normal. You go into a guy Res and they cheer… like I'm some kind of award that has been won. There are no real relationships… like intimacy and love. But it only happens here at Rhodes. I can say it's a Rhodes thing".*

None of the male participants made any reference to the rape culture at Rhodes. They did not speak about it or mention it; to reiterate, it was an issue only raised by the female participants. For these female participants, sexual violations, sexual assaults, objectification of the feminine body, and even rape, is part and parcel of Rhodes University. It has been normalised to the point where it has been presented as part of the culture which defines Rhodes. The rape culture at Rhodes University is not concealed, rather, it is general knowledge. In addition, a sense of dehumanisation, and being degraded, can be identified in the views of the black Zimbabwean female students. It is an issue that is slowly being dismantled but, like many social ills, its eradication has faced many challenges and stagnation from those in power. The rise of cases

around rape and sexual violence which have violated Rhodes University students has resulted in community action to try and stop these atrocities that are affecting Rhodes' students. An example of this action is the Silent Protest. The Silent Protest was initiated by Rhodes University in collaboration with the One-in-Nine Campaign and aims to generate awareness around rape, unite women victimised through rape, and encourage women to break their silence (Solomon, 2012, cited in Padmanabhanunni & Edwards, 2016: 818). However, this action has to some degree been in vain; to date, there are students still being raped, sexually violated, and sexually harassed.

3.7 Negotiating the Space and Adjusting to the Space

Zimbabwean students become foreign students at international universities all over the globe. These students leave their own familiar settings, norms and cultures behind, and enter into new settings that have their own norms and cultures. Overall, Zimbabwean students who become foreigners in universities outside of their country have to contend with novel social and educational organisations, behaviours and expectations; as well as also dealing with problems around adjustment similar to all other university students (Zhou, Jindal-Snape, Topping & Todman, 2008: 63). Within the new settings, Zimbabwean students are clearly affected by the setting, but their very presence also affects the setting. Regardless of who or what is impacted, there will be some form of impact, which often depends on how the Zimbabwean students negotiates the new space. At times, there may be long-lasting negative effects on the Zimbabwean student, especially if the student struggles to cope with the new-ness of the situation. The situation is difficult enough when the Zimbabwean student, as a foreign student, is fully aware of the cultural differences before they arrive at the foreign institution. For example, Zimbabwean students coming into South Africa may have some knowledge of the issue of South Africans sometimes being xenophobic and even afro-phobic. Conversely, it is even more daunting when the foreign student is unaware of the situation and falsely assumes that the new society which they enter into, operates in effect like their home country.

There are different ways in which to negotiate new spaces. Individuals often simply negotiate the space according to what works for them. Some individuals will negotiate the space through immediate interaction with others, communicating with diverse people, befriending people from their residences, from their tutorials, from student societies and so forth. In the same light, other individuals will negotiate the space by first familiarising themselves with the space before they can start engaging with others within it. Other individuals negotiate the space by simply

keeping to themselves, thereby not wishing to enter fully into the institutional and cultural space. The space is always being negotiated in some way, and for specific reasons. Whatever negotiation process takes place, it is clear that the student concerned is making sense of the space and – simultaneously – the space makes sense to them from their own experiences and perspectives. In the end, negotiating spaces differs across individuals. Further, negotiation is not an inherently rigid process as it might change over time for a particular student. Thus, as a student progresses from first year to third year, and then perhaps to post-graduate level, changes may take place or, perhaps, a student has become fixed in his or her ways. Also, it is likely that – at least at Rhodes – gender is a crucial factor in the negotiation process. In fact, it seems that black female Zimbabwean students, as compared to their male counterparts, have a more difficult time in large part because of the rape culture.

Negotiation is a vital procedure in ensuring that the foreign Zimbabwean student 'fits in' in a manner of their choosing. In doing so, the student typically moves along the cultural and social interfaces (as discussed in previous sections) – socially with South African students, along with cultural values and practices at Rhodes and in wider South African society. Negotiating along these interfaces is not necessarily an explicit and conscious act. Nevertheless, in the study, Zimbabwean students were openly asked how they sought to negotiate the Rhodes space. In this regard, many of the responses can be categorised as either accepting the challenge and dealing with it head on, or ignoring the problem and moving on. Most of the interviewees tended to justify how they handled the situation by reference to their particular personality traits – either being an extrovert or being an introvert. They explained their actions, responses and decisions in these terms. Precious (female first-year) and Sbo (male, third-year) explain how they negotiated the space when they arrived at Rhodes University. Unlike Precious who deals with the situation directly, Sbo states that he was an introvert and did not engage with other students when he arrived at Rhodes. Sbo sought to negotiate the space with help from a fellow Zimbabwean student. He only started engaging with other students once he was familiar with his surroundings:

> Sbo: *"I got here like during orientation and people had already grouped into their circles. So, at first, I was by myself, walking by myself, eating in my room not even going to the dining hall. Then eventually yeah… I got to see people because in res my sub-warden was Zimbabwean, so he helped me get used to the people".*

On the other hand, Precious spoke about a more direct approach:

Precious: *"I like discussing things with people. I think to hear your point of view, it helps to hear someone's point of view and then see if it's worth taking it in or arguing".*

Other students also spoke about this direct, extroverted-based, negotiation:

John: *"I think I'm bit of an extrovert [laughs] so… eventually they end up speaking to you. So I kind of dealt with it on my own. Some people are afraid to get out of their comfort zone so you kind of have to dig deep to try and meet them where they are and kind of see the things that they like. So, I dealt with it by taking it into my own hands to try and talk to the people and create a relationship".*

Themba: *"I don't mind letting people share their stories, but if I disagree, I will tell you straight up. No one should try and change you. I've learnt that you just have to tell people even if you guys end up in different directions. YOLO [you only live once] man… it's a simple philosophy that makes life easy".*

It became apparent that, once students negotiated the space, this led to a form of adjustment or existence at Rhodes. Although some scholars have suggested that foreign students are generally a resilient group (Parr, Bradley, & Bingi, 1992, cited in Reynolds & Constantine, 2007: 39), the fact that each student adjusted in their own particular way does not imply an untroubled resilience. In fact, growing research has indicated that cultural adjustment concerns can lead to heightened psychological distress, physiological complaints, and mental health concerns such as depression and anxiety (Constantine, Okazaki, & Utsey, 2004; Sandhu, 1995; Winkelman, 1994, cited in Reynolds & Constantine, 2007: 39). Thus, for those Zimbabwean students who have adjusted in a manner which leads to ongoing discomfort on their part, there are possible consequences arising from this. These consequences are presented in more psychological forms, rather than being physical or tangible. This makes existing in the new environment even more difficult because, in many cases, psychological distress is not seen by ordinary people. Ultimately, the failure to negotiate in an incomplete in still feeling a sense of disconnection from the university surroundings, can result in the lack of full adjustment. A few examples below illustrate this.

Happiness is a female student in her first year. She stated that she does not socialise or interact with other students. She is between the library, lectures and her room in residence during the day. The only social activity she was previously participating in (church) was discontinued because of academic commitments. For Happiness, any academic activity outweighs other commitments and engagements. Happiness used to attend River of Life Church on a Sunday;

however, as indicated earlier, she stopped because she now has additional classes which are also on a Sunday. Unlike many of the other students who often interact with other students as their way of adjusting, Happiness has negotiated the space by isolating herself from the larger environment. Her negotiation and adjustment vis-à-vis the space are understood by her, and make sense to her. She does not need to interact with other students in order to be labelled as 'adjusted'. Indeed, adjustment as a process differs from each individual. In this light, according to Rathus and Nevid (1986 cited in Mudhovozi, 2012: 251), "adjustment is a psychological concept that refers to the behaviour that permits people to meet the demands of the environment". This definition of adjustment is useful because this can avoid misconceptions of the process. For instance:

> Happiness: *"I don't think I have adjusted. Some days are better than others. Some days you feel like I can do this, and then some days you feel like I can't go on anymore. And then sometimes you have to call home and cry and then you get up and same routine. So, I don't think I have adjusted".*

Happiness might not have adjusted in the conventional way which is interacting with other students. But through her alienation from the space, this is her coping mechanism and how she makes sense of the space.

Kenneth argues that he has adjusted quite well into the system; according to how he defined adjustment. Kenneth is a male student in first year who, during the interview, mentioned that his friendship circle is mixed, consisting of both Zimbabwean students and non-Zimbabweans. According to Kenneth, he initially had a plan to follow which would help him adapt relatively easily. But his perceptions and ideas changed once he entered the new environment. Rhodes University was not what he had imagined it to be, and the interactions which he started to engage in were not exactly how he had perceived them. This was in the sense that he quickly learnt that university was not like high school, and that he was in a new setting about which he was not familiar. Manipulating the setting would not be as easy as he had imagined. Kenneth decided that it would be easier to assimilate, rather than to be unique and continue with the plan with which he came. This illustrates that, in coming into a new environment with its own values, norms, behaviours and rules, an outsider cannot easily change the already existing cultural arrangements. Therefore, Kenneth felt it necessary to assimilate in order to make his experience more pleasant, and to not be labelled as deviant. In his own words he stated that:

Kenneth: *"I think I can say I have adjusted quite well. At first, I had a plan. But then gradually I just got used to the system and went with the flow… I didn't ask any questions".*

Thandeka also observed what she saw around her, and slowly but surely took on board certain ways of being and doing in order to feel more comfortable:

Thandeka: *"Ok… firstly I adjusted mostly by observation. I would look at people and see what they do and see if I like it. If I liked it I would also start doing it. I copied a lot of girls from my res and dining hall who are from South Africa. It was easier to do what they do because they are from here".*

Considering the experiences of these participants, it may be that negotiation and adjustment as ongoing processes come to and over time, sometimes slowly, other times quickly. If the student has entered his or her comfort zone, or even if a level of discomfort remains, then it may be simply a matter of simple repetition of what has taken place up to then. For example, Kenneth might not need to negotiate the space anymore, because he has adjusted. He can continue as he is until his stay at Rhodes is completed. However, for someone like Happiness who feels a sense of discomfort or even emptiness, she might need to find a way to interact with other students and elevate the burden of being lonely, similar to how Sbo eventually adjusted. In the beginning, Sbo alienated himself from the space and stayed in his room without interacting with the other students. However, with the help of a fellow Zimbabwean student in the same residence as him, Sbo began to interface.

The issues of negotiation and adjustment are important in the debate of foreign students at international universities. In order for a student to be able to cope, with academic requirements as well as socio-cultural requirements, they need to experience some form of adjustment. Any serious lack of adjustment can be detrimental for the student's duration while at the institution. This is exemplified in the experience that Zweli (male, third-year student) had while he was still in first year. Zweli failed to negotiate and adjust to South Africa at large, and more specifically to Rhodes. His lack of interaction with locals made his experience difficult and uncomfortable. Zweli argued that the situation was only alleviated once he started engaging more with other students; and this only happened in his third year:

Zweli: *"I didn't like being around South Africans. The guys from my Res where bullies and always had something to say. Most of the time I was with my girlfriend… I did everything with her. But at times she couldn't do everything with me. I started talking*

to a guy from King Williams Town who was in my tut[orial];… through him I started chilling with the other guys… eventually things got better".

Thus, Zweli is an exemplar of how the process of negotiation changes over time and is beneficial for a more successful adjustment. This is not to suggest that individuals who do not befriend South African students, or any other students, will not adjust to the environment at Rhodes.

With the fact that university life has been reported to be more harsh and stressful than students anticipate (Compas et al., 1986), it should not come as a surprise when many students do not perform up to par. One research showed for instance that up to 60% of first-year students leave university without finishing their degrees; the majority of these students leave within the first two years (Porter, 1990, cited in Friedlander, Reid, Shupak & Cribbie, 2007: 260). The first two years in an undergraduate degree encompass students who are coming straight from high school: "The university terrain is drastically different from that of the school. Students get anxious as they adjust to academic, social, personal and lifestyle challenges that the university presents" (Abdullah et al. 2009, cited in Mudhovozi, 2012: 251). Many of these students are not able to endure the pressures of university and, at times with a limited support system, enduring might not be a feasible option. Further, "[i]t is likely that it is not just social support, self-esteem, or stress that affects the adjustment process to university" (Shupak & Cribbie, 2007: 262), and that there are other elements that affect the adjustment process of a particular student about which others do not know. Though social engaging with South African students is not the critical factor, it may be easier to navigate the socio-cultural aspects of Rhodes University with their assistance. Sometimes, local students are able to make the journey of being in South Africa and being at Rhodes University a lot less unpleasant, as seen with Zweli.

To reiterate, the adjustment process will differ between each student. Some students are able to adjust rapidly; they assimilate straight into the system, while others take time; the process of adjustment is slower, but present, while others adjust through isolationism. Thus, the adjustment process does not have a singular formula that all students can follow and apply. Further, the transition into university life is simply daunting for many students. This transition can be even more difficult for Zimbabwean students who are coming into a foreign country and an altogether unknown environment.

This study has presented various students who can be categorised within the subdivisions of either assimilating, or not assimilating into the system. The participants have thus far socially and culturally experienced Rhodes University differently because of their varied adjustment strategies. Once the students have negotiated the space and subsequently adjusted, most of the Zimbabwean students are able to continue within the environment without feeling disconnected or feeling like they do not belong at Rhodes, like Noel (male, first-year) and Shaun (male, masters student) stated:

> Noel: *"Obviously at first you feel out of place… then as time goes on you start to get with the flow and follow the pattern. It's just easier to do what everyone else is doing you know… that way no one cares about you, you don't really stand out".*

Shaun explained how he assimilated over time, once he was more aware of his new environment:

> Shaun: *"For me… adjusting took time. I only adjusted when we had a South African join our group. He took us to the township and showed us the chill spots. But before that… like… it was difficult. The only thing I had was house comm which wasn't really useful because they're also students pushing life. But when we eventually knew the place, it was easy".*

Assimilation without resistance makes the stay in any space more endurable for an outsider. Similar to the situation which Noel and Shaun negotiated for themselves, there sometimes is no need to resist the already-existing boundaries that have been pre-structured by the existing cultural and institutional systems. Outsiders who challenge these boundaries are easily expelled from that territory because they want to shift the status quo. In the case where a Zimbabwean student tries to change what has been accepted as socially normal by most South African students, that Zimbabwean is likely to be alienated, and in severe cases, may be socially ostracised through xenophobic or afro-phobic behaviours.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the social experiences and social relationships of black Zimbabwean students at Rhodes University, and how they sought to engage with diverse cultural dimensions at Rhodes specifically and South Africa more broadly. In addition, the chapter went on to examine the ways in which students, in diverse ways, negotiated the space of Rhodes and adjusted in multiple ways to it.

The participants explained how they made sense of Rhodes University and South Africa in general considering that they are new to these settings. Many of the Zimbabwean students seemed to have assimilated into the life-worlds of the local students, while some Zimbabweans did not; rather, they alienated themselves from the life-worlds of the local students, if only in seeking to focus on their academic studies. This does not mean that those who have not assimilated have not adjusted. The students made sense of the same space differently and sought – for themselves – the most appropriate manner in which they could sustain themselves, whether socially, emotionally or academically. Furthermore, the different negotiating methodologies displayed by the students reiterate that there is no singular formula that everyone needs to adopt in order to make sense of a particular space. Often on the basis of gender and year of study, the narratives of the students varied and exemplified the diversity of the individuals and the situations which they faced. Each unique response made sense to the student, and this additionally supports the argument that negotiation and subsequently adjustment are not universally-uniform processes leading to identical results.

Chapter Four: Conclusion

4.1 Introduction

The objective of this thesis was to understand the social and cultural experiences of black Zimbabwean students at Rhodes University. In doing so, it focused on their varied ways of manoeuvring through Rhodes as an institution and their engagement with other (non-Zimbabwean) students. This objective was located in a review of the broader literature on foreign students at universities globally, with this review also highlighting that the existing literature on the cultural and social experiences of Zimbabwean students at South African universities is quite limited. In pursuing the main objective of the thesis, the study was framed in terms of Interface theory as the thesis sought to examine the ways in which students negotiate their lives at the interfaces encountered at the university and beyond. This concluding chapter summarises the main points and findings in the thesis, as well as showing the relevance of Interface theory for understanding the experiences of foreign university students. The chapter ends with ideas about further required research on this topic.

4.2 Summary – Contextual Chapter

The contextual chapter (chapter two) focused on three main themes, namely: foreign university students in general; foreign students in South Africa; and foreign Zimbabwean students in general and specifically in South Africa. Globally, the number of foreign students admitted at tertiary educational institutions is on the rise. The increasing demand for international study exists in the case of both developed and developing nations, with a diverse range of reasons (both pull and push factors) existing for why students study in foreign countries. There are advantages and disadvantages in being a foreign student, including the advantage of a quality tertiary education and the disadvantage of cultural shock. With reference to South African universities, there are two types of foreign students: short-term exchange students usually coming from the developed nations, and longer-term undergraduate and postgraduate students normally coming from developing nations. Zimbabwean students fall within the latter category, and are the largest group of foreign students at South African universities. Historically, South African universities were racially divided. Since the end of apartheid in 1994, transformation of the university landscape has taken place, including deracialisation. But the legacy of racialism haunts particularly former white universities such as Rhodes.

Access to higher education for black Zimbabwean students typically occurs within Zimbabwe, at the many universities which now exist there. But, for various reasons, a significant number of Zimbabwean students seek a university education in South Africa. For many Zimbabwean students, being a foreign student is not by choice; rather, according to the literature, it is the result of the many pressures existing in Zimbabwe, including economic and political crises and the deteriorating quality of university education in the country. As foreign students in South Africa, as is the case with most foreign students globally, Zimbabwean students enter a 'new' social, cultural and institutional milieu not of their making, and they need to find their way in and through it. This entails negotiating their daily existence within the university space, with this space conditioned in many ways by South African society more broadly. For instance, South Africa is a highly xenophobic space which questions the presence of foreigners in the country. Because of this, Zimbabwean (and other foreign) students who attend university outside of their country of origin are confronted with – and troubled by – an array of additional circumstances (often of a non-academic character) not experienced by local students. How a foreign student negotiates the new space is bound to be open to some variation, such that no one-way of manoeuvring exists and no pre-determined one outcome (in terms of adjustment) takes place.

4.3 Summary – Empirical Chapter

Grahamstown is no exception to the poverty and unemployment that exists within the Eastern Cape Province. Despite this, Grahamstown is home to many prestigious and prominent educational institutions, including Rhodes University. Unlike in the pre-1994 period, Rhodes now has a large black student body with significant numbers of foreign students, most notably Zimbabwean students. The thesis focused specifically on black Zimbabwean students at Rhodes, with the sample consisting of nine female and nine male black Zimbabwean students spread across first year, third year and Master's level. The year of study of the student was considered of some significance because – quite likely – the process of negotiation took on different temporal forms as the student advanced through the university system. Gender likewise was considered of possible importance in conditioning student experiences.

There are multiple reasons why the interviewed black Zimbabwean students at Rhodes left their homes and came to South Africa, with many of the reasons appearing as well in the prevailing literature. These included economic and political instability in Zimbabwe, the proximity of South Africa to Zimbabwe, and the quality of the degree which they would obtain

once their studies are completed. Additionally, students indicated that they came to Rhodes University because of the particular degree being sought. Rhodes promised not only quality degrees but degrees specialising in certain disciplines such as Journalism, Law and Pharmacy.

Most of the students interviewed were initially surprised when they arrived in Grahamstown. They found the town quiet and boring, but with a more inclusive character compared to what they experience back in Zimbabwe. As well, these students perceived Rhodes University to be culturally diverse and accommodating people from nearly walks of life. In addition, they perceived the students at Rhodes, specifically the South African students, as liberated and opinionated (including in relation to sexual matters), which emphasises the differences of cultures between the students. The culture shock, which was more or less apparent amongst all the black Zimbabwean students, arose because of these different life-worlds. Entering this new life-world – Rhodes specifically and South Africa more broadly – resulted in the students being 'taken aback' by the relative unfamiliarity and new-ness of the cultural practices that they encountered. This was likely extenuated by the fact that, for most students, Rhodes was their first experience outside their home environment in Zimbabwe. Rhodes was their first outside destination, and they were highly dependent upon the norms, values and rules that they knew from home. Much of what they heard and saw at Rhodes unsettled their well-established cultural 'guides' and viewpoints.

With regards to the social experience of Rhodes University, many students argued that the contemporary Rhodes social experience was defined by its infamous drinking culture. The social activities at Rhodes were narrowed down to drinking and partying, residence activities and engagements on social media. Other students tended to focus on their academic studies (particularly the Master's students), having perhaps passed through the drinking culture earlier in their academic studies. But there were some students who had taken an isolationist approach throughout their studies by not interacting socially to any significant extent. Typically, all students tended to associate initially with other Zimbabwean students when they arrived at Rhodes, but most students slowly but surely built up their social circle which was inclusive of South African students.

Hesitancy about engaging socially beyond Zimbabwean students arose because of the cultural differences noted and experienced as they became familiar with the Rhodes institutional culture. First instance, some students encountered their first racist and Afro-phobic experiences

while at Rhodes. In the end, all the students indicated that they experienced some degree of culture shock. The change of environment and scenery was difficult for the students to handle, even though the difficulty varied between students and was handled in different ways. Certainly, questions around dress code, languages and sexualities came as a shock to many students, especially those who came from deeply conservative and patriarchal upbringings. A rape culture was identified as defining Rhodes University, at least from the perspective of the female students, and this added an extra burden on these students. Thus, the students experienced Rhodes and South Africa as both tolerant (of for instance, different sexualities) and intolerant (in the case of foreigners). This served to add complexity to their attempt to negotiate what was an unfamiliar cultural milieu.

The study concluded that black Zimbabwean students negotiate the space of Rhodes in different ways. Consequently, their form of adjustment also varied. Some students negotiated the space in an active manner, seeking at times to almost assimilate themselves into the life-world of Rhodes University. Other students took a more passive stance, standing seemingly outside the life-world of Rhodes (at least its drinking culture) and trying to isolate themselves from the effects of this life-world on their academic studies. Regardless of the form of negotiation, and the outcome of the negotiation process, negotiation took place in the case of all students. Students negotiate the space as they see and deem fit, and they negotiate the space according to their own understanding of the space, being able to justify their stance in all instances. Once a particular stance had been adopted, it was often simply reproduced over time. It seems that any changes of significance took place only once students, who previously had been party-goers, entered the post-graduate programme by adopting a more serious approach to their studies.

4.4 Relevance of Interface Theory

Interface Theory is designed to address the issue of how individuals negotiate the space within which they find themselves, with these negotiations taking place along the interfaces existing or established. With globalisation, people are increasingly and constantly moving around, and they invariably become foreigners in their new environments; new interfaces likewise are being formed. Consequently, people need to negotiate new spaces, especially if they will be staying in the space for an extended period. Norman Long states that an interface is the "critical point of interaction between life worlds" (Long, 2011: 9). Interaction between life-worlds became evident in the case of the black Zimbabwean students at Rhodes, as they sought to negotiate a

social, cultural and institutional space already governed by its own norms, values and practices. Into this space they brought their own perspectives, values and ways of acting in the world.

In negotiating along the interfaces of this space, such as their interactions with South African students, the Zimbabwean students did not take a conflictual or confrontational approach despite the discomfort they often felt. Rather, they sought to ease themselves into the space with the least amount of discomfort for themselves by, for instance, becoming at least acquainted with the cultural dimensions of Rhodes and Grahamstown more widely. This did not necessarily imply acceptance of these cultural dimensions, as sometimes they simply turned a blind-eye to dimensions such as alternative sexualities. In highlighting the ways in which black Zimbabwean students move around and through cultural, social and institutional spaces, Interface theory demonstrates that these students are active agents, and not victims trapped in the perspectives and practices of others. Therefore, Interface theory is a useful theory for this study which seeks to demonstrate the coming together of life-worlds and the agency of groups of people along interfaces.

The ongoing negotiation by the students, which becomes less conscious with time as the students acclimatise themselves in their own particular ways, inevitably forms part of their very daily experiences as foreign students at South African universities. This need for negotiation is likely stronger for foreign students than it is for local students, as the former students (in this case, Zimbabwean students) encounter a deeper level of strangeness and are confronted (and burdened) with a range of subtle issues about which South African students might not be aware. Further, as the space changes because of developments intrinsic to the host society (such as the student protests and struggles against racism and sexism at Rhodes), foreign students will find themselves in altered circumstances which they must think through and act accordingly. In this sense, explicit and conscious negotiation might re-occur as students face new challenges in an altered landscape.

The negotiation of life-worlds along interfaces is not one-sided. The fact that this thesis focuses on the agency of the Zimbabwean students only is not meant to imply this. In other words, it is recognised that South African students also negotiate the Rhodes space as well as their relationships with non-South African students. In this way, interfaces are marked by the agency of multiple groups. Certainly, in the case of Zimbabwean students, there was no one way of negotiating and navigating through the multiple cultural, social and institutional interfaces at

Rhodes; and no one way of fitting into the new milieu. This is likely to be the case as well with South African and other foreign students. Overall, then, the thesis does not imply that there is one homogeneous life-world for all black Zimbabwean students, one flattened process of negotiation for these students, and one form of adjustment for all; and neither is this the case with other groups of university students. Rather, life-worlds are internally differentiated. As well, the thesis does not seek to argue that life-worlds are devoid of any overlap, as there are commonalities across seemingly different life-worlds; it is only on this basis that black Zimbabwean students were able to negotiate in the first place.

In general, the level and form of newness of Rhodes – as an institutional and social space – also varies across Zimbabwean students. It thus becomes important to consider the diverse ways in which black Zimbabweans negotiate the Rhodes University social space, whether this entails a massive shock and subsequent alienation, adjustments over time, or assimilation into the life-world(s) of South African students (Aikenhea & Jegede, 1999: 269). The character of the Zimbabwean-South African student interface(s) at Rhodes will also have implications for the forms of institutional belonging for Zimbabwean students at Rhodes.

It is also important to highlight that interfaces are constructed interfaces. More specifically, as Zimbabwean students (and other students) interface with each other as conditioned by cultural and institutional ways of existing, these interfaces are being reconfigured on a constant basis. Even if the interfaces appear fixed and stable, they are still being shaped (if only reproduced or maintained) by the students. Hence, the agency of students do not exist outside of the interfaces as the latter are in part constituted by their agency.

While all interfaces are invariably co-constructed, the thesis focuses specifically on one agent of interface construction, that is, exclusively black Zimbabwean students. Despite this limitation, and though some research has been undertaken on Zimbabwean students at tertiary educational institutions in South Africa, no study on Rhodes students exists. Further, this study is significant in using Interface theory as a basis for understanding the sheer complexities of the social and cultural experiences of foreign students in South Africa more broadly.

4.5 Areas for Further Research

It would be useful for research to conduct a comparative study across other South African universities. Understanding the experiences of black Zimbabwean students at different

universities with different institutional histories such as a previous white Afrikaans-speaking university (such as Stellenbosch) or a former Bantustan university (such as Fort Hare) would bring forth even more diverse findings about student interfaces and negotiations within the South African tertiary education landscape. A comparative study across other South African universities might be able to demonstrate the existence of social and cultural experiences of Zimbabwean students which do not prevail at Rhodes.

In addition, other areas that could be explored in the future are how Zimbabwean students who have studied at South African universities cope after they have attained their degree. Does the degree 'open doors' and make these individuals as marketable as they think they might be? Is the degree at Rhodes or any other South African university of any value or significance in comparison to a degree from other institutions? The Africa-wide prestige that has been given to South African universities needs to be explored, to see whether these universities are living up to the expectations of Zimbabwean students. More generally, studies of the post-university lives of these black Zimbabwean students would be useful. In other words, what happens to black Zimbabwean students after they attain their degree from a South African university, specifically Rhodes University?

Finally, it is of interest to know how other Zimbabwean students cope in post-colonial and post-apartheid South African universities, including those previously classified as 'white Rhodesians'. Do white Zimbabwean students still study at South African universities? If so, are their reasons for coming to South Africa similar or dissimilar to black Zimbabwean students? What are the similarities, if any, between black and white Zimbabwean students as foreigners in South African universities? The experiences of black and white Zimbabweans are likely different; for example, issues such as Afro-phobia are not experienced by white Zimbabweans in South Africa. This of course raises broader issues of terminology and language. The word 'foreigner' carries negative connotations, and it is usually associated with black individuals coming from the developing nations, such as Zimbabwe. Simultaneously, the word 'international' seems to have more prestige and is often used to identify white students, especially those from the developed nations. How are white Zimbabweans at South African students depicted by local students? Are they recognised and categorised as Zimbabwean, consequently subject to the marginalisation that black Zimbabweans endure from some South Africans who have defined and understood themselves as being 'exceptional' to Africa. Or are they excluded from the Zimbabwean nation and lumped into white South Africa.

Hopefully, this thesis has contributed to raising further important questions for research about foreign students within South African universities and indeed beyond.

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Appendix 1

Interview Schedule

1. Where about in Zimbabwe are you from?
2. What year of study are you currently doing?
3. Why did you come study in South Africa?
4. How do you perceive Grahamstown?
5. Why did you choose Rhodes University?
6. How do you perceive Rhodes University?
7. How have you socially experienced Rhodes University?
8. How have you culturally experienced Rhodes University?
9. Who does your friendship circle consist of? Zimbabwean students? Non-Zimbabwean students? Or both?
10. How have you negotiated the social and cultural encounters?
11. How have you adjusted to Rhodes University?

Appendix 2

RHODES UNIVERSITY
Where leaders learn

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Participant Consent form (Interviews)

Name of researcher: Andile Daki

Brief description of the research topic: The purpose of the research is to explore the social and cultural experiences of Zimbabwean students at Rhodes. You will be asked to talk about your perceptions and experiences of the Rhodes University socio-cultural and academic culture.

Declaration

1. I confirm that the purpose of the research and the nature of my participation have been explained to me verbally and in writing;
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason - however I commit myself to full participation unless some unusual circumstances occur, or I have concerns about my participation which I did not originally anticipate;
3. I understand that data collected during the study, will be used by the researcher and that my personal details gathered during this research, especially my name or identity, will be kept private;
4. I agree to be interviewed and to allow audio recording and transcription to be made of the interview;
5. The researcher has informed me that the recording and interview transcript will be erased once the report is written.

Signature of participant:

Signature of the researcher:

Date: