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Acknowledgements

What is to become of me, Zipporah the stranger?
No man here will take me as his wife because my skin is black. But my father loves me. In his eyes I am a woman worthy of respect. Among the peoples of Cush, what would I be? I do not speak their language, do not eat their food. How would I live there? Only the colour of my skin would make me similar to my countrymen.

– Zipporah by Marek Halter

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Dedication

Florie

Dorothy

- I hope I made you proud.

Glenda

Amarah

- I love you immensely.
This dissertation focuses on the racialization of graduate international Black African collegians (IBAC) and the effects it has on their racial identity development. The intercentricity of race maintains that race is a defining factor for how one is situated in US society. However, many international students do not come from communities stratified by race first. For example, Black US Americans (BUSA) are socialized to view race as a master narrative from an early age. Yet, IBAC, are socialized in ways that tend to prioritize clan, tribal, or ethnic heritage as differentiating characteristics. I argue that despite being raced as similar, BUSA and IBAC undergo different socialization processes and therefore, the identity formation around race for IBAC follows a different trajectory than that of BUSA. The study includes semi-structured interviews conducted with ten graduate IBAC recruited through purposeful selection. Transcripts were analyzed using interpretative phenomenological analysis, a qualitative approach which seeks to provide detailed examinations of a person’s lived experiences. Based on this analysis, four thematic clusters and 14 subthemes were identified revealing how participants made sense and meaning of their racialization. The first theme, Becoming Veiled, outlines the process of becoming Black in a US context. The second theme, Living Under the Veil, draws attention to how IBAC maneuver through highly racialized environments. The final two themes, Resisting/Refusing the Veil and Opting Out both relate to how participants enact their agency to preserve their core essence. This dissertation extends current understanding of international student identity development by bringing into conversation critical intercultural studies, sociology, Black studies, and comparative education. Results from this study (in conversation with others) makes a strong case for reconsidering a blanket application of Cross’ (1978) Nigrescence Model as a schema for all Black students.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

Demand for higher education is a worldwide phenomenon, and increasing opportunities for African students to study abroad has led to financial and intellectual benefits for US institutions (Bittencourt et al., 2019; Farrugia & Andrejko, 2017; ICEF, 2018). For instance, 14,438 Nigerian students attend university in the US annually. Nigeria is among the top 10 sending countries to US institutions, with Nigerian students comprising 1.5% of all international students in the US (EducationUSA Global Advising Network, 2022). These students not only add diversity to campuses but also provide unique perspectives to classroom learning (Ramos et al., 2016). Despite growing numbers in enrollment, however, African students may still find themselves significantly outnumbered in US universities, even amongst other international students. This invisibility, which emanates from being outnumbered, can cause some students to feel isolated on US campuses. At the same time, students face hypervisibility as they stand out in appearance and behavior from majority cultural groups but are often misunderstood when university practitioners who conflate Black African and Black American student identities (Fries-Britt et al., 2014).

The act of lumping together Black US American and African student communities based on racial characteristics by university staff and students may disregard distinct national, ethnic, and cultural identities each group brings to US
universities (Fries-Britt et al., 2014; Onyenekwu, 2017). Such conflation or minimization of complex identities can have disastrous impacts on student identity and development (Nwadiora, 1996). Numerous student development studies in higher education, for example, draw correlations between student learning and success and positive identity development (Anctil et al., 2008; Baxter Magolda, 2003; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; R. P. Keeling, 2004; Tinto, 2012; Torres et al., 2009). Moreover, past research has established the importance of conational (same-country) friendships on student adjustment, contentment, and reduction of loneliness (Bittencourt et al., 2019; Hendrickson et al., 2011; Sawir et al., 2008). For graduate African international students, generalization of perceived identity by US educators and programmers fails to account for the complexity and unique experiences of Black African students and signals a critical issue within the field of student mobility and Comparative and International Development Education (CIDE).

The growing African demand for education in the US raises the need for further examination of the psychosocial educational experiences of a population that Onyenekwu (2017) calls “International Black African Collegians” (IBAC). My critical review of the literature addressed the extent to which current race identity theories address (or fail to address) the complexity of IBAC identity formation on US college campuses. My dissertation focuses on racialization of international students, IBAC in particular, and the effects they have on IBAC self-identity. In order to lay the groundwork for this study, this chapter provides a broad introduction to the study and Chapter 2 provides a genealogy of identity development theories. Understanding the genealogy of identity
development theories and how race is situated within these theories is a first step in examining these theories to provide an account for IBAC experiences in US higher education. Then, an overview of various conceptualizations of Black race is presented, followed by a detailed account of IBAC experiences in US education and society gleaned through empirical research for this dissertation.

**Significance**

My research aimed to advance knowledge of racial identity formation as it pertains to IBAC with the purpose of providing equitable student development care for international students. This research fills a gap that currently exists in the literature. The canon of student identity development, for example, still largely refers to theories developed in the 1960s and 1970s, primarily by White, Western men (e.g., Chickering, Perry, Kohlberg). The constant referencing to these theories has erased, ignored, or flattened certain voices. Foundational theories based on a majoritarian perspective may be helpful in providing a frame but they neither include nor consider the experiences of students of color, immigrants, or other minoritized and marginalized populations. When such models and theories are operationalized on these populations, it can lead to unfavorable and hostile results, such as further marginalization, which creates a critical education issue (Torres et al., 2009). This study aims to contribute to the progress that has been made in the field of student affairs and its theories, especially in the past decade. For example, the latest edition of the *Student Development in College: Theory, Research, and Practice Handbook* considers student identities that are informed by faith, class, gender, military service, digital presence, and disability (Patton et al., 2016). However, much is
still unknown about the student development and identity of particular populations, including IBAC.

One reason for a gap in knowledge about IBAC identity is that these students’ life and higher education experiences are assumed to mimic those of Black US Americans. Racialized experiences and trajectories, however, may vary widely between students on US campuses. Black US Americans (BUSA), for example, are socialized in particular ways about race as a master narrative from an early age (Cross, 1978). A key function of master narratives is that they serve as a means of identifying what is assumed to be normative (Andrews, 2004). Conversely, other Black populations, such as IBAC, are socialized in other ways and tend to prioritize clan, tribal, or ethnic heritage as differentiating characteristics more than race. Therefore, the identity formation around race will develop for IBAC according to their own experiences, not those of BUSA, and such identity formation often takes place after IBAC become adults. In order to formulate a distinct form of racial identity development theory (RIDT), which takes into consideration the experiences of Black international students, this study sought to understand how IBAC experience racialization. The study drew upon primary data collected in interviews with IBAC and was informed by extant literature that outlines Black race conceptualizations. Existing research discusses IBAC racial encounters in the US, IBAC-BUSA relations, and IBAC student success in the face of racism. However, it is unclear to what degree, if any, IBAC internalize new racial concepts in higher education settings, and what impact, if any, new racial concepts have on how IBAC self-identify.
Statement of Study Purpose

This study sought to extend current understanding of IBAC identity through the lens of racial identity development. IBAC have different ways of identifying compared to BUSA, yet little has been done to understand how such particularities impact racial identity development. Contemporary literature examines this phenomenon through psychological, sociological, and diasporic frames. Using higher education as a social stage, this study considers how the US context (re)positions IBAC identities and the meaning of that repositioning to study participants and the meaning of that repositioning to study participants. The definitions below provide an overview of the key terminology that are used throughout this study.

Definitions

Acculturation. Acculturation points to one’s adaptation to another cultural context; it is a psychological response to engaging in an inter- or cross-cultural space. Stated differently, “The concept of acculturation is employed to refer to the cultural changes resulting from these group encounters, while the concepts of psychological acculturation and adaptation are employed to refer to the psychological changes and eventual outcomes that occur as a result of individuals experiencing acculturation” (Berry, 1997, p. 6). Essentially, the migrant group adapts to or acquires specific cultural attitudes and practices of the receiving group. These adjustments can be made for a variety of reasons such as survival, approval, and even acquiescence. Acculturation at any degree and for any reason can cause acculturative stress.
Acculturative Stress is “a reduction in the health status of individuals, and may include physical, psychological and social aspects…” as an effect of the acculturation process and may result in “lowered mental health status (specifically confusion, anxiety, depression), feelings of marginality and alienation, heightened psychosomatic symptom level, and identity confusion” (Berry et al., 1987, pp. 492–493).

Assimilation. While acculturation and assimilation share a similar process, significant differences exist. Two major differences are that assimilation requires mutual acceptance (e.g., outsider accepts insider, outsider is accepted by insider) (Teske & Nelson, 1974) and that the outsider must hold the insider’s culture in positive regard, which results in a change of values and mentality (Teske & Nelson, 1974).

Black US Americans. Black US Americans are phenotypically black and generally refers to unnaturalized US citizens (i.e., citizens by birth). Black US Americans are most popularly called Black American or African American. Both demonyms are exclusionary. Black American ignores other Black ethnicities existing in the Americas from Canada to Argentina. Similarly, African-American erases the rich cultures of the Caribbean. American Descendants of Slavery (ADOS) is perhaps the most precise term to describe this group (Bonds Staples, 2020), however, ADOS is often ladened with anti-African sentiments (Cokley, 2020). For these reasons, I used Black US Americans (BUSA).

Diaspora. Diaspora is commonly defined as a movement of a people group en masse regardless of the reason. Zeleza (2005), on the other hand, considers “diaspora a
process, condition, a space, and a discourse” that is iterative as it is “made, unmade, and remade” (p. 210). Essential to a diaspora is a diasporic identity which, “…implies a form of group consciousness constituted historically through expressive culture, politics, thought and tradition, in which existential and representational resources are mobilized, in varied measures, from the minds of both the old and the new worlds” (Zeleza, 2005, p. 210). Thus, not all mass movements can be branded as a diaspora. In the aforementioned essay, Zeleza notes four African diasporas to the US: Transatlantic slave travel, Afro-Caribbean migration to the US, the recent wave of African migration, and African migrants from other diasporas (e.g., South African Whites).

**International Black African Collegians.** *International Black African Collegians* (IBAC) make up a small yet growing portion of the US international student population. Green (2015) notes IBAC differ from other immigrant populations in regard to, “size of population, recency of immigration, socio-demographic profile, and primary migration channels” (p. vi). IBAC are temporary visitors for the purpose of schooling, nationals of countries on the African continent, and phenotypically present as black. Because not all Africans phenotypically present as black, this distinction is necessary to delineate the population of interest. My study focused on IBAC of Sub-Saharan Africa.

**International Student.** Each higher education institution defines *international students* differently. Per federal guidelines, students in possession of a valid F-1 and certain restrictive non-immigrant visas (e.g., J-1) are considered international students. This parameter excludes permanent residents and undocumented students.
**Race.** *Race* is a dubious term. As Hoffman (2004) notes, “‘Race’ has been defined as a biological feature; a local geographic population; a group linked by common descent or origin; a population connected by a shared history, nationality, or geographic distribution; a ‘subspecies’; and a social and political construct” (p. 1096-1097). Race has been synonymous with “‘ethnicity,’ ‘ancestry,’ ‘culture,’ ‘color,’ ‘national origin,’ and even ‘religion’” (Hoffman, 2004, p. 1097). Powell (1997) aptly notices race functions as both verb and noun. The base definition I adopt in this paper coalesces two ideas, first that race is a socially invented “concept which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests” (Omi & Winant, 1994, p. 55) and second that it “arbitrarily utilizes aspects of morphology, geography, culture, language, religion, etc. in the service of a social dominance hierarchy” (Graves, 2006, p. 3).

**Race Salience.** Race salience explains how significant race identity is to one’s overall identity. Race salience has two dimensions which measure the degree of importance (low to high) and the direction of the valence (positive to negative) (Vandiver, 2001, pp. 167–168).

**Racial Identity.** One’s acceptance of, or resistance to, race can influence one’s *racial identity*. Racial identity, as defined by Helms (1990) as “a sense of group or collective identity based on one’s perception that he or she shares a common racial heritage with a particular racial group” (p. 3). In this vein, racial identity is a group membership identity.
Racism. Grosfoguel (2016) offers a nuanced and succinct definition and depiction of racism:

Racism is a global hierarchy of superiority and inferiority along the line of the human that have been politically, culturally and economically produced and reproduced for centuries …. The people classified above the line of the human are recognized socially in their humanity as human beings and, thus, enjoy access to rights (human rights, civil rights, women rights and/or labor rights), material resources, and social recognition to their subjectivities, identities, epistemologies and spiritualties. The people below the line of the human are considered subhuman or non-human; that is, their humanity is questioned and, as such, negated (p. 10).

Racism is more than pejorative terms, mean actions, or ill-will towards a people or person based on the color of one’s skin or racial group. Racism is also systematic and systemic in institutions, be they religious, educational, political, or health institutions (Kendi, 2019).

Conceptual Framework of the Study and Epistemological Stance

Conceptual Framework

In this dissertation I draw upon two major concepts to support sense-making of data. The first concept is intercentricity of race—a concept drawn from Critical Race
Theory that acknowledges the central and endemic role of race in relation to how US society functions. The final conceptual framework that supported the framing and interpretation of this study was W.E.B. Du Bois’ concept of a “Veil” which Du Bois used as a metaphor to both identify the constant demarcation that Black Americans experience from whiteness, and the lack of acknowledgement of the humanness of Black Americans by white Americans. These concepts were assembled under a larger umbrella of sensemaking, both during the interview process and for data analysis.

**Intercentricity of Race in the US**

Race is frequently studied through the lens of Critical Race Theory. Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a framework that theorizes, examines, and challenges the implicit and explicit impact of race on social structures, practices, and discourses (Yosso, 2005, p. 70). In the realm of education, CRT “challenges the dominant discourse on race and racism as they relate to education by examining how educational theory, policy, and practice are used to subordinate certain racial and ethnic groups” (Solórzano, 1998, p. 122). Solórzano (1998) abstracted five principles which orient theory, research methods, pedagogy of CRT in education; they are: (1) the intercentricity of race and racism; (2) the challenge to dominant ideology; (3) the commitment to social justice; (4) the centrality of experiential knowledge; and (5) the utilization of interdisciplinary approaches (p. 73). In challenging the dominant ideology of contemporary scholarship and politics, critical race theorists often deny that educational research is objective or neutral. Rather, critical scholars argue that research propagates existing power imbalances and silences the

The idea of intercentricity of race and racism as one of five principles which orient the application of CRT theory, research methods, pedagogy to education does provide a useful framework for this study as it illuminates how subjugated identities are negotiated in US society (Solórzano, 1998). The intercentricity of race and racism with other forms of subordination in US society means that race is placed at the center and all other forms of subordination—gender, sexual orientation, immigration status—can be racialized. Thus, the intercentricity of race and racism is a suitable concept for understanding how participants experienced the interplay of race, gender, and nationality in US higher education.

The Veil

In *The Souls of Black Folks*, Du Bois (1903) lyrically introduces a concept pertinent to understanding Black race in a US context, the “Veil.” The Veil is a symbol I understand to be a dialectical metaphor that explains the double-consciousness experienced by Black Americans. The Veil, and by extension double-consciousness, are byproducts of living within a system of perpetual colonization and oppression under white supremacy. The Veil prevents (White) people from beholding Black people in their full humanness and as US Americans. Conversely, the Veil prevents Black people from seeing themselves as they really are, outside of the negative effect of blackness created by racism advanced through colonization. DuBois states that BUSA are “…[B]orn with a Veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world, — a world which yields him
no self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world” (1903, p. 364).

Similarly, Fanon ascertains, “As long as the black man is among his own, he will have no occasion, except in minor internal conflicts, to experience his being through others” (Fanon, 2008, p. 82). And yet, the “fact of blackness… does not permit us to understand the being of the black man” as it postulates that “a black man can only exist in relation to a white man” (Fanon, 2008, pp. 82–83). That is, that blackness is dispossessed of intrinsic meaning and can only be understood through whiteness. Thus, “living within the Veil means exploiting one’s knowledge of what life is like without the Veil in an attempt to subvert and undermine the power relations, institutions, structures, and systems that reify and (re)produce racial inequality and oppression” (Bailey-Fakhoury & Mitchell, 2018, p. 491). In contrast to a traditional read of the Veil, GwinnLandry (2014) offers a powerful alternative understanding, “[T]hat the very suspicion that there is something behind the Veil is the Veil. The Veil is, then, that race is (p. 12)” In other words, the Veil is the concept and existence of race. The conditions described by scholars, metaphorically described as a “veil” shaped both interviews and interpretation of data in this study.

**Theoretical Frameworks**

In addition to two conceptual frameworks, two theoretical frameworks informed this study. The first framework is symbolic interactionism, a social theory that examines how social interactions shape meaning making in individuals. Symbolic interactionism has not to date been used to interpret racialization in the US context but provides a useful
tool for understanding IBAC experiences with racialization in the US. The second theoretical framework for this study is race identity development theory. At the beginning of this study, I hypothesized that racial identity theory could be useful in understanding how IBAC’s racial consciousness developed over time, but this application had mixed utility, as will be explained in subsequent chapters. Each of these frameworks is described below.

Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism is credited to Blumer’s (1986) theorization of Herbert Mead’s philosophies. Symbolic interactionism is framed by three premises,

The first premise is that human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them…. The second premise is that the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, social interaction. The third premise is that these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process (Blumer, 1986, p. 2).

From the three premises, Blumer makes clear that meaning-making is an essential part of symbolic interactionism. Meaning is not intrinsic. According to this theory, humans assign meaning to symbols through discourse. Once a symbol is given meaning, it becomes real. The meaning of symbols is internalized through interactions, and thus, becomes real and has real consequences. Meanings change over time and between contexts; therefore, not everyone ascribes the same meanings to the same symbol. This study looked at race as a symbol.
**Race Identity Development Theory**

Race is a phenomenon that can be studied through a myriad of models, including race identity development theories, which I discuss at length in the subsequent chapter. Racial Identity Development Theories postulate that racial identity develops as a result of racialized experiences. Omi and Winant (1986) arrived at the conclusion that racialization is “the extension of racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice, or group” (p. 111). Gans (2016) affirmed that,

> When new immigrants arrive in their new country, they also enter into its class and racial system, and if they are racialized as well, they most likely react in some way. Perhaps they do so in puzzlement, or anger, surprise, or with resignation, and in the process, they undergo what I call self-racialization (p. 8).

Omi and Winant (1986) go on to say that native-born youth, in this case, BUSA, are racialized from birth and undergo self-racialization as they grow up, which is where RIDT enters. But this study revealed that RIDT is limited in its assumptions about how race is experienced because of its focus on BUSA. Further explanation of the limitations of this framework for IBAC will be explained in subsequent chapters.

**Sensemaking**

Both symbolic interactionism and racial identity development theories focus on how individuals make sense of their world. The former theory was developed with normative expectations, the latter specifically focused on groups who have been racially minoritized. In both cases, theories seek to understand how humans make sense of their
worlds within social environments. Sensemaking is, “a process, prompted by violated expectations, that involves attending to and bracketing cues in the environment, creating intersubjective meaning through cycles of interpretation and action, and thereby enacting a more ordered environment from which further cues can be drawn” (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014, p. 67). Sensemaking is about “authoring as well as interpretation, creation as well as discovery”; it is a concept that highlights “the action, activity, and creating that lays down the traces that are interpreted then reinterpreted” (Weick, 1995, pp. 8,13).

A sensemaking perspective draws on the theories above. Scholars frequently embrace ethnomethodology and phenomenological methods to understand how people assign meanings to events in their lives. I will further describe my methodological choices in Chapter 3. Weick, who hypothesized sensemaking, identified seven principles for sensemaking; sensemaking must be: grounded in 1) identity construction, 2) retrospective, 3) enactive of sensible environments, 4) social, 5) ongoing, 6) focused on and by extracted cues, and 7) driven by plausibility rather than accuracy (Weick, 1995). Sensemaking is intricately tied to meaning-making (e.g., symbolic interactionism) and is a triggered response to an event, activity, or experience. In essence, Sensemaking is how people make sense of an unexpected phenomenon that occurs in their environment. Within the confines of this study, the phenomenon is racialization. Although sensemaking is categorically found in organizational studies, is it appropriate for my study which questions how they [IBAC] construct what they construct [racial identity], why, and with what effects (Weick, 1995, p. 4). In this case, organization is, “an attempt
to order the intrinsic flux of human action, to channel it toward certain ends, to give it a particular shape, through generalizing and institutionalizing particular meanings and rules” (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002, p. 567).

**Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks: Putting it Together**

International students, including IBAC, face a number of novel encounters in US higher education in which they ask, “what’s the story here?” International students may have limited previous interactions with US culture and limited knowledge of what symbols mean locally. This may not only impact how the student adjusts to local culture but can also change the ways students view themselves. A basic assumption throughout this analysis is that race is an arbitrary symbol loaded with socially constructed significance. International students, and IBAC in particular, are oriented to the significance of race in the US college environment through racialization. Kaufman (2014) presents a strong argument that identity development is a social process, and the university is an important site where students seek uniformity between their personal and social identity. IBAC are then tasked with making meaning and making sense of their social context, personal experiences, and changing identities. In short, this work explores how IBAC make sense and meaning of the phenomenon of racialization in US higher education.
Research Questions

Based on the frameworks and context described above, this investigation seeks to understand the lived experiences of IBAC in higher education institutions (HEIs) of the United States. The study aims to answer the following questions:

1) In what ways do racialized experiences in US higher education inform or complicate IBAC understanding of race?

2) How, if at all, do these experiences alter how IBAC self-identify?

The study is informed by a rich literature on racialization in the US, international student experiences, racial identity theories, and concepts such as intercentricity of race and the Du Bois’ veil. An expanded review of literature is provided in Chapter 2 on these concepts, followed by a discussion on the methods used to answer the research questions in Chapter 3.

Summary

It is through the backdrop of US racial concepts that race has historically been discussed and theorized into racial identity models. However, existing racial identity development models may not capture the full picture and uniqueness of IBAC populations in US higher education institutions. For such reasons, I undertook my inquiry through the application of conceptual frameworks such as intercentricity of race, Du Bois’ veil, as well as theoretical frameworks such symbolic interactionism as a meaning-making framework and sensemaking in order to bolster any explanatory gaps that racial
identity theories may have. Because the study of racialized experiences of IBAC is relatively new in the field of CIDE, allowances for differing or even competing interpretation of data was useful for understanding and identifying the sensemaking of participants.

This chapter provided the scope and purpose of my study. Additionally, I defined and confined key terminology. The latter part of this chapter introduced my operating frameworks and research questions that grounded my research. Thus far, I have presented evidence that race is a salient component of US society and identity. In the US context, my study also sought to identify a “race and…” (George Mwangi, personal communication, November 30, 2020) understanding of the phenomena present. Although IBAC are ethnically heterogeneous, they are raced homogeneously to BUSA. I sought to understand the experiences and sensemaking of those experiences that IBAC undergo in order to understand the higher education system in the US and how IBAC fit into it. To date, there is little to no published research on how (the process) IBAC develop a racial identity on US campuses or how that identity development is unique to the population (and should not be conflated with BUSA). The following chapters provide a deeper analysis of the issues described in this chapter, including a systematic review of literature, discussion of research methods, reporting of findings, and discussion of the study.
Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of relevant literature related to IBAC in US higher education settings that informs my study. The review of literature begins with a history of student mobility by African students to the US. This mobility provides the grounding for why IBAC racial identity is a phenomenon at US higher education institutions. The combined demand by African students to study in the US coupled with the conflation of IBAC identities as either “international” or “Black” on campuses presents a scenario whereby IBAC identity is not understood at the individual or campus level. The first section provides an overview of African student mobility to the US including trends and possible motivating factors for why IBAC pursue higher education in the United States. Next, I present a genealogy of psychosocial identity theories and the race identity theories they inspired. I briefly chronicle major movements in Black racialization in the United States (US), as they inevitably inform contemporary political conditions and campus climate in the US. This section prominently features this study’s theoretical frameworks—symbolic interactionism and racial identity development theories. Finally, I discuss IBAC experiences as identity and race converge in higher education situations.

Overview of African Student Mobility

By 2050, Africa's youth population will surpass that of both East and South Asia, making it home to the world's youngest population and largest labor force (African
Renewal, 2013; Chetty, 2013; Khokhar, 2016). Some reports also suggest Africa’s middle-class population rivals that of China and India (Wingfield, 2017; Wonacott, 2011). Despite a growing middle class and growing demand for higher education, there is not a guarantee that youth with postsecondary education will be absorbed into the African workforce. This is connected to the progressively global nature of today’s workforce. Traditionally, higher education has been accepted as a means of securing advantage in the workforce, but higher education today is also used as a leverage point for global mobility for youth around the world (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002). Today, an increasing number of African youths, who can afford to do so or are supported by grants and scholarships, test the waters of higher education abroad and global employment. The following section provides an overview of higher education trends across Sub-Saharan Africa and some of the reasons why students from Africa choose to study internationally.

Higher Education Enrollment in Africa

Mohamedbhai (2014) concluded that the continent of Africa is in a state of “massification” of higher education, meaning that national systems are struggling to expand quickly enough to meet demands, and new private institutions are emerging across the continent. Mohamedbhai, drawing upon Trow's (1973) theory of higher education development, noted that higher education has always been a function for the elite across the continent, but increased demand from matriculating secondary school students and global workforce requirements have expanded higher education across the continent.
This expansion is occurring simultaneously with growing inequalities and workforce stratification. Two-thirds of Africa’s growing labor force, for example, lack access to basic education. Although rates drastically vary by country, it is estimated that only 44.6% of students across sub-Saharan Africa completed lower secondary education in between 2015 and 2020 (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2022) and fewer than one in ten youth in the region attend college or university (World Bank, 2020). These statistics help explain why, despite recent growth, the continent of Africa has relatively low higher education Gross Enrollment Ratios (GER) of six to nine percent (Pillay et al., 2017; World Bank, 2020). Even though GERs are lower than the rest of the world, the number of students seeking higher education still exceeds capacity in the current sector. This is partially attributed to the fact youth numbers in Africa are higher than ever before, and national systems were built for a small elite cadre from a youth population that was significantly smaller decades ago. The current situation of higher education in Africa is one in which students have high aspirations but also face economic and infrastructural barriers (Chuks, 2017).

Nonetheless, demand is quickly growing and enrollment is also experiencing a steady uptick. Some of these demand and enrollment increases can be attributed to dividends of “Education for All” movements across Africa, which have produced larger numbers of students who are graduating from secondary school and demanding higher education. While country-level policy makers want to increase the number of university graduates, many institutions are maxed out or nearly at capacity to serve the existing populace, much less a surge of enrollment. This scenario of increased demand, existing
barriers, and steadily rising enrollment typifies Mohamedbhai’s assertion of “massification” of higher education, in which demand is creating both increased competition for historic state-run universities and seeing a proliferation of new private universities with varying degrees of quality.

A further example of how demand has outpaced opportunity is in the number of institutions per capita across the continent. For example, in the ten most populous countries in Africa, there are nearly 740 universities for 660 million potential African students compared to over 5,000 HEIs of the U.S. population of 323 million (Dahir, 2017). In order to increase higher education enrollment on the continent, universities throughout Africa will need to expand facilities, classrooms, dormitories, and laboratories to accommodate growing demands (Mohamedbhai, 2014).

At the same time, these universities must also fight to ensure quality. Mohamedbhai (2014) urges institutions to consider quality from an African perspective and indicators. This would translate into a focus on emerging research efforts on local problems, rather than attempting to incorporate outside interests for the purpose of worldwide recognition or rankings ascension.

Development of locally relevant quality in a world that is still marked by colonial influence is a challenge for higher education administrators in Africa. For example, there is a global trend to identify quality universities within the continent that have achieved recognition from Times Higher Education, QS, and other global university ranking systems. Many of the African institutions that sit in these rankings were founded by
Western colonizers and religious organizations (Mohamedbhai, 2017). These institutions, after independence, became the most well-known institutions in Africa worldwide, and offered free tuition to the most promising graduates in the country. As the number of qualified prospective students has grown and state investments in higher education have decreased, institutions have experienced overcrowding and pressure to admit potentially less qualified students who can pay fees for their study. Altbach (1998) originally called the factors that make students question higher education in their own society (such as overcrowding, admissions quandaries, and perceived lack of quality) “push” factors that act as an impetus for students to study in a different country. It can then be argued that the current state of massification in Africa – replete with pressure from increasing demand – is one reason why some African students choose to study abroad.

**Higher Education Finance in Africa**

Finance for higher education in Africa should be understood in its historical context. The oldest higher-learning institutions in the world are in Africa (Devarajan et al., 2011); they are: The Alexandria Museum and Library of Egypt (3rd century BC), Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (4th century AD), Ez-Zitouna University of Tunisia (732 AD), University of Qarawīyīn/al Karaouine of Morocco (859 AD), Al-Azhar University of Egypt (970 AD), and Sankore University of Mali (12th century) (Demssie et al., 2020; Kassaye Alemu, 2018; Zeleza, 2006). These learning facilities trained religious and secular leaders from various nations and continents (Kassaye Alemu, 2018; Yamada, 2007). Okyerefo (2021) argues that “university” as a concept and institution is African in origin. Different institutions across the continent between late
BCE and CE abstracted the university as a “community of scholars, with an international outlook and with cultural responsibilities” (Kassaye Alemu, 2018, p. 220).

However, imperial rule not only created new higher learning institutions but also brought new education paradigms and purposes while destroying the African university (Mohamedbhai, 2014; Okyerefo, 2021; Zeleza, 2009). Immediately following post-colonial independence, African nations (re)built universities during what Zeleza (2009) calls the “golden era.” Governments and taxpayers provided revenue to the university (Johnstone, 2004) while some surviving universities built during colonial times continued to receive financial support from Europe (Mosha, 1986; Sawyerr, 2004).

In more modern history, financing of higher education has continued to be controversial in response to neoliberal shifts in higher education. In 1962, thirty-one African nations convened at the Tananarive Conference on Higher Education in Africa to discuss “the role of higher education in the cultural, social, and economic development of Africa” and subsequently introduced a 20-year strategic plan for the continent (Rooney, 1963). The operation and financing of higher education in Africa were major topics of debate. National leaders and global strategists discussed and agreed upon cost sharing and cost-saving measures as well as structures for aid. These agreements were reconsidered after the destabilizing oil crisis of the 1970s (Devarajan et al., 2011).

As lending agencies began to engage in Africa, but then impose structural adjustments on indebted countries in the 1980s and 1990s, funds were redirected from tertiary education to basic education, and higher education and social sectors in general
came under fire for not demonstrating a donor-desired return on investment (Banya & Elu, 2001; Biglaiser & McGauvran, 2022; Ferreira & Keely, 2000; Wangenge-Ouma, 2017). The adjustment policies required cuts to social sector spending in exchange for continued financial support. As these cuts introduced political strife across Africa, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund policies threatened African economies, social development, and intellectualism (Mohamedbhai, 2014). In response to structural adjustments and further World Bank studies identifying high returns on investment for primary education, Banya and Elu (2001) reported that, “At a meeting with African vice-chancellors in Harare in 1986, the World Bank argued that higher education in Africa was a luxury and that most African countries were better off closing universities at home and training graduates overseas” (p. 23).

Inadequate funding as a result of divestment from higher education made it difficult to keep top faculty and retain productive staff. Faculty are often drawn to higher-paying and well-packaged positions overseas (Geber, 2013), even if home universities bring great prestige and security. Moreover, decreased state funding translates to more out-of-pocket costs for prospective students and families. At the same time, universities must balance limited public funds with tempestuous debates around raising tuition fees. Public African universities face great public scrutiny underscored by student activism if they attempt to raise tuition to meet rising costs. In 2016, for example, universities in South Africa were brought to a standstill by students who protested tuition hikes and sparked a nationwide #FeesMustFall campaign (Luescher et al., 2017). Recent fee hikes in Zimbabwe arising alongside the COVID-19 crisis have been met with student protests,
calling the increases “unconstitutional,” “insensitive” and disproportionately injurious to women (Mashininga, 2021). Student funding in South Africa has been deemed “a national, system-wide crisis” as student unions continue to push against unfavorable tuition increases (Naidu, 2021). One reason for resistance against fee hikes is that before the 1990s, higher education was generally free across the continent (Pillay et al., 2017, p. 182).

Many African governments continue to invest in higher education despite competing sectors such as infrastructure, healthcare, and primary and secondary education. On the whole, African nations spend five percent of their gross domestic product on higher education (Gandhi, 2020). Higher education commands roughly one-fifth of education budgets on average, meaning that only .80 percent (less than one percent) of Africa’s gross domestic product (GDP) is allocated to higher education. This average exceeds the worldwide average for low- and middle-income countries, in which .65 percent of GDP is spent on higher education (Pillay et al., 2017), but may not be enough to meet the rising costs associated with higher education today.

Despite infrastructure and financial challenges across Africa, as described in the section above, total university enrollment increased from about 1.5 million in 1991 to 9 million in 2020. As enrollment increased 16% annually, however, public investment only grew on average at 6% annually (Pillay et al., 2017, pg. 176). The investment, albeit steady, still cannot meet the demand for both more open seats and better-quality education. Despite efforts of governments to maintain a viable higher education sector, the high demand by African youth coupled with steady but slow growth of the sector has
‘pushed’ many students to seek higher education abroad for either perceived quality failures in home-based institutions or perceived additional opportunities that can be derived from universities abroad, which Altbach (1998), calls “pull factors.”

In sum, crowded universities, competitive entrance policies, infrastructure limitations, and academic turnover are hurdles African students must overcome to achieve higher education. Further, well-resourced institutions or the perception of higher quality may be pulling African students to apply to study overseas. Increased and diversified funding may not eradicate the issues faced by some African universities but may significantly mitigate them. Further, investments in African higher education may prove to provide better return on investment than exporting students. However, a common immediate solution involves some students seeking higher education overseas.

**African Student Mobility**

International education is not a new phenomenon; however, its landscape and nature have changed in regard to who participates, the logistics of such practice, and the effect on local communities. Additionally, the notion of international education as an economic export has flourished within the decade as nations experience declines in birth rates (Saul, 2018). Varying global birth rates and increases in higher education options has led to fierce global competition related to who studies where. The leader of this competition is currently the United States.

International education, through fees paid by students and scholars, brought in $45 billion to the US in 2018 (Institute of International Education, 2019). The largest
population of international students in the US hail from Asian countries (predominantly China, India, and South Korea). Currently, the United States is the leading destination of internationally mobile students, although in recent years the US has lost ground on its proportional lead as the largest host of international students in the world (Project Atlas, 2019). For example, international education is the third-largest export in Australia, reaching a new peak of $37.6 billion in 2018 (Dodd, 2016; Tehan, 2019). Revenue from the international education sector in the United Kingdom increased from £17.5 billion in 2011 to £20 billion in 2017 to £25.6 billion in 2021 with over 76.3% of the revenue coming from higher education (HM Government, 2013; United Kingdom Department for Education, 2022). With six countries that receive 53% of international students, many countries are left out of the equation; yet a number of markets are vying for growth including China, Japan, and Russia (HM Government, 2013; Project Atlas, 2023).

Currently, one in 10 international students in the world is African, yet not all African students are pursuing higher education in the US. Intergovernmental cooperation between Asian countries like Turkey, Malaysia, South Korea, and African nations, for example, is ever-growing and includes elements of higher education exchange. In 2003, for instance, the number of international students in China grew from 12,436 in 2009 to 81,562 in 2018 (MacGregor, 2015; Marshall, 2016; Ngalomba, 2015; Study International, 2020).

factors that determine country selection for study; they are (1) knowledge and awareness of host country in the student’s home country, (2) personal recommendations, (3) cost issues which encompasses social costs (4) environment which includes climate as well as lifestyle, (5) geographic proximity and, (6) social links.

The European Union and United Kingdom have two consistent pull advantages over North America, cost and geographic proximity. Despite these conveniences, the US and Canada are formidable competitors for African student enrollment. According to an Institute of International Education (2022) report, the majority of African students studying in the US come from West Africa (54%) followed by East Africa (24%), Southern Africa (15%), and Central Africa (7%). The US is the premier destination for students from Angola, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Central African Republic, Equatorial Guinea, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Lesotho, Republic of Congo (Brazzaville), and Somalia. Each country sends more than 70% of their internationally mobile students to the US for undergraduate education. Nigeria sends 32 % of all Sub-Saharan African students studying in the US and is the 13th largest sending country of international students to the US. The US is the second-largest destination for Nigerian students, next to the United Kingdom. The second-largest sender is Kenya, with over 3,300 students, 58% of which are undergraduate students. The US is also the top destination for Ghana, Ethiopia, and South Africa, which comprise the 3rd, 4th, and 5th largest senders respectively.
AFGRAD to HALI: African Students in the US

For many of Africa’s elite, the choice to study outside of their home country is a natural choice, yet there is a substantial number of students from low-income backgrounds for whom receiving an international education through various sponsorships and programs is also a viable option. Programs such as Bridge 2 Rwanda, CIYOTA (COBURWAS International Youth Organization to Transform Africa), SHE CAN (Supporting Her Education Changes a Nation), TanSAO (Tanzania Student Achievement Organization), and Tujenge Scholars Program are all educational non-profit organizations that place African students exclusively or primarily in US universities and colleges. These organizations are funded in part by the East African Scholars Fund, Higherlife Foundation, The Mastercard Foundation, and The HALI Access Network. Both organizations provide guidance, scholarships, and other resources to high-achieving low-income (HALI) scholars from in tandem with organizations across the globe, with a significant number of partners in the US.

In addition to self-sponsored mobility and mobility through non-profit assistance, the US has intentionally recruited African students through competitive and prestigious government initiatives. The African Graduate Fellowship Project (AFGRAD) operated from 1963 to 1990 until replaced by its successor, the African Training for Leadership and Advanced Skills (ATLAS) which ended in 2003 (Management Systems International, 1995). AFGRAD/ATLAS was funded by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and administered through the African-American Institute (AAI). Fellows attended mainly American graduate and professional schools to gain knowledge.
with the purpose of “accelerating economic and social development throughout Africa” (Management Systems International, 1995, p. 1).

Although this project funded undergraduate education, most participants received postgraduate training. The highest impacts of these long-term training programs were found in non-finance fields such as Education, Agriculture, and Health. A few reports document the repatriation rate during the project existence among fellows who completed the program to be between 85-90%, which was believed to be high, “Given the political and economic instability in a large number of countries” and fears of brain drain (Gilboy et al., 2004, p. 6). The reason for highlighting these government-sponsored initiatives is to demonstrate the strategic significance of African allyship through educational programming and also to demonstrate a ‘pull’ factor of African students to the United States.

**Summary of African Student Mobility**

This section provided an overview of higher education in Africa, its opportunities and its limitations. In view of these considerations, it is obvious that education, and higher education specifically, holds great importance across Africa. The 1970s to the 1990s were fraught with diminishing financial resources, reduced access and equity, and university politics. Research on African higher education mainly focuses on investments, educational quality, and student mobility choice-making. These macro-level push-pull indicators, as well as pull factors such as scholarship programs, help explain why students may choose to go abroad, but do little to explain what happens to students when
they do. A particular facet of student experience that is not explained by systemic data or enrollment trends is student identity. The gap in identity research related to African student mobility and exchange programs provides fertile ground for new study. In the following paragraphs, I outline various models and theories that frame empirical study of identity. These models will be used as a theoretical framing for this empirical study.

**Identity Development Models**

Identity development, as it relates to education, is commonly approached through a psychosocial lens across various fields. Psychology scholars examine attitudes about racial identity, while sociologists and education scholars often focus on collective racial identity and speculate about power and policies as related to racial identity (DeCuir-Gunby, 2009). Psychological studies have identified adolescence and early adulthood as interesting sites of convergence as youth balance self-exploration with societal pressure (norms) often within the context of schooling. Thus, in the scope of educational settings, there is an opportunity to witness identity formation and transformation. This section outlines the psychosocial function of identity and types of identities recognized in the literature. In this section, I also include scholarship that investigates identity formation and various attempts by race theorists to extend and apply these theories to ethnically diverse populations, including IBAC. Assuming that identity is “formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways we are represented or addressed in the cultural systems which surround us…” (Hall & Du Gay, 1996, p. 598), I will explore how IBAC identities may be changed or challenged in the context of US higher education.
Personal Identity

Through his groundbreaking work in the field of psychology, Erik Erikson argued that adolescence and early adulthood are important years of identity development and commitment. Erikson developed an eight-stage lifespan developmental model marking adolescence as a crucial time for identity development (vom Orde, 2016). A sense of identity is a unification of “physical and mental, moral and sensual selves, and of a oneness in the way one experiences oneself and the way others seem to experience us” (Erikson, 1966, p. 150). The adolescent stage is characterized as Identity versus Role Confusion, where the continuity and oneness of early childhood are called into question. Identity formation is not the cumulative childhood experience and is more than how one identifies themselves in relation to others; Erikson (1964) posits that, “[I]t is a process based on a heightened cognitive and emotional capacity to let oneself be identified” by an arrangement of old and new portions of oneself” (p. 33). In the adolescent moratorium stage, an unresolved identity can lead to role confusion, also known as an identity crisis. It is precisely at this juncture that James Marcia’s research investigates.

James Marcia labeled an identity crisis a period when values and beliefs are reexamined and reprioritized (Marcia, 1966, 1967). It is after such a crisis that one commits to an identity: thus, “the adolescent stage consists neither of identity resolution nor identity confusion, but rather the degree to which one has explored and committed to an identity in a variety of life domains….” (Farnicka & Pocinho, 2018, p. 73). Marcia expanded Erikson’s model to include four stages of adolescent identity development: identity foreclosure, identity diffusion, identity moratorium, and identity achievement.
Identity foreclosure signifies the unexplored identity. At this stage, a person accepts or assumes an identity uncritically. One might identify with a certain religion because of their family's commitment to that faith without questioning whether they truly believe. In the identity diffusion stage, youth remain uncommitted to an identity and although they may not actively explore, they may not be entirely ambivalent. Something piques a dormant or unexplored identity during the identity moratorium phase, which prompts a period of learning and exploration. One such prompting may be a result of exposure to new facts or new ideas in an educational setting. Finally, identity achievement occurs when one knows and accepts who they are.

**Identity and Race**

Marcia’s extension of Erikson’s work produced numerous race-specific theories, also known as content theories, “Whereas identity statuses reveal the extent to which an individual has explored and committed to one's racial identity, they do not provide information on the meaning and content of that identity for the individual” (Yip et al., 2006, p. 1506). Identity statuses look at identity through a psychosocial lens of humanity. However, content theories look at how individuals make meaning of their identities. DeCuir-Gunby (2009) provides a useful overview of various RIDT measurements, which are situated into four main categories—developmental, naturalistic, reaction to racism, and multidimensional. The developmental models, all borne out of Cross’ pioneering Nigrescence study and following Eriksonian and Marcian patterns, measure the psychological stages of Black identity over time. Naturalistic or worldview measurements look at how BUSA view themselves and interact with the world around
them and how cultural values are internalized. On the other hand, reaction to racism is externally focused and explores how BUSA regard the perception and behavior of others towards them. Lastly, the multidimensional instruments investigate how society—and its institutions—affect Black identity. I only address measurements included in the developmental category as they are utilized in student development theory to address IBAC, whereas the other models are typically only applied to BUSA. Two key further ethnic and racial identity models are Phinney’s Model of Ethnic Identity and Cross’ Nigrescence.

**Ethnic Identity**

Another identity genre that is relevant to this study is “ethnic identity.” A central ethnic identity scholar, Phinney (1989), was heavily influenced by Erickson and Marcia and even used Marcia’s language for their Ethnic Identity Development Model. Phinney, unlike Cross, primarily studied ethnic identity development in adolescents (Guiffrida, 2009). Phinney (1993) originated the Model of Ethnic Identity by studying Black, Mexican, and Asian adolescents. Taken directly from their study, Phinney’s (1989) Ethnic Identity Model has four stages:

1. Diffuse: Little or no exploration of one’s ethnicity and no clear understanding of the issues.
2. Foreclosed: Little or no exploration of ethnicity, but apparent clarity about one's own ethnicity. Feelings about one's ethnicity may be either positive or negative, depending on one’s socialization experiences.
3. Moratorium: Evidence of exploration, accompanied by some confusion about the meaning of one's own ethnicity.

4. Achieved: Evidence of exploration, accompanied by a clear, secure understanding and acceptance of one's own ethnicity (p. 38).

Each stage can be placed within three dimensions: unexamined ethnic identity, ethnic identity search, and ethnic identity achievement. Diffusion and foreclosure are categories in the unexamined ethnic identity dimension. An example of this is that students can have either positive or negative thoughts about ethnic pride, however, these thoughts are influenced by an external source such as the media or parents. Students in this stage do not engage in exploration with members of their ethnic groups. At this stage there is a general lack of concern in ethnic identity formation.

The second dimension, identity search and moratorium, is catalyzed by an event or trauma that brings the student into a place of awareness. In this stage, students are forced to choose a path to follow which can move them further along this continuum or can keep them in the early stages of diffusion and foreclosure. Lastly, identity achievement is when students achieve congruence with multiple parts of their ethnic selves. A student can embrace a bi- or multicultural identity, which is, knowing their own ethnicity and appreciating that of others. Cross’ influence on Phinney’s ethnic model is most apparent in these later stages.

**Racial Identity**

Developmental Black race identity (BRI) models demonstrate change over time in the ambit of a social movement or socialization (Cross, 1978). Racial identity, as defined
by Helms (1990) is, “a sense of group or collective identity based on one’s perception that he or she shares a common racial heritage with a particular racial group” (p. 3).

Racial identity development theory concerns the psychological implications of a racial group membership. Adolescence is pinned and centered as the site of high growth potential. At the same time, it is believed that early encounters with racialization cause Black children to undergo racial identity development earlier than their White peers (Cross, 1991). Original research shows education plays a key role in RIDT as a site of exploration, manifestation, and negotiation (Cross, 1978). For example, Fordham and Ogbu (1986) found that high-achieving Black students may choose to underperform academically to avoid being accused of “acting White.” Stated another way, maintaining a collective identity may affect academic outcomes and achievement. As suggested in Cross’ original work, Black students often begin actively negotiating their racial identity in college. It is for these reasons RIDT has serious implications for adolescent and young adult populations.

Nigrescence is defined as “the process of becoming Black” and reflects the various phases or attitudes BUSA navigate in search of an authentic identity. Nigrescence theory was developed in the late 1960s and through 1970 (Cross, 1978, p. 13). Plummer (1996) similarly defines Nigrescence as a “…developmental process by which a person ‘becomes Black,’ where Black is defined as a psychological connection with one’s race rather than the mere identification of the color of one’s skin” (p. 169). Originally, Cross included a five-stage model. The first stage is Pre-Encounter, in which race is not a salient identity. However, a significant event such as changing schools or being called a
racial slur heightens one's awareness of their race. This is called the *Encounter* stage. Ashmore et al. (2004) suggest that in this stage, "individuals begin to perceive that their personal outcomes are yoked to the fate of their group" (p. 106). The highly active *Immersion-Emersion* stage is where one begins to "act Black" and accentuate pro-Black ideals. *Immersion-Emersion* is a performative stage as one works out what it means to be Black. The next stage is *Internalization*. During *Internalization*, individuals adopt a more balanced view of Black race identity. A Black identity is neither under- nor overly privileged. Finally, *Internalization-Commitment* mobilizes Black self-acceptance into a commitment to social justice through activism. It signifies a move from psychological illness (pre-encounter) to psychological well-being (internalization) (Vandiver, 2001, p. 167). Table 1 below provides the key elements of the Nigresence model, from pre-encounter to internalization.

**Table 1**

*Nigresence Model*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Attitude</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Encounter</td>
<td>Anti-Black</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Miseducation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assimilation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encounter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immersion-Emersion</td>
<td>Afrocentricity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Anti-White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internalization</td>
<td>Black Nationalist</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Biculturalist</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Multiculturalist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cross (1978) eventually revised his Nigrescence model to portray attitudes within stages as captured in Table 1. For example, the *Pre-Encounter* stage was updated to include three attitudes, pre-encounter assimilation, pre-encounter miseducation, and pre-encounter self-hatred (Vandiver, 2001). Similar to the first version of Cross’ theory, pre-encounter assimilation identity is a time when race is not a salient identity but that one identifies strongly as US American (Cokley, 2002). The *Pre-encounter Miseducation* identity is marked by a time when one internalizes stereotypes about Black people. The *Pre-encounter Self-hatred* identity is an extreme anti-Black, self-hating identity based on miseducation. In Cross’ (1978) updates to the five-stage model, significant changes were made to the *Encounter* stage, and the *Immersion-Emersion* stage was updated to include two possible attitudes: intense Black involvement which celebrates Blackness and Afrocentricity or anti-Whiteness, which holds all things White and Eurocentric in contempt.

In *Immersion*, “[I]ndividuals immerse themselves in Black culture to the point of romanticizing it” (Vandiver, 2001, p. 166). This includes wearing pro-Black clothing, African garb, changing one's name, seeking more Black relationships by joining Black networking groups, etc. Anti-White sentiments dissipate as individuals begin another cycle of reevaluation categorical of *Emersion* (Patton et al., 2016). Through a balanced amalgamation of affective and cognitive domains of Black identity, one may move towards *Internalization* (Vandiver, 2001).

However, negative possibilities where one adopts a disparaging disposition do exist in the *Immersion-Emersion* stage; they are called regression, continuation/fixation,
and dropping out. Negative experiences or ineffective coping strategies can inhibit one's growth and race identity development, thus leading to regression to Pre-encounter (Patton et al., 2016). When an individual becomes engrossed with negative perceptions of White people, they display signs of continuation/fixation (Patton et al., 2016). Others may feel a weight of Blackness and become tired, depressed, or stressed of being and becoming Black. In turn, they may opt to drop out once they've found a satisfactory level of Blackness (Patton et al., 2016).

The final stage, Internalization-Commitment, has at least three possible attitudes: Black Nationalism, Biculturalism, and Multiculturalist inclusive (Vandiver et al., 2002). Cross (1991) explains Black Nationalism as the “Black American interpretation of what it means to have an African perspective” (p. 222). A Biculturalist attitude embraces Black-acceptance while actively engaged in another cultural orientation such as gender or sexual orientation. Or, one may adopt a multiculturalist inclusive orientation that embraces an intersectional identity (e.g., Black and female and Christian).

**Identity Theories in the US and Beyond**

As typical with all scholarship, one study builds upon another, yet there are critical points of divergence. Whereas Marcia’s research did not contemplate the impact of race or ethnicity on adolescent identity development (Syed & Fish, 2018), Erikson’s did. Erikson (1966) borrowed Vann Woodard’s concept of “surrendered identity” to refer to the negative identity BUSA, descendants of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, may possess. Undergirding these negative identities, or internalized racialism (Taylor &
Grundy, 1996), are often elements of inferiority or self-hate as BUSA identity has been defined by others. Thus, self-definition and self-identification are vitally important for BUSA’s self-determination. Identification, as defined by Foote (1951), is the individual "appropriation of and commitment to a particular identity or series of identities" (p. 17).

At the same time, Cross’ (1991) work rejects the motif of racial self-hatred in Black communities. In Shades of Black, Cross argues that if Black self-hate was as pervasive as believed, psychology would suggest Black people would have lower self-esteem and more mental health disorders (i.e., psychopathology) compared to other races. Yet, there is no evidence suggesting such is universally true (Bachman et al., 2011). Cross stresses that individual identity and collective identity must be considered independently.

Erikson (1966) attempted to differentiate how individual identity develops in the face of discrimination when he stated, “one person’s or group’s [ethnic] identity may be relative to another’s; and identity awareness may have to do with matters of an inner emancipation from a more dominant identity, such as the ‘compact majority’” [emphasis added] (p.148). Phinney’s research found a positive correlation between high scores on ethnic identity scales and high levels of self-esteem and psychological functioning, which underscores the importance and potential effects of securing a healthy identity (Day-Vines et al., 1998, p. 463).

While there are distinctions between individual (personal), social, and collective identities, race incorporates all three identities. Berzonsky (2005) positions personal,
social, and collective identity as layers of one's identity. What is important here is that positive regard towards one’s race is understood by scholars to be a positive view of one’s collective identity, whereas a negative view of one’s race is often experienced on a personal identity level (Cokley, 2002; Vandiver et al., 2002). Cross and Frost (2016) explain Black identity is discussed through two approaches, (1) ontogenetic identity development (OID), which looks at infancy to adulthood in the Eriksonian and Marcian traditions, and (2) social movement identity change (SMIC) (e.g., Nigresence). OID supposes a universal psychological identity development process that can be applied to all people of all backgrounds. SMIC, on the other hand, is content-specific and considers the meaning-making systems of identity development. OID does not contemplate ethnic and racial differences, nor does it consider development as one moves from one cultural context to the next. For example, Immersion in the Nigresence Model is marked by surrounding oneself with all things “black”– “black” music, African clothes, Black friends. One might wonder if these are the same racial identity progression markers to expect in a student from Togo, Central African Republic, or Mozambique. While useful in some ways, the relevance of SMIC to IBAC cannot be inferred from available scholarship and requires further study to understand theoretical relevance.

**Racial Identity Theory and IBAC**

There are clear parallels in stages among Marcia’s (1980) identity development models and race-specific developmental models such as status and terminology. I have also identified points of contention between these models. Marcia’s research does not substantively address race or ethnic identity. As previously stated, Black children begin
their racial identity journey earlier than their White peers (Cross, 1991). Moreover, the trope of rampant racial self-hatred lacks psychological evidence and ignores personal, social, and collective identity distinctions (Cokley, 2002).

It should be noted, however, that these prominent race identity formation theories were crafted through a US American lens that may be inappropriate for global application. In response, Kim (2012) lays the groundwork for a new psychosocial identity development theory for international students through the examination of various approaches—psychosocial identity development, racial and ethnic identity, transition, and cross-cultural models. However, little empirical evidence exists about how IBAC construct their identities on US campuses.

While identity and race-specific theories are informative for BUSA, there is not scholarship that investigates the more complicated factors such as nationality and national conceptualizations of race using these theories. Throughout DeCuir-Gunby’s (2009) study and implicit in some of the author’s theoretical framings, there is an assumption that there exists a shared experience amongst all Black people. For example, DeCuir-Gunby states, “Black students mostly associate with their racial group because it is comforting to be surrounded by people with similar experiences and backgrounds” [emphasis added] (p. 115). It remains unclear that there is a lack of coherence in scholarship around what a “Black experience” is, if there is a singular “Black experience,” and who may be the authority on what is authentic “Blackness.” As stated before, these theories are produced in the US and may be reductive, irrelevant, or limiting to those born and living outside a US context.
George Mwangi and Fries-Britt (2015), for example, confirm that existing race and racial identity development models are, indeed, inadequate for international populations because racial and cultural understandings are specific to one’s home cultural context. Because IBAC are navigating cultural, national, and sometimes linguistic transition, they experience racism and discrimination differently from BUSA (George Mwangi & Fries-Britt, 2015).

In support of developing internationally relevant racial identity models, Fries-Britt et al. (2014) presents an emergent framework which asks, “How do foreign-born students of color perceive and respond to racialized experiences and their racial minority status in the United States?” (p. 1). This pioneering study comprised of 15 students who were mostly Black African and Caribbean produced an emergent framework titled Learning Race in a U.S. Context (LRUSC) to help education researchers and practitioners respond to international students in a more conducive manner.

The results of Fries-Britt et al.’s (2014) study found that Black international students arrive with an unexamined US racial identity and may believe race is of no effect to their everyday lives and goals. Black international students may resist racial distractions until a significant racial/ethnic encounter in a US context prevents racism from being overlooked. At this point, Fries-Britt et al. (2014) surmised Black international students begin examining their racial/ethnic identity in a US context. Some students will reach a level of integrated awareness. It remains unclear how deeply students internalize their racial positioning and what impacts it has on self-identity.
Although LRUSC does not layer in criticality or acknowledge the effect of intersecting identities, such as religion, it provides a point of departure for my research.

My research aims to contribute to scholarship that advances race identity theory to consider the experiences of Black African international students. Part of this feat requires a deep understanding of race and its various conceptualizations, which is presented in later sections. However, it is important to note that not all Black race frames stem from a psychosocial lens, although the ones discussed above have had significant influence on student development theories. Some theories are based in the discipline of psychology, while others in the study of Pan-Africanism. Several of these frames are worth noting, including Négritude, Black Consciousness, and Black Power, which can all be placed under a Pan-Africanist ideological umbrella. Each term and framework will be discussed below.

**Conceptualizations of Black: Racial Etymology**

The terms “Black” and “Blackness” are heavily connotated and loaded terminologies. Yet, the purpose of my research is not to scrutinize the terminology of “Blackness” but rather to offer a counterview to the Black monolith by bringing to the fore various conceptualizations of race and Black identity. In this section, I provide an overview of influential theories about “Blackness” and how it is defined by proponents of the usage of the term to describe a social phenomenon.
Where it Begins

Tsri (2015) traces the modern subtext of black to the Greco-Roman eras, where ‘black’ connotes a moral undertone as dark and inferior. Tsri uses classical works to illustrate how black—referring to evil and moral corruptness—was used in the same contexts to describe Ethiopians. At that time, Africans were interchangeably called Ethiopian or black as Ethiopia means ‘burnt’ or ‘black face’ (Blyden, 1869, p. 9). Ethiopian does not refer to Ethiopians in the modern context; the double entendre of black as skin color and evil is illuminated in Othello, “And noble signior, If virtue no delighted beauty lack, Your son-in-law is far more fair than black” (Shakespeare, I.iii.209-291, as cited in Tsri, 2015, p. 4). Through this and other examples, Tsri claims black symbolism is deep and ancient and nearly impossible to overcome. “The crux of the matter,” according to Tsri (2015), “is that being conceived of as black or white is informed [sic] more by politics and power than by nature, and people are members of different colour categories because they have been assigned to them” (p. 4).

Prashad (2000) similarly finds that historically, blackness symbolized emptiness and failure. However, this symbolism was not in direct reference to black bodies; instead, “blackness was projected onto certain peoples who are deemed to be ‘black’” (Prashad, 2000, p. 159). Black here, again, does not refer to African ancestry but to “white supremacy’s attitude toward people assumed to be inferior” (p. 159). Prashad supports this statement by highlighting various people groups that have been regarded as black in history. The scholars above chronicled the pejorative nature of blackness, yet, over time, there have been (and are currently) movements to reclaim and redeem the connotation of
black as good, and beautiful, and fully human. These efforts are perhaps best demonstrated through expressions of Pan-Africanism.

**Pan-Africanism**

In the 1930s, Caribbean and Francophone African scholars recognizing the borderless “Negro situation” called for a “concrete rather than an abstract coming to consciousness” in the way the Negro (or Black race) must unify, “Then, in a way, we slowly came to the idea of a sort of black civilization spread throughout the world...There was the African continent, the Antilles, Haiti; there were Martinicans and Brazilian Negroes, etc.” (Césaire, 2000, pp. 91–92).

President Léopold Sédar Senghor (of Senegal), Aimé Césaire (of Martinique), and Léon Damas (of French Guiana) and others maintain, “Négritude [is] not a cephalic index, or plasma, or soma, but measured by the compass of suffering” (Césaire, 2001, pp. 42–43). This shared suffering referred to the struggle for freedom and independence. For example, during this time, Black people in the US were still under Jim Crow laws, labor uprisings spread across the Caribbean (Hart, 2007), and the (under)development of Africa well-underway (Bonneuil, 2000); and all of these events progressed against the backdrop of the Great Depression. The Negro situation was explained as a shared experience, with each Black person born with a “Negro soul” (Senghor), “African personality” (Blyden and Nkrumah), or “Negro essence” (Césaire) (Tsri, 2015, p. 8). The belief that all people of one skin color share inherent qualities affirms a racial construct.
Similar to Négritude, the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM), led by South African anti-apartheid activist Steve Biko, outlines that because of a common oppression (and oppressor), “we,” as a Black community, need to develop a Black consciousness where we can build a unified identity, join forces, and build ourselves up. So, being Black “is not a matter of pigmentation— being black is a reflection of a mental attitude” (Biko, 1978, p. 48).

Prior to the Black Consciousness movement, an empowerment movement began in the United States in the 1960s, the Black Power Movement was fronted by Kwame Ture (Stokley Carmichael) and arose concurrently to BCM. Black Power attunes itself primarily to the oppressive experiences of the Black community,

. . . a call for black people in this country to unite, to recognize their heritage, to build a sense of community. It is a call for black people to begin to define their own goals, to lead their own organizations and to support those organizations. It is a call to reject the racist institutions and values of this society...The concept of Black Power rests on a fundamental premise: Before a group can enter the open society, it must first close ranks. By this we mean that group solidarity is necessary before a group can operate effectively from a bargaining position of strength in a pluralistic society. . . (Carmichael & Hamilton, 1967, p. 44).

The Black Power Movement was accented by Cecil Elombe Brath’s “Black is Beautiful,” which further led to the rise of the Black Panther Party (Anderson & Cromwell, 1977; Ransom, 2014). The Black Panther Party, most notably founded by Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale in the late 1960s, was as much a political party as it
was a culture (Ongiri, 2009, p. 20). The Black Panther Party provided an aesthetic, vocabulary, literature, and its own social structure that were taught and reinforced with the same vigor as their fight against capitalism. The key to ending all forms of oppression was economic freedom, which was also necessary for true Black Empowerment, along with the proper education and the eradication of police brutality (Duncan, 2021).

State-sanctioned violence, the reemergence of the Ku Klux Klan, and hurdles in achieving financial freedom prompted disillusionment with the possibility of achieving true freedom and equality in the US amongst BUSA. Marcus Garvey’s Back to Africa Movement proposed that the talented and learned elite BUSA, such as the scientists, doctors, mathematicians, “return” to “Africa,” though he himself had not been (Stein, 1991, p. 10).

James Africanus Beale Horton (a founder of African Nationalism and the Father of Modern African Political Thought), Edward Wilmot Blyden (father of Pan-Africanism) along with Martin Robinson Delany (Father of Black Nationalism who coined “Africa for the African”) are considered the founders of Pan-Africanism (Martin, 2012; Shelby, 2003; Shepperson, 1960). While W.E.B. Du Bois is considered the Father of Modern Pan-Africanism, no person had as varied and complete influence as George Padmore. C. L. R. James (1973), close friend of Padmore and contributor to Pan-Africanism, affirmed Padmore’s title as the Father of African Independence as he was a mentor to notable African revolutionaries like Kwame Nkrumah, Jomo Kenyatta, and I.T.A. Wallace-Johnson.
Du Bois and Padmore embody two major camps of Pan-African thought: Black Nationalism and African Nationalism. It is important to note that earlier intellectuals, such as Firmin (2000) and Delaney (1991), argued that Black people are indeed people, with minds and souls at least equal in potential to White men. During that time, race was debated as a scientific concept, not a social construct. These scholars were responding to 18th and 19th century naturalists who defined race by morphology, geography, and frequency of genes which supported racist pseudoscience that falsely claimed Black people were not fully human (Graves, 2006). During the modern era, more emphasis was placed on the political fight for independence and the right to self-rule, whether it was national or individual.

Black Nationalism, “in general, is an ideology whose core tenets are black political, economic, and cultural autonomy either within or from white America” (Brown & Shaw, 2002, p. 23). Black nationalists desire a nation (whether separate or embedded within a nation) that belongs to Africa and its diaspora. The ideologies of Garvey, Du Bois, and Malcolm X align with Black nationalism. African Nationalists (Biko, Nyerere, Lumumba, Cabral, Sankara) contend for self-determination and call for a unified Africa. African nationalism is anti-colonial, anti-imperialist, and pro-indigeneity. Stated plainly, Black nationalism is essentially a race-first orientation (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2016), whereas African Nationalism is focused on political independence (Kiven Tunteng, 1974). Both seek to dismantle European colonialism and its legacies.

Oloruntoba-Oju (2012) suggests, “The ideals of Pan-Africanism may therefore be phrased in summative terms as the emancipation of Black people in all locations, and,
possibly, the political unification of African countries and the creation of a home in Africa for all African people” (p. 191). Pan-Africanism started long before the 1930s and continues on today. Most of the identity theories described in the previous section are informed by individual and group psychology, whereas most of the Pan-Africanist approaches are informed by political understandings of identity.

**Critiques of Black Social Movements**

These movements are not without critique. For example, colorism was prominent in Garvey’s Back to Africa Movement as he sought only to send the “purest Africans” back to Africa and questioned the legitimacy of light-skinned and mixed-race Africans (Johnson, 1940; Kendi, 2017). The question of Black authenticity was also taken up in the Black Panther Party who were distrustful of the Black middle-class and sought alliance with the "'brothers on the block,’ the disenfranchised, angry underclass in the ghetto” (Torrance, 2014).

Notable figures, such as Patricia Hill Collins (1998, 2000, 2006), Marika Sherwood (1999) and Ashley Farmer (2013, 2016, 2017) all drew attention to the patriarchal bent of these movements. Black women who had a profound influence on these movements, like Paulette and Jane Nardal, Anna Julia Cooper, Claudia Jones, Amy Jacques Garvey, Amy Ashwood Garvey, and Esther Cooper Jackson, are often overlooked or erased from these conversations. There are many architects and executors of Pan-Africanism who gave nuance, power, and their lives to these movements. With an
understanding and deep appreciation of the contributions made by women, I focus on the most familiar players and movements of Pan-Africanism for the purposes of this study.

Patterson and Kelley (2000) provocatively ask, “Is Pan-Africanism simply the recognition that black people share the same timeless cultural values…or is it a manifestation of life under racism and imperialism?” (p. 18). Pan-Africanism shows how Black race has been stylized over time and across boundaries. In each case, it is assumed that there is a transnational connection – be it shared oppression or shared race. As we see, many Pan-Africanists were born outside of the US and many BUSA Pan-Africanists repatriated abroad; yet Pan-Africanism has been discussed this way and seemingly always inclusive of BUSA, even if not the other way around. While there is significant overlap, there are also distinctions; namely, Africans sought political independence while Black Americans pursued racial equality (Kiven Tunteng, 1974, p. 37). This is not to suggest these revolutionists were ignorant of or blind to international affairs, but rather they drew untested connections of Black identity and its impact. Such assertions can be classified as essentialist.

Essentialism

According to Spivak (2010), essentialism is an imperial device used to create a stabilized other. Ashcroft (as cited in Motamedi et al., 2017) defines essentialism as “…[T]he assumption that groups, categories, or classes of objects have one or several defining features exclusive to all members of that category” (p. 92). Essentialism is rampant in US media, like the National Geographic, where Africa (and Africans) are
portrayed as homogenous and primitive (Goldberg, 2018). Paradoxically, essentialism is also used in anticolonial discourse, like Pan-Africanism, to create a faux shared identity (Hall, 1994). Paul Gilroy’s (1993) *The Black Atlantic* is a modernist meditation on the confluence of African, American, Caribbean, and British (Black) cultures. Essentialism is perhaps the most documented critique of Gilroy’s infamous work, *The Black Atlantic*, which overlooks other diasporic experiences (Zeleza, 2010). The Black Atlantic shares a nationalism not marked by borders and ethnicity but through a shared experience of the Black Atlantic itself. *The Black Atlantic*, albeit an important work, does little to acknowledge the range of experiences and identities outside of mentioning “the mix of Africa” and creolization (which still claims a shared base foundation).

Collins' (2000) matrix of domination (an organizing tool to identify domains of power and their impact) demonstrates that one can, at the same time, inhabit space(s) of privilege and oppression. Operating within a matrix of domination, Black scholars and philosophers of the West, like Gilroy, center their racialized experiences as the standard and solidify those narratives as the typical Black experience. Young (2009) contests the notion of a standard or quintessential Black experience claiming such a notion is a cultural imperialism which universalizes the dominant group’s experience, culture, and interpretation of events and establishes them as the norm. Cultural imperialism is enacted when the dominant group,

reinforces its position by bringing the other groups under the measure of its dominant norms... Those living under cultural imperialism find themselves defined from the outside, positioned, placed, by a network of dominant meanings
they experience as arising from elsewhere, from those with whom they do not identify and who do not identify with them (Young, 2009, pp. 66-67).

Those enacting cultural imperialism ignore important distinctions and differences in order to create a metanarrative—stories that shape history—of shared identity and struggle (T.D. Mitchell, personal communication, July 2, 2018). In doing so, the diasporic experiences of the West (i.e., the United States) serve as a standard of comparison of the Black experience (Patterson & Kelley, 2000). This metanarrative is quintessential to Pan-African beliefs, and to all racial concepts as race is neither biologic nor scientific. Race exists because of stories told to, with, and about us and others. These metanarratives shape and create racial identities.

In reality, racial doctrine is anti-rational and full of contradictions (Graves, 2006). During the 1950s, UNESCO published its first Statement on Race, which is a summary of agreements and comments from eminent sociologists, biologists, and physical anthropologists on the topic of race. These scientists defined race as

a group or population characterized by some concentrations, relative as to frequency and distribution, of hereditary particles (genes) or physical characters, which appear, fluctuate, and often disappear in the course of time by reason of geographic and/or cultural isolation (UNESCO, 1969, pp. 30–31).

Yet, in the same paragraph, UNESCO stated, “National, religious, geographical, linguistic and cultural groups do not necessarily coincide with racial groups; and the cultural traits of such groups have no demonstrated connexion [sic] with racial traits”
(1969, p. 31). Thus, the report’s authors conceded that human races have been classified differently by the sciences, by different factors, and state with confidence that the concept of race will change in the future.

**Race and Non-BUSA Black Identities**

In relation to the fluidity of the concept of race described by UNESCO above, Hall (2017) describes race as a “a sliding signifier” because race “is a cultural and historical, not biological, fact” (p 32). Because there is no scientific evidence of race (Mills, 1997; Tishkoff & Kidd, 2004), “Race, then, is not real—except society has given weight to race and race has real consequences, therefore, it is real” (Hall, 2017, pp. 3–4). As race is socially constructed, it is understandable that societies may have different perspectives on race. From an analytical view, BUSA and IBAC may not possess the same ideas of race due to differing contexts (Hunter et al., 2017; Thelamour, 2017; Tormala & Deaux, 2006). Regardless, the modern notions of ‘black’ stem from the same subtext and are predominantly studied through an Afro-Atlantic lens.

Imperialism, or perceived cultural superiority, is only one reason why Afro-Atlantic diasporic studies dominate scholarship. The hegemony of Afro-Atlantic diasporic studies is largely related to the fact that the Americas received an overwhelming majority of enslaved Africans, an estimated 160 million people (Zeleza, 2010, p. 4). The legacy of slavery provides complications for first and second-generation immigrants and nonimmigrants as they navigate overarching BUSA and non-BUSA Black identities, in this case, African identities. For example, race and racial identity are
given unique significance in the US and differ from other countries’ ideas on race such as in South Africa or Brazil (Kibona Clark, 2008, p. 178). Beyond whiteness and blackness, the significance of race varies in part due to power, population demographics, and racial rigidity. Like the US, South Africa and Brazil are multiracial and multiethnic nations.

On the other hand, both South Africa and Brazil have a larger nonwhite population than the US. The 2011 South African census listed Black African (which includes Indigenous groups), Whites, Coloureds, Asians, and Others, with Black African comprising 80% (Statistics South Africa, 2011, p. 2). Yet, White South Africans make up the majority of middle and upper class (Bernstein et al., 2013; Business Tech, 2018). Racism requires institutional power and privilege. Politically, the African National Congress, a Black Nationalist party, has governed South Africa ever since Nelson Mandela was in power in the mid-1990s. Consequently, Black South Africans may have political power, however, organizational institutionalized racism prevents Black South Africans from achieving economic power (privilege) (Bernstein et al., 2013).

Similarly, Brazil’s census includes White, Brown, Black, Yellow, and Indigenous (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, n.d.). Demographically, Brazil has less rigid racial divides with over 50% of its population being Black or mixed race. Within one’s immediate family, each member can have a different race depending on their features. While colorism exists in the US, one’s race is not determined by physique or figures. So, not only are diasporic identities socially and historically created, reified, and reproduced, “any sense of a collective identity among black peoples in the New World, Europe, and Africa is contingent and constantly shifting” (Patterson & Kelley, 2000, p.
For many Africans, national and ethnic identities are more salient than US race indicators (George Mwangi & Fries-Britt, 2015; Ibrahim, 2008; Kibona Clark, 2008).

An ethnic group, for example, is a self-perceived group of people who hold in common a set of traditions shared by the others with whom they are in contact (De Vos, 1975, p. 9). Kibona Clark’s (2008) research describes how first and second-generation Africans in the US make “complex and sometimes contradictory decisions on their place in America’s racial and cultural landscape” (p. 179). Because little research is available on IBAC exclusively, I’ve included studies on Black immigrant populations and foreign-born Black students. IBAC are potential members in the first category and included in the latter. Black immigrant refers to immigrants to the US from places such as Latin America, the Caribbean and African nations who are phenotypically black.

A specific example of these concepts is found with first and second-generation African immigrants. These immigrants have many choices in how they self-identify. One may call themselves Ghanaian-American, African American, American, or African (Kibona Clark, 2008). Former President Barack Obama, referring to his African ancestry, can say he’s Luo, Kenyan, East African, and African American (Zeleza, 2010, p. 5). Table 2 provides a sample of how one person might have a regional, national, ethnic, and tribal identity simultaneously. This table provides a brief overview for example purposes only, and is not a comprehensive listing of national, ethnic, or tribal groups.

These choices about how to identify are not made in name only; African immigrant students become experts at identifying boundaries between US American and
their African cultures (Habecker, 2017). Ibrahim (2008) explains that African immigrant students “chose” blackness through arduous, complex and, mostly, subconscious processes of ‘translation’ and ‘negotiation’; but it is not “done in opposition to, or in competition with their embodied memories and histories” (p. 249). These students did not forsake their African identities and cultures but rather created a third space identity where all identities merge and are contradicted and embraced (Bhabha, 1994). This point is well-illustrated by Ibrahim’s research participants' ability to code-switch.

**Table 2**

*Sample African Ancestry Chart*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Regional</th>
<th>National</th>
<th>Ethnic</th>
<th>Tribal/Subgroup</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>West African</td>
<td>Ghanaian</td>
<td>Akan</td>
<td>e.g., Ashanti, Fante, Akwamu</td>
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<td>Ewe</td>
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<td>Guan(g)</td>
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<td>Gur</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>East African OR Central African</td>
<td>Rwandan OR Rwandese</td>
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<td>Kenya</td>
<td>East African</td>
<td>Kenyan</td>
<td>Kikuyu</td>
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<td>Luhya</td>
<td>e.g., Anyuak</td>
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<td>Namibia</td>
<td>Southern African</td>
<td>Namibian</td>
<td>Ovambo</td>
<td>e.g., Aandonga, Ovakwanyama</td>
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<td>e.g., Kwandu, Ovambanderu, OvaHimba</td>
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Code-switching is a tool that persons who use non-standard vocabulary or intonation engage in linguistic ways, determined by, “Who is talking to whom, in what
context, and for what purpose,” shows the nearly instantaneous and prescient subconscious ability students possess to quickly adapt their performance of language and culture (p. 249).

In spite of the various ways of introducing oneself, many African immigrants are given, or choose to take on, an African identity, instead of a national or ethnic identity (Kibona Clark, 2008, p. 170). Ibrahim (2008) argues that once in North America, students who once would have called themselves Sudanese or Yoruba become African or Black; national or ethnic identifications are tertiary at best. The existing scholarship recognizes the process of identity shifts as one of acculturation. Acculturation alludes to the manner by which, “(i)migrants facilitate their own settlement in host societies by adopting, rejecting and/or retaining aspects of their heritage and host cultures to varying degrees” (Green, 2015, p. 37). This information is useful, but also complicated by the purposes of this study. IBAC, for example, are not immigrants. They may, however, have to make choices around self-identity and may also experience similar patterns of acculturation.

In the above paragraphs, I outlined available ways of understanding race and identity found through scholarship in psychology and Pan-Africanist studies. These negotiations are then informed by an operational definition of blackness which is articulated by Asante et al. (2016),

Blackness is more than skin color; it is a contested terrain of memory, identity, culture, and politics. Blackness is a space of transnational cultural construction, an ongoing formation with multiple axes/intersections in which historical narratives, local politics, and self-identifications are enunciated and debated (p. 368-369).
The preceding section reviewed literature on race and non-BUSA identities. The next section explores how identities may inform the higher education experiences of IBAC, a non-BUSA population that is coded as “Black” in US higher education institutions. The following section will further inform the possible meanings that Black African international students assign to black and blackness in my study.

**International Black African Collegians Experiences in U.S. Higher Education**

Much of the available research about African experiences in education samples data from studies about Black immigrants. Even less data is available for nonimmigrant African students, which is my target population. In 1997, Kamya encouraged scholars to explore “the ambivalence about identity that many African immigrants experience in this country” (p. 161). This call has been answered by a number of studies and researchers, including the scholarship in this section. However, most of the literature on Black immigrants’ university experience was published within the last 12 years and looks primarily at how racial identity and socialization impact student adjustment to college, enrollment, and performance (George Mwangi & English, 2017). While these studies offer a helpful framing of potential challenges, IBAC may process these experiences differently. The growing body of literature regarding IBAC has examined the “emotionally taxing” work international students face learning how to traverse “the advantages and disadvantages that come along with categories and labels…” such as racial hierarchies in the US context (Onyenekwu, 2017, p. 1122). According to these studies, Black immigrants and IBAC are double minorities with interracial tensions that
contribute to acculturative stress; these themes will be defined and discussed throughout this section.

**Double Discrimination**

Racial discrimination and prejudices have been found in some studies to cause the most acculturative stress for IBAC, compared to other stressors (Berry, 2005; Boafo-Arthur, 2014; Joseph et al., 2013; Reynolds & Constantine, 2007). IBAC face prejudice and discrimination from domestic US students (ethnic and racial), international students (ethnic and racial), as well as from other Black students (ethnic) (Boafo-Arthur, 2014). A major argument of Bryce-Laporte’s (1972) *Black Immigrants* is that Black immigrants (e.g., Black and foreign-born) are “double minorities” that face double visibility and double invisibility. That is, they are doubly invisible to society as immigrants and Black immigrants, and doubly visible to White people as Black and to Black people as foreign (p. 54). For Black immigrants, racial discrimination is likely to be present in predominantly White institutions, but there also may be tensions even at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). George Mwangi and Fries-Britt (2015) found in one study that IBAC at HBCUs did not feel fully accepted by Black US peers and generally felt more comfortable with other international students on campus despite later befriending BUSA. In the same study, non-native English-speaking Black students were considered less educated by some of their peers due to language acquisition and accent despite receiving more rigorous science and mathematics education in their home countries (George Mwangi & Fries-Britt, 2015).
Perhaps what makes these incidents more stressful for IBAC is that many have never experienced racial discrimination in their predominantly Black countries of origin (Boafo-Arthur, 2014; Kibona Clark, 2008; Stebleton, 2007). George Mwangi (personal communication, November 30, 2020) argues that Africans in Africa experience structural racism through the lens of their countries and global positionality. According to George-Mwangi, anti-Blackness is a global phenomenon, and is an imperial tool that can be enacted by imperialists and internalized by societies to maintain racial hierarchies. African nations and its people are disparaged by colonialism and its living legacy.

Examples of anti-blackness can be found in scholarship and in contemporary politics. In 2018, then-President of the Unites States, Donald Trump, called African nations, Haiti, and El Salvador “shithole countries” (Fram & Lemire, 2018). Despite these offensive comments, a Pew Research survey showed President Trump had high approval ratings in Nigeria and Kenya, 58% and 65% respectively (Dawsey, 2018; Hudson, 2020; Wike et al., 2020). In fact, some Nigerians defended Trump’s travel ban which contained six African nations, including Nigeria (Nwaubani, 2020). Many in the US deemed Trump’s comments and expansion of Obama’s travel ban as xenophobic. However, Nwaubani (2020) noted that it is “difficult to prove beyond any doubt that Trump’s motive was simply bigotry and malice,” likely because there were other political motives at work as well. Given the socio-political and socio-historical relationship between the US and non-European immigrants, Trump’s actions reflect a narrative of racist nativism, and reflect the structural racism that is present in the US is present.
Such racism is also present in other nations in North America. Ibrahim (2008), who, for example, defines himself as a “refugee from Africa now holding the Canadian passport and working in the US,” retraced the first day he was declared Black by a policeman in Toronto, Canada in his work. As Ibrahim recalled walking the streets of Toronto, he was stopped by a White police officer looking for “for a dark man with a dark bag” (Ibrahim, 2008, p. 242). Ibrahim refrained from mentioning his bag is light blue but asked the officer about the “darkness” of his skin, to which the officer retorted, “We are looking for a Black man with a dark bag.” For Ibrahim, this experience opened his eyes to the “everyday racism, human degradation, and general annihilation of black people in North America” (pg. 242). Ibrahim’s experience can be linked to another scholarly account given by James Baldwin discussed decades before,

The police in this country make no distinction between a Black Panther or a black lawyer or my brother or me. The cops aren’t going to ask me my name before they pull the trigger. I’m part of this society and I’m in exactly the same situation as anybody else — any other black person — in it” (Mead & Baldwin, 1971, p. 59).

Along with documenting the psychological violence of police profiling, Ibrahim’s story illustrates how momentous these racialized occasions can be for Black and international students and the possibility that IBAC could encounter such profiling at any time.
Black-Black Relations

In the paragraphs below, George Mwangi and others noted that relations between IBAC and BUSA are at times strained on university campuses. Because IBAC may have “difficulty processing what it means to be Black and a foreigner in the United States,” interactions between foreign-born and US-born Black students are important to study (George Mwangi & Fries-Britt, 2015, p. 20). In Black Skin, White Masks, Fanon (2008) famously said, “For not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man” (pp. 82-83), but there is not a singular Black experience. Instead, “Black people must (also) learn to be Black in relation to other Blacks” (Asante et al., 2016, p. 369).

For example, George Mwangi (2016) explored factors influencing Black international students’ sense of belonging at an HBCU through a multi-participant descriptive case study approach. Ten international Black students from Nigeria, Kenya, Jamaica, Haiti, Senegal, Trinidad, Ghana, and Eritrea were identified for this study. The key indicators of Black international students’ sense of belonging were students’ perception of Black Americans before enrollment, self-perception, perceived campus “fit,” and student engagement on campus. Another study focused on “Black within Black” experience. In this study, the authors found Black international students reported feeling that US-born Black students were too quick to cite racism or prejudice as a cause for unpleasant incidents around campus (George Mwangi & Fries-Britt, 2015). As a result, Black international students often said they distanced themselves from issues of race and racism on and across campus. BUSA students felt Black international students
lacked critical awareness of important campus issues because they (Black international students) didn’t fully understand the “legacy of racism” in the US. In other words, BUSA may feel IBAC benefit from, but do not necessarily contribute to, the struggle against racism (Storr, 2009). Kibona Clark’s research (2008) offers another vantage:

In America, where ethnicity is conceived of in black and white, African immigrants have to contend with internally and externally imposed identities that can often leave them either embracing multiple identities or distancing themselves from an African-American identity and all of the baggage that comes with it (p. 170).

Thelamour’s (2017) research aligns with Kibona Clark’s, stating that “In response to the dampening of their ethnicities, at times these immigrants have distanced themselves from Black Americans and the negative stereotypes and racism that affect that cultural group” (p. 1459). Bashi and McDaniel (1997) offer yet another claim that the reactions of immigrants to racism depend on where they were situated in the racial hierarchy in their home country. Griffin et al. (2012) have noted some Black immigrants who are affluent in their home contexts carry that knowledge of their social capital into their new contexts and use that knowledge as a map for achieving upward mobility.

The experience for IBAC is further complicated by the way that race and class are commixed in the US. Slavery, globally, is informed by class politics, but after the institutionalization of slavery in the US, slavery became racialized and viewed as both a class and race (Bashi & McDaniel, 1997, p. 675). Some in the US code black as “poverty” or “unintelligence” or conflate both codes (Haney-López, 2014; Hubbard,
2018). For example, during Joseph Biden’s presidential campaign, he stated “poor kids” were as smart as White kids, with poor meaning children of color (Viser & Wagner, 2019). Coded and coated language is an example of what Bonilla-Silva (2006) calls colorblind racism,

[W]hich acquired cohesiveness and dominance in the late 1960s, explains contemporary racial inequality as the outcome of nonracial dynamics. Whereas Jim Crow racism explained blacks’ social standing as the result of their biological and moral inferiority, color-blind racism avoids such facile arguments. Instead, whites rationalize minorities’ contemporary status as the product of market dynamics, naturally occurring phenomena, and blacks’ imputed cultural limitations… (p. 2).

The co-constitutive nature of race and class in the US and practices of coded language can obscure the structures of race. In effect, IBAC may neither combat racism nor be conscious of it, which may signal to Black Americans a measure of complicity.

Compounding BUSA-IBAC relations is the fact that many racist stereotypes about BUSA have been accepted by Africans through media portrayals and research propaganda (Okpalaoka & Dillard, 2012; Thelamour, 2017). As IBAC acclimate to the US and develop an understanding of its racial hierarchy, they may be reluctant to accept ties or associate with BUSA (Okpalaoka & Dillard, 2012). In response to Gordon and Anderson’s (1999) assertion that Black immigrants and BUSA share a “global group” identity [Black] which creates an opportunity for these groups to create a “cultural
community,” Thelamour (2017) reminds readers that relationships between these groups are often taut (p.1459).

Perhaps the best example of IBAC race detachment are social distancing theories. Social distancing in the public health field refers to maintenance of a safe distance between two or more parties to prevent the spread of the coronavirus disease of 2019 (COVID-19). However, the social sciences have long-used the term social distance to investigate the closeness or connectedness people feel towards a group based on perceptions of difference that impacts intergroup relations (Jackson, 2010, p. 194). Bogardus’ (1933) social distance scale measured and divided attitudes in categories of friendliness, neutrality, or apathy. Sample survey items include whether someone would approve of having two-thirds of their child’s class of a specific background or whether they would be willing to have their child marry someone from that group.

In line with this thought, Jackson’s (2010) work challenges research which suggests that social distancing practices of Black immigrants are part of a collective identity and set of personal preferences; an idea posited by Harris and Khanna (2010); Jackson and Cothran (2003); Patterson (1972); and Reid (1939). Specifically, Jackson’s (2010) study on Black immigrants and rhetoric uses discursive analysis to demonstrate how distancing discursive practices teach foreign-born Blacks about race and ethnicity in the US, which leads to social distancing from domestic Black Americans.

For migrant and immigrant communities, social distancing is an indicator of the scale of assimilation: the more assimilated to the dominant group (i.e., White) an
immigrant community is, the more one distances themselves from other Black communities as some immigrants associate assimilation to the dominant group with success. Jackson uses social and discursive analysis to illuminate how the language Black immigrant communities used to talk about and distinguish themselves to others reveals more about US society than self-understanding. To provide context, when a Nigerian international student was asked if it was surprising that the first friends they made in the US were White, the student replied, “I’ve always considered myself to be different from the, you know, Black people”—Black people here meaning Black US Americans.

Another example from Jackson’s work came from a mother who was “furious” at her son for fighting “[s]ome Irish kids” after they repeatedly called her son a racial slur. Unsure of why her son was offended by the slur, she asked “Why don’t you just make it clear to these kids that you are not a Negro? You are a Bajan, a West Indian, a British!” Unlike the Nigerian student, this woman’s son was born in the US, yet she did not consider her son Black or American. Similarly, Joseph et al.’s (2013) research suggests Black immigrants are more likely to engage with African-American culture if they perceive that the public holds African-Americans in positive regard. In this way, Joseph’s work highlights the importance of social capital.

Applying this framework, it would appear that BUSA students don’t want to be considered African, and African students don’t want to be considered Black because of how each group learned to think of and view the other through dominant ethnic and racial lenses. Day-Vines et al. (1998) led a diasporic study abroad intervention with 18 BUSA students to Ghana. One BUSA participant explained that they were indoctrinated to
believe, “Africa was not a place to embrace, but to scorn, and make an example of her supposed ‘desolation’” (p. 435). However, positive experiences in Ghana allowed students to challenge and reframe their thinking. In a similar fashion, Ghanaian students believed the majority of Black Americans were violent, abusive, and unruly based on media representation such as *Boyz n the Hood*. The 18 BUSA participants were perceived by the Ghanaian students as “exceptional” Black Americans.

Comparative research between domestic and foreign-born Black groups indicates that divisive language that is present in various societies around the world reinforces anti-Black tropes stemming from racist—and a deeper read would suggest capitalistic agendas (George Mwangi & English, 2017; Kendi, 2019; Onyenekwu, 2015, 2017). Pierre (2004) and Thelamour (2017) argue mainstream US media and to a large extent, hegemonic academia, perpetuate a narrative of upwardly mobile Black immigrants as successful Blacks in comparison to BUSA, and that an association with BUSA may result in downward assimilation (Portes & Zhou, 1993). To illustrate, the topic of upwardly mobile Black immigrants has been taken up in public scholarship such as *The Atlantic* (Coates, 2009), *Pew Research* (Anderson, 2015a; Anderson, 2015b; Tamir, 2022), and *The Economist* (“Building Afromerica”, 2015; “Immigrants and the Wage Gap”, 2018). In effect, Black immigrants and BUSA are pit against each other or, at the very least, given tiered placement within US racial hierarchy. Moreover, this idea of downward assimilation completely disregards the systemic and systematic oppression of Black and Brown people in the US and feeds into a white supremacist belief that Black Americans do not and cannot succeed (Kendi, 2019; Thelamour, 2017).
In addition to IBAC facing double discrimination and tensions with Black Americans, Boafo-Arthur (2014) provides an overview of acculturative stressors unique to international Black-African collegians. The issues facing many IBAC are interconnected; social isolation, distance from community, and finances can be tied together. Malcolm and Mendoza (2014) offer an example from a student quote, 

I didn’t go home last year . . . for an entire year, and that’s the longest I’ve been away from home. And that messed with my mind so badly. . . . I can’t ever do that again. I need to go home at least once a year ... because we are pretending, . . . you’re just not being who you really are, as a person, I mean, the full you (p. 609).

Decades of research have identified perennial challenges IBAC face returning home. For example, unfavorable currency conversion and exorbitant flight costs with fewer travel options make travel a costly endeavor. In addition, out of reach and underresourced US embassies makes obtaining or renewing visas difficult and uncertain. Constrictive student visa policies coupled with travel restrictions make returning home particularly risky for IBAC, and prevent many students from returning home during their studies overseas (Caldwell & Hyams-Ssekasi, 2016; Lee & Opio, 2011; Okusolubo, 2018; Tito, 1987).

Political instability was earlier noted as a push factor towards international education for IBAC, and can also be a strong deterrent for visiting home during their
studies. Prolonged time away from their community can exacerbate feelings of social isolation. In a highly racialized society like the US, in which many people may not have an understanding of the unique challenges facing international students or an understanding of a particular African context, IBAC may feel like they are “pretending” as they share parts of themselves while concealing other parts.

Acculturation is a two-way street; both host and guest have agency in the relationship. Berry’s work on acculturation shows that hosts or receiving societies can also adjust to immigrants either in a welcoming or marginalizing manner, which can reduce acculturative stress or exacerbate it (Berry, 2001, 2005). Acculturation does not have to be whole or complete. “The inclusion of these domains in the model is key to understanding the multifaceted nature of immigrant adaptation: Immigrants might exhibit one acculturation strategy for a proximal cultural domain and show another strategy for a distal domain” (Thelamour, 2017, p. 1458). As an example, IBAC may assume a nickname for ease of pronunciation and participate in events around campus but may only opt to eat foods from their region.

Essandoh’s (1995) research on mental health and the unique challenges facing IBAC in the United States gives five considerations for effective counseling, including 1) boundary concerns, 2) authority issues, 3) attributions of disturbances, 4) differentiation, and 5) accessing IBAC (p. 354). Pertinent to this study is a reminder that interdependence and collectivism are esteemed cultural habits in many African communities as, “Community is the cornerstone in African thought and life” (Mbigi, 2005, p. 75). Boafo-Arthur (2014) states, “Black-African students’ perception of societal norms and
interpersonal relationships could lead to acculturative stress as they have to adjust from the interdependent worldview of their home environments to the independent worldview of life in the United States” (p. 120). Maladjustment can lead to greater mental health concerns (Constantine et al., 2005; Essandoh, 1995; Thomas A. Parham, 2012).

Despite the challenges outlined above, IBAC also have agency. The scant literature available focused on agency shows that IBAC use a plethora of mechanisms to cope with acculturative stress, such as prayer, spirituality, and humor (Constantine et al., 2005; Essandoh, 1995). A shortfall of the literature is the cursory lens through which these experiences are investigated and that studies do not investigate the impact of these culminating experiences on IBAC self-esteem, self-image, or self-concept. This gap and others are highlighted in the section below.

**Gaps in the Literature**

In this final section, I introduce gaps in the literature and areas where I seek to contribute to the broader discourse on IBAC and racial identity through this study. In order to identify where gaps lie, I call upon Miles’ Taxonomy of Research Gaps introduces seven core gaps found in research titled: (a) Evidence Gap; (b) Knowledge Gap; (c) Practical-Knowledge Conflict Gap; (d) Methodological Gap; (e) Empirical Gap; (f) Theoretical Gap; and (g) Population Gap. As outlined in the literature analysis, there are several gaps which I identified and will summarize in the following categories: empirical gap, theoretical gap, and knowledge gap.
Empirical Gap

An empirical gap can be identified by scholars when a topic is being researched from a different angle than previously studied. Because the topic is being approached from a different angle, the findings and propositions from previous research may need to be reevaluated or empirically verified. While there is a growing body of literature on IBAC, no study, to my knowledge, considers how IBAC understand race. It is clear that “Black” is not a talismanic symbol and has different meanings and consequences based on context and locale. Newly arrived Black immigrants and non-immigrants alike may neither expect nor fully grasp what it means to be Black in the US and may have difficulty making sense of specific moments of encounter. Stated another way, “Who you are is not necessarily how you are seen” (R. M. Paige, personal communication, June 29, 2017).

Gans (2016) suggested, “Since racial inequality begins with racialization, greater emphasis on racialization research can perhaps enable social scientists to help the U.S. and other countries move yet further toward racial equality” (p. 12). In the US, “black” is heavily connoted and coded. Often it is considered negative in Western traditions (e.g., black magic, black plague, black cat, black sheep, black market) and far too often met with negative effects (e.g., physical, psychological, and social violence). Understanding the (d)evolution of race in the US is critical to understanding the current conceptualizations of Blackness. I use (d)evolution to reflect the shift of opinion from race as a scientific fact to a social invention. At the same time, these concepts, which may
be accepted—or at the very least understood—in the US, may be elusive to or rebuffed by IBAC.

Theoretical Gap

A theoretical conflict occurs when a phenomenon is studied through various theoretical models in prior research but may currently lack explanatory power. In this chapter, I have identified recent theoretical approaches to research studies with IBAC (Ethnic Models and Race Identity Development Theories). Each of these theoretical approaches gives insight to race and racial identity. However, these concepts are designed through a US-focused lens and may not encompass the realities of IBAC that have been identified in more recent research.

Additionally, Berry (1997) states that acculturation is impacted by three aspects: psychological, sociocultural, and economic (p. 6). In the same article, he notes the research that supports this claim was largely tested on Western populations. The same Western-centric approach has informed identity and race development research. These studies were performed by Western scholars with particular attention to Western realities, and so privilege interpretations of data related to acculturation (Berry, 2005; Cross, 1978; Erikson, 1964; Marcia, 1967). What is known about acculturation may indeed be relevant to IBAC, but such a claim must be questioned and substantiated by research. Furthermore, more recent studies centering the experiences of Black immigrants complicate basic bidimensional acculturation assumptions (Ferguson et al. 2012; Thealamor, 2020). For example, by layering in race, Ferguson et al. (2012) introduced a
tridimensional model where Black immigrants can align themselves along three cultural lines: Black American, European American, and their cultures of origin.

**Knowledge Gap**

Lastly, there are unexplored dimensions to IBAC racial identity, which is consistent with Miles’ criterion for identifying a knowledge gap. Since there is limited student development research available on international education (Malcolm & Mendoza, 2014; Renn et al., 2014), it comes as no surprise that even less research about international Black students exists - given the subordinate consideration of Black people in education. The works of George Mwangi, Thelamour, and Boafo-Arthur have made significant contributions to this emergent topic. There is more literature on Black immigrants and thus, many studies on IBAC incorporate Black immigrant narratives (George Mwangi, 2014; Thelamour & Johnson, 2017). Black immigrants come with the intention of staying in the US indefinitely; however, immigration is not the intent or desire of all IBAC. In fact, IBAC, like all international students, must demonstrate intention to repatriate post-studies to obtain a visa for travel. It is possible that reasons for travel, length of stay, and intention can influence one's adaptation, acculturation, and identity development process. These factors are not amplified in existing studies. Through this study, I hope to learn whether an international distinction provides a shield or insulation that impacts IBAC’s racial identity.
Conclusion

This chapter began with an overview of African higher education systems and the push-pull factors leading to increased African student mobility. I provided a genealogy of identity development theories that move from Erikson’s (1964) attention to adolescence to Cross’ (1978) Nigrescence and then finally to Fries-Britt’s (2014) focus on Black international student identity development. An understanding of Black mobility and the impact on identity coalesced in a literature review of Black race conceptualizations from antiquity to modern-day with special focus on Black etymology pulling heavily from Stuart Hall and global Pan-Africanists. The final section of this chapter investigated the educational realities of IBAC in US higher education. I discussed the role of social distancing in exacerbating tensions between Afro-diasporic communities in the US. Within sociology, social distancing can be applied to the idea that immigrant communities quickly learn racial hierarchies and choose to distance themselves from communities that are not perceived as upwardly mobile. Taken together, these sections highlight that IBAC are an understudied group who undergo a unique racialization process in US higher education.

Because little is known about the unique racialization experiences of IBAC and the importance of giving students voice and agency in sharing narratives about their own unique identity experiences, I have chosen a qualitative approach for my study. Qualitative research is the most useful approach to understanding people’s belief systems, perspectives, experiences and generally preferences words for data analysis over numbers.
(Bricki & Green, 2007). My study is rooted in symbolic interactionism and sensemaking allows me to elevate and center research participants' voices. Zeleza (2005) observes that the “contemporary academic diaspora in the United States and elsewhere in the North is becoming a force to reckon with in terms of ‘knowledge production on Africa’” (p. 270). Thus, my study does not seek to speak for or at IBAC, but rather speak with them, as we co-create knowledge. In the following chapter, I provide information on the research methods I used to answer the questions:

1) In what ways do racialized US higher education experiences inform or complicate IBAC understanding of race?

2) How, if at all, do these experiences alter how IBAC self-identify?

In the next chapter, I will introduce the methodology and methods used to address these research questions.
Chapter 3: Methodology and Methods

Introduction

My study on the imposition of race, plasticity of Blackness, and racial understanding is an extension of emerging research done by Boafo-Arthur, Dei, and George Mwangi, and Zewolde. My study aims to inform and educate the field about the heterogeneous identities of Black students, adding new dimensions of knowledge by understanding IBAC through lenses of racialization and identity development. The endpoint of this study was new knowledge creation regarding IBAC’ racial identity development that can be used to create more robust and relevant support to IBAC as they navigate racialized campus climates in US HEIs.

As noted in Chapter 2, this study sought to examine the racialized experiences of international Black African collegians (IBAC) on higher education campuses in the United States (US). The study originally built on racial identity theory and was based on existing evidence that IBAC experience racism and racial identity questions on US campuses. The research questions were answered through a qualitative approach to capture the richness of student perspective in their own words. This chapter is organized in three sections 1) research methodology, 2) research design, and 3) quality markers of qualitative research.

Research Methodology

Methodological Approach Rationale
The epistemological traditions reflected in this study were both interpretive and critical, as I sought to understand the meaning that IBAC attached to race, how they made sense of their own experience, identify the patterns that were present across participants, and critically interrogate how structural racism shaped those experiences. As Bartlett and Vavrus (2017) state “…many interpretivist scholars focus only on local meanings and symbolic systems while downplaying the historical, material, and structural forces that allow some groups to have greater influence over dominant meanings and representations” (p. 39-40). My aim was to both focus on context (which is informed by phenomenological research) and structural inequalities (which is informed by critical race approaches). Chapters 1 and 2 acknowledged and delved into dominant meanings and representations of race and blackness. Through this study, I hoped to uncover IBAC understandings of race, blackness, and racial identity formation. Thus, this project pursued both the personal identity conversations as well as an attempt to identify the intersection of racial identity formation with the structural and historical meanings of race and racism in the US.

Given these research aims, a wide range of qualitative approaches were available, including grounded theory— which was considered. Grounded theory is most appropriate when seeking to develop a theory, which was not my overall aim. Instead, I chose to work with existing identity development models as a starting point for understanding the experiences of IBAC. I knew, however, that this pursuit would require a deep dive into the social phenomena that IBAC experienced. Therefore, a phenomenological study was
the most appropriate and effective way to address the research question and research aims.

Phenomenological research aims to create understanding of a particular phenomenon (experience) from a particular point of view. Within phenomenological research, there are a myriad of approaches with ontological and methodological nuances. I chose interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) because of my positionality and how I was situated within the project. I am a Black US American and an international higher education professional with tacit and posteriori knowledge from my own lived experience in African contexts in the US and abroad. It was important for me to choose a research approach with a philosophy that allowed me to associate my understandings in the meaning-making process, which I was able to achieve through IPA by using reflexive memos and dialoging with participant transcripts.

Interpretative phenomenological analysis is rooted in what Heidegger named interpretive phenomenology (Larkin et al., 2011). Interpretative phenomenological analysis is a qualitative approach which seeks to provide detailed examinations and rich description of personal lived experiences. According to Smith and Osborn (2015), IPA, “...[A]ims to produce an account of lived experience in its own terms rather than one prescribed by pre-existing theoretical preconceptions. IPA recognises that this is an interpretative endeavour because humans are sense-making organisms” (p. 41).

In short, IPA is a philosophical, participant-oriented approach in which the researcher is concerned with how participants make sense of their lived experience
IPA uses qualitative data collection methods such as interviews, observations, and journaling to inform research questions. Embedded in this approach is an invitation to researchers to dissect the research project, research process, perspectives of participants, as well as how the research project is socially and culturally placed for participants. IPA requires reflexivity and attentive listening which I believe is paramount in good qualitative research. Reflexivity, “[I]s all about managing subjectivity—the participants’ and the researchers’—rather than seeking to eliminate it” (Finlay, 2011, p. 125). IPA is also idiographic, meaning that the approach is less concerned with making generalizable claims but is rather invested in understanding individual behaviors or unique experiences (Smith & Osborn, 2015). In other words, as Behal (2019) says, an IPA is concerned with the “whatness” of an experience, which aligns with my research questions. Specifically, my research focuses on the sense and meaning making of racialized experiences and not the experiences themselves. Through this line of inquiry, the focus moves from the “thatness” of the phenomenon itself (racialization and racialized experiences) to how those with direct lived experiences are making personalized meaning of the phenomena and experiences (Behal, 2019).

**Research Design**

**Participants**

This study used purposive homogeneous sampling, also referred to as purposeful selection to identify participants. According to Maxwell (2013), the five possible goals for purposeful selection is choosing a population that may: 1) serve as a representation, 2)
illuminate its existing heterogeneity, 3) be of critical relevance to test a theory, 4) establish comparison, or 5) produce productive relationships that will aid in answering research questions. My work specifically focused on Maxwell’s purpose 3. I purposefully chose IBAC because their circumstances allowed for closer scrutiny about racial identity theory, which has been developed primarily with African American participants. Part of my research sought to understand if there was relevance to existing theory to IBAC.

IPA necessitates purposive sampling as it requires close personal experience in a specified context (Behal, 2019). Using homogenous sampling, I could gain a close understanding of this phenomenon by focusing on those that have first-person experience. Homogeneity in purposeful selection ensures that participants are information-rich and can advance the understanding of the phenomenon regardless of sample size (Creswell, 2007; M. Q. Patton, 2002). Homogeneity in this case refers to the possibility of a shared experience. I used screening questions to create a homogenous group of African international students in the US (see Appendix C). Specifically, I was not seeking information from any student who has experienced racism and racialized experiences on US campuses; I sought the perspectives of a specific group of students who, by their international status and Black raciality, may have had different racialized experiences across their lifetime when compared to US domestic students.

The target research participants were international Black African collegians studying in US higher education institutions. For my study, an international Black African collegian 1) identified as Black African, and 2) possessed a nonimmigrant study or exchange visa. Participant selection was informed by theories in question and
representative of international Black African students. As discussed in Chapter 2, IBAC face neither the same socialization to race as Black US Americans nor do they necessarily have intentions to emigrate as Black immigrants have done (even if some have aspirations to relocate to the United States, F-visa rules make this aspiration unlikely). Consequently, IBAC may not have the same motivations to acculturate or assimilate to dominant US norms. Focusing a study solely on IBAC may offer novel insights to how this specific group contends with racialization and to what degree, if any, racialization is internalized.

While there is no set number for a phenomenological study, my target number was four to eight participants. The final study comprised of 10 research participants. I received 13 legitimate responses; however, two participants did not schedule interviews after completing the screening form. Another participant was excluded from the study because they were a South African of Indian descent, which may have introduced a new set of racialized phenomena into the study. To examine whether a student's age or length of stay had any effect on the process of making sense and meaning, the study was open to both graduate and undergraduate students as well as students on short-term study (six to eight weeks) and full-degree study (two or more years). Table 3 provides an overview of participants’ demographic information.

Table 3

Participant Demographic Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Higher Education Institution</th>
<th>Year(s) in US</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Giselle</td>
<td>Doctoral</td>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td>Snowbird State College, FL</td>
<td>6+ years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>Country</td>
<td>University</td>
<td>Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thabo</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>Hoosier State University, IN</td>
<td>6+ years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kwesi</td>
<td>Doctoral</td>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>University of Evergreen, WA</td>
<td>&gt; 1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saba</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>Pine Tree University, ME</td>
<td>5-6 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mach</td>
<td>Doctoral</td>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td>North Star State University, MN</td>
<td>5-6 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jade</td>
<td>Doctoral</td>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td>North Star State University, MN</td>
<td>5-6 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anike</td>
<td>Doctoral</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>North Star State University, MN</td>
<td>5-6 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nyashma</td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>North Star State University, MN</td>
<td>1-2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habakkuk</td>
<td>Doctoral</td>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>North Star State University, MN</td>
<td>5-6 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margaret</td>
<td>Doctoral</td>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>North Star State University, MN</td>
<td>6+ years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Despite the open criteria that I established for recruitment, only graduate students responded and participated. This self-selection may be informed by demographics - a majority of African students are coming as graduate students, but there may also be other factors at work that are unknown to me. As demonstrated by Table 3, my graduate participants had substantial experience in the US, as eight of them had been in the US for at least five years. This led to an unintentional outcome of participants with longer experience of racialization than expected during the early recruitment phase.

**Methods**

IPA prioritizes in-depth interviews and researcher reflexivity, for which I used memoing. The rationale and procedures for both interviews and memoing are described in the paragraphs below. Individual interviews were utilized to collect in-depth, rich individualized experiences. Memos were composed throughout the research process to support researcher interpretation of data and highlight key moments in interviews.
**Data Collection**

After receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board, a recruitment poster was shared on social media platforms (Facebook and LinkedIn). Research participants were also recruited through Black, African, and international student organization listservs, offices of international student services, and word of mouth. The most effective recruitment means were Facebook and word of mouth. At least one participant mentioned a peer who was ineligible for the study referred them to my study. Participants were recruited through an open call and therefore, the study was not centralized within a single institution. Prior to commencing interviews, participants completed a short qualifying survey. After confirming eligibility through a Qualtrics qualifying survey, participants were then invited to schedule their Zoom interview via Calendly. On the Calendly page, they were instructed to choose a pseudonym.

As noted, the final study included 10 participants and were all conducted virtually through Zoom, which allowed for greater geographic diversity and was a necessity because the interviews were conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. After receiving signed waivers and reconfirming consent at the start of the interviews, I video recorded the interviews. Prior to recording, participants changed their Zoom name to their chosen pseudonym so that the auto transcript would capture their pseudonym, adding another layer of anonymity. By recording the interviews, I was fully present with participants while also assured by the knowledge that I am capturing data with the highest accuracy. The shortest interview was 35 minutes, and the longest interview was 92 minutes, with an average interview time of 72 minutes. Interviews were conducted from safe and private
rooms around campus, including a private office where the interviews were videorecorded with limited background disturbances. Interviews were conducted with and without cameras on. Participants were only interviewed once. Most of my participants asked why I was doing this research and what I hoped to gain from the study. A second interview would have been methodologically unfaithful and may have influenced student responses in certain ways, as I made my true and full intentions known. This limitation is discussed at length in Chapter 5.

Interviews were transcribed by a human transcription service. I listened and read through each transcript to ensure accuracy before coding. Transcripts, once edited, were then analyzed for trends and patterns. Although no one did, participants were notified they could request a copy of the transcript. This study did not implement member-checking, a practice not encouraged in IPA studies. Member-checking is an analytic tool that involves the researcher bringing interpretations of data to the participants for direct feedback and is often employed as a measure of validity and co-inquiry. However, member-checking is neither standard nor encouraged in Smith and Larkin’s approach to IPA as it is both epistemologically and methodologically incongruent and can complicate the findings. In an interpretative phenomenological analysis, the participant experiences the phenomenon and shares their sensemaking process. It is the duty of the researcher to provide an interpretation of the participant's interpretative reflection, which creates a double hermeneutic. Hence, inviting the participant post-analysis to make sense of the researcher making sense of the participant's initial sensemaking complicates the double hermeneutic. The data collected included video recordings, audio recordings, interview
transcripts, consent forms, qualifying survey results, and an identification key. The interview data was stored in a password-protected Cloud account issued by the University of Minnesota. Duo technology was needed to access the Cloud storage. I intend to keep these files for no more than five years.

**Semi-Structured Interviews.** My study employed semi-structured dialogic interviews as they are the preferred and recommended tool for IPA data collection. Research interviews exist to better understand the participant’s perspective on a given matter (Esposito & Evans-Winters, 2021). Semi-structured interviews have the organizational advantage of structured questions to allow for cross-participant comparison, along with the possibility to personalize— as with unstructured interviews. Interviews are an exemplary IPA tool because a well-designed interview can generate data with depth and breadth (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Africa is a diverse continent of 54 recognized nations (excluding Western Sahara and Somaliland) where over 2,000 languages are spoken by a population of one billion people who experience(d) colonialism and its aftermath in similar but contextualized ways (Stebleton, 2007; United Nations, 2019). Contrary to written responses or observations, interviews allowed me to ask questions and clarify meaning in real time as I do not claim to know the exact context participants are coming from.

Smith et al. (2009) declared that “[i]nterviewing allows the researcher and participant to engage in a dialogue whereby initial questions are modified in the light of participants’ responses, and the investigator is able to enquire after any other interesting areas which arise” (p. 57). Semi-structured interviews involve an attempt to build rapport,
allow questions to follow conversation flow over order, and permit flexibility to follow
the participant’s interests or interesting topics (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Yet, careful
consideration must be given to the prompts designed for the interview to avoid an
expectancy effect. As such, I rigorously designed a questioning route in response to my
research questions that were validated by a research committee and peer colleagues not
participating in the study. Questions were open-ended, not leading, prioritized, and
balanced descriptive and affective, general and specific, and included superficial as well
as disclosing questions (Smith et al., 2009) (see Appendix F).

Because the aim of an interpretative phenomenological analysis is "to capture
particular experiences as experienced for particular people" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 16),
finding norms and outliers in data was not a concern. Small data sets are encouraged as
each transcript was meticulously detailed on a case-by-case basis and then across the
whole dataset, which was time consuming but provides rich and detailed description and
interpretation of phenomena (Beck, 2020). Guest et al. (2006) concluded “the magic
number of six” interviews provide enough rich, thick data to understand how a
phenomenon is experienced by participants (p. 78). Guest et al.’s study on data saturation
demonstrated there was enough data and context to identify metathemes after six
interviews. However, Smith and Osborn, the original authors of IPA methods, believe a
researcher can derive very meaningful information from as few as three interviews. Three
interviews allow for detailed case analysis of each case and lends itself to micro-analysis
across cases (Smith et al., 2009). Smith et al. (2009) suggests a sample size of three to six
participants for novice researchers and four to ten for doctoral students.
Memoing. Memoing is the recording of the researcher’s thoughts, emotions, guesses, concepts and other reflections (Given, 2008). Unlike positivist methodologies and epistemological approaches, I do not claim to engage in this project as an unbiased observer. In my research, my stance is that “(t)here is undoubtedly no understanding that is free of all prejudices, however much the will of our knowledge must be directed toward escaping their thrall” (Gadamer, 1989, p. 490). To this end, an important part of the study was the memos I constructed immediately following interviews. Memos were not only helpful in constructing answers to the study’s research questions, but they also helped me to understand my own lenses. Memos provided a metadata set of my personal reactions and reflections on the data and were imperative for my own meaning making.

An interculturalist once said, “I cannot not be judgmental; but I can attend to it” (Condon, personal communication, July 16, 2014). Memoing, coding in process, and emergent writing are tools researchers use to attend to their judgments, perspectives, values, and priorities. Memos are as useful to critical self-reflection as it is to data analysis. Memos, when shared, allow readers to chart the researcher’s process and may possibly answer questions about how and why the researcher made decisions. My objective in memoing was to keep the research honest and transparent (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater, 2012).

Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater (2012) offer three questions to which memos should answer and a rationale, “What surprised me? What intrigued me? What disturbed me? As these three questions track assumptions, positions, and tensions" (p. 87). Although other forms of phenomenology preferences bracketing as a term, I believe that it falsely
connotates researchers can *set aside* preconceived knowledge and assumptions and be *less* involved in the research process, analysis, and outcomes (Dahlberg & Dahlberg, 2003; Dahlberg, 2006; Stutey et al., 2020). Rather than set aside my interpretations and responses, I used memos as a way of supporting circular and dialogic interactions with my participants and their meaning making. Interpretive phenomenological analysis embraces a double hermeneutic. During the interviews, participants try to make sense and meaning of their experiences. During data analysis, the researcher then tries to make sense of participants’ experiences. I used memos as a source of reflection and guidance for the procedures of the study to help me adapt questions and guide analysis.

**Protecting Participants**

From the research design to its intended effects, I wished to do no harm. Prior to commencing the study, ethical clearance was received from the University of Minnesota’s Institutional Review Board. Electronic consent forms were obtained from interview participants. Participants were informed that participation was voluntary, and they were able to opt-out at any stage without penalty. Conversations around race, identity, and memory can trigger complicated emotions that may require debriefing with a highly skilled professional. At the beginning of each interview, I reminded participants of available coping resources should they become necessary (e.g., student counseling center, national hotlines, etc.). In a follow-up to email to the interview, participants were gifted $25 paid through gift card, Venmo, or Zelle as a token of appreciation after the interview in addition to state and national helpline numbers in case the interview caused any adverse mental health effects. Each transcript and recording was stored in a
password-safe folder only accessible to the research team. Transcriptionists received
deidentified audio and transcripts. As noted above, only pseudonyms appeared in
transcripts because all participants chose their own pseudonym when scheduling the
interview.

Data Analysis

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) accurately claim analysis is as artistic as it is political
and is often driven by whether one is informed by interpretive or critical epistemological
traditions. My study is informed by both. The project outlined above was suited for an
inductive data analysis approach. Data was gathered through narrative tools, iteratively
coded, and sectioned into themes (Clusters) and subthemes.

After checking the transcripts for accuracy, coding began. Saldaña (2009) states,
“A code in qualitative inquiry is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically
assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion
of language-based or visual data” (p. 3). Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2022) introduced
new terminology which I have adopted in this study (see Appendix G). For interviews,
coding occurred in stages: 1) descriptive/phenomenological, 2) interpretive, and 3)
integrative. The phenomenological stage includes making initial comments alongside the
data set; these are called exploratory notes. Like open coding, descriptive coding is a
nonlinear process involving a careful read-through of transcribed data in order to provide
labels (codes) (Khandkar, 2009). The interpretive stage moves from description to
meaning and sense-making. Experiential statements (formerly known as emergent themes
in IPA) are created by clustering together related codes. Lastly, the integrative stage moves from the unique and particular to generalized patterns across participant narratives by identifying relationships and illuminating salient or recurring ideas, issues, or concerns now known as group experiential themes. IPA presupposes that participants can experience the same objective condition (phenomenon) differently because each participant undergoes a deeply personal and unique meaning and sensemaking process influenced by their own thoughts, expectations, and judgements (Wood, 2012, p. 30). Thus, these themes are further abstracted into a finalized set of subordinate and superordinate themes which were screened for patterns of similarity, difference, frequency, sequence, and correspondence across the data set (Hatch, 2002, p. 155).

Although I did not utilize member-checking, participants were invited to a preliminary reading of the findings whereby they could correct, challenge, or clarify any points. I also engaged in formal and colloquial peer debriefing throughout the analysis process and initial write-up in order to enhance research rigor and transparency.

**Quality Markers for Qualitative Research**

The final section of this chapter addresses markers for quality in qualitative research that guided this study. Yardley (2000) summarized four key principles of good qualitative research that are less contentious than positivist or qualitative research frames. The four principles are: 1) sensitivity to context, 2) commitment and rigor, 3) transparency and coherence, and 4) impact and importance.

*Sensitivity to Context*
The idiosyncrasy of IPA is inherently sensitive to context. A major tenant of IPA is that “our being-in-the-world is always perspectival, always temporal, and always ‘in-relation-to’ something” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 18) and thus, “we ask questions about people’s understandings, experiences and sense-making activities, and we situate these questions within specific contexts, rather than between them” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 47). The context of my study and sample size was clearly delineated to learn about international Black African students in US higher education.

**Commitment and Rigor**

The methodological decisions made in this research design must not only align with a phenomenological inquiry, but also demonstrate rigor. In order to maintain my commitment to the data and rigor in analysis, I have opted for a sample size amenable to my level of experience and research timeline as supported by Smith and Osborn (2008). IPA requires intensive analysis that typically takes doctoral researchers three weeks per interview to properly code and it is possible that follow-on interviews may be necessary to add to or revise my analysis. The small sample size accommodates active engagement with the rich data within a reasonable timeframe.

**Transparency and Coherence**

Ibrahim’s (2008) musings on “how to become” and “what it means to be” informed my study as I sought to understand identity fragmentations and cohesions in the African diaspora. Mafeje (1971) poses an important question, “Are things necessarily what they are called?” (p. 254). I asked a similar question, “are people necessarily what
they are called?” One of the main inquiries of this study is how society recognizes and contends with multiple or competing constructions of Black identities. This called for reflexivity as concepts of race and identity are contested. Reflexivity is the conscientious examination of the research process and power dynamics within the research, which is crucial in identity development studies (Fonow & Cook, 2005). Reflexivity is a way of probing the positionality of the researcher. In IPA, this can be achieved through memoing, which I discussed earlier.

As a scholar, I embrace that “meaning is infinite, always contextual, and recognized as expandable and expanding” (Dahlberg, 2006, p. 16); that is, “meaning” is neither static nor permanent; yet, in research, we are constantly tempted to “make definite what is indefinite” (Dahlberg, 2006, p. 17). An audit trail that conveys how I systematically arrived at my understanding of the data is included in Appendix H. Despite the conclusion of my analysis, I accept that my interpretations are tentative, time-bound, and purposefully indefinite.

**Importance and Impact**

At the time of writing, using a Boolean search of “interpretative phenomenological analysis AND international students (or foreign students or overseas students or exchange students)” as keywords in premier education databases only yielded 13 results in ERIC Education and 12 results in Education Source. Similarly, “interpretative phenomenological analysis AND race” returned 11 resources in ERIC and 12 in Education Source. Accordingly, my research responds to a gap in the application of
IPA to topics of race and international students. Through this study, I entered into a
cornerstone that started long before my dissertation project, seeking to add fresh
perspectives and vantage points to ongoing conversations about international education,
racialization, and higher education.

Chimamande Adichie’s (2014) award-winning book, Americanah, provokes
meditations on race as a transnational subject, “In America, you don’t get to decide what
race you are. It is decided for you” (p. 339). If race is foreordained, then my research, in
part, seeks to add up-to-date information on Allen et al.’s (2012) queries, “Who and what
influences the construction of Black African identities? How are Black African
immigrants making sense of their experiences of being Black in America?” (p. 3). My
study is an entreaty to educators to recognize and attend to the heterogeneous identities of
Black students through an appraisal of culturally-relevant advising and mentoring.

Conclusion: Situating Myself in the Research

Parker (1994) stated that, “Research is always carried out from a particular
standpoint” (p13). I have both a professional and personal interest in this work. My
professional journey has always involved international, intercultural, and multicultural
education. Working in these fields, especially in study abroad and international student
recruitment, had shown me the importance of culturally-relevant orientations, culturally-
attuned training for educational administrators, and culturally-inclusive programming.
The questions I asked not only investigated IBAC experiences, but also revealed how
universities approach diversity and inclusion in international education and how the university codes international students’ racialized experience.

Kibona Clark (2008) notes that Black Americans, not Black Immigrants, have called for and explored new ideas of identifying and distinguishing Black diasporic communities. The same is true of this study. I am a Black American woman who grew up aware of and attuned to the often unspoken but deeply-felt divide between Black Americans and the Black diaspora, especially between Black Africans. This unuttered tension contradicted the sameness rhetoric of “all Black people.”

While I have dear African friends and family members, I am not an African by birth nor did I grow up in an African household. But because I am Black, oftentimes I am encouraged to “become” more “African” through travel and learning local languages by my African loved ones. Lance (1990) states, “Outsiders are removed from accepted norms and social obligations; they enjoy the luxury of irresponsibility” (p. 336). When visiting friends and close business colleagues in Ghana, I am applauded when I look like “a typical African lady” and complimented on my manners. Yet, I am chastised when I commit a social faux pas like being too direct with a request, or greeting others in the wrong order, or being too formal in an informal setting, or being too permissive with a child, or missing an indirect clue that an offer was made to be polite and not made in earnest. Although these social norms have not yet been explained to me, there was an expectation that I should know. According to Hudley (2017), “Culture, language, and race are all systems of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviors, and artifacts that members of communities co-construct and transmit from generation to generation.
through learning” (p. 382). This possibility of “becoming,” to me, signals an outsider status without luxury. Life and this educational project have taught me where to place the blame. This fragmentation is a result of centuries of chattel slavery, colonialism, and psychological warfare encapsulated in the belief of White supremacy.

As a final thought for this chapter, I reflect on Tuhiwai Smith (2012), who offers the notion of communities being made (through colonization) and communities making themselves (through resistance) (p. 128). These processes can produce multiple layers of belonging, or “nested identities” (p. 129). Thus, I bring my localized identity as a Black American and my broader identity as a member of the trans-Atlantic African Diaspora, and my professional identity as international educator to my work. The methods I described in this chapter were a vehicle to better understanding of the complex phenomena of racialization and identity in US higher education settings, and the potential that better understanding of these phenomena in relation to both IBAC and BUSA.

**Chapter 4: Findings**

**Introduction**

Table 3, located above in Chapter 3, provided information on the ten research participants of this study. The table includes their chosen pseudonym, the degree they were pursuing, nationality, higher education pseudonyms and state, as well as the length
of time they had been in the US. This chapter reports on the findings identified through analysis of interview transcripts. Data is organized into clusters, themes, and subthemes. Within each cluster, the most common themes are presented first. To ensure precision and concision, the frequency of themes will be described as all (n=10), most/majority (n=9 or n=8), many (n=7 or n=6), half (n=5) and some (n= ≤4). Although in qualitative research, it is often more important to emphasize the quality over quantity of comments, I believed that providing some numeric data was helpful for explaining the prevalence of phenomena among participants. Quotations from participants are used to capture the essence of their experiences in their own words and to illuminate the range of perspectives they hold. To make the quotations clearer, some have been lightly edited (e.g., filler words removed; passages brought together; commonly confused words replaced), but the core themes of participant remarks are reported word-for-word as they were spoken. Although there are cross-cutting themes, there are also distinctions that warrant further explanation, such as differences between gender, field of study, length of stay, and regional distinctions (e.g., West Africa compared to East Africa; US Midwest universities vs coastal institutions). These will be presented after the main themes.

The following clusters, “Becoming Veiled,” “Living Under the Veil,” “Refusing the Veil,” and “Opting Out” are abstracted from my participants’ lived experience as conveyed to me. A brief note on language: Throughout this chapter, I capitalize White when referring to people raced as such. In alignment with Mills’ (1997) attestation that “Whiteness is not really a color at all, but a set of power relations”, I lowercase white
when referencing systems and structures of white supremacy. Viewing whiteness as a power system concedes the complicity of people raced as White and otherwise.

**Cluster 1: Becoming Veiled**

The most salient theme that emerged and the most relevant to my research questions was the theme of *Becoming Veiled*. Becoming veiled represents the process of becoming raced and how participants became cognizant of the implications of being raced. Putting it another way, *Becoming Veiled* explains how IBAC obtained a “second-sight”—that is, seeing one’s self through the lens of whiteness. Each interview started with the same first question, What does race mean to you? Admittedly, this was neither a light nor easy introductory question; however, it was essential for me to know how each participant understood race as I conducted the rest of the interview. Three themes in this cluster are: Lack of racial identification, Becoming Black, and Meeting the White Gaze. The idea of becoming Black reflects both the process and product of racialization and is supported by contemporary literature that states people are racialized as Black (Asante et al., 2016; Dei, 2018; Gans, 2016). This is an important characterization because it both acknowledge the social construction of racial categories and recognize the lived realities of having a label ascribed to you by another. Two participants, Kwesi and Nyashma, are not well-represented in this theme for reasons that will be explored in later sections.
Lack of Racial Identification

A majority of my participants lacked a racial consciousness when they arrived in the US. When I asked Habakkuk what does race mean to you, he prefaced with,

Let me share when I had no knowledge on what race is, and this is when I was living in Kenya. Because my understanding of race when I was in Kenya and when I came to the US is totally different.

Habakkuk’s qualifier is perhaps more revealing than his actual response. He started by answering he “had no knowledge” of race and then mentioned a change in his “understanding,” which signals that he did have an existing awareness of race as a concept. Perhaps more accurately, then, race was of no consequence to him in Kenya and therefore, not something he gave thought or meaning. Later he stated, “I had never identified myself as Black before; it was something new” which confirmed that racial identification was irrelevant before coming to the US. Other participants said the same. Saba stated “So I never really deeply thought about I am Black, but I have always accepted that I'm Ethiopian. I'm African.” Here, Saba named Black, Ethiopian, and African as distinct identities. She accepted and understood what being Ethiopian and African meant to her but prior to the US, she neither assumed nor contemplated a Black identity. Another participant said, “I've never been asked ‘what skin color are you’ at home” (Mach).

One reason for the lack of racial identification is because participants, like Mach, were never asked to racially identify. Participants had to identify as Black to qualify for
the study; but it was in coming to the US they became aware that race is real and that
being Black meant more than being highly melanated. Race is made real in the US
through socialization and systemic structures. Race is a prevailing way of stratifying US
society as race is a social determinant of outcome disparities at every level and sector of
society in the US including, health, education, and wealth. As Saba explained, different
social categorizations, namely tribal, religious, and regional identities, took precedence
over how communities were divided.

So, where I come from, we differentiate people based on the different ethnic
groups that they come from. So, this person is from this tribe, this person is from
this tribe, and you identify those things by the way they talk maybe, by the way
they dress maybe, or by the way they characterize themselves on a lot of things.
Then, I didn't have to think about the difference between what is White and what
is Black as race until I came to the United States. Because there in Africa, those
[ethnic groups] are the things that differentiated us (Saba).

Although Saba did not mention whether these categories are used as rationales for
subjugation, Kwesi acknowledged tensions between communities in Ghana based on
ethnic group and region by saying, “back at home I'm from the North and in Ghana we
have this minority kind of thing of Northness among the minority.”

Because the majority of participants never had to think about their race before
coming to the United States, Black was a novel way of identifying. Saba, Habakkuk, and
Mach experienced “being Black” for the first time as adults; however, Giselle and Thabo
had long experiences with race and racism. Giselle and Thabo, two participants from the Southern Africa region, recounted earlier stories of racialization. When I asked Giselle if race held any personal significance, she responded that her private and then predominantly White high school in Zimbabwe made her acutely aware she was Black,

I think I'm very aware that I'm a Black woman. I think I've always been aware because I went to a predominantly White high school in Zimbabwe and so there was a lot of segregation and discrimination. I think race means a lot to me because of the way that I experienced some things in high school and the way I experience things even right now.

According to Giselle, White Zimbabweans were concentrated in “rich areas or farmy areas.” In the "farming" area where her boarding school was located, most White Zimbabweans lived close enough to return home during weekends. However, she and many other Black Zimbabweans lived in the city which was over two hours away. When the school administration introduced restrictive weekend boarding policies, it only impacted the Black students. Students were also chastised for speaking Shona, one of Zimbabwe's national languages. There was also social segregation. Whenever Black boys and White girls showed romantic interest in each other, controversy erupted at her school. The White girls would face threats and possible “ex-communication” for betraying their whiteness. Although the violence and threat of social banishment was directed towards the White girls, the message was that White and Black people do not belong together and romantic association with Black men was deemed treacherous.
Thabo’s racial awareness came even earlier from his family.

I know I'm Black; I've known that since the day I was born. I'll actually tell you a little story. My mom is actually half South African and a half Scottish. Her dad was a White Scottish male and my dad's obviously Black South African. So, I had white cousins growing up and I remember because most of the people I was close to were my mom's relatives. At one point I came home and put powder all over myself, like, white powder. It was during the time when Michael Jackson got his plastic surgery. I was at my aunt's house with my White cousins and I was like, ‘Oh, I want to be White.’ …It happened when I was very young; when I was eight or seven. With that said, I think when I think of that [inaudible 00:27:22] and because I felt othered by my cousin, it was more so I wanted to be like my cousins because I was always around my cousins who were White.

Despite Giselle and Thabo’s earlier racialization experiences, neither were prepared for the covert and microaggressive racism they experienced in the US. Perhaps the preexisting racialization coupled with US racialization is what motivated Giselle and Thabo to be the only participants who call themselves advocates and activists, respectively. This theme substantiates Fanon’s (2008) claim that amongst one’s own, there is rarely an occasion to experience one’s being through another group’s lens.

Anti-Categorization
It is important to note participants did not accept racial categorization without issue. Half of participants were confused by racial delineations and annoyed by the lack of choices or even having to identify in the first place:

Other things that don't make sense to me is also the way things are characterized. For example, there are some darker skin Indians maybe that come from India, but they're not necessarily from Africa or the Caribbean Islands. But you don't really see them being categorized Black, at least from my experience… I said at the beginning that still the concept [race] is vague to me because sometimes people look at me and I'm lighter skin and they don't really think that I am Black. Like, okay, so where is the drawing line for this definition? (Saba)

The question of the “drawing line” harkens back to racial membership laws of the 20th Century which used association tests, blood fraction, and the “one drop” rule in addition to appearance to codify who is and is not Black (Cooper, 2008; Sweet, 2005). Association laws asserted people of the same race maintain close contact, and therefore, race could be determined by one’s social circle. Blood fraction laws, first introduced in 1705, were considered more objective than association and physical appearance tests (Cooper, 2008). By 1910, twenty states used blood fraction laws; most commonly it was decided a person with one grandparent (one-fourth) or one great-grandparent (one-eighth) was Negro or Black. In order to account for invisible blackness, eventually, it was decided that any person with any degree of African ancestry (one drop of “Negro” blood) was Black. The last legal case to use the one drop rule was in 1986. Although no longer enforceable, the one drop rule has not been repealed by most of these states and the
“drawing line” is still contended. Understanding this history—subjectivity of legal racial codes, obsession with “invisible blackness,” and the legacy of enslavement manifested in the uniqueness of Black racialization—is essential to understanding how other group have been racialized “relative to and through” the Black-White binary (C. J. Kim, 1999). The Black-White binary does not acknowledge nationality. Consequently, IBAC are unknowingly absorbed into the cultural residue of these laws and legacies upon entering the United States.

Nyashma further explained the confusing nature of racial categorization in the US, when understood through a lens of melanin, rather than as a descriptor of structural inequality.

One main thing I don't understand here in the US is who are those that are called Latinos, who are those that are called Hispanic, who are those that are called non-Hispanic? … Those classifications are really confusing. The only one I know is African American or Black, that’s what I know. The other ones I really cannot distinguish them.

Nyashma’s confusion points out the ‘absoluteness’ of the Black identifier (someone with African ancestry) and the vagueness of some of the other ethno-racial categories. Mach wondered, “why are they separating the Hispanics and Latinos? Why aren't they separating the Africans and the African Americans? Why are we the ones to be lumped into one category?”
Mach shared an opinion that the cultural differences between Africans and Black Americans were significant enough to be separated and wondered why some groups had more options than others.

But I have a problem with why do I actually even have to put my race on a form in the first instance. I've never had to fill a form before getting to the US where I had to specify what race I was. The White people in Nigeria don't have to put their race on the forms they fill in Nigeria. They just fill out their names and their date of birth and the other requirements. So, how come race is such a big part of everything that is going on in this country? (Anike)

But Nigerian forms are not as simple as Anike suggests. Other identification markers are used in Nigeria. Nigeria has 36 states divided into regions. Some regions are mixed, like the Kanuri, Hausa, Fulani, and Nupe in the North. Other regions, like the southwest and southeast are namely comprised of one tribe, Yoruba and Igbo respectively. All official forms include a question about state of origin. Generally, tribal affiliation can be ascertained by state origin.

Participants were not only anti-categorization, but they also attributed poor race relations to forced racialization. Margaret reflected on her thoughts when encountering US categorizations: “I was like, ‘wow America is so discriminative, everything you have to put a race there, every form you fill you have to put a race, is it that relevant?’” Mach also observed that “Because I think the American society separates people. It starts from that application [race question on forms].” Participants struggled to make sense of the
shifting yet defining racial categories of the US and spurned the ubiquitous request to identify themselves by race.

**Becoming Black**

Despite the lack of pre-existing racial identification for most participants and early racialization for Giselle and Thabo, each participant (except for Kwesi and Nyashma) shared a rude awakening to understanding what it means to be Black in a US context. Black is both a phenotypic definer (lowercase b) as well as an identity (uppercase B). Not everyone who identifies as Black has black skin and not all who have black skin have a Black identity. Black is not a monolith, neither is the salience of identity. All of my participants had to consider themselves B/black to be able to participate in the study; however, my study sought to uncover what blackness meant to them (i.e., skin color or identity). “Becoming Black” explains a phenomenon in which participants become a Black person with politicized existence and not only a person with “black” skin. In other words, they became aware of their racial and racialized identity, a distinction taken up by Ibrahim (1999) and Dei (2018) and others. This shift often occurred within educational spaces. The reason, Melamed (2014) argues, is that,

That the university—a site that has held so much promise for the transformation of society and our collective imaginations—has historically been a key institution within racialized and gendered capitalism; it has been a main locus for the social reproduction of racial, class, and gender inequalities and normative morality; and now it has become center and transit for the ongoing neoliberal debt economy.
controlling dissent, and perpetuating old and new forms of settler colonialism (p. 290).

Although Giselle knew she was raced in high school, race was not an identity to her. She recalled, “I would say that the first time that I remember actually being aware that I'm Black and that my blackness was the center of my identity was in graduate school for my first masters.” During her undergraduate years, Giselle said that she “just didn’t get it” “it” being racism, but she began to “pay attention” during her first master’s degree. She credited the shift of consciousness to the multicultural competence courses she took as a supplement to her higher education-focused degree. These courses discussed social identity and inequities related to gender, sex, and race. Giselle gained awareness of her own biases and also gained a new lens and language to make sense of her experience. In a separate part of the conversation, Giselle mentioned it was through her program that she interacted with more Black US Americans and made her first Black American friends.

All of this study’s participants came from communities in which they were the racial majority. However, in the US, they became a racial minority and were minoritized, which are different phenomena. One definition of minority is, “the smaller in number of two groups forming a whole” (HarperCollins, 2022). To minoritize is to make a group subordinate, also known as marginalization. As an illustration, White Zimbabweans are a numeric minority never surpassing 10% of the population; yet native (Black) Zimbabweans were minoritized through colonization (Matthews, 1990). During one colonial period, native Zimbabweans were subjected to land expropriation, social
separatism, and forced labor, further demonstrating that power in number does not equate to political or economic power (BBC News, 2022; Matthews, 1990; Mlambo, 2019).

Anike reflected on her minority status and the process of minoritization: “You don’t grow up thinking you're Black or you’re brown or you’re White. You don't really notice it until you get to a different country where you are a minority and then people look at you as the exception”. Habakkuk relayed similar experiences:

I was in Kenya; basically, I think 80% of the people look like me…. I came with that comfortability of being in a space where I’m the majority. And then coming to a space where I’m not the majority, of course, here, having the Whites as the majority, kind of makes you feel like you're not part of everything.

Being an “exception” and “not part of everything” communicated Anike and Habakkuk’s discomfort becoming a numeric minority as one of isolation and being singled out. Similarly, the final sentences of Thabo’s quote below conveys nostalgia for being a numeric majority, but he also described his experience being minoritized.

Because I think before I took for granted because you don't experience racism consistently. Like here, I think at least once a week you can count you experience some form of discrimination. And I think you take that for granted when, even though it’s a diverse place, Africa is majority Black people. I grew up in a middle-class suburb where I lived was mostly Black people. Yes, two of my neighbors were White, but everyone else in the road were middle class Black people. That was normal to me.
Taking these quotes together, there are simultaneous processes that underscore how racialization was experienced by participants: thinking about being Black, identifying as a minority, feeling like an outsider. The participants’ blackness and foreignness contributed to their feeling othered, both inside and outside of the classroom. Othering occurs when one is treated as different from. It is within this process that Black comes to “mean something” (Giselle)/gain significance.

**Inescapable Surveillance**

Another novel phenomenon for participants was the being under constant surveillance and suspicion, which is coded as the “white gaze.” According to Toni Morrison who coined the phrase, the white gaze assumes that “our [Black] lives have no meaning and no depth without the white gaze” (Rose, 1998, 29:33). The observed (i.e., those who are racially marginalized) are compelled under the white gaze to perform, explain, or entertain in a way that centers and defers to whiteness. Previously, participants experienced the white gaze through neocolonialism, that is to say, at a distance through direct and indirect influences on policies, practices, and economics (e.g., international non-governmental organization, structural agreements, etc.). However, in the US, they experienced the white gaze in interpersonal and intimate ways.

For example, Giselle and Thabo were raced in the places they considered home from early adolescence. Both Zimbabwe and South Africa have very long histories of white domination and racism, which is likely why they were raced. Although wealth, resources, and power were unequally distributed in favor of White people, Black people
in both countries have always had the power of numbers. And yet, neither of them felt prepared for US racialization. One interpretation is that all racialization is equal in creating an “other” but not the same in its effects. “Obviously,” Thabo said, “there is still racism there [South Africa], but I had never experienced it in the way in depth I experienced it here.” He further reflected:

I'd say the biggest difference is you are made aware that you are a Black person. From the time you wake up to what you do, it's almost like there's this burden of knowing that you are almost like a second-class citizen to the predominant race here. Not only from how they think or talk about people who look like you, but how they perceive you too.

Giselle reported similar experiences, stating:

I don't think my high school experience prepared me for anything that I've experienced in higher education race-wise. I think in high school, yeah, I knew it wasn't fair but I just was like, ‘Okay, fine, they're racist and it's not fair.’ But I got to go home to a city where everybody looked like me. Like, I only experienced that when I was at school, which was during the school term that's like January to May, and then I come home for the break and then, when I left high school and I was done with high school I didn't have to go back. And everybody I saw in my daily life after high school looked like me. I had the chance to leave and forget. And then only experience it when I come back to school. But coming here to America, I don't have that. I don't get to forget that this happens.
Because Thabo and Giselle were part of a numeric majority in South Africa and Zimbabwe, there were places of reprieve for them. However, in the US, racism is a daily traumatic event; there is no escape from racism. Giselle’s use of orienting language in the quote above (“go,” “come,” “left,” “leave”) hinted at the idea of navigation. Giselle was able to locate, and therefore, navigate around racism in Zimbabwe. But in the US, racism is impermeable, inescapable, and unforgettable. Giselle continued,

I don't get to leave racism at school and then go somewhere where I don't experience it. I experienced it even in Walmart when somebody looks at me funny because I am a Black person and I'm lingering in an aisle a little too long because I'm not sure what I want to get in that aisle.

Being followed around in stores is something half of the participants mentioned as a new and puzzling phenomenon. Thabo, for example, recalled,

I’ll say in America it’s more you’re made aware of it [being Black] just by people's reaction to you by taking up space. Like we're just innocently walking, and people are looking at us like we're animals in a zoo. Or when you go to a store and you're being followed around. Those things happened to me when I was here.

Habakkuk lived similar experiences, telling me that “you either go to a store and expect to be followed or you walk across a police car and, and the police will just be looking at your every step.” Mach experienced surveillance as well, but under the guise of “help” from store associates.
You know, sometimes you walk into a store and you can have people following you right at the door, ‘What can I help you with?’ You know, you tell someone, ‘No, I'm fine, I just want to take a look around’…but you can still feel somebody following you.

The pervasive surveillance that participants experienced was described as always being watched, followed, and suspected constantly in the vantage point of the white gaze. Meeting (read: encountering) the white gaze refers to participants coming into awareness that they are under surveillance. The gaze is not neutral nor is it a matter of only being looked at; the gaze is suspicious, judging, and assuming which leaves little room for empathy and understanding. The gaze is a process of minoritization. Margaret described it as: “It’s like when you’re a Black person, you're even working, they’re suspicious of you. So, the day you’re feeling sick, people will feel like you're lazy…”

Watson (2022) expressed this persistent surveillance as the presumption of whereabouts authority, a residual entitlement of whiteness stemming from the plantation economy which viewed Black people as property to be owned, watched, and accounted for. Presumption of whereabouts authority (PWA), which once looked like fugitive slave patrols, now ubiquitously shows up in every level of US society like being followed around the store (community), being tracked by police like Philando Castile (state), or even the creation of ICE—Immigration and Customs Enforcement (federal). As Jade’s quote below illustrates, becoming aware of the gaze means participants began to sense how they are looked at by dominant US society because of their Black identity once they became international students; thus, becoming veiled.
I definitely didn't think about race as much as I do now, before. Because I feel like it just didn't affect so many things that I did before I came here to the US. And now just, walking into the room people just judge you by the color of your skin. There's just so much that people can have assumptions just based on how you look.

Once aware of the gaze, participants became more cautious. Some participants began to internalize cautiousness into racial anxiety.

In all cases above, participants experienced the white gaze in their lives as IBAC. This gaze was inescapable and changed how participants looked at themselves. These changes, and the capitulations that participants engaged in, are described in the next section entitled *Living Under the Veil*.

**Cluster 2: Living Under the Veil**

Under this cluster there were clear distinctions between those who had recently started their studies (<3 years) and those more senior (5+ years). These distinctions became more pronounced especially within this section where we discussed their lived experience and interactions with others. Because IBAC became more aware over time, their strategies for navigating racialization became more pronounced.
Living with Racial Anxiety

Racial anxiety, or the preoccupation with whether one’s race might have an effect on the outcome of an interaction, began to show in participants who had longer stays in the US. Mach relayed,

I've been made to think of my skin color in so many ways in this country that when something happens, I always think you might think it’s my skin color maybe. I never used to think like that...Later on when you're home, you're like, “Why did this happen this way but this happened that way to that person?”

For example, Mach remembered an experience,

I got an email from a student (that stated) “Oh, what the F is this?” and I had to ask my supervisor, “Is this normal in an educational institution that a student would actually write such a word to an instructor?” And for me, I immediately went to my skin color and I'm like, “I'm not sure if this is something that they would do with another instructor.”

Mach was reluctant and mentioned she was saddened to admit that she now filters her experience through a race lens. She realized that she can never be too sure whether or not her race is at play because she only exists within her Black body and not another. She was not alone. Anike stated that “I feel that I'm Black with the kind of racism in this country, are they going to discriminate against me for putting it there that I'm Black, or does it really matter?” Later, she expressed confusion about certain interactions, asking
“[Y]ou think, ‘Okay, am I just overreacting because of past experiences, or is this actually someone being racist?’” Margaret expressed further anxiety, describing “So it creates that thing in your mind, right, so you're always in fear you can’t even do your best your potential is being killed, right?” Racism in the US is so pervasive and overbearing, that it evokes fear. In an academic setting, fear may manifest as the fear of being misunderstood, fear of underperforming, or fear of poorly representing your race. Part of Margaret’s sensemaking included sympathizing with BUSA. Based on her own experience, she believed living under this fear for prolonged periods could result in a self-fulfilling prophecy where Black people never reach their potential.

Racial anxiety in participants showed up as hyperawareness of one’s surroundings or hypersensitivity to how one is being presented. Anike presented anxiety as “this constant consciousness of trying not to do something that would draw too much attention to you at the wrong time.” She followed this explanation with an example:

If I'm driving on the road, I'm consciously trying not to go above the speed limits and not to go too low below the speed limit, because I don't want to get pulled over. If I'm driving through a neighborhood and I know I have to drive through something that I think is a suburb, it's mostly going to be White people. I'm trying to know what the speed limit is here, because I don't want the same incident with another local sheriff, and this time around I might not be so lucky to meet someone who would think twice before asking stupid questions.”
Mach further expounded on how racial anxiety manifested itself in the lives of IBAC who participated in this study.

These are questions that I continue to ask myself and see how I can present myself or whatever it is that I'm doing so that people understand us as Black people coming from Africa and don't just write us off after they see our skin.

Jade further recalled the moment racial anxiety set in for her, and how it continued throughout her period of study.

Then, when I realized that I was coming to (midwestern university city) for grad school, that's when it was like scary to just think I'm Black but I'm international, but no one can see that. It was hard. Just after I made that decision, I was like, is this the best choice for me in terms of my education to move to (midwestern university city) but like, what is that going to do to my mental health?...(N)ow I just feel like whenever I hear the sirens or whenever I see a police car, I feel like my body just automatically goes tense; not because I'm doing something wrong but because I'm Black and you never know what could just happen even in broad daylight.

Racial anxiety has structural roots. Studies on racism in medicine and policing informed many of the responses from participants. For example, it is well-documented that medical care professionals have often minimized or ignored pain that African American women feel in medical exams (Alang et al., 2017; Campbell, 2021; Strand et al., 2021; Washington, 2006). Giselle acknowledged this phenomenon and feared for her
own safety: “In Zimbabwe, if I die during childbirth, it's not because I'm a Black woman and doctors don't think that I feel pain.” Jade’s anxiety was exacerbated by events in the Midwest city in which she lived. She considered that life might be different in other parts of the US:

I just feel maybe I'll be more at ease back in the East Coast because here I’m always just afraid. I'm like, I have to be home before the sunset. I don't know there is just so much to worry about whilst trying to enjoy life at the same time.

Jade’s accounts were based on real-life events in one of the states in which IBAC were studying. In recent history, Minnesota had numerous high profile fatal police shootings, including but not limited to Philando Castile (2016), George Floyd (2020), Duante Wright (2021), Amir Locke (2022) who were all Black men. These police shootings are in addition to the gun violence endemic to metropolitan cities across the US. It is specifically within this context Jade’s comments about being “at ease” on the East Coast can be understood. Giselle revealed her younger brothers are now in the US and she expressed worry that they will have an encounter with the police. Both Mach and Anike talked about the panic they started to feel when joined by male family members in Minnesota. Here, I will share Mach’s account of her son’s first four weeks in the US:

My son just came and then he was putting on a hoodie with, you know, he covers his head and I have to think about that … I had to think about educating him that you're a Black young man and you can't go around with your head covered like that. You don't want people to assume this and that and whatnot and if you get
stopped, this is what you're supposed to do. I've had to worry about that….I've had to really think about it because I came to Minnesota. Yeah, given the whole George Floyd thing…. This is what scares me. If you're taking a run and you're a Black person or going around in the neighborhood, somebody thinks you're a thief and they take the gun out of the house and come and shoot you. Oh, man. I don't want to take too much, otherwise I'll pack and go home.

Mach’s comments related to “taking a run” referred to the 2020 shooting of Ahmaud Arbery, a Black man shot while jogging in a suburban Georgia neighborhood by three armed White men. Racial anxiety has roots in police violence, citizen-initiated racialized violence, and the potential racialized consequences Black students might face for engaging in relationships with White individuals. Members of the African Student Union at one university, for example, advised Mach to tell her son to be mindful in interactions with White women, a concern that two male participants also brought up in interviews.

Racialization and racist responses were reported by participants across a wide range of activities, some as common as workplace conversation. For example, Habakkuk briefly mentioned a conversation he overheard between a White female colleague and other colleagues working in the international education office. One evening when she was leaving the office, she saw someone standing near the office with a hoodie that “looked Black because of the hands;” she said, “When I closed the door, I took steps forward and then, something in my brain told me go back and confirm whether the door
has been locked or not.” Confirming the door was locked, she went home. Habakkuk disclosed,

[T]o me, that was a stab in my heart because I imagined the person as me.

Basically, it’s no different from when I go to stores and each and every corner there is someone asking me, what can we help you with? What can I help you with? Do you need anything? But then, if I walk with my [White] girlfriend to the store no one comes and talks to us. Only once in a while that has happened.

Habakkuk shared this story after discussing another incident in which he was studying inside a university building one weekend morning,

A [White] woman walked across me and then came back, looked at what I was doing and then she came back the second time and she was like, I think the specific questions that she asked me was, ‘Who are you? What are you doing here? Are you from this school? Are you a student here?’

These questions, asked in rapid succession without space for a reply, also illustrated the constant surveillance that Habakkuk experienced. Habakkuk answered her patiently and firmly addressing his student status and right to be in the building. She walked away after hearing his response. After a moment of reflection, Habakkuk walked towards her and asked what motivated her to question him. After calling her out for racial profiling, she “left crying.”
Thabo joined a fraternity during his college days. Through his Greek Life experience, he learned to “understand White women tears to the fullest extent” after witnessing how “the world stops when a White woman is crying” and how those tears could be “weaponized.” Although he didn’t share examples of these lessons, he did bring up an observation that White women on his undergraduate campus would hook up with Black male athletes and then go on to date conservative White men,

Don't you think it's interesting that these White women will hook up with you [Black male athletes] in a very intimate way, but don't want to date you or take you to the parents but when they're done having sex with you after a month, they go and date the most opposite person from you. Is that not interesting to you?

By his own accord, Thabo reported that he attracted many White women perhaps because he was “international and from South Africa” or because of his fraternity status. Schuller (2021) claims the concept of sexual difference emerged as a function of racial identity which makes the two entangled. The issue for Thabo and Habakkuk was not interracial relationships, as both were at different points in relationships with White women but rather how Black bodies are fetishized, debased, and criminalized all at once.

According to DiAngelo (2015), White women’s tears (literal and figurative) in cross-racial interactions are “one of the more pernicious enactments of white fragility” as they signify how white fragility centers itself by focusing on the harsh effects of racism on White folk. It privileges White people’s feelings over justice and truth. I understand white tears differently. Because "White people set standards of humanity by which they
are bound to succeed" (Dyer, 2005, p. 12), anything that challenges, conflicts with, or contradicts a moralistic self-ideal is perceived as a threat or betrayal. Hamad (2019) cautions that even though these tears might be genuine, they are not “innocent and harmless” (p. 110).

Kwesi was the only male participant not to specifically reference White women’s tears. He did, however, recall his main memory of orientation was a concern about a sexual misconduct policy.

There was something about sexual misconduct. In fact, I was a bit disturbed by it, because there were so many things that could be used falsely against you. For example, if you are looking at somebody, that person can accuse you. I was like, how do you know that I'm looking at you sexually? Who determines that?

Although sexual violence is real and serious, false allegations by White women about Black men have led to egregious injustices, for example, the brutal torture and murder of 14-year-old Emmett Till legalized by Carolyn Bryant’s false testimony that Till whistled at her. Another example is Alice Siebold’s uninterrogated rape case that resulted in Anthony Broadwater’s 16 years prison sentence and 23 more years as a labeled sex offender. Both Black men were innocent; Broadwater was exonerated in 2021 and Bryant confessed to lying in 2017. However, neither woman has faced restorative or legal repercussions for their complicity in damaging the lives of these Black men nor have there been changes to the system that enabled them to do so (Dowty & Knauss, 2022; Weller, 2017). Stories like these, coupled with the everyday microaggressive engagements experienced by IBAC, have a definitive role in their university experience.
These experiences align with empirical evidence. In *White Tears, Brown Scars*, Hamad (2019) claims “White women can oscillate between their gender and their race, between being the oppressed and the oppressor” (p. 99). Hamad declares that white womanhood and the damsel in distress trope are necessary functions of securing white supremacy. Concurring this argument, Smângs’ (2020) investigated lynchings for interracial sex in deep southern states from 1881–1930 and found such lynchings were more likely to occur under conditions where White females resided under White male-headed households, more White females of school age attended school, and Black men had higher literacy levels. The study argued that White racial sexual fears were a farce that covered the true motivations behind these lynchings. According to Smângs, the true rationale was for White men to regain and cement their racial and gender power that was threatened by the post-Civil War changes by tyrannizing both Black people as well as repressing White women.

These points around safety are significant in this study because, without prompting, four out of seven female participants brought up safety concerns. Interestingly, no male participant voiced an explicit concern about physical safety. Although no male participant mentioned being scared, each of them mentioned trepidation or attentiveness to interactions with women, and for good reason. At some level, they understood the riskiness of race and gender intersections.
Gauging the Environment

This theme is occupied with the social climate. Because the cultural context of the US is not always intuitive to newcomers, but one that “need(s) a lot of understanding” (Habakkuk), participants had to take stock of their surroundings. In *White Ignorance*, Mills (2007) states Black people become lay anthropologists “studying the strange culture, customs, and mind-set of the ‘white tribe,’” not out of curiosity, interest, or acculturation, but for survival. Discerning White people's intentions is key to understanding the environment. Knowing their intent involves understanding motives and motivations behind their words, actions, and questions is a key to health and survival.

New people who come to the US may be asked these questions, but then when they answer them, they [newcomers] don’t know that they’re putting themselves in boxes based on whoever is questioning them. Because, because the person that is questioning them, you never know, you never know their intentions. (Habakkuk)

Habakkuk believed newcomers, IBAC included, may unwittingly fall into traps set by seemingly innocuous questions with ulterior motives. Some people intend to condescend even when extending help,

They accept you to show you that you are nothing without their help. They accept you to show you and to brainwash you into the mentality, to get you to the mentality of like, oh, “I can't stand by myself” type of thing (Saba).
IBAC may end up in less-than-ideal situations if they are not able to discern someone’s true intentions. For instance, Giselle was confused by the lack of hospitality when she accepted her White roommate’s invitation to spend Thanksgiving at her house,

But they let me sleep in the basement which I later realized was racism, but I think in the basement with the dog and they had like three guests rooms I don't understand why I couldn't sleep in the guest room. I slept in the basement on an air mattress.

It was only in retelling the story to me she realized when the family gave a full tour of the house, there were three vacant bedrooms upstairs and one had a bathroom inside.

I really now sit back and I think about it and I'm like why was I so naive, because I just like at the time didn't think about it like that, because they really like wrapped it up in like a nice little gift for me like oh no we decided you're going to sleep in the basement it's like your own little area, so you can have privacy, because there was a bathroom in the basement.

When asked how the parents treated her, Giselle said, “They just…I think they were just fascinated is maybe the wrong word, but they just asked a lot of silly questions, and they enjoyed the fact it was my first Thanksgiving.” It took years before it would register that “messed up” incident was because her hosts were racists. Giselle realized in hindsight all the signs that her hosts were racist, signs she ignored or undervalued. For example, her roommate would often comment she couldn’t date a Black man because her father would kill her. Despite these strange incidences and interactions, she was invited to
Thanksgiving dinner the following year but “made sure [she] found somewhere else to go.” Although her roommate’s family were racist, they were also ‘nice.’

Two participants in Minnesota discussed how the “Minnesota Nice” culture obscured genuine intent and interest. Minnesota Nice alludes to the stereotype of Midwest passive aggressiveness. For the unsuspecting many, Minnesota Nice culture results in the inability or difficulty figuring out how people really feel. For example, when Habakkuk first arrived in Minnesota, the niceness he experienced was too good to be true, “When it came to Minnesota, everyone was just nice but then, you get this feeling and wonder is everyone like this or like there’s something wrong?” Eventually, he started paying more attention.

Oh, you know, try it out, ask them to plan something and they never show up. You experience several times, like, let me just stay with my African friends because I can just show up at their door and they’ll be, they’ll put aside life and then we can talk and discuss, let me not put a lot of effort in trying to connect with people and so on, whenever they will, they’ll connect…But here, you can’t gauge if these are positive intentions or negative intentions. So, like, I’ve learnt to really be careful on what I’m sharing. (Habakkuk)

Margaret compared her current state, Minnesota, to a state that has a reputation for racism (Mississippi, in the US South).

People say Mississippi is a racial state but it’s better. Why? Mississippi racism is upfront. Minnesota racism you don’t even know who likes you so it’s like you always have to be careful with your words because they’d smile at you, but they
don’t like you and that is very crafty and anything can happen behind the scene.

...I’m always careful because a lot of them (church community) are Minnesotans so I’m very careful.

Mississippi was the first state she studied and lived in when she came to the US.

Margaret went on to point out the ironies of racism that exists in a so-called progressive state.

There’s huge racism in Minnesota and it’s funny enough that they’re the people who pretend in the name of politics. Especially these professors like, “We want Democrats, you’ve got to vote,” because that is in the name of politics but they’re the same people who are racist.

Jones (2009) has written on this topic, saying Minnesota Nice is “more about keeping up appearances, about keeping the social order, about keeping people in their place” (1:15).

**Enacting Boundaries**

Setting up boundaries was reported by participants as a form of protection and preservation. Establishing clear boundaries allowed participants to exert some influence over shaping the experience they had by choosing how and with whom they interact. One day at her workplace, for example, Giselle’s upper manager made a derogatory statement about people from “third world countries” which led her to avoiding them for a full semester,
In order for me to remain in like a professional space, it’s best that I don't communicate with them directly, because I'm not very good at like hiding my facial expressions… I don't want to put myself in a position where I'm jobless because the boss's boss's boss felt like I didn't like them.

Habakkuk used phrases like "putting up a wall” and creating “distance" to describe newly adaptive behaviors as a survival mechanism.

I have learned ways of protecting myself and also being aware of what is going on…I just put my wall up and put my distance and if I don’t want to share anything with you then like I’ll just stop and say hey, you know, that’s enough, I have to go....I’ve worked hard to put myself outside there so that I get to know and understand when it is necessary to engage, to protect myself, to put a wall, and so on”.

Habakkuk described that racialization can even occur in recreational activities, designed to be fun and with common sets of rules. For example, Habakkuk described what occurred at Friday night soccer games that he attended. Soccer is an international sport and attracts a diverse group of players, seemingly in every community Around the world, expatriate and national communities meet for recreational soccer games forming teams based on national or continental affiliation. International students participate for a myriad of reasons, including cultural maintenance, cultural adjustments, socialization, as well as health and fitness (Allen et al., 2012; Allen & Lyons, 2019; Buzzelli, 2016).
Whenever there are tensions between White people and Africans, it’s like there will be a war because no one wants to understand each other. We’re not patient with them nor are they patient with us. We’re always very rude to each other. We just take it we’re here for soccer and when soccer is done, everyone is going to go home.

Habakkuk’s observations demonstrate the depth of racialization for IBAC. For Margaret, adapting to such an environment meant that she changed some of the ways that she thought about who she was as an African. What is more is that Margaret juxtaposed these adaptive behaviors to her African nature.

I love people so much but I can’t mingle with people that any time I come my energy is drained so I have to like define my boundaries….Initially, I didn’t know because I was an African being open up now, I don’t do that again, I study people, I do the American way…I think America has made me more of a strong and a stubborn person, not stubborn but it has…you know, back in Africa we don’t have this thing kind of set boundaries, right?

Margaret’s experiences and adaptivity to her environment were further exacerbated by the cultural environment she experienced. She further pointed out differences in Minnesota and Mississippi specifically, but also to the US in general.

Africans are very warm. A lot of people in America are not warm, especially in Minnesota people are cold. But in the South like Mississippi, people are warm. So when you live in this cold area you have to change the warm nature because they...
don’t understand it. So I have to do a lot of changes, read a lot of books and all that and I pray to God to lead me. If I don’t do that, I don’t think I can survive in the US.

**Barriers to Interaction**

The perceived ignorance of classmates and even faculty impacted IBAC’s willingness to engage with others. Ignorance here includes uninformed thoughts, ill-mannered behavior (e.g., touching someone’s hair without permission or invitation), and lack of historic context IBAC witnessed from classmates, faculty, and the community at large. While being hosted at her roommate’s house for Thanksgiving, Giselle endured a myriad of unenlightened questioning,

They also asked a lot of stupid questions about like Africa. Do you have White people? Did you see White people for the first time when you came to America? And I was just like, no, no. I went to a predominantly White school. High school. I’ve seen White people before. There are White people in Africa; there’s White people in Zimbabwe so yeah.

Saba also experienced ignorant questions, which essentialized all of Africa into a narrow stereotype.

The moment they heard that I'm from Africa, they were like, “Oh, you must have missed seeing the giraffes and the gorillas and stuff as you were walking to
school.” It was like, at that point you would just laugh, right? Like where do you think I live, in the jungle [laughs]?

Mach further explained a common narrative that IBAC often face in their engagement in the US:

The narrative that people receive here in the US is always the narrative that Africa is poor because the pictures that you see are always of [inaudible] starving children and all the negative things is what you see, what you know.

Thabo blamed some of the ignorance that participants experienced on the media that White US Americans consumed. “And then yeah, people don’t know how to research and stuff. You're like, wait, no wonder why you're so brainwashed, because everything you see is just on some media outlet.” Other participants, however, wondered how people in the US could be so boldly ignorant. Many of the participants expressed exasperation and bewilderment about how people could know so little about Africa. “I kind of don't understand,” Anike wondered, “whether it's appropriate for people to ask me such a stupid question, or if it's acceptable here or not.” Giselle was more forthright in her frustration. “I don't have the patience to tell you,” she lamented, “why saying all lives matter is problematic and why your grandma probably shouldn't put that on Facebook. I don't have time for it, so I'd rather not do it at all.” Mach estimated that “90% of people firstly don't know where Zimbabwe is because they think Africa is just one big, huge country,” adding that “a lot of Americans are aloof about what happens outside of the borders. They don't know more even at a PhD level, I noticed.” In summary, participants
were often confused and frustrated by how unaware US Americans were of African and global affairs.

“**You Are Here as a Guest**”

Unbelonging has been defined as “a removal of membership belonging” (Healy, 2020, p. 119) and “an aggravated sense of dispossession, longing and resentment of insurmountable exclusion” (Buck et al., 2022, p. 827). Unbelonging, similar to othering, produces an “us and them” (e.g., White vs. non-White; US American vs. non-US American). However, one can still be welcomed as an outsider. Unbelonging, then, is different because one feels unwanted and unwelcome, which is not the same as being treated as different. Anike relayed experiences of unbelonging in common activities such as dining out: “You're going out to a restaurant, you walk in and all the faces you see are White, and they all turn to you and they're looking at you like you're not supposed to (author’s emphasis) be here.” In the previous sentence I emphasized “supposed to” to draw attention to Anike’s words, which relayed a sense of intrusion or trespassing on someone else’s territory.

When asked to reflect on the differences between racism in South Africa and the US, Thabo replied,

I would say that's the biggest difference is, I hate to sound cliché, but you know you're not in the motherland here. You know you are a guest in the white capitalist world. You are here as a guest, and this isn't for you, nor do you belong here.
In this comparison, he used the word “guest.” Being a “guest” connotes a temporary dwelling or a tentative privilege that can be revoked which implies that the inhabited space does not rightfully belong to them. As a guest, one is invited to a space for a given time and purpose. A guest can become an intruder if they fail to perform as expected or overstay their welcome. From this perspective, Nyashma attempted to understand the rationale behind why Whites in the US or elsewhere may react as they do, commenting on the tenuous nature of settler and other colonialism.

I feel it's understandable especially because you're in a place that is not originally yours. And a racist or somebody who is distinguishing someone based on color, they feel that you are coming to take what rightfully belongs to them. That's the way I understand this whole issue. That is why they are mad at you, that's why they don't like you. That’s the way I see it.

The circumstances described by participants reinforced findings reported in Cluster 1, which highlighted how higher education institutions were sites for racialization. In this cluster, participants demonstrated how racialization can be hostile. Thabo cautioned, “[Traditionally White Institutions] can be pretty traumatic because those spaces can be violent and not everyone can be as persistent as I was.” To support his statement, Thabo described his experience in a predominantly White fraternity, where he was one of three non-White members and the only Black member. On many occasions, he was called the “token of their organization” and made to feel like an outsider and not a fraternal (frat) brother. Once upon entering a party, his frat brother exclaimed, “That’s my favorite n-word!” Another time, a frat brother said, “I want you to
be friends with me, so my dad thinks I have Black friends.” The president of the fraternity made him feel like he was “obligated to be humiliated every time” and would single him out, make fun of his accent, and punish him more harshly for missing meetings than other members of the fraternity. Eventually, Thabo quit the fraternity which, in his words, “was one of the most violent spaces I’ve been in.” Margaret did not join a Greek organization, but her own qualms about her current institution and saying, “I’ve been through a lot on this campus. The day I’ll be out, I’ll say ‘thank God.’”

Both Thabo and Margaret called out the structural issues of US higher education and the lack of authentic inclusion. Thabo reflected on recent university initiatives related to diversity, equity, and inclusion and their shortcomings. “[O]ur education leadership can respectfully just stop the over performativeness, and we can talk to one day about how some of those Black and Brown folk of color in those positions are just puppets to that system.” Margaret further explained that “North Star State University is very racist, it’s not so diversified, and the few diversity they have, there is no inclusion they look down upon us.” When asked what message Thabo would tell incoming students related to structural racism on US campuses, part of his answer was, “I would want them to know that race is a construct and I’d want them to really understand how that shows up in the classroom because microaggressions are really a thing that people experience a lot.”

Because participants reported that they were viewed as unwanted outsiders, they were often silenced literally and symbolically. Thabo reported that "I often saw myself when I shared an opinion, it made even the professors uncomfortable and my classmates, and instead of asking maybe a follow up, the professor chose to be like, ‘Okay, who
Mach also relayed that "When we critique professors who come to the continent to do their studies, they are quick to cut us off." Universities are frequently characterized as spaces in which students can be free to critically engage in conversations (Marginson, 2011), but participants in this study found their perspectives were often censored or cut off in discussions.

When I contribute to a conversation and say especially in terms of criticizing people who come to Africa, and I say that this is wrong because this is the way. My word, I felt, is not been taken as truth or I don't know enough academically and If I'm not familiar with something and I'm just told that you expected to know this.... It’s the White person at World Bank. It's the White person who does the human capitalist theory, it's the White person who works at USAID, it's the White person who comes into my community and tells me I need the well when I don't need a well. And when you say that you're too emotional or you're not thinking academically (Mach).

Margaret reported having to change advisors because the advisor shouted at her and engaged in stereotypical and racist conversations with her. “I switched from the first one [first advisor] because the first one raised his voice at me on two occasions and I didn’t like the way he referred to African people one time when he was communicating with me.” Margaret’s negative experience with her first advisor who yelled at her on two occasions and spoke of Africans in an unsettling manner. During a period in which Margaret was struggling with deep depression and anxiety, she asked for an extension on a paper and her advisor said no. Ultimately, she turned in an incomplete paper with a
plagiarized section. Margaret knew what she did was wrong according to university policies, but she acknowledged she was not in the right frame of mind when making that decision. According to the institution’s policies, the instructor is to meet with the student before deciding on a course of action. In this case, the instructor, who is also her advisor, immediately reported her to the student conduct board. It is unclear if this incident happened before or after she switched to a different advisor. It is also unclear whether this incident was racially motivated. What is clear is that Margaret presented a strong enough case that the student conduct board decided not to issue any penalties or sanctions against her.

Around this time, Margaret became suicidal and sought help in group therapy at the student counseling center. When the therapist asked whether attending a traditionally White institution factored into their depression, Margaret began to see how being silenced and looked over for half a decade led to her current mental health condition. All the same, this proved to Margaret that even at “liberal” institutions that champion mental health wellness and encourage students to disclose mental health challenges, there were faculty who simply did not care.

*Made to Self-Doubt*

Self-doubt was a salient phenomenon for five of seven women. Part of self-doubt stems from schooling in a non-native environment, but it can also be attributed to the burden of representation, that is, the pressure to perform well because one believes the
next Black/African person will be judged based on their performance or they must do well to refute negative pre-existing stigma:

So, I was under constant pressure to do what I needed to do in school, and being the only Black person in predominantly White departments was not helping. So that first phase was me suffering a lot of self-confidence issues. Not necessarily because of what people said, but I think it was more about being in a place and knowing that people thought you were not quite as good as everybody else because you were Black and trying to maintain or at least be at the same level as the other students. So, you don't give them a confirmation of what they think and trying to do this while struggling to keep up with what people were saying because of their accents. (Anike)

Although in the purportedly diverse, multicultural, and internationalized higher learning institutions, one might expect an appreciation or, at a minimum, tolerance for different accented English, accents proved to be a point of strain for participants. Nyashma joked, “When you're doing a dirty job, nobody sees that you have an accent but when you are trying to fight for your rights or when you're trying to get something that you need, then (the accent come on)…” Giselle said that “because of the fact that I'm Black and I have an accent, I'm not confident enough to ask questions in class when I don't understand.” Giselle’s quote related to her time as an undergraduate where she described herself as timid and fear of being dismissed as “not smart” because of her accent. Margaret described similar pressures of being stigmatized, and the consequences of this,
They’re (White students) free to do anything they want but you, the Black person… it’s like you always have to prove yourself because there’s a stigma, there is this stereotype. So, I think that is what is also making a lot of the Blacks in America commit suicide, be under depression because they’re demanding so much and they’ve told them that they’re this, they’re this. So, some are even overworking and I experienced it in my PhD. I was always under fear when I was doing different research assistant positions to the extent that I had to change and always that fear was haunting me, right?

Mach relayed similar pressures and reactions to racialized structures in higher education.

I always questioned myself, could I have answered it differently to educate them further, could I have presented my solution in a way that would not have raised that question? These are questions that I continue to ask myself and see how I can present myself or whatever it is that I'm doing so that people understand us as Black people coming from Africa and don't just write us off after they see our skin.

The two women who did not express self-doubt reported episodes in which their intelligence or ability to accomplish might have been in question, often by men, introducing further intersectional experiences of IBAC that are not the focus of this research, but could be explored in future studies. When relaying an experience with a male professor, said
And there are some, just because I say I'm from Africa, they try to see me as uneducated or maybe have difficulty going about the material, whatever it is. Those people, I don't exchange words with them, but I prove myself through my work.

Jade’s experiences occurred with male students.

Then there was one pair of male students who instead of asking me, their TA [teaching assistant] for the day, for whatever chemicals or for the instructions that they needed, they went on to look for another TA who was in a different room with their own students giving instructions to them, to ask them about the experiment that I was TAing [teaching assistant] and I was literally just standing right there. Sometimes I feel like it's a power thing that just goes on. And I'm just here like, I'm here to do my job. Personally, I don't need those courses so it's all up to you. So, it's just interesting whenever I have little things that go on with the male White students.

Saba and Jade dealt with other people’s skepticism by leaning on demonstrated capability. Both Saba and Jade are in male-dominated fields in the science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and medicine (STEM), and have used many of the strategies mentioned in this section to navigate environments that are both racist and sexist.

A final note of this cluster, self-doubt should not be misunderstood as a general lack of self-confidence or low self-esteem. Self-doubt was contained to academic spaces and triggered by racists and sexist assumptions of intelligence and capability. This cluster
depicted the new mental load taken on by participants as they navigated interpersonal challenges and hurdles in pursuit of higher education.

**Cluster 3: Resisting/Refusing the Veil**

The third theme of *Resisting/Refusing the Veil* expresses the psychosocial and spiritual battle that participants faced—the veil symbolizing the knowledge of the dehumanization of Black lives within the white imagination. Resisting/refusing can be held in juxtaposition to *Becoming*. Where “Becoming” exemplifies a new, alternative, or additional way of being, this theme highlights the battle of resisting changes to the character and core of their being as they struggle to remain in their essence. In summary, these resistances bound identity to Africanness and humanness and owning their agency.

“I’ve Come to Appreciate the Africanness in Me”

In addition to being raced as Black, participants maintained (or came into) their Africanness and wanted to have that identity recognized. Remaining African is both a point of pride and a rejection of being (racially) defined by others. Socially, Saba stood in two places, a desire to understand others while being unmoved by people’s opinions of her. My interview with Saba touched on many topics, namely ignorance of US Americans and her accepting herself. For Saba, accepting oneself is tied to knowing oneself. Saba presents an interesting case for this subtheme because she is not immediately raced as Black or perceived to be African because of the lightness of her skin. Saba is Ethiopian. Ethiopia boasts of never (formally) being colonized by
Europeans, forcing out Italian settlers in the 1970s. Ethiopia is a diverse nation with 80 recognized ethnic groups with various shades of skin. According to Saba, the different complexions “are considered and taken as indigenous looks of the country, but not necessarily black versus white.” These particularities are important to note as they directly influence Saba's narrative. Several times throughout the interview, Saba made clear that she is an African.

So, I never really deeply thought about I am Black, but I have always accepted that I'm Ethiopian; I'm African. Then if we go even more deeper, I'm a mix of two tribes. When it comes to religion, I'm a Christian, I'm an Orthodox Christian. When it comes to family, I come from this family. When it comes to the region, I was born and raised in the capital city. Those were my definition of identifying myself…

Because I am in the society where those terminologies are quite often used to identify somebody, then okay, I'll go with those identifications so I can easily communicate with you. That doesn't necessarily change whether you label… if you label, for example, not that it will ever interchange, but if it interchanges then say like, oh, Whites are Africans, African Americans, and all of those definitions that we've discussed, then okay, I'll call myself White from those regions, if that makes your understanding of my identity easy. But for now, because you are calling those things [Black] or those identities under the label box of the race
definitions of America, okay, I'll identify with those, but I will always be African. Whichever color that you give me, I will always be that African young girl.

This quote conveys how Saba is making sense and meaning of her African and Black identity. Firstly, Ethiopian was a primary way of identifying herself after being in the US for some time, it seems that the African identity became more prominent. Like other participants, national (e.g., Ethiopian) and continental (i.e., African) are closely connected identifications although participants do not wish to speak for the whole of Africa. Secondly, Saba identifies as Black insofar as “Black” is associated with Africa. For her, there is a utility to accepting this label as Black but there is no attachment to the word or the terminology.

Other participants noted that blackness and Africanness are separate identities. Anike said,

I would not allow my blackness as an identity to control who I am. Before being Black, I am me. So, I don't have to leave my life to try to obscure or reduce the level of my blackness. So I'm going to embrace my Nigerianness.

I asked Habakkuk to explain how Blackness and Africanness is different after he said, “I’ve come to love blackness, I’ve come to appreciate the Africanness in me;” he then added,

I think my blackness is basically what I’m considered here in the US and what my identity is. Even though it’s not my identity from Kenya, it’s not my original
identity. My original identity is basically African, and I think I resonate more to
the African identity.

Saba, like Habakkuk, recognized Black as an imported label. Habakkuk and
Anike both embraced Black as a new or more pronounced identity but for Saba, Black
was a temporary designation that makes it easier for her to navigate social spaces in the
US. Although Saba could accept being Black, she did not want to be confused with being
American. I asked how she handles the “check your race” box when she first arrived to
the US; Saba responded,

I had always went with the one that said ‘not American,’ or nothing associated
with American, because I mean, I'm not American, I'm African. Okay, if you call
me Black, well, I'm actually Black, then okay. So, I always chose from those
options that were quite like from my understanding point, like I'm not American.

Remaining African for participants, then, did not only refer to contextualizing a
Black identity; it also meant rejecting an American identity. During the course of the
interview, Giselle mentioned a desire to stay in the United States considering all the
sacrifices she made thus far and the irrelevance of her skills in Zimbabwe. I asked Giselle
what she would call herself if she became a permanent resident and later obtained US
citizenship, to which she responded, “I'm an African who naturalized and now has US
citizenship.” For Giselle, being African is not simply a matter of citizenship.

Some of the participants took issue with being called ‘American’ (an issue of
nationality) while others distinguished themselves from American Americans (issue of
cultural identity). In my understanding, this is a critical distinction. ‘Black’ and ‘American’ are social constructs that are perceived differently by some participants. As shared earlier, Mach lamented that Latinos are separated into other categories, but all Black people were “lumped together.” Mach firmly asserted, “I am an African; I'm not an African American. I believe there's a difference.” Although Mach did not explain the differences, she discussed Black Americans as an outside group from her, with a distinct history. Thabo gestured towards that difference when he critiqued that,

Even though they know you’re a student from South Africa, they expect me to be like my friend Mark, who's African American, who grew up in Chicago. It's like those two experiences don't correlate or intersect. Yes, we both show up has Black men in the space, but our lived experiences are vastly night and day.

Kwesi said, “When there’s ‘African American’ and there's ‘Others', I put myself in 'Others.’” He further explained,

They ask about race and all that. Yeah, sometimes I look through it and I don't even know where I'm supposed to belong. Because I see ‘African American' and whatnot and I’m like, I’m not an African American. I don’t see ‘African,' I don't see ‘Ghanaian.’ So sometimes you see like ‘Black African American,’ so they take Black as African.

Although no participant attempted to distinguish the “difference” between Black Americans and Africans, they all acknowledged that there were distinct differences. While Thabo maintained his African identity, he also understood how he was perceived
by others in the US and wished to alert incoming students, stating “yes, you're going to
be a South African, because we often see this debate, oh African American versus
Africans. You're still a Black person to these people (referring to White people) at the
end of the day.” It is worthwhile noting South Africa and Kenya are two of the most
racially diverse countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and could be a reason why Habakkuk
and Thabo consented to being called and calling themselves not only African but Black.

**Being Human**

Before arriving in the US (and even after), participants viewed themselves as
human beings first and fought to maintain this self-concept. More than being seen as
African first, my participants wanted to be seen as human—complete humans with
multiple identities: “I see myself as a human being,” said Kwesi “I just see myself as a
human being.” Anike critically asked, “I’m a human being, isn't that good enough?”
Nyashma further reflected on humanness, asking,

> Is it because somebody is not the same color as you are, does that make the
person less of a human being than you are? That's one thing that I don’t
understand because I feel like why would you treat somebody else who has a
head, a hand or a leg like you, who breathes and talks, why would you treat the
other person less than you treat yourself? Is it because of the color?

Thabo additionally remarked,
I think people see me as Black before they see me as anything else. I think if that, that would be the most prominent identity that I have is like, I am Black before I'm Thabo. Even though I would want to identify as Thabo who happens to be of a Black race, who happens to be from South Africa, who happens to be immigrant, who happens to be an intentional student, unfortunately, I'm seen as Black first and then I’m maybe Thabo. But to me, I am Thabo first and then all of these other identities that make up the full picture of who I am, come through. But unfortunately, that's not how I'm seen here. I’m first Black and then many other things.

Participants of this study saw themselves as humans first and mostly spoke of people with whom they interacted with as human first. For example, they only mentioned other people’s race when I asked or if they deemed it a necessary detail for the clarity of story. For these participants, racialization detracted from their larger sense of identity and purpose as human beings or as Africans.

**Enacting Agency**

This theme exemplifies how participants used their agency and aspirational capital to persevere despite negative experiences. Kwesi, Mach, Saba, and Habakkuk, for example, explicitly chose careers with African development in mind. For some, the negative experiences they encountered in a US higher education setting did not appear to deter them from their commitment to their home continent. Several were preparing to either return to Africa or remain engaged through their work. Saba focused on healthcare.
That's something that I see is a gap in our healthcare, not just in my country but also in our continent in general and in several other developing countries in the world as well. So those are the skill sets that I want to carry with me when I go home.

Habakkuk and Mach discussed their work habits, in service to their broader commitment to the continent. Habakkuk talked about a commitment to learning.

You can sleep at the library by yourself and stay there 72 hours and nobody will ask you anything. Um, so, so if you want to do so, do so, you know, consume everything, make your brain fuller and full, and then when you're ready to go or you want to stay, well and good.

Mach also expressed a commitment to fulfilling educational goals, stating:

I'm on a mission, I'm not giving up, in the sense that, I came here and I want to get this education down and go back and help my people…I'm here really to learn and to amass as much knowledge and advanced and hopefully take some of my learnings back home but I think that some of my energy could be used in other things, instead of like worrying about my race.

Mach’s comments demonstrated two phenomena experienced by participants in this study. The first was a commitment to excel educationally so learning could be put to work in Africa. The second was a feeling that racialization (and response to it) was a distraction from other greater goals.
The issue is about bread and butter; it is not about these things. When you look at the order of needs, you people have gotten to the self-actualization level, and we are still at the basic needs level. So, I'm looking at how to put food on my table for myself and my family and I am not concerned about what you think about me. I’m a talkative man and I also want to go far.

The last two quotes illustrate how a single-minded commitment to education and application of education in Africa gave participants fortitude to stay narrowly focused on achieving their goal (e.g., higher education) and filter obstacles (e.g., racism). Reminiscent of game theory, participants expressed a risk and reward mentality that pointed to their narrow focus of achieving their goal. Game theory is a mathematical approach to understanding and predicting human behavior and decision making in the social world. Assuming humans are rational beings, decisions are thoughtfully made by calculating the possible rewards of winning and risk of losing. This analysis suggests participants believed the gains received from being educated in the US outweighed the losses (racism and racialization) they experienced in the US. Yosso (2005) framed this approach as “aspirational capital” (p. 77), which describes the resiliency of people of color to persist through all types of barriers in fulfillment of one’s hopes and dreams. Despite feelings of racial anxiety and unbelonging, six of the ten participants were considering or making intentional moves to remain in the US but remain active in their professional and personal contributions in Africa.

Unlike the participants above, Margaret was an example of a participant who was intent on staying in the US, despite her negative experiences. She retold a story in which
she felt her advisor overstepped his boundaries by sending her relevant jobs postings in Africa. Although many of the participants specifically wanted to work in Africa, Margaret saw her mission as different. She thought that working in academia in the US would afford her more free time and give her the best chance to have a positive impact and “channel hope” to people (including Black Americans) who are struggling with racism-triggered depression.

Giselle also felt a transition in her aspirations and was leaning toward staying in the US when we spoke,

I came to America when I was 20 and I'm 32 now so I’ve been here like my whole adult life. If I left and went back home, I would not make it. Like I have not built the skills as an adult that would allow me to live and survive in Zimbabwe. I'm well into my adulthood, all my skills I've learned as an adult has been specific to America, I cannot take those and put them in Zimbabwe in the Zimbabwean economy and political situation. I would probably die.

Giselle had little confidence that the adaptive skills and expertise she gained in the US would help her survive as an adult in Zimbabwe. She believed she would “struggle so much” to the point of “wilting away.”

Jade was also in a stage of re-thinking a return to Africa at the time of the interview, worried that her graduate degrees would not translate to a livelihood nor provide her adequate return on the sacrifices she made to study in the US.
Also thinking okay, I want to do this but it's not worth going through all the hustle. Am I going to go back home? But then it's also like, “Am I going to get compensated for all these years that I've spent getting my education and all that.”.

Jade described her strategic approach to education, which began during her undergraduate years. During that time, Jade changed her career path from a medical-focus to a science-focus after learning about the average debt of medical doctors. Similarly, as she approached the end of her terminal degree, Jade was counting the emotional and mental cost of her career prospects. Between industry and academic roles Jade said, “I'm seeing fewer and fewer people who look like me in the careers that I envisioned myself to have in the next four or five years.” In this case, Jade had ambitions but was well aware of the obstacles outlined throughout this chapter.

Through career talks, she learned of the obstacles facing Black folk in STEM. She realized there are some things she “just wasn’t willing to go through” in order to get a position without the assurance that the position will be “worth it” (financially and psychologically). The National Science Foundation reports 73% of Black women with their highest degree in a science or engineering (S&E) field work in non-S&E careers (Okrent, 2021). The STEM fields have been notoriously harmful places for women and Black folk, which likely explains why Black women opt for alternative careers in management-related occupations (16%), social services (11%), and other non-science and engineering (S&E) occupations (28%) at higher rates (Okrent, 2021). McGee (2020), who publishes extensively on this topic, said Black STEM PhD students experienced,
(a) stresses and strains that made them question their qualifications; (b) racialized experiences that were often the source of stress, strain, and academic performance anxiety; (c) discordance between the racial makeup of their academic environments and their racialized engineering and computing identities, which appeared to exacerbate impostor phenomenon; and (d) proactive racialized coping mechanisms that took an emotional toll and fostered feelings of self-doubt (p. 636).

McGee’s points are corroborated throughout this chapter in Jade, Anike, and Margaret’s narratives. Within this subsection, participants enacted their agency by considering how the available options could help them attain their long-term goals. This evidence presented in this cluster demonstrates that these participants are not passive recipients but are agentic actors (re)creating their present and futures.

**Cluster 4: Opting Out**

And finally, an emerging concept that I call “opting out” is connected to participants who chose not to engage in race-discourses. My participants had choices available to them and the agency to choose. This theme indicates that IBAC used a variety of methods to opt out of engaging with US racialism.

“I Didn’t Let it Bother Me”

Some participants disclosed ways they rebuffed constant discrimination. Included in this subtheme are attitudes that range from persevering through racism to “ignoring”
racism altogether. Anike reflected on how she navigated through racism on a day-to-day basis.

I cannot control what someone else is thinking, or what they're feeling. What I can control is how I choose to react to it and my attitude towards it. So I choose to control what I can control and not waste my energy on things that are beyond my control...So, gradually I got to the state where I could think of myself as, “I make no apologies for being Black,” and I'm confident in being who I am. So, if you have a problem with this then that's your own business, it's not my problem.

Saba also expressed a detached attitude from racism, labeling racist attitudes as the problem of the one who is racist themselves. “That is your perception” (referring to the person who is racist), “and the problem in your brain, and that's the problem in your understanding, but that doesn’t change my nature.” Kwesi and Nyashma described how they tried to avoid worrying about the racism around them in order to preserve their own mental health, “All these issues about discrimination and all those kinds of things, if some of us want to be worried about this, we'll never be happy.” Nyashma made note of police violence but attempted to remain unaffected by it and day-to-day microaggressions.

So, it didn't affect me because I wasn't following the news, I didn’t let it bother me. I just was worried about more people losing their lives, with all the police trying to stop people from going extreme and all that. But aside from that, it didn't mean anything to me and it didn’t make me think otherwise about whoever was
close to me and all that…But the truth is once you're here in the US and you’re Black and you enter a new place, people see you and turn and look at you twice. That's the way I see it. But I already told myself that means I’m a unique person, and it doesn't bother me anyway.

**Resignation**

A central part of not internalizing racism, resisting resentment, and opting out of racist narratives in the US was the participants’ approach of taking the world “as is” and accepting that humans are discriminating beings. When reflecting on discrimination, Kwesi wondered:

I don't know, will it ever end? It can only improve but, will it ever end? I mean that racism, inferiority, superiority complex thing, is like an innate kind of thing in human beings. It’s inborn, people will just grow up and feel that they are better than others, even within the same family.

Margaret had similar questions, related to race specifically. She said,

I feel like the world is…that is how the world is. We are all racial beings from different places, right? So no matter what happens there will always be that discrimination, right?”...So no matter what we do that is not going to change, right, so it’s up to the individual.

Jade also took a long view on discriminatory human nature, lamenting that “Because even though there's so many protests and whatnot that's happening, it's not
going to end anytime soon.” This subtheme highlighted ways in which participants viewed racism as someone else’s problem and prejudice as innate. This mindset not only freed participants from feeling they must address the problem but absolved them from being implicated in the rules of engagement in the US racialization project.

“I Channel My Pain to God”

Faith, religion, and spirituality influenced all of the participants, albeit in different ways. Faith and religion were important to participants in general, but also served as a coping mechanism for the racism they encountered. For some participants, their faith served as an anchor or pillar of their identity. For others, they questioned their conservative religious upbringing. For others still, spirituality was what connected and bonded them to humanity. Africa is a religiously vibrant continent with over 60% of sub-Saharan Africans identifying as Christian (Marshall, 2018). Accordingly, a religious, in this case, Christian identification can be linked to the participants’ self-identification of being African. While faith impacted all participants either as a personal confession or in their upbringing, this theme was particularly salient for Nyashma and Margaret. These beliefs shaped how some participants made sense and meaning of their racialized experiences. Nyashma said, “I'm a Christian, and I believe so much in God and there is an ideology that I go about, which is that nothing happens to me by accident.” According to Nyashma, when situations arise, she responds by thinking “Okay, this is what God wants to happen at this time, and that is the way it is.”
Margaret also explained how her faith helped her respond to what she experienced in the US.

I identify myself in Christ, and I began saying to myself “if God wants to make me great he will make me great, no White person or Black person, no one can stop me” … I am a Christian, I love God. So, I don’t allow people to determine where I am coming from. I use the word of God no matter how you look down upon me, I use the scripture to tell like myself this is what God says about me this is not what someone, another person is saying about me.

Faith also helped Nyashma to create an alternative narrative for herself. She explained:

So if I'm born and I'm Black and I find myself in a particular location, then that means that is the way God has designed me to be so I don't want to attribute whatever happens to me to either my color or whatever it is about me.

Nyashma explained that she believed God was behind the events that occurred in her life and took solace in this both when events went her way and when they did not. In one example, she remembered, “I said ‘Okay, let me try getting a job,’ but it didn't work out but finally somehow I got my fees to be paid, and I looked up and said really God didn't want me to take those jobs.”

Nyashma also shared how she included narratives about uniqueness and faith in messages she shared with her children who joined her in the US:
Though I also told them that it is possible that people will see that you're different because of your color. But just know that you are made uniquely, and that is the way God created you. He created you to be unique so you shouldn't feel otherwise about it.

Margaret also explained how she made sense of her experiences through faith and prayer.

I started my Ph.D. and I went through a lot and I've been spending time with God. Because I was like, “why do I have to go through all this fear?” I was like, “God, I'm not a Black American.” And I realized it's not a Black American thing. So, one time I woke up in the middle of the night and I'm like, ‘okay, in Ghana, I'm not from a rich family. Why did even God pick me from Ghana to the US? Could it be that God wanted me to also help some people in the US who are also struggling who are going through a similar thing? So that was when I woke up and I told myself, “Okay, I think I understand I'm going through what I'm going through for a reason.”

Faith also guided how they contended with such experiences. Nyashma, for example, taught her grade-school children not to respond or react to mistreatment explaining that,

We're very religious and we try to tie whatever we do to being a good child of God. I would be like “What would Jesus do in such a situation? He will walk away; He's not going to fight back.
Margaret and Nyashma both relied on faith to help guide their reactions to racism in the US. Margaret, in particular, acknowledged the painfulness of the experience, and noted that “now, I channel my pain to God.” In addition to participants believing that all things would work together in their favor, they wanted to be sure that their response to racism and mistreatment was aligned with the Faith.

“I Don’t Want to Be Bitter”

A final subtheme present in participants’ comments was an explained resistance to resentment. The participants explained that they did not want their hearts to be poisoned by hatred or to become “bitter” (Margaret). They further did not want to transfer their past negative experiences on to unsuspecting others. Margaret was very forthcoming in this stance:

I tell myself I don’t want to be the pain, the rejection, the mistrust…I don’t want to be any of those things I went through and do that to people, no, I want to be a better person…I told myself I don’t want to be a part of that bitterness, God should heal me, God should give me a forgiving heart all those who are hating me…So I told myself, actually, that is one of the main reason where, why I want to go into academia because I want to, I want to be an impact. I want to help people out there. I don't want to bitter and voice out, I want to use that to channel hope into people…I love everyone, I don’t want to be in hate…like anyone, no White person can stop me, what God says I am, is what God says I am.
Margaret’s comments touched upon the agency and faith narratives reported above and focused on avoiding self-negativity through believing that “no White person” can stop her. Nyashma described a cautious approach to reacting to events she experiences.

Even if I have to be timid, even if I have to just swallow my pride and take the streets, I try to do that rather than raise an uproar because at times you can't prove it, the person doesn’t say it out so you can’t prove that this person’s action is because of this so I just try not to make that assumption at all…At times I know that there are some of them here that actually know it when somebody is reacting to you because of your color but I try as much as I can not to let that because if…One thing I know is that if I begin to have that in my mind, then I'll begin to suspect everybody around me and I don't like that, I don't like being that kind of person.

Anike described a similar approach to Nyashma, responding to a question about advice that I asked in the following way: “the advice I would give will be based on one experience, it’s easy to put everybody together in the same category, but you need to consciously tell yourself, it's not everybody that is that bad.”

These comments made by participants can be characterized as a form of detachment. Margaret, Nyashma, and to a lesser extent, Anike expressed that they wanted to extract themselves from the racialization by transcending or conceding to the experience. This cluster raises questions about how deeply rooted racism is perceived to be by participants. Rhetorically, it appeared that these participants understood and
accepted that there are racist people but potentially did not account for how their lives were affected by institutional, structural, and colorblind (that is, the social function of racism). One interpretation is that this cluster highlights some participants’ coping strategies, which include maintaining a nonchalance and at times, willful ignorance. Toni Morrison’s work offers a different possible understanding.

In one of her infamous interviews, Charlie Rose (1993) posed a question to Morrison about whether she still encountered racism after having achieved high status and international accolades for her artistic contributions; Morrison responded to that question with another question and provocative commentary on racism and those who practice it,

Don’t you understand the people who do these things, that practice racism are bereft? There is something distorted about the psyche. It’s like it’s a profound neurosis that nobody examines for what it is…. And it has just as much of a deleterious effect on White people and possibly equal as it does Black people…. I’m not a victim. I refuse to be one... if you can only be tall because somebody is on their knees, then you have a serious problem. And my feeling is that White people have a very, very serious problem and they should start thinking about what they can do about it. Take me out of it (Rose, 1993, 38:30).

Throughout the interview, Morrison redirected the focus to the perpetrators of racism, insisting that racism mutually affects the recipient of racist acts but also affects the one performing them: the racial anxiety felt by the performers reflected the “neurosis” of racism. The belittling of others exposes the feebleness of the aggressor; and the true
victim isn’t the Black person, but the White oppressor beholden to a distorted psyche. In
effect, Morrison resolved that she is neither the problem nor is the issue hers to solve.
Participants’ responses aligned with this perspective, as many of the interviewees
attempted to take themselves out of racist narratives, assigning blame for it on the racists
themselves. Opting out can be seen as an oppositional stance that de-literalizes racism (by
rejecting a victim mentality) and de-legitimizes the white gaze by refusing to respond its
gesturing (thereby, nullifying its power). In the same interview, Morrison continued in
the above-mentioned interview:

But when you take it (racism) away, I take your race away, the only thing you got
is your little self, and what is that? What are you without racism? Are you any
good? Are you still strong? Still smart? Do you still like yourself? (Rose, 1993,
39:56).

Unlike the racists Morrison calls out, participants— reliant on their capabilities,
faith, and goals— had a clear sense of who they are without racism. Whether opting out
was strictly a coping mechanism or a way of writing their own narrative, these
participants once lived in the “stunning” (Cornell University, 2013) world outside of the
white gaze; that experience continued to shape how they made sense of and navigated US
racial terrains.

These clusters, Becoming Veiled, Living Under the Veil, Resisting the Veil, and
Opting Out are intricately connected but can also stand alone. Together, they attest to the
complex, puzzling, and unsettling nature of racialization (phenomenon). Separately, they
give a glimpse into the resilience, agency, and at times, willful ignorance and optimism of the research participants.
Chapter 5

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand how racialized experiences in US higher education inform or complicate international Black African Collegians’ (IBAC) understanding of race and whether it has an impact on self-identification. This research aimed to identify the ways in which IBAC had been specifically racialized in US higher education and how those experiences may differ from those experienced by Black US Americans (BUSA), and potentially other international students. Uncovering these particularities was an important step to identifying specific systems necessary to support positive racial identity formation in IBAC.

Purposeful selection was used to identify participants who 1) identified as Black African and 2) possessed a nonimmigrant study or exchange visa. I chose interpretative phenomenological analysis to analyze 10 semi-structured interviews with graduate IBAC to understand how they are making sense of racialization. The four major clusters identified were “Becoming Veiled,” “Living Under the Veil,” “Refusing the Veil,” and “Opting Out.” As referenced in Chapter 2, DuBois (1903), one of the founding fathers of American sociology, is most known for the concept of double consciousness, which is Black people seeing themselves through the lens of whiteness. The veil, then, is the division between Black and White folk that prevent White people from seeing Black people as they are and in their full humanity. Becoming veiled involved the process of becoming aware of the implications of being raced as Black in the US. Existing under this new racial understanding was expressed under the cluster living under the veil. Both
refusing the veil and opting out highlighted ways in which participants enacted their agency to resist, or withdraw, from racialism and racial discourses.

This chapter provides a deeper discussion of the implications of the findings in relation to existing research. Many of the findings align with existing literature. At the same time, due to the scant literature available, a discussion on how novel findings link to a way forward for scholarship and practice is also presented in the paragraphs below.

**Implications for Scholarship/Research**

The study extends current understanding of international students’ racial identity development by bringing into conversation communication studies, cultural psychology, sociology, Black studies, and comparative education. When I started this project, there were few people studying and publishing on this topic. The dearth of literature in the subfield of CIDE led me to pull from other fields. Even now, more has been published on related topics in disciplines such as psychology, ethnic studies, and economics than the subfield of CIDE. However, the recent addition of CIDE publications on these matters suggests a promising trajectory of these research topics. There were many interesting findings and therefore implications for the field, and in the paragraphs below I highlight four implications for scholars and practitioners.

**Rethinking Racial Identity Development Theory - New Frames, Lenses, and Models**

Findings from this study (in conversation with others) makes a strong case for reconsidering the blanket use of Cross’ (1978) Nigrescence Model for all Black students.
Cross’ Nigrescence Model, Phinney’s Model of Ethnic Identity and the subsequent frameworks introduced in Chapter 2 have limited applicability to how IBAC form racial identity on US campuses. Current racial identity development theory is designed to explain and model how racial identity becomes a salient part of one's identity proved to be not useful for understanding participants. This study demonstrates that IBAC may have limited exposure to the structural aspects of racialization, and potentially have more power to disengage from it than BUSA. This would impact the relevance of racial identity theory. It can be argued that if theories are developed by presuming BUSA experiences to be normative, IBAC experiences might disrupt assumptions, thus undermining the utility of the theory.

Moreover, the process of developing a racial identity is not linear and is multilayered for these participants. A key critique of identity development theories is that these theories work on the assumption that people follow a linear progression, order, or path. Many models do not account for the messiness of human lives. For example, it is rare that RIDT or other identity theories account for how people progress or regress under certain conditions, especially in circumstances when one leaves their home environment for a completely different environment (i.e., international students). These models often do not sufficiently or appropriately account for the influence of time and space temporality. These elements are crucial in conversations involving transnational populations.

For example, Anike traded colorful Ankara for more muted tones in the US before returning to her preferred wardrobe. If using the available models, one might unfairly
assume Anike regressed to a Pre-Encounter assimilation stage and attitude then moved to Immersion Afro-centricity stage and attitude without considering how her name, accent, and clothing plainly marked her not only as Black, but *non-American*— a foreign alien (USCIS, 2023). In Nigeria, she confidently wore her colorful clothing as they were accepted and acceptable within that context. However, these linear and two-dimensional models do not consider Anike here and there—only one can exist.

Further illustrating the dynamic and nonlinear process of identity development and IBAC power to disengage, length of stay appeared to be an influential factor. The two participants with the shortest stay in the US, Kwesi and Nyashma (four months and two years, respectively), had the least critical views of race, racism, and racialization in the US. Conversely, participants with a more tenured stay in the US expressed the most annoyance and exasperation with US racialism. However, Kwesi and Nyashma expressed similar sentiments in regard to self-identity as Anike and Margaret who had been in the US for over five years. Thus, the attitudes within the stages of the revised Nigrescence theory are incongruent with attitudes articulated by participants in this study.

In each of the ways described above, identity theories as they exist now are limited in their applicability to an ever-increasingly complex transnational reality. Therefore, new frameworks that account for such complexity are necessary. As I discuss in a later section of this chapter, many of the participants saw their own Black identity as distinct from BUSA and perhaps other African-descendant people. Because there are different black experiences, it is logical that racial identity may form according to these distinctions. The notion that the racial formation trajectory for IBAC follows that of
BUSA simply because IBAC possesses the same “racial uniform” and “external marks” (Park, 1914) as BUSA is not supported by any participant narrative.

As a means of theorizing future studies about IBAC or even BUSA, Dei (2023) emphasizes the need to twin Blackness with Africanness. Twinning allows some to reinvent their Africanness in the diasporic context. It is a question of African indigeneity where one contends with Blackness before, after, and because of Whiteness. Dei (2023) cautions that in light of African indigeneity, one ought to not talk about Blackness as a counterpoint to whiteness, “The conceptualization of Blackness must be conceptualized outside of the context of whiteness. In this case, Blackness should be embedded in the context of Africanness, which should be constructed outside of Europeanness”. Thus, any new model should account for how national, ethnic, and continental identities can be twinned with a racial identity.

**Need for More Racialization Research**

Gans (2016) deftly surmised, “Since racial inequality begins with racialization, greater emphasis on racialization research can perhaps enable social scientists to help the U.S. and other countries move yet further toward racial equality” (p. 12). In general, therefore, it seems that racial identity formation is an internalization of racialization. For example, Bryce-Laporte (1972) talked about becoming Black and being treated as Black through unwelcoming encounters in Canada. Similarly, participants in this study were made aware that in the US their Black race was most important (at least, initially) to other people with whom they interacted. They developed a new understanding of what Black
meant in a US context as they became aware of their own racialization. Thus, understanding the racialization process and protest of IBAC racial identity formation can expose a layer of US society and present new possibilities of being.

Racialization is “the extension of racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice, or group” (Omi & Winant, 1986, p. 111). This definition, which applied to my findings, demonstrates racialization is social, relational, and contextual—it is not static. The idea that in a post/paracolonial era that racially unclassified (Omi & Winant, 1986) remnants exist in any society seems far-fetched. That is, even though most participants in this study did not call or see themselves as Black before coming to the US, they were raced as Black even within their home contexts long before crossing a border (Dei, 2023; George Mwangi, 2023) because the concept is ubiquitous. It is not that race did not exist for IBAC in this study prior to the time they arrived in the US, but it felt more distant and less relevant in their daily lives prior to their arrival. This was especially evident in Giselle’s schooling experience, Thabo’s relationship with his cousin, and Habakkuk’s experience in Kenya with his White girlfriend. Such distinction provides an example of the nuance between B/black raciality and Black racialism (Gordon, 2022; Ibrahim, 1999).

Although most participants never had a reason to call themselves b/Black, most of them accepted a Black raciality, “-ity” meaning a “condition or quality of being” (Online Etymology Dictionary, n.d.). They understood black as a fact of having deeply melanated skin. “-ism” on the other hand, Merriam-Webster (n.d.) defined as “a distinctive doctrine, cause, or theory or an oppressive and especially discriminatory attitude or belief.” Black
racialism is informed by modern race theories, which are complete with negative, false, and limiting beliefs about African-descendant peoples. Even participants who were reluctant to be raced as Black and who had an adamant desire to be seen as human first could not deny that racialization was an inescapable phenomenon.

“Black and” or “Black but”: Conceptualizations for Interpreting IBAC Experiences

Through the processes of racialization discussed earlier, race—and a racial identity—became more salient to their experience in higher education, their identity development, and their sense of self. Thus, at the time of interview, most participants had embraced, or at least adopted, a b/Black identity. Generally speaking, there were two ways participants spoke of their Black and African identities. I draw upon the conceptualization of another IBAC and scholar (who was not in this study) and describe these as “Black and” and “Black but” (S. Kufeyani, personal communication, February 9, 2023). Black and African denoted two accepted identities. These identities could be leveraged in different ways but attested to a level of willingness, or at least comfortability being put in the same category as Black Americans. This can be observed with Thabo, Habakkuk, and to some extent, Giselle. It was not a desire for these participants to be seen as BUSA, but they did not take offense to the assumption of others that they are US American. Black but African presents what I call a "this, not that" position of being Black in America but not Black American. Jade expressed, “[S]ometimes you're put in a position to talk about experiences for Black people and I'm like, that's not my experience because I am Black but I'm not from here, so I don't know.” Following this statement, she
said, “Like, my feelings over a certain situation might be different from Black Americans.” A person with a “Black but African” perspective like Jade might say, “Of course I'm Black, you can see that, but I'm not American.” My study suggests that such orientation might be linked to the propensity of racism that was experienced by participants.

**IBAC Isolation from, and Stereotyping of BUSA**

Results from this study and those mentioned from other scholars in Chapter 2 suggest the desire to ignore the US veil of racialization is one of the factors creating intragroup tensions between IBAC and BUSA, as well as newer Black immigrants and the later generations. Those who had close relationships with BUSA made different decisions and understood their experiences differently than those without connections to BUSA. Since the majority of participants had limited interactions with Black Americans, few empirical comments can be made in regard to social distancing. Sociologically speaking, social distancing refers to the behavior taken on by those seeking to maintain or advance their social standing (e.g., IBAC) by dissociating themselves from a community deemed downwardly mobile (i.e., BUSA). A majority of participants had limited interactions with BUSA because there were so few in their graduate programs. Various reports estimate roughly 10%-13% of graduate students are Black (Espinosa et al., 2019; National Center for Education Statistics, 2023). These data do not disaggregate the Black population; thus, it includes BUSA as well as first and second-generation Black Americans.
Therefore, there were few opportunities to glean whether participants distanced themselves from (or aligned with) BUSA since BUSA were operationally absent from graduate programs. Similarly dire, Black faculty only comprise six percent of the academy (ethnically aggregated) (Davis & Fry, 2019). Participants again spanned the disciplines from STEM to education to social science and yet, there were no more than two other Black people in their courses, most of whom were not US American descendants of slavery, but rather first and second-generation African or Caribbean. IBAC and BUSA are denied an important opportunity to connect organically in an academic setting due to low Black enrollment, which is further proliferated by the fact that few Black US Americans are tenured or tenured-track faculty. This is a byproduct of larger racist systems in higher education that keep Black participants out in general, and it makes higher education complicit in creating and sustaining stratification within the Black community and contributes to international students’ unknowing (Mason, 2011).

A critical part of this conversation is how IBAC understand BUSA. Participants voiced varied opinions about BUSA, with the most prevalent expressed views being “angry,” “distant,” “ignorant,” and in effect, worthy of pity or empathy. A few participants expressed both before coming to the US and at the time of interviewing that they believed BUSA were lazy, vulgar, aggressive, uncultured, criminal, and did not value education even after bearing witness to the structural challenges of graduate education for BUSA. These views reprised Jefferson’s musings that, “Among the blacks is misery enough, God knows, but no poetry” (Jefferson, 1837, p. 147).
Through remote acculturation, IBAC adopt opinions that mirror majoritarian views reinforced by media and false/incomplete histories. Ferguson et al. (2017) described remote acculturation as a form of acculturation that occurs through indirect and/or intermittent intercultural contact (e.g., media; tourists) without migration. Not only do these ill-informed beliefs evoke feelings of moral superiority over BUSA, but they also align with anti-Blackness. Many of these tropes of BUSA—lazy, vulgar, dangerous, unlearned, and primitive—have also been used as so-called “evidence” of why Africans need to be “saved” from themselves. In fact, this is the same commentary that incited IBAC in Cluster 2. Divorced from each other, it is difficult for IBAC and BUSA to recognize this as recycled rhetoric and to challenge or confront it as such.

To conclude this section, I refer to a roundtable on Black Americans’ impressions of American culture and the arts in which Baldwin said,

To be a Negro in this country and to be relatively conscious is to be in a state of rage almost, almost all of the time — and in one's work. And part of the rage is this: It isn't only what is happening to you. But it's what's happening all around you and all of the time in the face of the most extraordinary and criminal indifference, indifference of most White people in this country, and their ignorance. Now, since this is so, it's a great temptation to simplify the issues under the illusion that if you simplify them enough, people will recognize them. I think this illusion is very dangerous because, in fact, it isn't the way it works. A
complex thing can't be made simple. You simply have to try to deal with it in all its complexity and hope to get that complexity across (Hentoff, 1961).

IBAC beliefs that BUSA are disproportionately angry about racism might signify that participants did not yet fully grasp how pervasive, malignant, and systemic issues of race-based oppressions are in the US. Such ignorance is why BUSA often feel betrayed by the lack of anger IBAC exhibit (George Mwangi & Fries-Britt, 2015). Anger (or rage, as Baldwin iterates), is a natural reaction once conscious of anti-Black propaganda and its aims. However, the isolation of communities separate can result in a lower consciousness, greater indifference, and shallow solutions to complex issues. It is possible that increasing BUSA representation (as students and faculty) in graduate education can help international students, IBAC in particular, make sense and meaning of their experience. Moreover, IBAC and BUSA can benefit from learning about and appreciating each other’s navigational and resistance capitals, but rarely have the chance to do so. The engagement of IBAC and BUSA, and the structures that prevent, are subjects for future studies.

The veil is felt less by those in Black spaces and by those without hope for change. DuBois not only introduced useful concepts such as the colorline, double consciousness, the veil, he also outlined a way to overcome the veil. A deep understanding of the impacts of race and racism on one’s daily life, self-awareness, ancestral pride, and solidarity amongst Black people can remove the veil.
Reconceptualizing IBAC Experiences

This study demonstrated that IBAC experiences are unique. They are neither experiences of “unraced” or normative international students who seemingly do not encounter racism in the US. Nor are the experiences of IBAC the same as BUSA. Although some international students, BUSA, and IBAC all experience racialization and racism on campus, IBAC experiences captured in this study can be characterized by new concepts, described below, that can be used as frameworks in future studies aimed at examining the intersection of racializing structures and international student status. One way of considering this racialization and its impacts is through a lens of intensity of experience, which is described in the paragraph below.

Intensity of Racialization

Intensity of racialization describes the relative severity of racializing incidences experienced by IBAC. International students often choose a university shortlist based on recommendations and word of mouth testimonies (Alfattal, 2017; Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Tan, 2015). However, most participants said they would not focus on, or even mention, US racism to prospective international students despite their own negative and formative racialized experiences. This means that current students and alumni are sharing experience about institutions, academic programs and funding but not the racial microaggressions and macroaggressions they encountered.
Each IBAC made a choice to come to the US, and therefore, in contrast to the circumstances of some BUSA, also have the option to escape. Intensity can be somewhat modulated by students’ temporary status. Suffering and surviving racialization was seen by participants as an opportunity cost. This cost was framed by Jade as one for which only time would reveal the “is it worth it?” This is a question that many immigrant populations ask themselves as they think about what they (and their families) give up and endure to be in a space and is a question that IBAC are forced to answer as they decide whether to proceed in their schooling in a racialized environment or opt out. Future research can focus more on the intensity of racialization as a mediator of the experience of IBAC.

**Limited Liability Racism**

One interpretation is that participants, and perhaps IBAC in general, could decide whether to count racialization as formative. Here materializes something I term *limited liability racism*. Liability can mean “something that holds one back” or “anything that hurts your chances of success or that causes difficulties” (American Heritage, n.d.; Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). It can also mean “a broad spectrum of things a person may be held responsible for” (Legal Dictionary, 2016). While limited liability is a business term, I use it here to describe the perceived parameters of racism’s effects experienced by IBAC. For most participants in this study, systemic racism was not perceived to impact their daily lives. That is, racism was not directly connected to their educational attainment, socioeconomic status, employment, or health outcomes, even though it was present in their general surroundings.
For the IBAC in this study, perceived racism was mostly relegated to interpersonal biases but did not impact their ability to achieve their desired reality. Instead of “racism without racists” (Bonilla-Silva, 2018, p. 1), there were, in effect, racists without racism (Gordon, 2022, p. 75). In some ways, IBAC were disaffected by much of the racial conflict and racial antagonism impacting Black Americans. International students, including IBAC, often have less access to or encounters with societal institutions (e.g., banks, real estate, medicine, law enforcement) outside of the higher education context. Thus, it is important to use the word liability here as it refers both to the burden of racism and one’s accountable response to it. For IBAC, this liability was limited in comparison to their BUSA counterparts, but their limited liability has previously not been interrogated in research.

*Lack of Proxy Mentality*

The proxy mentality occurs when someone personalizes negative things that happen to a person with a shared identity. This mentality can be rooted in empathy; but for many, it is related to a long history of racialized moments in which the outcome could have been more egregious— or even fatal— under the same condition but with different people. A proxy mentality sounds like Cooper’s (2015, para. 18) attestation that “Black communities are weeping and mourning with her [Sandra Bland’s] mother, friends, and four sisters, because we know that at any time, she could be any of us” and then-President Obama in the White House speech saying, “Trayvon Martin could have been me 35 years ago” (Memmott, 2013, para. 1).
A lack of a proxy mentality shielded IBAC in this study from psychological terror plaguing part of the domestic Black population. For example, despite being in Minnesota at the time of George Floyd’s murder, Nyashma was unaware of the incident until her university released a statement, “my school sent an email to say that we stand solidly behind the Blacks and I was like what's happening? What happened to the Blacks?” Although Nyashma is Black, the distancing language used signaled that in her mind, such incidents involve other Black people—namely Black Americans. Most participants also did not feel obligated to respond to or advocate against racism or be antiracist. IBAC reported that they were largely disaffected by the racial plague faced by many BUSA, in part, but not solely due to the lack of a proxy mentality. More accurately, participants in this study did not see themselves as a proxy until they had reason to. For example, participants were “saddened” (Margaret and Saba) by police violence but did not feel it was a threat until it became personally relevant. This is evident in the case of Anike who, even after her own encounter with a police officer, “wasn’t too worried” about police violence until her husband joined her in the US. Another example comes from Jade, who began to think of her Blackness upon moving from the East Coast to Minnesota after George Floyd’s murder. In these cases, IBAC often lacked a proxy mentality related to circumstances around them, which creates another direction for conceptualizing future research.

**Disembodiment and Opting Out**

Holding inconsistent proxy identification in tension with the fact many participants were mis(s)taken as BUSA, a lack of proxy mentality could be seen as a form
of disembodiment. The literal meaning of “disembody” is away from or not in the body; as in a detachment between one’s spirit/psyche and one’s body. In psychology, this sort of dissociation is a common coping mechanism when facing traumatic events. Disembodiment can be a way to avoid internalizing experiences. In essence, someone with this attitude might say, “Negative things are happening to and around me, but I’m not letting them touch me” (Gordon, 2022). “Me” here refers to the hypothetical core, spirit/psyche of IBAC. This form of disembodiment is the antithesis of the proxy mentality adopted by BUSA which vicariously processes the trauma (and successes) of other Black folk as one’s own.

Earlier research suggests African students may feel Black US Americans focus too much on race (Fries-Britt, 2014; Mwangi & Fries-Britt, 2015). Participants expressed a similar sentiment; from Kwesi’s recommendation to use niceness to “weaken” racial tension and refocus on one’s own happiness to Margaret’s exhortation to BUSA to “wake up” to their potential and “use wisdom” to understand that the media uses race issues to distract. In (mis)interpreting structural racism as personal, participants externalize and advocate for mental fortitude and grit. In this case, if IBAC were able to achieve detachment and prosper, it makes sense to them that if BUSA were less angry and sensitive, they too, would achieve more. This understanding may be because IBAC are in a liminal space related to racialization and can disembody themselves. This position is different from BUSA, who have been entrenched in it since birth.

Attempting to circumvent racism is also a strategy endorsed by conservative BUSA, whose arguments are often economic. As an example, treating racism as an
inconvenience rather than a barrier is an argument advanced by McWhorter (2006). That is, even without systems change, McWhorter argues that the plight of Black people in the US can shift once Black people turn away from their own preoccupation with race and racism. This oversimplification is most evident in the theme Opting Out found in this dissertation, which is a way that I have conceptualized the disembodiment expressed by IBAC in this study. It would seem that a particular expression of disembodiment (also described as opting out above) is a coping skill available to those transitioning into the US who feel they can overstep or rise above structural oppression, a position which is dialectically opposed to Baldwin’s position referenced earlier and contrary to the lived experiences of many BUSA.

Interestingly, only West Africans were fully represented in the opting out cluster of this study. Another closely related particularity, none of the West Africans mentioned or gestured towards colonization, which may be a reflection of their own positionality. All other participants except for Jade (Zimbabwe) made reference to (neo)colonization without prompting. One thing all participants (including Jade) share is a quantitative academic background in STEM-related fields. Due to the small sample size and the chosen methodology, it is impossible to draw generalizable conclusions regarding these possible trends but future study could query the ways in which programs of study influence how or whether students are presented with opportunities to talk about these phenomena (e.g., anti-Blackness, colonialism, racialization, and racism).

Nonetheless, the mental load participants carried through this process of racialization while trying to understand and make sense of what they were experiencing
cannot be overstated, even for those who sought to transcend or opt out of it. Three of the five participants in this cluster explicitly called out the psychological toll which led one to depression, another to be afraid of being outside past sunset, and nearly drove the other to suicide. In this view it becomes clear that regardless of whether participants failed to recognize structural racism, chose not to take things personally, or aimed to circumvent racism, the affect and effect of racism and racialization were salient and ineludible in their lives.

**Future Directions for Research on Racialization, Racism, and Anti-Blackness**

The previous section highlighted implications from this study and implications for the study of IBAC experiences in higher education systems. This final section proposes two new research directions that focus explicitly on a major theme of this research - the systemic and structural practice of racism. As noted above, IBAC in this study often focused on “racists” while experiencing racism in their everyday lives. Racism has been described as a social cancer, a sickness that plagues US society (Kendi, 2019). Like all sicknesses, there are people who may reproduce or even profit from its existence. Two of these are described below as topics of future research to help illuminate the corners in which racism hides.

*Future Direction 1: Research that Acknowledges White Women as Complicit and Accountable in Causing Harm*

The sub-theme *Gauging the Environment* in Chapter 4 highlighted the ways in which IBAC abated and responded to racial anxiety. It was difficult for participants to
know who, among the White people they knew, was safe, and who was not. Some participants responded to this uncertainty by becoming more guarded, others became more selective in their circle, and one participant chose solitude. Giselle, Anike, Habakkuk, Mach, and Margaret each discussed racial violence in the presence of or by someone who they once considered safe. Here, it is important to call out the complicity of White women in perpetuating and upholding racial violence.

Giselle, Anike, Mach, Thabo, and Habakkuk all shared stories of harm committed by White women. Mach’s disagreement with her professor and such actions can be classified as racial gaslighting (Berenstain, 2020; C.G. Graves & Spencer, 2022; Vasquez, 2022). Davis and Ernst (2019) explain racial gaslighting as “the political, social, economic and cultural process that perpetuates and normalizes a white supremacist reality through pathologizing those who resist” (p. 761). The professor’s unwillingness or incapacity to consider Mach’s tacit and tactile knowledge rendered her epistemically invisible. Habakkuk provided two clear examples. One instance was being accosted by a White woman who questioned his right to study and be present in a university building. After responding to her barrage of questions and calling her out for racial profiling, she left crying. The second example came from his coworker in the international student office who willingly shared that she double-checked she locked the office after seeing a Black man walk down the hall.

White women play a critical role in the bioecology of US higher education. The fields of student affairs and international education are predominantly comprised of White women, who also make up a third of the professoriate (AIEA, 2021, Bauer-Wolf,
Therefore, any critical intervention to advance equity, access, and safety should consider the role of White women.

Young’s (2009) understanding of structural oppression is that some groups suffer grave injustices “not because a tyrannical power coerces them, but because of the everyday practices of a well-intentioned liberal society”; such injustices are “consequence of often unconscious assumptions and reactions of well-meaning people in ordinary interactions, media and cultural stereotypes, and structural features of bureaucratic hierarchies and market mechanisms…” (pg. 56). This expansive view of structural oppression means oppression does not have to be intentional and premeditated. Thus, White women in higher education can be named as complicit without being elevated (or reduced) to tyrannical oppressors. At the same time, it behooves White women, particularly those in education who view themselves as champions for social justice to continue the innerwork necessary to live out their social justice convictions. This innerwork is exemplary of cultural humility, which is “a process that requires humility as individuals continually engage in self-reflection and self-critique as lifelong learners and reflective practitioners” (Tervalon & Murray Gacia, 1998, p. 118). Cultural humility allows White educators to occupy multiple spaces including subject matter expert and a learning human being. Further research on this topic can help illuminate the complicit roles White women may play in reinforcing and reproducing existing structures.
**Future Direction 2: Research that Identifies and Confronts Bias and Anti-Blackness Amongst International Students**

Participants in this study arrived in the US not as blank slates, but as young adults with pre-existing experiences and ideas. Understanding their background is crucial to understanding their current development. Many of their ideas, ideals, and identities were called into question upon entering the US. As stated by Mach and echoed by others, their ways of knowing, being, and doing were not always embraced in US higher education. At the same time, there is little evidence in this study that suggests that IBAC are asked to give an account for their beliefs, especially negative views about other groups and communities, including Black US Americans.

Throughout this study, anti-Blackness showed up across continents, contexts, and races, including in Black people, in the form of comments made by some of the participants. Anti-Blackness is a type of racism that tries to deny the humanity and dignity of Black people and demonstrates a lack of respect or hostility towards their struggles and achievements (University of California Irvine, 2023). This definition does not presuppose anti-Blackness can only be perpetuated by non-Black people. From a structural vantage, anti-Blackness shows up as differential racialization, a CRT tenet that describes the process by which racial and ethnic groups are viewed and treated differently based on shifting needs and priorities by dominant society and its efforts to uphold global whiteness (Delgado, & Stefancic, 2012). Collins (1990) reasons through the matrix of domination that even the most disenfranchised people have “varying amounts of penalty and privilege” (p. 225) or oppression and privilege. The matrix of domination and
differential racialization in tandem can be used to understand how IBAC are privileged in certain higher education contexts (i.e., in comparison to BUSA) while simultaneously being devalued under different circumstances (e.g., in comparison to other international students). This also confirms that international students can be both victims of racism and enactors of racism.

While some participants were set on returning to their nations of origin, an opportunity for practitioners in higher education is to sensitize and involve IBAC in domestic issues of justice, equity, and inclusion, especially for those seeking to stay (and even for those who do not). Educators ought to be mindful that students, regardless of race, are at different levels of racial consciousness. Investing in anti-racist education and training for international students may not only help them become agents of positive change in their home contexts but can also spur them to advocacy here in the United States.

**Future Direction 3: Research that Focuses on Colorism**

The phenomenon of colorism is a final area that can be considered in future research related to IBAC. The issue of colorism is as pronounced and prolific as the issue of race and anti-Blackness. Alice Walker introduced colorism as the “prejudicial or preferential treatment of same race people based solely on their color…” (Walker, 1983, p. 291). Azibo (2014) extends this definition by adding that colorism includes a high appraisal of Eurasian features of hair texture and length, lips, nose (what Fanon would call racist corporeal schemas). Azibo states colorism, “has been implanted and passed
from generation to generation since the origin of chattel African enslavement in the Americas” and is a concept that is distinctly against an African nature (p. 90).

IBAC experiences in this study were influenced by colorism. Because of Saba's light skin color, she often was not raced as Black or perceived to be African. She credited this as a mitigating factor to more obvious and aggressive forms of racialization and racism that other IBAC may experience. Nyashma had a different colorism experience. According to her, she is also perceived as light skin in a Nigerian context, and therefore is seen as beautiful and receives preferential treatment. In the US context, however, she is not considered light-skinned. However, mentally, she still carries a mentally of privilege due to colorism she experienced earlier. Research focused on international student experiences has just begun to acknowledge racism, but has not begun to address colorism as a phenomenon related to experience. This could be a future direction for research.

Considerably more work will need to be done to determine how the prevalence of colorism, global anti-Blackness, and White women’s unique positioning factor into the racialization phenomenon within comparative and international education. While there are a number of potential studies arising from this study, researching the aforementioned dynamics will advance understanding of racialization itself and how communities experience it.

**Limitations and Delimitations**

This study provided important insights into the experiences of IBAC, and helped identify the prescient role that racialization plays in the experience of any Black
individual in the United States. The study also provided data that highlighted the limitations of existing racial identity theories in describing phenomena related to IBAC identity in a US context. Those theoretical limitations can be explored in further research that seeks to expand and ‘delinizarize’ and contextualize theoretical approaches to racial identity development. The findings of this study helped me identify several future research directions, which were explained in the paragraphs below. Despite the richness of this study, however, there were also several important limitations and delimitations to acknowledge in this study. These limitations should be considered by readers when considering future work that builds upon this research.

**Methodological Limitations**

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) is a structured form of analysis that seeks to understand the lived experience of the research participants. The idiographic nature of IPA delimits interpretations to the participants, meaning it does not seek to generalize. While IPA was a good choice, this study was well suited for a dialogic methodology (e.g., Black Feminist Framework, Endarkened Feminist Epistemology, etc.) that does not seek to bracket or remove the researcher.

While IPA includes the researcher as an interpreter, it still limits the ways in which I could show up in my data to avoid “mudding the research” with my own lens and biases. To hear painful stories and be restricted in whether and how I responded felt disingenuous to the aims of my research and extractive as a person-researcher. Most participants wanted to know why I chose this work and the desired impact of my
research. Nearly every interview ended with the interviewee asking for an explanation. To answer truthfully and thoroughly as I did voided any possibility of follow up interviews using IPA. However, the debrief would have only enriched the data if I had opted for a dialogic approach. Unfortunately, these questions were typically asked after I had completed the interview and stopped recording. The "off the record" conversations were generative. Both the participants and I shared insights that would have enriched my research. However, since it was post-interview, I made the decision to leave this information out. This limitation calls into question changes or adaptations that may need to be made to IPA in general, or hybrid approaches that could be used in future studies that allow for more authentic engagement in interviews.

Another challenge of the study was the inclusion and exclusion criteria. One potential participant was excluded from the study because although they were African, they were of South Asian ancestry. As a result, I added a specific question to the pre-qualifying survey, “Do you identify as Black?” The criteria issue is another example of the lingering complications of colonialism. Future studies may consider diverse experiences with racialization and racism in order to inform the broader phenomenon, however, as a scholar I limited this study to those who identified as Black because of the particularly salient feature of anti-Black racism found in US institutions of higher education.
Diversity Limitations

In addition to the limitations mentioned above, there were several unintended limitations that arose during the sampling process. The goal of this study was never to attain a representative sample of all IBAC in US higher education institutions. Rather, the aim was to engage with participants who had unique and situated life experiences. In the end, however, participant demographics centered around specific linguistic, religious, and institutional markers. These are described below for the sake of transparency and consideration for future studies.

Linguistic Diversity

Although participants came from six unique countries and three African regions, English was a national language for every country except Ethiopia. Yet, English is widely spoken in Ethiopia and used as a medium of instruction in secondary schools and universities (Alemayehu, 2021; Sbhatu, 2021). Few Francophone IBAC study in the US and even fewer still from Hispanophone and Lusophone countries. However, their experiences are also valid and may be different from my research sample due to linguistic differences and possibly less familiarity with US or British schooling proclivities.

Religious Diversity

I did not ask participants about their religious identities although many shared stories of their religious upbringing or personal faith during the interviews. None of the participants identified themselves as Muslim despite Islam being the second largest
religion on the continent (Costa et al., 2020). A more diverse religious profile may have further informed the faith-based coping strategies data that was reported in Chapter 4.

**Institutional Diversity**

Collectively, the 10 participants studied in 12 states, which includes their higher education experience prior to interview: Maine, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Washington, Utah, West Virginia, Mississippi, Louisiana, Florida, Indiana, Ohio, and Minnesota. They remarked on regional social differences that they had experienced in the US. However, all participants attended Traditionally White Institutions (TWIs). Like domestic students, IBAC at TWIs are socialized to deficit narratives of Black people. However, what is missing from this study is an account of IBAC experiences at HBCUs. It is my suspicion that racial socialization at HBCUs will have a different effect on IBAC racial identity formation due to the affirming and humanizing onto-epistemological roots of HBCU institutions. There is likely to also be greater engagement between IBAC and BUSA in HBCUs, which may have informed the findings of this study.

Despite these limitations, numerous insights have been made possible through the study and the willingness of IBAC to share their stories. As a researcher trusted with rich stories that resulted in interesting and relevant findings, I intend to publish these themes, even with acknowledged limitations.
Conclusion

The fields of higher education and comparative and international education are uncritically informed by whiteness. Historically, higher education in general, and what is now considered student affairs in particular, had a holistic, theoretical perspective to promote the learning and development of the whole student (Bowden, 2007). Yet, as mainstream culture shifted and access to higher education became more diverse, the doctrine of *in loco parentis* waned. Further, higher education and student affairs theories are often constructed in identity-specified silos and not at the intersections (Baxter Magolda, 2009), the space international students occupy. It is for these reason that participants struggled to find support within their institutions and why departments were ill-prepared to mitigate and aid them through these challenging and isolating experiences. Unlike the assumed experiences of Black US Americans, participants encountered a confluence of different phenomena at different points, yet concurrently, all of which were accented by their international identities and Africanness. Given the uniqueness of their lens, it is understandable that IBAC can experience the same phenomenon as BUSA differently and apply a different meaning and sensemaking framework.

This work adds to the growing, yet still under-represented, literature on International Black African Collegians (IBAC), also referred to as Black African international students. Other scholars have detailed IBAC experience (Boafo-Arthour, 2014; Mwangi et al., 2018; Mwangi et al., 2019; Zewolde, 2021) but have not taken steps towards offering new conceptualizations. I have learned a lot through this process, the literature, and conversations with participants. In synthesizing my new knowledge, I used
this dissertation as an opportunity to try to explain, and not only describe the phenomenon of racialization of International Black African Collegians.

The Afro-diasporic community is unified by shared histories of White dominance, settler colonialism, and exploitation colonialism. Yet, we are fractured by the unique manifestations of those conditions. Within the Afro-diasporic community, I hope my work is used to legitimize the dynamic mosaic of Black identity as we reckon with and heal from our histories in order to collectively (re)envision new possibilities of being. This envisioned future must be inclusive of all Black experiences in order to reify the status and mattering of Black lives. Finally, I hope future scholars use this work as a building block to investigate how students work through and understand race in educational contexts, explore how educational experiences shape and complicate identities, and examine internalized anti-Blackness and Black nativism across the diasporic landscape.
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http://www.refugeestudies.org/UNHCR/UNHCR.%20Four%20Statements%20on%
https://data.worldbank.org


https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2161-1912.2001.tb00515.x

https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.49.1.71


https://primo.lib.umn.edu/permalink/f/dkvf4l/TN_cdi_proquest_miscellaneous_2270332416


https://cognella.com/blog/2022/06/15/twelve-steps-for-white-america/


Wingfield, A. (2017, September 19). Who exactly is Africa’s consuming class?

*Perspectives.*


http://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/id/eprint/14563


Appendix A

Interview Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Study</th>
<th>International Black African Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research questions</td>
<td>How are IBAC thinking about race in a US context? How are IBAC making sense of blackness?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>International Black African university students, have F-1 or J-1 visas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment procedure &amp; incentive</td>
<td>Black, African, and international Student Associations, social media platforms (Facebook and LinkedIn NASPA listserv, NAFSA listserv, Intercultural affairs offices, International affairs offices, word of mouth, Facebook $25 incentive paid through PayPal, Venmo, or to a charity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of interviews and location</td>
<td>Between 4-10 participants, virtual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources needed (time and money)</td>
<td>8 interviews (max) x 75 minutes per participant = 600 minutes 8 participants x $25 = $200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timeline</td>
<td>2022: Feb. - Mar.: Solicit and conduct interviews Mar.: Transcribe interviews April: Begin coding for analysis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

Recruitment flyer

African Student Experiences
Research Participants Needed

Goal: To understand how African international students process their experience in US higher education as it relates to race.

Participation: A 75-minute recorded interview via Zoom

Incentive: Participants will receive a $25 gift card at the conclusion of the interview.

☐ Are you a college student from sub-Saharan Africa?
☐ Are you enrolled at a U.S. higher education institution?
☐ Are you studying on an F/J/M visa?

If you answered “YES” to these questions, you may be eligible to participate in this study!

Click here to sign up: [Qualtrics Link]

For more information, contact Ashley N. Watson at watso670@umn.edu.
## Qualifying questions for Qualtrics survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualifying Details</th>
<th>Useful Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are you currently enrolled at a U.S. higher education institution? (Y/N)</td>
<td>Which US college/university do you attend?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you a college student from sub-Saharan Africa? (Y/N)</td>
<td>Which country issued your passport?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you studying on a(n) F-1 or J-1 visa? (Y/N)</td>
<td>What is the level of your academic program (undergraduate/post-baccalaureate, Masters, doctoral)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you interested in being interviewed? If yes, please leave your email:</td>
<td>How long have you been in the US? &gt; 1 year 1-2 years, 3-4 years, 5-6+ years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D

Consent Form

Racialization Among International Black African Students: Consent Form

Doctoral Candidate: Ashley Watson, watso670@umn.edu
Dissertation Chair: Dr. Christopher Johnstone, john4810@umn.edu
Investigator Departmental Affiliation: Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development

Key Information About This Research Study
The following is a short summary to help you decide whether or not to be a part of this research study. More detailed information is listed later on in this form.

What is research?
The goal of research is to learn new things in order to help people in the future. Investigators learn things by following the same plan with a number of participants, so they do not usually make changes to the plan for individual research participants. You, as an individual, may or may not be helped by volunteering for a research study.

Why am I being invited to take part in this research study?
We are asking you to take part in this research study because you identified yourself as an international Black African student studying in a US university and indicated a willingness to share your racialized experiences in U.S. higher education.

What should I know about a research study?
● Someone will explain this research study to you.
● Whether or not you take part is up to you.
● You can choose not to take part.
● You can agree to take part and later change your mind.
● Your decision will not be held against you.
● You can ask all the questions you want before you decide.

Why is this research being done?
The goal of this study is to understand how African international students process their experience in US higher education as it relates to race. Information shared today will be incorporated into my dissertation research which aims to aid higher education professionals understand the complex identities of all students.

How long will the research last?
We expect that the interview will last between 75 and 90 minutes.

What will I need to do to participate?
You will be asked a series of questions about your experience with race and racialization in U.S. higher education.

**Is there any way that being in this study could be bad for me?**
Due to the sensitive nature of this topic, there is a risk for emotional stress or tension to arise.

**Will I be compensated for my participation?**
If you agree to take part in this research study, we will pay you $25 per interview for your time and effort. Payment will be made through PayPal, VenMo, or gift card.

**Whom do I contact if I have questions, concerns or feedback about my experience?**
This research has been reviewed and approved by an IRB within the Human Research Protections Program (HRPP). To share feedback privately with the HRPP about your research experience, call the Research Participants’ Advocate Line at 612-625-1650 (Toll Free: 1-888-224-8636) or go to z.umn.edu/participants. You are encouraged to contact the HRPP if:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
- You have questions about your rights as a research participant.
- You want to get information or provide input about this research.
Appendix E

Online Interview Introduction

Hello, my name is Ashley Nicole Watson. I’m an Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development Ph.D. candidate at the University of Minnesota. I know you could be doing many other things right now, so I want to take the time to thank you for sharing your time with me today. As a token of my gratitude, you will receive $25 at the completion of this interview.

Information shared today will be incorporated into my dissertation research which aims to aid higher education professionals understand the complex identities of all students. Today, I want to capture your thoughts and perspectives on being a student here in the US. You were invited because you identified yourself as an international Black African student studying in a US university and indicated a willingness to share your racialized experiences in U.S. higher education.

The interview itself will be casual but first, I have to go over a few formalities before we dive in: The interview will last about 75 minutes. Your responses to the questions will be kept confidential. You will have a pseudonym assigned to help ensure that personal identifiers are not revealed during the analysis and write up of findings.

As a reminder, I’m recording this session because I don't want to miss any of your comments. This will be more interesting for both of us if we treat this like a conversation. Keep in mind that I’m just as interested in negative comments as positive comments, and at times the negative comments are the most helpful.

Again, this will be an informal discussion, so feel free to take care of yourself as you need to.

So, let’s get started!

Opening Question:
Please introduce yourself: name, year in program, and one dish you can’t wait to eat when you return to whatever country you call home?
Appendix F

Interview Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Priorities</th>
<th>Potential Interview Questions</th>
<th>Additional Question Bank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Understanding of Race/Racism/Blackness | What does the term “race” mean to you?  
How do you define it?  
What makes someone Black?  
If you were leading an orientation for new African students coming to the US, what would you tell them about race? | What do you think about racism in the US?  
How does it compare to your home country?  
Before coming to the US, what were your views of race and blackness?  
What are your views of race and Blackness nowadays?  
What are the things you still don’t understand or something that confuses you about race in a US context?  
What, if any, advice do you have for others concerning how to cope after a racialized experience? |
| Identity Development         | What changes in your identity, or your attitudes about your identity, have you experienced since you arrived in the US?  
Has being in the US made a difference to how you see yourself? If so, how do you see yourself now as different than before you came? How would you say you have changed? |                                                                                          |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Racial Identification</th>
<th>Think back to when you first arrived in the US and you had to select your race on a form or application, what went through your mind? <em>What did you do? How did you feel?</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In what ways have you been affected by racism or racial discrimination and what followed it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How do you feel (physically, emotionally, mentally) when you hear about a racist incident on campus or elsewhere in the US?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do you have a large local African network? Do you have a large Black American network?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can you describe a typical Black American at your university? <em>What makes them different from college students in your country?</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix G

### IPA process overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meta-description with non-technical description</th>
<th>Technical description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PHASE 1:</strong> Working towards experiential statements</td>
<td>Reflexive reading</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>STEP 1:</strong> Get to know the data</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>STEP 1a:</strong> Get to know interests &amp; preconceptions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>STEP 2:</strong> Conduct detailed exploratory analysis, staying close to the account</td>
<td>Exploratory notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>STEP 3:</strong> Articulate the main claims you are making about the meaning of the person’s experience on the basis of their account</td>
<td>Experiential statements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important steppingstone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **PHASE 2:** Working towards case-level summaries | | |
| **STEP 4:** Organize the work around the main claims, and supplement it with ‘at a glance’ annotation [Start by shuffling on screen, or on physical desktop] | Preliminary clustering of statements (candidates for themes) |
| **STEP 5:** Consolidate case analysis in a case-level summary | Supplementary annotation and Reflexive threads |
| Consolidation point | Structured consolidation of case-level work mapping to Personal Experiential Themes (PETS) |

| **PHASE 3:** Working towards cross-case themes | | |
| **STEP 6:** Repeat 1-5 for each case, allowing time and space to add go back a step and add further reflections, interpretations or notes | Group Experiential Themes (GET) (drawing on the PETS to begin with, but examining clustered material underneath them too, for potential cross-cutting themes) |
| **STEP 7:** Review the case-level summaries and identify candidate themes which cut across the cases | Shuffle and sort the components of the PETS |
| **STEP 7b:** Review the emerging analytic structure with advisor, add further reflections, interpretations or notes | Reflect on contributions made by each PET to each developing GET |
| | Use color to keep track of each process |

| **PHASE 4:** Working towards a linear account of the thematic structure | | |
| **STEP 8:** Finalize the analytic structure | Discuss proposed structure and revise it accordingly |
| Consolidation point | Finalize sub-themes and structure |
| **STEP 8b:** Review work for audit trail | Use structure to make a plan for writing up each section; use PETs to identify quotes to support each theme |
| **STEP 9:** Work with advisor to decide how to present some or all of the structure in a linear, written report | Make sure plan includes opportunities to reflect on variations across cases |
| Outcome | Make sure plan includes opportunities to reflect on variations across cases |

The above table is adapted from Larkin’s (2021) presentation on the updates to IPA terminology.
Appendix H

Audit Trail

This audit trail documents how I extrapolated from my preliminary notes, exploratory notes, and Anike’s transcript to create a cohesive narrative that informs and reflects the final analysis presented in this study.

Excerpt notes from Anike’s interview:

Hair tells a story
  ➔ Hairdressing is really important but not race?
Avoiding things that exposes you to unnecessary danger
Being cautious of the environment
  ➔ Things you can and cannot do because you’re Black
Remind yourself it’s one incident & they aren’t all like that

Find the benefit (of being Black and international)

Excerpt of notes after initial read-through:

Benefiting from affirmative action in regards to funding for Black, female, and STEM because she has not been disenfranchised in this way in Nigeria. Was this my primary reason for asking?

Despite hearing about racism and racial incidents, it was her own encounter that changed her view. *What was her view?*

Mentioned her hair 18 times

Mentioned being conscious/cautious/careful in regards to race 16 times

Exploratory notes:

Originally, I was drawn to the change since husband arrived, hair, and her focus on cautiousness. I could hear her concern about biasing IBAC but also wanting them to be on guard.

After several read-throughs, I understood that she went through a full identity adjustment. The physical changes to her appearance revealed the psychosocial changes she had with her identity. Some stemming from before arrival but all manifesting in real ways since arrival. For example, she permed her hair in Nigeria but went natural in the US as a way of reclaiming her true self. There was also an interplay between Black not being all-consuming/ all-inclusive identity in a way that being Nigerian is.
There was a clear identification not only with being Nigerian, but also a clear understanding of what being Nigerian means and what it means to her. This was not the case with being Black. Although Anike embraced being Black, she did not want to "allow my blackness as an identity to control who I am. Before being Black, I am me....embrace my Nigerianness."

Perhaps blackness, then for her, is a social construct to be understood in the context of White supremacy? Blackness as reduction and restriction.

[First read for experiential statements resulted in just under 70 statements.]

**Final write-up of Anike’s Narrative:**

Anike was a doctoral student from Nigeria. *Becoming Veiled, Living Under the Veil, and Resisting/Refusing the Veil* were the most salient Group Experiential Themes for Anike.

Race was not a salient identity prior to arriving to the US because, “You don’t really notice it until you get to a different country where you are a minority and then people look at you as the exception”. Race became a dominant prism through which Anike interpreted her experiences. I’m not 100%, thinking about it every time but it’s somewhere at the back of my mind everywhere I’m going.

Anike underwent a full identity adjustment, inside and out. The physical changes to her appearance revealed the psychosocial changes she had with her identity. Some stemming before arrival but all manifesting in real ways since arrival. Since Becoming and Resisting are concerned with identity, they are deeply intertwined, yet distinct and are best understood in tandem.

Anike first started her studies in Louisiana in a non-diverse community where people struggled to understand her accent and she struggled to understand theirs; she felt othered inside and outside the classroom. She described how her wardrobe went from colorful Ankara fabric tailored in various styles to basic black, brown, and grey pants and dresses in an effort to blend in, “I had gotten to the stage where I was trying to blend in so much that even my appearance, my dressing and everything had been toned down to the extent that I didn't even recognize myself”. Her journey towards healing began once she “cleansed” her closet, started rewearing her African print jumpsuits, dresses, and caftans, cut her hair, and went natural. Hair is a physical manifestation of one’s African roots, and for some, indicative of their Black identity. Hair is important to many African descendants; Anike mentioned hair 18 times in the interview.

For Anike, hair texture, more than skin color is an attestation of being Black. “Even if you lose the color and you become so white, your hair would still have a way of
showing that you have some African DNA in you”. Anike permed her hair in Nigeria but becoming natural in the US was a way of reclaiming her true self. Her natural hair marks her journey toward self-acceptance and embracing Blackness, “I don't have to apologize for it. I have every right to be who I am, I have every right to be a human being just like everybody else”.

Twice in conversation Anike affirmed her “right to be human” and seen as such.

“If I fill this, and I fill that I'm Black with the kind of racism in this country, are they going to discriminate against me for putting it there that I'm Black, or does it really matter? And if it doesn't matter, then why are you asking?” So, the feeling is annoyance. It's close to anger, but not quite there yet. Why do I need to specify what my race is? I'm a human being, isn't that good enough?

Like the desire to blend in, this affirmation was not due to shame or a desire to be anything other than Black but rather, she wanted to be seen and treated on the basis of her humanity. Throughout the interview, Anike mentioned the pervasiveness of race in the US and described it as having “an effect on just about a lot of the things you do”.

I would not allow my blackness as an identity to control who I am. Before being Black, I am me. So, I don't have to live my life to try to obscure or reduce the level of my blackness. So I'm going to embrace my Nigerianness.

There was a clear identification not only with being Nigerian, but also a clear understanding of what being Nigerian means and what it means to her. This was not such the case with being Black. Although Anike embraced being Black, she did not want it to "control” her. The interplay between Black not being all-consuming/ all-inclusive identity in a way that being Nigerian may suggest that blackness is conceived as reductive and restrictive.

Since coming to the US, there’s not only a propensity to think about race, but a need to be conscious of it as well.

Psychological Safety

Living under the gaze and Self-Doubt were subthemes under the GETs. Anike describes in detail her first experience with racial profiling. On the way to Jo-Ann Fabrics, Anike had to transfer buses through a predominantly white suburb. While waiting for the bus, a sheriff car circled the block several times, “And then he finally stopped by me to ask what I was waiting for. I was just standing by a bus stop, which should give you an idea of what I'm waiting for... He actually asked me, 'When is the bus supposed to come?'”. The tone and pauses in her voice displayed the obvious irritation and tempered patience with the officer’s seemingly nonsensical question. Her experience with racial profiling by police changed her view of the US and made her
“more cautious about the places I would go to and the things I would do when I get to those places”. Despite this interaction, Anike felt less at risk as a woman for police brutality and believed that her interaction with police was a rarity. While she was less concerned about her physical safety, she realized her husband could become a target simply because he is a Black man with a carefree nature.

*When I was just here it was just me, I wasn't too worried about it but now my husband moved here about two years back. And I realized that when he moved here he's not the type who likes to stay home so sometimes he could just take a drive, just go out and I found myself constantly worrying. Every time he goes out, I hope somebody doesn’t mistake him for somebody else or hope something doesn’t happen to him. I still worry but I try to find ways to cope. The constant pressure of constantly thinking someone could target him because of his race, is something that I've only had to live with for two years. And then I try to imagine people who stay here, who were born here, grew up here, and who are Black, and they've had to live with this constant fear every single day of their life, I don't know how they do it.*

The constant worrying and cautiousness (mentioned 16 times) describes her response to living under the gaze of whiteness.

Navigating new and old identities, a lack a deep connection, and living under constant surveillance resulted in self-doubt. The lack of confidence was not attributed to a specific conversation or interaction; for her, it was “being in a place and knowing that people thought you were not quite as good as everybody else because you were Black”. Anike is a STEM major. The structural gap between women and men in STEM are nonexistent in her culture (Yoruba) and is more likely to exist in Hausa communities where there are social-religious restrictions for women. In her own words, she benefits from affirmative action programs meant to fund domestic Black and female STEM majors. What is striking is that despite having Black and female examples, familial support, and former educational success, her confidence waned as a result of her US classroom experience.

*“From my own experience, for a while after that encounter with the sheriff guy, I realized I was excessively conscious of what my environment was like, and where I was” (Anike).*