Faculty of Education

IDENTITY PRACTICES OF AFRICAN FEMALE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN AUSTRALIA: GENDER, RACE AND EDUCATION.

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ABSTRACT

This study draws upon conceptual frameworks of African feminism, international education and critical race feminism (CRF) to investigate ways in which African female students in Australian universities construct their identity, and how they are positioned or position themselves in Australian universities and in the broader community. CRF analytical lens is used to unpack the gendered and racialised experiences of the African female students. The notions of African feminism, discrimination and empowerment are used to understand the patterning between the ways in which African female students from Kenya construct their identities.

This study is located within a feminist research methodology. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews, informal conversations and observations were used to collect data on the experiences of thirteen female students from different ethnic, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds in Kenya, studying in two universities in Melbourne. The patterning within the data produced three groups which were based on the students' socioeconomic statuses in Kenya; the 'snobs' who came from rich Kenyan families, the 'go-getters' who came from middle-class families and the 'strugglers' who also came from middle-class families, but had their spouse and child living with them while they studied. These three groups used different strategies in the construction of their identities.

My research positioning is interrogated because of my past experiences and I share multiple identities and experiences with the research participants. However, unlike the African female students in my research, I have studied and worked in the United States of America; I am a research student in Australia and also hold a full-time teaching position in one of the secondary schools in Melbourne.

My study found that Kenyan female students hold an essentialised understanding of African women, Australian women and international student identities. They associate certain

cultural, social and physical markers with these essentialised identities, however they draw on these markers differently in the construction of their own identities. The findings of my research conclude that Kenyan female students studying in Australian universities have multiple, shifting and contextual identities. Their identity practices are influenced by their Kenyan socioeconomic background, experiences of discrimination and negative representations of African women in Australia, and empowerment from their studies.

By using CRF analytical lens, my study indicates that Kenyan international female students in Australian universities do indeed experience discrimination and are negatively perceived and misrepresented in the broader Australian society. These findings are similar to other studies in Europe and North America (Beoku-Betts, 2004; Beoku-Betts & Ngaruiya-Njambi, 2005; Maundeni, 1999; Mohanty, 2002; Mirza, 1992) in that; African women in education institutions experience discrimination because of the intersection of their race and gender identities. My study also shows that Kenyan female students in Australia construct their identities in ways that allow them to negotiate discrimination and negative perceptions of African women.

The findings of my research contributes to three bodies of literature it draws on; African feminism, international education and CRF. My research reiterates the need to further investigate the experiences of international students, especially those who are marginalised and may go unnoticed because of their small numbers such as these Kenyan female international students in my study.

DECLARATION

I, Grace Kamuyu, hereby declare that this thesis contains no materials, which have been accepted for the award of any degree or diploma in any universities or other educational institutions. To the best of my knowledge, this thesis does not contain any materials which have been previously published in any forms of publications or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

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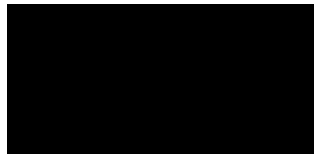
This research project was generated approval by the Standing Committee on Ethics in Research involving Humans of Monash University (Project number: 2009001169)

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I dedicate this thesis to the memory of my beloved father,
Peter Mugwe. You will always be remembered.

You once told me, "The best gift you can ever get from your parents is the gift of education."

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1.1 Introduction

> Although they constitute a plurality of the global population, African women are consistently situated economically, socially, and politically at the bottom of each society, regardless of what country they live in. (Wing, 2000, p.2)

> They (African female students) discussed how prejudice and discrimination against them as Black women had affected their experiences in graduate school. Among the issues they mentioned were doubts by their professors about their ability to do the work, feelings of exclusion, lack of support, perceptions about their inability to speak English, and negative perceptions of African societies. (Beoku-Betts, 2004, p.121)

The first quote is by African-American scholar Adrien Katherine Wing, one of the founders of critical race feminism (CRF). Wing uses CRF to study race and gender discrimination of African women or women of colour across the world. The second quote is from an article titled 'African Women Pursuing Graduate Studies in the Sciences: Racism, Gender Bias, and Third World Marginality' (Beoku-Betts, 2004), which discusses the experiences of African women pursuing studies in Europe and North America. The quotes refer to how African women are positioned in the Western world and the challenges they face as they negotiate and position themselves in Western universities. In using the term *Western,* I refer to universities located in post-industrial, capitalist, and neo-liberal societies such as the United States of America (USA), the United Kingdom (UK), Canada and Australia. The quotes by Wing (2003) and Beoku-Betts (2004) also express some of my experiences as an African student from Kenya studying in the USA, and now in Australia. My research also draws on other studies (Collins, 2002; Gilchrist, 2013; Maundeni, 1999; Mirza, 2006; Mirza & Joseph, 2013; Mwangi, 2002) that analyse the racialised and gendered experiences of African female students in Western universities.

1.2 My experiences and personal interest in the research

Most African female students—including myself—upon leaving their country not only aspire for a quality education in Western countries such as the USA and the UK, but also freedom from patriarchal societies that are designed to favour men (Beoku-Betts, 2004; Beoku-Betts & Ngaruiya-Njambi, 2005; Maundeni, 1999; Mwangi, 2002; Prah, 2013), only to earn a racialised and gendered immigration status in the Western world. I am aware that patriarchy manifests itself differently in different societies and women experience it in different ways. I provide more in-depth discussions on patriarchy in Chapter Three. African feminist scholar Ogindipe-Leslie (1994) points out that before she went to study Western countries, she never viewed herself as Black, since in African societies the question of one's identity is never based on the colour of their skin, but on other complex signifiers such as age, clan, class and marital status. However, when she was studying in the US, she found herself constantly referred to as international female students from Africa, Black women, women of colour or third-world women. Mohanty (2014) had a similar experience of adjusting to being referred to as a foreign student or a student of colour. She discovered that being a "foreign student, and a woman at that, meant being dismissed as irrelevant (the quiet Indian woman stereotype), treated in racist ways (my teachers asked if I understood English), or celebrated and exoticised (you are so smart!)" (p. 127).

Similarly, to the experiences of Mohanty (2014) and Ogundipe-Leslie (1994), I too had to negotiate multiple positions as a 'foreign/international student,' a 'Black female student' and an 'African woman' while studying in the USA as an international student from Kenya. My lecturers and university staff often referred to me as an 'international student,' as they saw me as a student from another country seeking education in the USA. As an international student, my race or gender did not seem to matter; instead, I was part of the homogeneous groups of foreign/international student. This position often isolated me and made me feel different from

other students. I felt like an 'outsider' or the 'other' in the classroom and within the university community. These feelings of isolation and exclusion are common among international students as seen in previous studies (Koehne, 2006; Li & Collins, 2014; Marginson 2014; Weiley, Sommers & Bryce, 2008). These studies state that, international students are often seen or see themselves as outsiders, or the other, in Western universities because of their culture and national identity.

When I was studying in the USA, my fellow classmates used racial and gender markers to identify me. There were times when my gender seemed to matter more than my race, and vice versa. For example, the term 'Black female student' was often used by most male students, though at times Black male students liked to use the term 'sister,' which is commonly used within the African American community to refer to any Black woman. Most female students, especially those from the African American community, referred to me as an 'African lady/woman' to distinguish between African American women and women from Africa.

As I negotiated these different positions, I found that were times when as an African female student studying in the USA, I felt disadvantaged academically. My African culture and my previous learning experiences in Kenya did not encourage assertiveness, this prevented me from actively participating in classroom discussions, and presentation during my university studies in the US. I am cautious in the way I use term 'African culture' because I do not want to homogenise it, as I am aware of cultural diversity that is present in Africa. However, I use it to refer to the general beliefs, values and attitudes of women in Africa particularly in Kenya. African women are socialised early in their lives in a system of norms, attitudes, values and skills that tend to emphasise gender differentiation (Wamahiu, Opondo & Nyaga, 1996) and often take a back seat in many African communities. I provide more discussions on the attitudes and position of women in Africa in Chapter Three. The education system in Kenya also does not provide opportunities for class discussions and presntations such that there is lack of

classroom discussions or class presentations in schools because the system generally encourages rote learning, and is teacher-oriented (Keriga & Bujra, 2009). My African culture also contributed to my lack of confidence, since in many African traditions women are not encouraged to participate in any form of public speaking (Kabanyoro, 2008; Kamau, 2004; Prah, 2013).

When I was studying in the USA, participating in group discussions and presentations became very difficult for me, because not only I disliked talking in public, but also because there were times when I was subjected to subtle racial comments by fellow students and some lecturers. There were times during class discussions when some students mimicked my accent, saying they liked the way I spoke. Others complained that they could not understand me because of my accent, making it difficult for me to participate no matter how well I was prepared. It became worse during my teaching placement when one of the supervising lecturers used my African accent as a reason for giving me a lower grade. These comments and criticisms made me feel isolated and lowered my self-confidence especially during my first year; nonetheless, I was determined to complete my studies. As time went by, I learned how to overcome my learning challenges by seeking help from the university's student services, where I was taught public speaking and presentations.

Apart from academic challenges, there were times when I was put in awkward positions of having to explain some of the cultural practices that take place in Africa. One time during a classroom discussion, I was asked by a fellow student to explain whether female circumcision was still practiced in Africa. I explained to him that it was a rare practice and takes place in only a few communities, unlike what was often reported by Western media. Although this question was difficult and uncomfortable to explain, it was important in that it gave me an understanding of the existing negative perceptions of African women in Western countries;

they are often depicted as victims of violence and unchanging traditional practices (Ampofo & Arnfred, 2010; Beoku-Betts & Ngaruiya-Njambi, 2005).

In spite of these issues, there were times when I felt that my educational experiences empowered and made me stronger, especially when I thought of other young women in Africa who would wish for an opportunity to study in USA or other Western countries. I felt fortunate and was determined to succeed. I was also empowered by my lecturers as they encouraged me and wanted me to be successful.

It was a real privilege for me to have had the opportunity to study in the USA because I was raised in a middle-class Kenyan family. My parents owned a small business in Nairobi. They valued education and when I completed my undergraduate degree in education from the University of Nairobi my father wanted me to pursue graduate studies in the USA. He felt that there were better education and career opportunities for me in the USA compared to Kenya. He also wanted me to assist my younger sisters pursue their studies in the USA since they were unsuccessful in attaining admission in Kenyan universities. My father could not afford to pay for my entire education and therefore I had to work as a substitute teacher in different schools in order to afford tuition and living expenses. Within my second year of study, my younger sister joined me to study a bachelor's degree in psychology. I remained focused in my studies in spite of the academic challenges that I experienced and I learnt how to juggle work and studies.

My experiences as an international student in the USA and now as a graduate student in Australia have made me reflect on my own sense of identity, making me interested in understanding how Kenyan female international students construct their sense of identity in Australian universities and within the broader community. It has made me want to find out how race and gender politics within the Australian society play out in positioning young African women studying in Australian universities. In this thesis, the terms *Western*, *Black female*

student, *international student* and other related terms that I have used to describe my experiences are all contested terms. I also understand that there are differences and similarities in the experiences of these groups of students and will provide more discussions on these contested terms in Chapters Five, Six, Seven, Eight and Nine. I am interested in understanding how these concepts are understood and experienced in Australian universities, given that they have high numbers of international students with different cultural backgrounds. For example, data from the Australian Government Department of Education's summary of international student enrolment in 2015 indicate that there were approximately 645,185 international students from more than 190 countries studying at various educational institutions in Australia; 2,475 of which were students from Kenya (refer to Table 1 and 4).

1.3 Purpose and research questions

The purpose of my research is to understand different ways of being a Kenyan female international student through their racialised and gendered experiences in Australian universities. The students I engage with in this research come from Kenya where patriarchy dominates all sectors of the society. I use the term *patriarchy* throughout this thesis in reference to a "system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women" (Walby, 1990, p.20). My research seeks to find out the identity practices of Kenyan female international students studying in Australia's higher education sector. I am interested in how the intersections of the African female students' identities (Kenyan, Black, women and international student) discriminate or privilege them.

My research is guided by the following questions:

How do Kenyan female international students construct their sense of identity through their racialised and gendered experiences in Australian universities?

How are Kenyan female students positioned and how do they position themselves within the Australian education sector and broader community?

From these two major questions, other specific questions are sought: How does their race and gender shape the way they construct their identity? How do they negotiate race and gender politics in the different university environments and in the broader community? What identity markers do they take on in the construction of their identity? How do the intersections of their identities as women, African women and international students discriminate or privilege them? The aim of this study is to raise awareness among policy makers, lecturers, counselors, students and others interested in understanding the experiences of African female students who would otherwise be overlooked because of their small numbers in Australian universities.

1.4 Importance of my study

This research draws on notions of African feminism, CRF and international education to examine the experiences of African female international students from Kenya in Australian universities. Although previous studies (Bullen & Kenway, 2003; Kashima & Loh, 2006; Koehne, 2006; Marginson, Nyland, Sawir, & Forbes-Mewett, 2010; Sawir, Deumert, Marginson, Nyland, & Ramia, 2008; Volet & Jones, 2012) on international students have moved beyond homogenising the experiences of international students, and consider the

complexity of cultural and educational experiences of international students from diverse backgrounds, there is still a need for research in the Australian context that examines experiences of international students who may be marginalised or privileged because of their race and gender.

Although there has been research (Harris, 2012; Harris, Spark and Watts, 2013, 2015) on educational experiences of migrant African women in Australia, there are not many studies in Australia that have examined the experiences of African female international students from Africa studying in Australian universities. A few studies (Beoku-Betts, 2004; Beoku-Betts & Ngaruiya-Njambi, 2005; Kishimoto & Mwangi, 2009; Maundeni, 1999) in the USA have examined racial and gender challenges facing women from Africa studying or teaching in Western universities. Yet there are many African women seeking higher education in Western countries such as the USA, UK, Canada and Australia (Wiggan & Hutchison, 2009) and according to World Bank girls' education is considered important for development in Africa and other developing countries (Tembon and Fort, 2008).

In spite of the increase in use and access of internet over the last decade, the literacy rates among women continue to be low compared to men in Africa (UNESCO, 2015). Women still face many huddles when accessing education due to the culture and gender inequalities. For example, in Kenya the number of girls/women who get opportunities to study, still remains low compared to their male counterparts (see figure 2) and according to United Nations, sixty percent of illiterate population in Sub-Saharan Africa are women. (United Nations report, 2013). Educating women is therefore important and according to United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), girl's education is both an intrinsic right and critical lever in reaching development. Increasing literacy rates among women in Sub-Saharan Africa and other developing countries is crucial in helping reduce poverty and other problems facing Africa. My research is important in that it discusses the challenges that African women continue to face

when accessing education in Africa and in Western countries. My research unpacks some of these challenges allowing them to be addressed by universities and education policy makers. My research adds to the global debate on plight of African women in education. The study is therefore important in that it will contribute to an area that is under-researched and add to the literature concerned with gender equality in education.

Although there are several studies (Allen & Dhawan, 2007; Gopalkrishnan, 2006; Meekosha, 2006; Pettman, 1995b; Ralston, 1998; Stubbs & Tolmie, 1995) that have examined how race and gender plays out in Australian society, the use of CRF as a theoretical approach has not been applied in many studies in Australia. Marchetti (2008) and Andrews (2000) work like my research have used CRF as an analytical tool in their studies of Aboriginal women in Australia. Andrews (2000) uses a CRF lens to analyze violence against women in aboriginal Australian and black South African communities. Andrews work investigates how CRF can be used to contribute to the continuing feminist project of unmasking structures that generate, tolerate and acquiesce in violence against women. Marcheti (2008) discusses ways in which the Australian Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC) failed to take intersectional approach when dealing with problems confronting indigenous women. Marcheti identifies, describes and critically analyses the ways in which the dominant liberal ideology can, at times, operate to exclude racialized women and stresses the importance of using CRF in understanding the problems facing aboriginal women in Australia.

My study drawing on CRF in understanding the racialised and gendered experiences of African international female student in Australia adds on to Australian and global research using CRF as a theoretical and methodological tool in an educational context. My study is also significant in that it adds on to research in international education by problematising issues of race and gender in education spaces. My study is unique in that most literature on experiences of international students in Australia comes mainly from educational psychology (Kenway &

Bullen, 2003; Smith & Khawaja, 2011) and although recent research has focused on different aspects of international students such as national or cultural identity (Azmat, Osborne & Rentschler, 2011; Sawir, Marginson, Forbes-Mewett, Nyland, & Ramia, 2012; Singh, 2010; Singh & Doherty, 2008; Zhao & Singh, 2011), there is paucity of literature—especially in Australia—that examines experiences of female international students from Africa studying in different universities in Europe and North America.

1.5 Researching the Kenyan female international students studying in Australia

1.5.1 Conceptual framework informing the study

To answer my research questions, I draw on CRF (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; Wing, 2003, 2007), African feminism (Beoku-Betts & Ngaruiya-Njambi, 2005; Kamau, 2010; Kolawole, 1997; Mwangi, 2002) and international education (Bullen & Kenway, 2003; Joseph, 2012; Kashima & Loh, 2006; Koehne, 2006; Marginson, 2013; Matthews, 2002; Sidhu, 2004; Tsolidis, 2002) as conceptual frameworks to inform my study. My study uses CRF (Wing, 2003) analytical lens in understanding how race and gender shape the way African female international students construct their sense of identity.

The concepts of gender and race are important in my study. Traditional understandings of gender and race are essentialist with a focus on fixed stable categories independent from social contexts. Contemporary and critical sociologists including African feminists, critical race feminists and postcolonial scholars argue that social categories such a race and gender are socially produced, heterogeneous and dynamic processes of being and becoming (Brah 1997, Beoku-Betts & Ngaruiya-Njambi, 2005; Collins 2000, Crenshaw 1991, 1995, Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010, Gunaratnam 2003, Kamau, 2010, Mirza and Joseph 2010, Wing 2003, 2007). These scholars also argue that to understand race, gender and the social categories, it is important to examine how the interplay between biological and fixed categories, and cultural discourses are played out in different contexts. Experiences of race and gender are mediated

by the continual negotiation of personal, interactional and social dynamics (Gunaratnam 2003). Gunaratnam argues that "social discourses are enmeshed in lived experience and institutional and social power relations that have emotional, material and embodied consequences of individuals and for groups" (p.7).

The notion of discourse is an important concept in my study that focuses on ways of being and knowing as African female international students in the Australian context. Ways of being and knowing as African female international students are determined through discourses. *Discourse* is a term that is often used without a simple definition and for the purpose of this study; I use it to constitute all that is written and spoken. Discourse is historically, socially and institutionally a specific structure of statements, terms, categories and beliefs (Foucault, 1980). It is contained and expressed in organisations and institutions as well as in words, and is always part of a wider network of power relations, often with institutional bases. Discourses enable us to give meaning to the world and act to transform it, through language (spoken and written) as we actively construct our experience (Mills, 1997; Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 1995). According to Foucault, a person does not have a fixed identity; rather, he identified the self as being defined by a continuing discourse in a shifting communication of oneself to others (Clarke, 2011). We learn who we are and how to think and behave through discursive practices. Discourses shape and create meaning systems that impact upon how we define and organise ourselves and our social world. Discourses define what it means to be a woman or a man and the available range of gender-appropriate behaviour (Joseph, 2014).

My study engages with literature on African feminism as the research participants are young African women from Kenya studying in Australia. They come from a society in which femininity is constructed and represented differently than in Australian society. Femininity in Kenyan society is constructed using images such as the mother, stereotypes of women's roles, abilities and personal characteristics attributed to the ideal woman (Asimeng-Boahene, 2013;

Kabanyoro, 2008). Women's roles and responsibilities in an African society are understood as that of bearing children, maintaining the family and investing in their children's upbringing (Afisi, 2010; Mikell, 2011; Mwangi, 2002). According to Beoku-Betts and Ngaruiya-Njambi (2005), African women are often seen as docile, obedient and are dominated by men. This is not surprising, since many African societies such as Kenyan are structured along a patriarchal system. Femininity in Africa is therefore constructed in such a way that women are subservient and subordinate to men.

Literature on African femininity provides important understandings of ways of being a young African woman in Kenya. It offers knowledge on what it means to be an African woman in Africa and Kenya, her social roles and expectations, her position in the society and how she is understood. This is important when researching the experiences of Kenyan female international students living and studying in Australia because it provides the fundamental understanding who they are, how they are understood and positioned in Kenyan/African context.

1.5.2 International education in Australia

In my study, I also draw on research in the sociology of international education. Australia's higher education has changed over the years and it has a reputation as the world's leading exporter of higher education. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) indicators in 2013, Australia host about 6% of the world international students, making Australia the third largest provider of international education services in 2011, behind the USA (16%), and the UK (13%) (OECD, 2013). The Australia Government Department of Education website indicates that in 2015, there were 645,185 enrolments of full-fee paying international students in Australian universities (see Table 1). Nearly half of these enrolments were in higher education. This is mainly because Australia's higher education is

favourable in terms of cost when compared to other Western countries such as the UK and the USA (van der Brugge & Edwards, 2012; Sidhu, 2011). The majority of international students in Australia come from Asia, particularly China and India. In 2015, there were 170,212 international students from China and 72,504 from India studying in various institutions in Australia. This can be seen in the table below:

Table 1: Countries with high numbers of international students enrolled in Australian universities in 2015

Rank	Country of Origin	Number of students
1	China	170,212
2	India	72, 504
3	Vietnam	29,575
4	South Korea	28,725
5	Thailand	27,965
6	Brazil	24,672
7	Malaysia	24,123
8	Nepal	19,807
9	Indonesia	19,300
10	Pakistan	16, 091
11	Other nationalities	212,211
12	Total	645,185

Source: Australian Government Department of Education and Training, 2015

Australia has had international students since 1904. From 1950–1974, most international students were provided with a university education through Australian foreign aid programs, particularly through the Colombo plan which begun in 1951. Between 1974 and 1980 there was yet another change in education, and international students enrolled on the same basis as Australian students. There were no tuition fees and the government provided financial support for the universities and all of the students. However, the number of international students was restricted to 10,000 in all universities. From 1990, all international students were required to pay full fees that have become an important source of income to Australian universities.

Today, Australia is one of the countries that has the highest numbers of international students in the world (Marginson, 2012a). International education has reached number three in Australia's exports, contributing over $17.6billion to the Australian economy in 2014 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2015). Australian universities' success in recruiting international students has been mainly due to the underfunding of universities by the Australian government (Altbach, 2012). International students are attracted to Australia because Australian currency currently has a better exchange rate than other countries competing for foreign students such as the USA, Canada and in the UK. In addition, Australia is seen as safe country, has student post-study work rights and the ability for students to work while studying (Lawson, 2014). Apart from recruiting students to study onshore, Australian universities have found other ways of pursuing international students; some have built off-shore campuses, forged twinning arrangements and designed online programs (Byram & Dervin, 2009; Doherty & Singh, 2008; Lin, 2014; McBurnie & Ziguras, 2007, 2009, 2011).

In spite of Australian universities success in recruiting international students, critics of international education in Australia see it as being too commercially driven (Marginson, 2011; Matthews, 2002). Students are seen as consumers, where a buyer-seller relationship exists between the universities and the students. In order to raise money, universities increase their enrolments by targeting full-fee paying international students (Joseph, 2012, 2013; King, 2001; Marginson, 2007). Critics are also concerned that the inadequate language skills and 'soft marking' of international students' work is lowering the Australian university credentials (Doherty & Singh, 2008). There have been fears that some universities are compromising academic standards in order to increase international students' enrolments (Lowe, 2009; Marginson, 2007; Turpin et al., 2002). Australian universities have also been criticised for not doing enough to promote cultural exchange among students, and previous studies indicate that most international students often feel isolated from the local students (Forbes-Mewett &

Nyland, 2008; Koehne, 2006; Rosenthal et al., 2006). In recent times, there have been media reports of attacks on international students, especially from south Asia. According to the Australian Human Rights Commission (2010), international students face multiple forms of discrimination including racial and hatred violence. Racial violence against international students in recent years in Australia has resulted in some decline in the number of international students from south Asia (Marginson, 2012a).

My study draws on discourses of international education in Australia in order to understand how African females as international students from Africa are constructed and positioned, and how they construct or position themselves in Australian universities and within the broader community. My research engages with literature on international education (Bullen & Kenway, 2003; Joseph, 2012; Kashima & Loh, 2006; Koehne, 2006; Marginson, 2013; Matthews, 2002; Sidhu, 2004; Tsolidis 2002; Ziguras & McBurnie, 2015), as my research participants are constructed by Australian higher education as international students.

Understanding discourses on international students is important in my study because there are discourses circulating within Australia's institutions of higher learning that shape the way international students construct their identity. International students are often perceived as passive learners (Koehne, 2006; Kutieleh & Egege, 2004; Sawir, 2013), lacking competency in the English language (Arkoudis, Baik, Marginson & Cassidy, 2012; Hellstén & Prescott, 2004) and in need of pastoral care (Koehne, 2006). International students are described by their teachers and peers as being motivated, hardworking, friendly and respectful especially to teachers (Isibor, 2008; Kell & Vogl, 2012), and they are also seen as 'shy' and 'introverted' (Harrison & Peacock, 2007). My study seeks to understand which discourses of international education present in Australian universities do African female students from Kenya engage with in the construction of their identity in Australia.

1.5.3 Higher education in Africa

African students—particularly those from Kenya—seek to study in Europe and North America because of problems facing higher education in Africa. Universities in Africa have a marginalised position in knowledge production because of the lack of resources available to conduct research; hence, they are ranked poorly in the world (Woldegiorgis & Doevenspeck, 2015). For example, The Times Higher Education World University Rankings ranks the University of Cape Town as number one in Africa, and 267 in the world, while University of Nairobi that is the number one university in Kenya, is ranked 702 in the world. In the last three decades, higher education in Africa has experienced challenges that have been brought about by a lack of funding and an increase in student enrolments.

Many universities in Africa, including Kenyan universities, for many years relied on 100 per cent government funding and foreign aid for their day to day running. However, this changed in the 1990s when many African governments reduced their university budgets (Watson, Modgil & Modgil, 1997). This was due to overall reduction of allocation of funding to service sectors including education by the governments, and the push by World Bank and International Monetary Fund Structural Programs to have beneficiaries of education to contribute towards their own education (Mwiria, Ng'ethe, Ngome, Ouma-Odedo, Wawire & Wesonga, 2007). For example, in 1990 universities of Zambia, Ghana and Makerere received 79, 53 and 34 per cent of their budget requests respectively (Mwiria, 1992). Many universities experienced chronic funding problems due to lack of government support and foreign funding. This resulted in a crisis in higher education brought about by the privatisation of universities and an increase in enrolments.

The quality of teaching in higher education has deteriorated over the years. There has been an increase in private universities, which tend to sacrifice quality for profit, and a significant increase in student enrolments which has led to a massively increased academic

workload and a subsequent mass exodus of academic staff (Puplampu, 2005; Woldegiorgis & Doevenspeck, 2015). For example, in Kenya, enrolments have soared with a 28 per cent increase in enrolments in 2014 compared to 2013, and the public and private universities had a combined enrolment of 443,783 students in 2014 (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2015) However, both private and public universities in Africa have shortage of qualified teaching staff, leading to poor quality of education (Gudo, Olel & Oanda, 2011)

Because of the challenges facing universities in Africa, there are large numbers of African students seeking education in Western countries. In 2010, there were over 380,376 international students from sub-Saharan Africa studying in different Western countries (Woldegiorgis & Doevenspeck, 2015). Students from sub-Saharan Africa are the most mobile group of people in the world; one out of every sixteen students studying abroad comes from sub-Saharan Africa (Marshall, 2013; Mulumba, Obaje, Kobedi, & Kishun, 2008).

1.5.4 African international students in Australia

Information from the Australian Government Department of Education and Training shows that there are significant numbers of African students studying in different parts of Australia. In 2013, there were around 9000 students from Africa (about 2 per cent of the total number of international students) studying in Australia. Many of the students came from Nigeria, Kenya Ghana and Uganda. A recent data from the Australian Government Department of Education and Training shows that the numbers of students from Kenya seeking higher education in Australia towards the end of 2015 was 1,408 and nearly half of them were female. These numbers, according to statistics by the Australian Government Department of Education and Training, have steadily increased over the years as seen in the table below.

Table 4: Number of Kenyan international students enrolled in various institutions in Australia from 2012 to 2015

Sector	2012	2013	2014	2015
Higher Education	1,109	1,093	1,207	1,408
VET	490	598	806	921
Schools	12	6	3	5
ELICOS	40	60	76	102
Non-award	27	24	31	39
Grand Total	1,678	1,781	2,123	2,475

Source: Australian Government Department of Education and Training, 2015

Previously, Australia used to financially support education programs within African countries. However, in recent times, the government has been offering scholarships to African students to study in Australia.[1] In 2015, only 1000 scholarships were available for African students and professionals. Hence, most of the international students who come to study in Australia are full-fee paying students. The families of African female students from Kenya who come to study in Australia pay the tuition and living expenses. A HSBC report (2013) says the cost per year for studying in Australia for international students is about Aus. $42,093. This amount depends on the university, the type and level of a degree program. For many families in Kenya, studying in Australia is very expensive since nearly half of Kenya's populations of 44 million live in poverty. Only very few people can afford to send their children to study in Australia. There are not many government or private scholarships available to study in Western countries and Kenyan women have to compete with their male counterparts for the few that are available. There are also not many scholarships in the humanities courses where most women elect to study. In Australia for example, the majority of the scholarships offered by Australian

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[1] Looking West: Australia's Strategic Approach to Aid in Africa 2011- 2015

government and educational institutions are for postgraduates in science courses, and very few—if any—are available for African female international students taking undergraduate courses.[2]

Female students from Kenya studying in Australia do not all share the same social and economic backgrounds. Many of them come from middle class families that shun the negative notions that most African societies including Kenya have about educating girls (Obura, Banos-Smith, Gherardi & Wallace, 2015). According to Agesa and Agesa (2005), many African societies until recently saw educating girls as 'wasteful' because it would prevent them from getting married or cause them to have marriage problems (Colclough, Al-Sammarai, Rose & Tembon, 2003; Elimu Yetu Coalition, 2005). Although many middle-class Kenyan families have a different attitude to women's education, pursuing education in Western universities is very expensive for them. Access to financial resources is therefore critical, and many families in Kenya raise money through fund raising or selling their property. The students from these families are also expected to work once they are abroad in order to sustain themselves.

1.5.5 Methodology: participants, site and methods

My study on African female international students takes place in two Australian universities in Melbourne. The participants are thirteen young African females from Kenya. The research participants come from different socioeconomic backgrounds, religions and ethnic groups. Eight of them come from wealthy Kenyan families that either have successful careers as doctors, politicians or own successful businesses, four come from average income families (in Kenyan standards)[3] where two of them owned small businesses, the other two worked in the

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[2] http://www.australia.gov.au/information-and-services/education-and-training/scholarships
[3] Kenya Economic Report, June 2013, No. 8: Time to Shift Gears--Accelerating Growth and Poverty Reduction in the New Kenya

banking sector and as a tour guide respectively. The other two research participants are average income families where one previously worked as sales representative and the other worked as health officer in Kenya. Both are married with each having a young child. The research participants left Kenya to pursue higher education in Australia because of the limited education opportunities for female students, and the desire for international education. This is discussed in detail in the next chapter.

The research methodology involves two interconnected processes: the conceptual framework and the techniques of data collection and analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Tomm & Benston, 1989). The conceptual or theoretical framework shapes the techniques of data collection and analysis. This research adopts a feminist methodology (Given, 2008; Keating, 2013; Ramazanoğlu & Holland, 2002). It is informed by a feminist epistemology and researches the experiences of young women. The research used semi-structured and in-depth interviews, informal conversations and observations to collect data. These methods of data collection were used to provide an insight into the uniqueness of each individual research participant's experiences. My research used the students' socioeconomic status as a mechanism to categorise my research participants into rich families and middle-class families because as I discuss in the next chapter, cultural and economic inequalities influence girls' access to education in Kenya.

1.6 Outline of the thesis

This chapter mainly discusses the rationales of this thesis that include my personal experiences and how they made me interested in the research. The questions guiding the research are contextualised and the significance of my study is stated. In addition, the conceptual framework that underpins this study, the research method, the research participants and the site are briefly discussed.

Chapter Two examines the gender disparity in Kenya's education system, and how poverty and patriarchy exacerbate the plight of young women seeking education. The chapter further provides a discussion on the history of Kenya's education system from pre-colonial, post-colonial to present day to provide an understanding on gender disparity in education, which is one of the causes that makes young African female students from Kenya seek higher education in countries such as Australia.

In Chapter Three, the conceptual framework that informs my study is discussed. The research draws on African feminism, CRF and international education epistemologies in conceptualising the identity of African female students studying from Kenya in Australian universities. The research uses CRF theoretical lens to analyse how politics of race and gender within Australian university and broader community shape the way African female students construct their identity and how they are understood. The chapter also includes discussions on notions of African femininity and international education that are significant to my study.

Chapter Four outlines the research design used in my study. It discusses the research methods used to answer the research questions and the reasons why the investigation is located within a feminist framework. I also provide information about the research participants and my positioning as a researcher researching the experiences of African female students from Kenya studying in Australian universities. The strategies and methods for conducting the research as well as the selection of the research participants are described in this chapter.

Chapters Five, Six, Seven and Eight provide the research findings on how African female students from Kenya construct their identity and how they are positioned or position themselves within Australian universities and broader community. The themes that emerge from the research participants' in-depth interviews are explored and patterns are observed. The research participants are grouped into three groups: 'snobs,' 'strugglers' and 'go-getters.'

Chapter Five provides the essentialised understandings of young Kenyan woman, international student and an Australian woman. Chapter Six examines how the group labelled 'go-getters' construct their identity and ways they position or are positioned within Australian universities. The chapter discusses the identity strategies that the go-getters adopt in the construction of their identity. Likewise, Chapter Seven discusses different ways that the group labelled 'snobs' construct their identity and how they position themselves or are positioned within Australian universities and the broader community. It also looks at the identity strategies they take in the construction of their identity in the new environment. Lastly, Chapter Eight gives details of different identity approaches that the group labelled 'strugglers' adopt in the construct of their identity. It also examines ways in which they position themselves or are understood in Australian society and especially within the universities.

Chapter Nine discusses the findings of the research. It examines identity practices and discursive positioning of African female international students in Australia. It answers the research questions: How do African female international students construct their sense of identity through their racialised and gendered experiences in Australian universities? How are African female students positioned and how do they position themselves within Australian education sector and broader community? In this chapter, I discuss what it means to be an African woman and ways in which Kenyan female students have multiple shifting identities and how they strategically take on different identity markers that are essential to their studies and ways of being in Australia. I conclude the chapter by discussing how politics of race and gender play out in discursively positioning Kenyan female students. Discrimination and empowerment are also examined to understand identity practices of this group of students. The main findings of the research are summarised in the last chapter of this thesis. It answers the research questions that guided this study. Reflections on my role as a researcher researching the young African female students from Kenya studying in Australian universities, and what

the research has informed me about my own identity, are also discussed. The chapter ends by

looking at the implications of the research findings and the future of the research.

Chapter Two – Kenya: Education, poverty and patriarchy

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss Kenya's education system and the Kenyan society that is essential in understanding the cultural and educational background of my research participants - Kenyan female international students in Australian universities. This chapter intends to bring to light how the nature of Kenya's culture and education system pushes Kenyan female students to seek higher education in countries such as Australia. I first provide a brief discussion of the historical context of Kenya. I next continue by examining informal education or traditional African education, which was intertwined with the African culture and practiced among all Kenyan communities. It then looks at the formal education that was brought about by missionaries and the British colonial government. I argue that African traditional education, formal education that was introduced by missionaries and colonialists, and post-colonial education systems were all designed to marginalise women and limit them access to education. Challenges in Kenya's higher education are also discussed focusing on gender disparity, its causes and what is being done to address it. The chapter ends by examining how poverty further exacerbates the plight of Kenyan girls in accessing education.

2.2 Kenya: Background information

Kenya, a country that has about 44 million people, is located in East Africa. It shares its borders with Tanzania in the south, Uganda to the west, South Sudan to the north-west, Ethiopia to the north, Somalia to the northeast and the Indian Ocean is on its southeast. Kenya became a Republic in 1963 when it gained independence from the British rule. Jomo Kenyatta was Kenya's first president and was succeeded by Daniel Arap Moi in 1978 after his demise. Uhuru

Kenyatta, the son of Kenya's first president Jomo Kenyatta, came into power in 2013 and he is the current president.

Kenya is a multi-ethnic country, made up of approximately 42 tribes. The Kikuyu are the largest ethnic group and comprise of 22 per cent of the population. The other major tribes include the Luhya (14 per cent), Luo (11 per cent), Kalenjin (13 per cent), Kamba (10 per cent), Kisii (6 per cent), Meru (6 per cent), other African (15 per cent) and non-African (Asian, European, and Arab) comprise 1 per cent (National Cohesion and Integration Commission, 2011). All 42 tribes speak different languages, however all people speak Kiswahili and it is Kenya's national and official language. English is also an official language and is used as a mode of instruction in all schools. Christianity is the predominant religion in Kenya, which is followed by 83 per cent of the population. Other religions include Islam, Baha'i, Buddhism and traditional African religions.

Figure 1: Map of Kenya

Source: The World Fact Book (CIA)

Kenya's economic growth has increased tremendously over the last few years and according to World Bank report (2015), it is projected to rise from 5.4 per cent in 2014 to 6-7 per cent over the next three years. This makes Kenya's economy among the fastest growing

economies in Africa. Its economy is one of the biggest and most advanced in East and Central Africa as it accounts for 40 per cent of the region's GDP, followed by Tanzania at 28 per cent, Uganda at 21 per cent, Rwanda at 8 per cent, and lastly Burundi at 3 per cent (International Monetary Fund [IMF] report, 2015). Agricultural and tourism sectors support the economy.[4] There has been major growth in the economy over the last decade brought about by rapid expansion in the telecommunication industry, the tourism sector and in higher education. Although Kenya has experienced incidences of national insecurities, for example the 2007/2008 election violence and current attacks by Al-Shabab terrorists from neighbouring Somalia, the Kenyan economy is considered fast-growing and stable in East Africa.[5] Nairobi, the capital city, has functioned as a financial and communication centre of East Africa and is the headquarters of many international organisations. However, corruption is rampant and affects all sectors of the Kenyan economy. It is worse within the government as it affects the equal distribution of resources.

2.3 Politics of inequality in Kenya

Kenya's citizens come from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. According to World Bank and United Nations reports (United Nations Department of Economics and Social Affairs 2013; World Bank, 2013), Kenya has among the highest income inequalities in the world. The gap between the rich and poor continues to widen. A Standard Bank report titled "Understanding Africa's Middle Class," states that 83 per cent of the over 40 million Kenyans live on or below the poverty line, and only 4 per cent can be considered middle class.[6]

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[4] http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/kenya/overview
[5] Doing Business 2014: understanding regulations for small and medium-size enterprises.
[6] The African Development Bank (AfDB) defines the middle class as those spending between $2 and $20 a day

The issues of inequality tend to influence Kenya's politics. For example, in 2007 Kenya experienced one of the worst elections in its history. The two main political parties Party of National Unity (PNU) and Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) were formed on tribal lines, with PNU mainly comprising of the Kikuyus and ODM mainly Luo and Kalenjin tribes. Fighting broke out when President Mwai Kibaki from PNU was re-elected. Supporters of ODM turned against the Kikuyus accusing the government of rigging the election so that Kikuyus could continue to be in power. Although there have been many discussions within Kenya about what may have brought about the violence, one of the underlying factors appear to be regional disparity. Social inequalities in Kenya emanate from unequal distribution of resources, power and privilege among members of society. According to Nyawalo et al. (2011), the governance of Kenya is often defined by inequitable distribution of resources to regions and ethnic communities, whereby the ethnic community of the incumbent president is favoured. Thus, the ethnic community in power has better access to resources such as education.

The current president of Kenya, Uhuru Kenyatta is the son of Kenya's first president, Jomo Kenyatta and, like his predecessor, comes from the Kikuyu community. The Kikuyus mainly live in central Kenya and are spread in other parts. Their population is the largest of the forty ethnic communities found in Kenya, and in 2014, there were approximately 9,902,212 Kikuyu people in Kenya (Central Intelligence Agency World Fact Book, 2016). The Kikuyu are mainly farmers and traders. I and two of my research participants come from the Kikuyu community, while the rest of my research participants belonged to different Kenyan ethnic groups.

The unequal distribution of resources and persistent inequalities of gender, class, ethnicity and regional are hence evidenced in Kenya's education system (Amutabi, 2003; Mulongo 2013). Despite Kenya's investment in education enrolment at various levels, the education system is characterised by regional, socioeconomic and gender disparities, and

declining enrolment ratios, especially among girls (Alwy & Schech, 2007; Glennerster, Kremer, Mbiti & Takavarasha, 2011). The inequalities of gender, class, ethnicity and regional disparity in Kenya can be traced back to the colonial period (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2012). In the next section, I discuss some of these social inequalities within the context of education in colonial and postcolonial Kenya.

2.4 History of education in Kenya

The history of Kenya's education is divided into two parts: informal education and formal education. Informal education refers to the type of education that was present in the Kenyan communities before the arrival of Europeans and the Arabs in mid-1800s (Eshiwani, 1993). The European missionaries brought formal education and it involved reading and writing.

2.4.1 Informal education

Before the arrival of Arabs and Europeans to Kenya over 1000 years ago, the Kenyan communities had their own systems of education (Sifuna, 1990). There were no classrooms or teachers as we know them today, but all members of the communities were involved in educating children. Traditional education in Kenya was inseparable from the society as the same cultural fabric interwove them both. It was natural, informal, and based in the community (Sifuna 2008). Unlike formal education that is specialised and formalised, traditional African education was integrated to the daily life of the learner and was based on active discovery (Owour, 2008). Children were taught traditions and customs of their ancestors from the community. They were also taught ideal forms of behaviour and morality, and the skills necessary to take up gender roles in their community (Sifuna, 2008). Transitions between age groups were natural and inclusive, not based on any system of elimination. Learning was based on active discovery (Cunningham, 2006).

In traditional African societies, learning was through folk-tales such as proverbs, poems, stories and songs. They were used not only to amuse and express feelings but also to teach good virtues. Children learnt by repetition, imitation, internalisation and practice. (Majoni & Chinyanganya, 2014; Marah, 2006). Folk-tales were memorised in order to be retained and passed on from one generation to the next. The education that children were given fitted their ethnic group. Boys were taught skills of livelihood for occupations such as herdsmen, blacksmith, fishermen, hunters and others based on their ethnic group. Girls, on the other hand were taught skills for their future roles motherhood, wife and other female roles based on their ethnic group (Marah, 2006).

Although Kenya's education today is formal, Kenyan communities still value traditional African education because it is intertwined in the African culture. Children, especially in rural areas, continue to be taught about their community's culture, traditions and keeping good morals by their parents and grandparents. Traditional African education helps people understand their identity and what is expected of them within the community. Pre-colonial education in Kenya is therefore still used to reinforce traditional gender roles and is used as a mechanism to transmit cultural values and traditions through generations.

2.4.2 Formal education

Christian missionaries laid the foundation of Kenya's formal education. They arrived in Kenya in the nineteenth century and they introduced reading to aid the spread of Christianity. The first missionaries were Roman Catholics from Portugal. They were followed by Church Missionary Society (CMS), and then later by diverse groups of missionaries associated with United Methodist free church; Holy Ghost fathers, Consolata fathers, African Inland mission, and so on (Ojiambo, 2009; Sifuna, 1990). The first mission school was established in 1846 at Rabai, near Mombasa.

The missionaries' goal, according to Sheffield (1973), was to spread Christianity, civilisation and commerce; to stop slave trade and replace it with legitimate trade (the three C's). Education was seen as key in spreading Christianity and civilisation. Africans were taught how to read so that they were able to read the Bible and help in spreading Christianity and Western civilisation to their fellow Africans. Africans were taught to read and write so that they could communicate with the missionaries and to act as interpreters whenever necessary. Missionary education put emphasis on rote learning aimed at religious teaching and simple literacy (Ojiambo 2009; Sifuna, 1990). They also taught apprenticeships such as carpentry and gardening, which were useful for the missionaries.

Missionaries controlled education in Kenya up until 1911 when the British colonial governments took over.

2.4.3 Colonial education

The main interest of the British colonial government in Kenya was that of economic benefit. The type of education system that they designed was meant to relate to the nature of the colonial economy. They provided education along racial lines; Europeans, Arabs, Indians and Africans. There were separate schools for Europeans, Indians and Africans. The European and Indians schools were in main towns while the African schools were spread across Kenya. The colonialists argued that each of these groups of people had attained different levels of social political and economic development, and therefore needed the kind of education that would preserve their culture and prepare them for an 'appropriate' role in society (Eshiwani, 1990). Colonial education was not only structured to discriminate along racial lines, but it also systematically and deliberately discriminated against women (Chege & Sifuna, 2006). Africans were relegated duties of producing a labour force that facilitated and reinforced functioning of the colonial government. African men were given technical education to prepare them for vocational and blue-collar jobs such as clerks and junior officials, while women were taught

domestic science, which entailed learning to be good wives, cooking, cleaning and taking care of the children (Chege & Sifuna, 2006).

Europeans and Indians from India who were brought over by the British were given a different type of education. The Indians were given education that allowed them to find middle-level jobs such as artisans, trades and vocations while Europeans received specialised education that allowed them to seek leadership positions and white-collar jobs. Colonial government in Kenya also provided education for Africans in rural areas through the missionaries. Apart from spreading the gospel, the missionaries also promoted European practices and created loyalties among the Africans, hence easing the colonialisation process (Mwaura, 2005). The missionary schools mainly provided primary education, which trained Africans to be catechists, clerks and to work in European farms.

Over time as Africans received formal education they begun to react radically to colonialism and Christianity. According to Harper (2016), they started their own independent indigenous churches to "provide spiritual inspiration to fight white missionary dominance and blend Christianity and African beliefs" (p. 53). They were also not happy with the missionaries' schools either, as they saw them as centres for indoctrinating Africans to disregard their cultures and adopt Western culture instead (Sifuna, 2008). This led to the emergence of independent churches, schools and eventually political organisations to help fight colonialism. The elite Africans started their own independent churches and schools. Independent schools Association such as Kikuyu Independent Schools Association and Kikuyu Karanja Education Association were established to create schools free of missionary and colonial government control with the aim of teaching academic subjects that incorporated African culture (Eshiwani, 1993). The colonial government and missionaries were against these schools as they were suspicious of their political motives. The government tried to shut down the independent schools; however, the independent schools' movement among Africans continued and

influenced nationalistic struggles against the colonial government. This eventually led to Kenya gaining independence from the British rule (Mwaura, 2005).

2.5 Post-colonial education

Since Kenya attained independence from the British rule and became a republic in 1963, it has continuously sought to change the education curriculum to suit the needs of its citizens. After independence, racially segregated schools such as (Duke of York- white, Duke of Gloucester - Indians and Maseno- Africans) established by colonial government ceased. Three types of schools; government, private and/or missionary, and harambee (a grass-root movement of self-help schools) replaced them. The government and private schools that were previously reserved for white people were well funded and equipped. Harambee schools aimed at increasing education of the Africans and were government and community supported. Missionary schools also continued to provide education, however they were required to follow the curriculum set by the Kenyan government.

When Kenya gained independence from British rule in 1963, a new education curriculum 7-4-2-3 was adopted. This was similar to the British education system, but was later replaced by 8-4-4 education in 1985.

2.5.1 The 7-4-2-3 Education System

Kenya's struggle for political independence brought about the need for educational development and change. The colonial education was seen as racist, exploiting African labour and resources, and was not designed to serve the country as a whole (Eshiwani, 1993). After independence, the Kenyan government placed emphasis on the role of education in promoting social and economic development. During this time, education was used to promote national unity and nation building (Sifuna, 1992). There was also the Africanisation of the syllabus, such as teaching Kenyan history and geography, and hiring African teachers. Although English

was the preferred medium of instruction in the early years of primary school, teaching of Kiswahili became compulsory.

Between 1964 and 1981, a 7-4-2-3 education structure was adopted and it modelled the British education system. This system was designed to provide seven years of primary education, four years of junior secondary education, two years of senior secondary education and three years of university education (Buchmann, 1999). During this time, the government was in need of skilled workers to fill positions that were previously held by the British; therefore, it expanded educational opportunities for its citizens. It did this by setting up various commissions such as the Ominde commission of 1964, whose goal was to bring changes that would reflect the nation's sovereignty. The commission focused on identity and unity, and subjects such as history and geography were made to reflect national cohesion. The Gachathi commission of 1976 was created to address unemployment and it recommended vocational education and training. However, in spite of its recommendations, the number of school leavers without employment continued to rise, hence the introduction of 8-4-4 education system.

2.5.2 The 8-4-4 Education System

In 1981, the president appointed a committee to examine curriculum reform for the entire education system. The committee submitted recommendations to change the entire 7-4-2-3 education system to the current 8-4-4 education system, whose overall structure was similar to the American education system. It was designed to provide eight years of primary education, four years of secondary education and four years of university education. The 8-4-4 system was implemented in 1985. It placed emphasis on vocational and technical courses aimed at producing graduates that did not rely on employment in the formal sector of the economy, but instead be self-employed as entrepreneurs of small-scale businesses.

The required secondary school subjects are categorised into five groups as follows:

Table 2: Secondary school subjects

Group	Subjects
1	English, Mathematics, and Kiswahili
2	Biology, Physics, Chemistry, Physical Sciences, and Biological Sciences
3	History and Government, Geography, Christian Religious Education, Islamic Religious Education, Social Studies and Ethics, and Hindu Islamic Education
4	Home Science, Art and Design, Agriculture, Woodwork, Metalwork, Building Construction, Power Mechanics, Electricity, Drawing and Design, and Aviation technology
5	French, German, Arabic, Music, Accounting, Commerce, Economics, Typewriting and Office Practice.

Students are required to take all three subjects in Group 1, at least two subjects from Group 2, and select two or more subjects in the other three remaining areas. The selection of these subjects is dependent upon what each of the individual schools offers, and the resources and teachers available in the individual schools. At the end of the fourth year of secondary school, students sit for the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Examination (KCSE) and are examined in the compulsory subjects and elective subjects listed above for entry into tertiary and higher education.

The KCSE examination is graded using the system below.

Table 3: KSCE grading system

Grade	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	E
Points	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

The average grade is based on performance in the seven subjects. Where a candidate sits for more than seven subjects, the average grade is based on the best seven subjects. Admission to the universities is based on the best seven subjects and performance in particular subjects relevant to degree courses.

Although the 8-4-4 education system was seen to cater for the needs of ordinary *mwananchi*[7] because of its emphasis on vocational and technical courses, criticism has been leveled against it. It is criticised for not being able to tailor its contents to the socioeconomic and cultural realities of the people capable of developing local solutions for local problems. Instead, it is centred on schooling rather than learning, consequently producing a people who consistently look to developed countries for models of development that matches their own social and physical environment (Ntarangwi, 2003). The education system fails to place emphasis on science and technology courses, which are important in the global world today.

The 8-4-4 education system has also been criticised as cumbersome; students are overloaded with a heavy academic workload (Keriga & Bujra, 2009). At primary school, students are examined in seven subjects to get a Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE). In secondary schools they are also examined in seven subjects for their KSCE. Students study to pass exams by cramming the education curriculum. This is seen by critics as producing Kenyan students who are passive learners unable to be creative or innovative (Metto & Makewa, 2014).

Today, most schools offer morning, lunchtime and afterschool classes in an effort to complete the school curriculum before the examinations. This leaves no time for students to 'play' or engage in extra-curricular activities. Critics of rote learning see it as failure by the education curriculum to provide adequate co-curriculum activities that are vital for mental, physical and talent development of pupils and students (Keriga & Bujra, 2009).

The Constitution of Kenya, in Article 53 (1) (b) states, "every child has a right to free and compulsory basic education." It is compulsory in Kenya for boys and girls between ages six and thirteen to attend school. Kenya has over 18,000 public primary schools and a large number of non-formal schools offering primary school curriculum. The elimination of primary

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[7] A term used in Kenya to refer to Kenyan citizen.

school fees under the Free Primary Education policy in 2003 was geared towards increasing enrolment in public schools. Although this policy opened up opportunities for the poor and marginalised in society, it has been criticised for lowering the quality of education due to overpopulation in classrooms and low teacher-pupil ratio in public schools. There has also been an increase in the number of private schools,[8] owing to the declining quality of education in public schools. Nearly one-third of the primary schools in Kenya are privately owned. Private schools in Kenya—as defined by the World Bank—are institutions that are not operated by a public authority but are controlled and managed, whether for profit or not, by a private body (such as non-governmental organisation, religious body, special interest group, foundation or business enterprise). These schools charge fees at different rates. For example, Riara Primary School, a popular private primary school in Nairobi, charges approximately AUS$3000 per year while international private schools such as the International School of Kenya charges around US$20,000 per year. Although primary education is free under the Free Primary Education policy, students are still required to pay some money for books and building maintenance. Secondary education is not free and is most expensive because many schools have boarding facilities, and all students are required to pay both tuition and boarding fees. Many parents who can afford to prefer to take their children to boarding schools instead of day schools as the students generally perform better. Just like primary schools, there are private and public secondary schools. Now there are 5014 public and private secondary schools in Kenya, and only few have good academic performance. When they complete secondary education, students in Kenya have a choice of proceeding on to tertiary education, depending on their performance in the KCSE exams. Most students aim to join public universities that are relatively cheaper and offer a wide variety of courses. However, not all students who qualify are guaranteed admission. In 2012, only 41,000 out of a qualified 118,000 candidates (35 per

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[8] According to Ministry of Education, the enrolment rate has tripled between 2005 and 2009 from 4.4% to 10.5%.

cent), got places in both public and private universities (Chege, Komote, Mwangi, & Njoroge, 2015). Those who are not admitted to public universities can either join private universities or seek higher education overseas. There are also government and private institutions that offer diploma and certificate courses.

2.6 Higher education in Kenya

University of Nairobi was the first university in Kenya, established in 1971. As time went by, the number of students seeking university education increased tremendously, resulting in the establishments of other universities. Moi University was established in 1984, followed by Kenyatta University in 1985 and Egerton University in 1988, which were previously Teacher Training Colleges and the latter an Agriculture college. Over the last three decades, there has been a continued increase in the numbers of Kenyans seeking higher education. According to information from the Kenyan Government Ministry of Education Science and Technology as of 2014 there were 22 government owned and 31 private universities. In 2014, the number of students enrolled in public universities was 363,334 and 80,448 in private universities (The Economic Survey, 2015). At least 60 per cent of the enrolments in public universities were male.

Although there has been an increase in the number of universities in Kenya, Kenyan students continue to seek higher education in Western countries. This has mainly been due to problems facing higher education in Kenya and Africa as a whole. In the last three decades, many African countries including Kenya have experienced a crisis in higher education. This has been brought about by three major related problems: chronic funding problems due to lack of government support and foreign funding, declines in quality of teaching and research brought about by an increase in the number of private universities which tend to sacrifice quality for profit, and a significant increase in student enrolments which led to a massively

increased academic workload and a subsequent mass exodus of academic staff (Chege et al., 2015; Wangenge-Ouma & Nafukho, 2011).

The problems that Kenya's higher education is experiencing have brought about fear that the quality of education in most universities is on a downward trend (Magutu, Mbeche, Nyaoga, Ongeri & Ombati, 2010; Munene, 2015; Nyaigotti-Chacha 2004). University of Nairobi, which is the top university in Kenya, is ranked 7th in Africa and 702 in the world by the Times Higher Education World University Rankings. The downward trend of Kenyan universities is not the only reason pushing students—and especially female students— to seek higher education in Australia and other developed countries; the education and social structure in Kenya tends to marginalise women and limits their access to higher education (Keriga & Burji, 2009; Kivoi, 2011; Mwangi 2002; Nyaigotti-Chacha 2004).

My research participants told me in their interviews that they came to study in Australia because of limited access to higher education in Kenya and their desire for quality overseas education. Many of the research participants were studying courses that were not previously offered in Kenya; for example, a Bachelor of Nursing or courses in areas that are too competitive such as engineering. Gender inequalities in Kenya's institutions of higher education and their longing for quality education pushed my research participants to study in Australia.

The next section discusses gender disparities in Kenya's education system from primary schools through to universities.

2.7 Gender disparity in Kenya's education system

Gender disparity affects Kenya's education system at all levels. Female enrolments from primary schools to universities remains low compared to that of male students (Chege et al., 2015; Lucas & Mbiti, 2012). There are more girls enrolled in primary schools than in secondary schools. This may have been because of the introduction of free primary education in 2003.

The number of female students who complete primary and secondary education remains low compared to their male counterparts, thus making gender disparity more prevalent in universities and other institutes of higher education. The table below shows both male and female enrolments in Kenya's primary and secondary schools and universities between 2011 and 2014.

Figure 2: Student enrolment (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics [KNBS], 2015)

Education

Table 10: Student Enrolment by Type of Educational, Training Institution and Sex, 2011 - 2014

		2011		2012		2013		2014	
		Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Enrolment in Primary School	000	4,887.3	4,673.7	4,972.7	4,784.9	5,019.7	4,837.9	5,052.4	4,898.4
Enrolment in Secondary School	"	948.7	819.0	1,019.0	895.8	1,127.7	976.6	1,202.3	1,107.6
Enrolment in Universities[1]	"	127.5	91.2	140.2	111.0	214.0	147.4	259.6	184.2
Teacher Training Institutions	Number	14,912.0	14,701.0	15,180.0	15,516.0	18,235.0	18,878.0	19,523.0	20,330.0
Technical Institutions	"	53,585.8	48,173.0	77,260.0	50,431.0	88,064.0	59,945.0	89,765.4	58,377.0

[1] Includes students in National Universities and Private accredited Universities and unaccredited universities

In recent years, as evidenced in the figure above, there has been an expansion of higher education, which has seen an increase in the number of students enrolled in universities. According to the information provided by Kenya National Bureau of Statistics in the figure above there are now over 400,000 students enrolled in Kenyan universities. Eighty per cent of the enrolments are in public universities and twenty per cent in private universities. However, in spite of the increased enrolments there is still an imbalance in proportions of girls' enrolment in universities compared to boys. The figure above indicates that in 2014 only about 40 per cent of all university enrolments were female students compared to males at 60 per cent (see appendix A for more information). This is attributed to the patriarchal, social and educational structures found in Kenya which are designed to favour men and which isolate, frustrate and marginalise women (Kamau, 2004; Mwangi, 2002; Omwami, 2014). In addition, in some rural communities—especially among the Maasai and the Samburu—most parents prefer to educate

boys than girls particularly when resources are limited (Righa, 2013; Warrington & Kiragu, 2012). In some instances, girls are married off early to provide money to support their families. Also in some communities, girls are denied the opportunity to go school because their parents fear that sending them to school will make them interact with boys, resulting in pregnancies (Bifwoli, 2009).

Although Kenya's education system is not meant to discriminate against girls, it is designed in such a way that it favours boys more than girls. There are certain situations where girls have been denied freedom to choose subjects they would wish to study, such as pure sciences on the pretense that girls (Amunga, Musasia & Maiyo, 2010; Mwingi 2008) poorly perform the subjects. Many girls in Kenya often prefer subjects that conform to their traditional roles and end up taking courses such as history and home science that do not help them maximise their opportunities in the labour market (Ajowi & Obura, 2012; Amunga & Musasia, 2011; Kitetu, 2008). In secondary schools, girls tend to shy away from science subjects, and those who do enroll end up doing poorly compared to their male counterparts (Onsongo, 2011). The reason why girls dislike or do poorly in science courses is because of a lack of role models, fear of mathematic-related courses and hostile attitudes towards females who showed an interest in non-traditional subjects such as agriculture, engineering and computing (Ajowi & Obura, 2012; Keriga & Bujra, 2009). Most girls therefore, are attracted to arts-based subjects such as commerce, education and law. In spite of their remarkable performance in arts subjects in secondary schools, being admitted into public university for an arts degree is very competitive, as female students have to compete with their male counterparts. It is not surprising then, that there are many women enrolled in private universities that tend to offer arts-based courses (Agesa & Agesa, 2005; Keriga & Bujra, 2009; Mulongo, 2013).

Kenyan female students who complete secondary education and do not secure a place in public universities for a science course, or do not wish to attend private universities, pursue

education in developing countries such as Australia, United States of America, United Kingdom or Canada. However, it is important to note that only a very small number of female students can afford private universities or to study abroad because nearly half of Kenya's population lives below poverty line.[9]

In the next section, I look at some of the causes of gender disparity in Kenya's education. I discuss the social inequalities in Kenyan society that further exacerbates the marginalisation of girls in education, and the cultural and economic inequalities that limit access to education for female students.

2.8 Inequalities in Kenyan society

Research indicates that disparities in Kenya's education system are mainly caused by the patriarchal nature of the Kenyan society and poverty, which makes it difficult for girls to receive proper education (Colclough, Al-Samarrai, Rose & Tembon, 2003; Elimu Yetu Coalition, 2003; Ombati, 2015)

2.8.1 Patriarchy

Kenya is a multi-ethnic country it has forty-two tribes and sixty-nine languages spoken. The Kikuyu is the largest tribe, followed by Luhyia and Luo. All of these tribes have their own customs and traditions, which are still practiced today, especially in the rural areas. Kenyan society is often described as a patriarchal (Chesoni, 2006; Mwangi, 2002; Omwami, 2014). Patriarchy is a based on the principle of masculinity and gender inequality that results in the discrimination and subordination of women (Kilonzo & Maseno, 2011; Wing 2003). There are three reasons why patriarchy is embedded in Kenyan society.

Firstly, many Kenyan communities—before the arrival of Europeans in the 1890s— were governed by a council of elders. The council consisted mainly of elderly men (Kariuki,

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[9] World Bank report

2010). Decisions affecting the community were left to the council and the men of the community. Women were considered subservient and dependent to men. Their roles in the community were mainly to farm the family land, care for children, maintain the homestead and tend to their husbands. Educating girls is still seen in some communities as preventing girls from taking up those roles. Until recently, many African societies saw educating girls as 'wasteful' because it would prevent them from getting married or cause them to have marriage problems (Colclough et al., 2003; Elimu Yetu Coalition, Commonwealth Education Fund, 2003; Ombati, 2015).

Secondly, patriarchy was reinforced when the British social system was imposed on Kenya during the colonial era. British common law placed men as the head of households and owner of family property (Kameri-Mbote, 2000; Kariuki, 2010). In addition, during the colonial period, there was land redistribution and many African communities lost their lands to colonialists. Women lost access to land, making them economically dependent on men. The colonial education system did not assist women in gaining their economic independence either; instead, it focused on training them for duties that were associated with domestic matters such as cooking, cleaning, gardening and taking care of their families. Men on the other hand, were given tasks that required some formal education such clerical duties. This resulted in women receiving less education than the men (Agesa & Agesa 2005; Chege & Sifuna, 2006; Omwami, 2011). Gender disparity still prevails in Kenya's education system, since this attitude towards educating women still continues today.

Thirdly, Kenya's constitution after independence discriminated and marginalised women as it restricted women from full enjoyment of fundamental freedoms (Chesoni, 2006). According to Nzomo and Kameri–Mbote (2003), "until 1997, section 82 of the Kenyan constitution dealing with the question of discrimination excluded 'sex' as an objectionable ground for discrimination" (p.1). In addition, Section 82 (4) exempted a number of the laws

from the provisions against discrimination directly affecting women's rights and legitimising traditional positions that accord women less privilege than men do.

In 2010, Kenya adopted a new constitution that enhances gender equity. Women's rights within the issues of citizenship, land and property rights, participation in the political process and discrimination, have all been improved under the new constitution (Kimani & Maina, 2010). However, there is still a need for Kenya to develop an economically, socially and politically empowering education to women, as one of the challenges facing education in Kenya is gender disparity.

2.8.2 Poverty

Other than patriarchy, most Kenyan girls are unable to access education because of poverty. About half of Kenya's population of forty million people live in poverty. The term *poverty* is a complicated concept and with different definitions. According to World Bank, poverty is:

> Pronounced deprivation in well-being, and comprises many dimensions. It includes low incomes and the inability to acquire the basic goods and services necessary for survival with dignity. Poverty also encompasses low levels of health and education, poor access to clean water and sanitation, inadequate physical security, lack of voice, and insufficient capacity and opportunity to better one's life. (World Bank, 2001 p.15)

In Kenya, poverty manifests itself in the forms of malnutrition, hunger, illiteracy, lack of shelter and the inability to access basic social services such as education, health and sanitation.[10] The majority of the poor in Kenya are women (Muiruri, 2010). The main reason for this according to Kimani and Kombo (2010) is that they have limited access to education since a female child is given less preference compared to a male child in most Kenyan communities. In addition, women have no ownership, access or control of family assets and

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[10] Republic of Kenya Sessional Paper No.3 of 1999

resources since in the traditional practices and beliefs of many Kenyan communities, men own and control family assets.

When Kenya gained independence in 1963, the main goal of the government was to eliminate poverty, illiteracy and diseases in order to achieve sustainable development. Emphasis was placed on education and this was heavily invested in because it was seen as a means of eradicating poverty and diseases. Educating women was beneficial because it would result in improvement in agriculture production, food security, child nutrition and health. (Oniang'o & Mukudi, 2002). However, in spite of the heavy investment in education even to date, and the introduction of free primary education policy in 2003, not all Kenyan children have access to education. (Maangi, 2014) This is mainly due to poverty; in other words, poverty is a threat to education in spite of the Kenyan government using education to eradicate it.

It is difficult for girls in Kenya, just like in many under-developed countries, to receive education in a poor household; this is because girls' labour substitutes their mothers' (World Bank, 2011). In poor households in Kenya, girls as young as five years old perform household duties. They do domestic chores such as cooking, cleaning, taking care of siblings, fetching firewood and water while their mother spends the day working manual jobs. In other instances, girls from the age of ten years old, especially in rural areas, are sent to urban areas to work as house helps in order to support their family instead of going to school. According to Bass (2004), ninety-five per cent of domestic child workers in Kenya were females and they contributed significantly to the families' income.

In some communities, especially those living in economically underdeveloped parts of Kenya such as the Samburu, girls are viewed as economic assets (Mokua, 2013). They can be married at a young age to bring wealth to their family. They are booked for marriage at an early age and therefore, see no need to attend school. In the Samburu community, a girl as young as five years is old enough to fetch a bride price for her father and can marry a man seven times

her age. A man interested in the girl books her by placing a beaded necklace on her neck and does not have to inform the parents as long as he pays the bride price to them.[11] With such customs and traditions, it is not surprising then that the Samburu community and other nomadic communities such as Maasai and Turkana from economically underdeveloped regions of Kenya have the lowest education enrolment rates and have the largest gender disparities in education.[12]

In 2003, Kenya introduced free primary education in an effort to increase literacy rates and to achieve universal primary education by 2015. While initially there was a significant increase in enrolments when the free primary education policy was introduced, enrolments in public schools are declining compared to private schools (Maangi, 2014). Critics of Kenya's education question whether the quality of education has been compromised for quantity resulting in the increase in private school enrolments. There has been evidence of overcrowding in classrooms, increased student-to-teacher ratios and inadequate resources (Bold, Kimenyi, Mwabu & Sandefur, 2011; Maangi, 2014). According to the Uwezo Report (2011), it appears that the free primary policy, which was intended to improve enrolment and access of primary education, has created other inequalities that are poverty related.

Poverty can also affect the quality of education being provided. I use the term *quality education* cautiously as it is a rather vague and contentious term (Mualuko, 2007). Various people may have a different way of defining it and therefore may use different indicators to describe quality education. For some, emphases may be on the inputs while for others it may be the processes and outcomes (Mualuko, 2007; UNESCO, 2004; UNICEF, 2000). In Kenya, whichever way you describe quality of education, poverty seems to affect the provision of quality education in several of ways such as availability of facilities and resources, qualified teachers, level of students' health, increased dropout rates and so on. The economic disparities

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[11] The Daily Nation Thursday January 28, 2010 - "For the price of a necklace, a moran can wed a 4-year-old."
[12] UNESCO report Educational Marginalization in Northern Kenya

across Kenya are very grim (Mulongo, 2012). The gap between the poor and the rich continues to grow in Kenya and the low education standards emerging in government schools has forced parents to send their children to private schools. The decline in quality of education in Kenya has inadvertently affected girls' access to education and it is only the rich families that can afford to take their daughters to private school, thus increasing their chances of enrolling in higher education. Support for private school is increasing since recent research shows that those who attend private schools performed higher than government schools in numeracy, literacy and Swahili (Uwezo Report, 2011).

2.9 Kenyan Students studying overseas

Migration of Kenyan students to Europe, United States of America and Australia can be traced back to 1960s (Odhiambo, 2013). The number of Kenyan students seeking to study overseas has slightly declined compared to what they were a few years ago. UNESCO estimates there are currently just over 13,000 Kenyan students in overseas universities down from nearly 20,000 a decade ago. This is mainly due to the economic growth that Kenya has experienced in the recent years (International Consultants for Education and Fairs-ICEF, 2016). Many students now prefer to study in Kenya than overseas because of the increase in the number of local universities, which are less expensive than international universities.

However, there is still demand for international education in Kenya because the increase in the number of universities has brought about concerns of the quality of higher education. Lack of government funding, high numbers of enrolment that lead to over working of lecturers, lecturers leaving for better jobs overseas and many private universities sacrificing quality for quantity, have resulted in decline in quality of higher education (Chege et al., 2015; Odhiambo, 2013 and Ouma & Nafukho, 2011). Trends in increase in the number of international students show that developing economies are growing in tandem with international student mobility. The demand for international education will continue in Kenya, as is the trend in fast-growing

African economies like Nigeria where international student mobility is on the rise.[13] Kenyan families that can afford still prefer to send their children to study in countries such as USA, UK and Australia because of they want quality education that will improve their job prospects at home and overseas (Odhiambo, 2011). UNESCO estimates that today there are just over 13,000 Kenyan students studying in various higher education institutions across the world[14]. According to UNECSO, United States of America, United Kingdom and Australia have the highest numbers of Kenyan international students respectively.

According to Albatch (2015) many international students from developing countries who study in countries like the US, Canada and Australia do not return to their home countries after completion of their studies instead they prefer to work in their host countries because they are not guaranteed jobs when they return to their countries. Host countries do not want international students to return to their home countries because they want them to work in employment sectors that have skills shortage such science, technology, engineering and mathematics (Albatch, 2015; Gribble and Blackmore, 2012). Australian government also allows international students to work part time, making it possible for them to fund their education in Australia (King, Marginson and Naidoo, 2011). Kenyan international students studying in countries like USA, Canada, Australia and the UK do not return to Kenya after graduating instead they prefer to live and work in their host countries (Fraser- Abder, 2014)

2.10 Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed Kenya's education system and highlighted gender and economic inequalities that are rooted in Kenya's education system. Literature on gender and education in Kenya (Agesa & Agesa 2005; Colclough et al., 2003; Elimu Yetu Coalition, Commonwealth Education Fund, 2003; Onsongo, 2011) indicate that there is gender disparity that is present in

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[13] http://monitor.icef.com/2015/11/the-state-of-international-student-mobility-in-2015/
[14] http://uis.unesco.org/en/uis-student-flow

Kenya's education system, and gives three main reasons for its existence. First, the type of formal education that was introduced to Africa by missionaries and colonial government sidelined women by offering domestic courses that trained them for duties such as cooking, cleaning, gardening and taking care of their families while men were taught subjects that prepared them to do clerical duties. This resulted in women receiving less education than the men (Agesa & Agesa 2005) do. Secondly, some ethnic groups' cultural practices inhibit women from attaining education; educating girls is seen as wasteful as they are expected to get married and assume roles of taking care of their families (Colclough et al., 2003; Elimu Yetu Coalition, Commonwealth Education Fund, 2003; Mulongo, 2013; Ombati, 2015). Thirdly, poverty in Africa prevents girls from attending schools because they are forced take up domestic responsibilities while their mothers find work (Ombati, 2015), or married off at an early age so that their parents are paid dowry (Kariuki, 2010). While the gender gap in primary education has reduced over the years, there is still a fewer number of girls compared to boys pursuing secondary school and higher education (see Figure 2). In spite of the massive expansion of education in Kenya over the recent years, gender inequalities and poverty continue to influence the development of higher education in Kenya. The proportion of girls' enrolment declines as they move up the educational ladder. This is mainly due to the patriarchal nature of Kenyan society, the society's attitude towards educating women, and the fact that poverty affects women the most in Kenya. This chapter highlights the challenges that Kenyan female students undergo in pursuit of education. It is rich families that are able to receive quality education in Kenya because they can afford to study overseas.

In my next chapter, I discuss the conceptual framework that underpins this study, namely African feminism, critical race feminism theory and international education.

Chapter Three – Race, gender and education

3.1 Introduction

My study conceptualises ways in which African female students from Kenya construct their identity, and how they position themselves or are positioned as African female international students within Australian universities and in the broader Australian community. It examines how discourses of African femininity, race, gender and education shape the way in which they construct their identity, are understood and positioned.

The term *identity* is complex to define as it is discussed and interpreted differently by many researchers in different academic fields. In order to understand how African female students, construct their identity, I draw on the sociological understandings posited by CRF scholars, black feminist scholars, postcolonial scholars and other critical scholars   that views identity as flexible, dynamic and constructed (Crenshaw, 1991; Joseph, 2008; Mirza & Sheridan, 2003; Mohanty, 2014; Wing, 2000). According to these scholars, identity is not formed in the internal concepts of self, rather in the adoption of changing representation and narratives that we generate and articulate in our individual and social experience; being is always becoming. There is the interplay between one's subjective, personal experiences and one's collective experiences Individuals therefore are always constructing themselves and have multiple layers of identity.

The African female students in my study, prior to commencing their studies in Australia, negotiated personal, subjective and collective identities as they juggled their multiple roles as women, daughter, wife, student and other roles within Kenyan society. Their gender, race, social class, age, religion and other social dimensions shape their multiple identities. Their personal identity represents their individual uniqueness while their collective identities are shared experiences of a group that gives them a sense of belonging (Brewer & Gardner, 1996).

A person can have a sense of identity to different groups hence have multiple identities. *Multiple identity* is a phenomenon of constructing different identities in relation to whatever social context a subject is related to at a particular moment (Padua, 2012).

My research participants are not only negotiating ways of being Kenyan women in drawing on their lived experiences in Kenya, but also negotiating new ways of being, doing and being in their new cultural, social and educational environment in Australia. As noted earlier three main bodies of literature; African feminism, international education and critical race feminism (CRF) inform the paradigms that underpin this study.

3.2 Notions of African femininity

I began by examining sociological and feminist literature that conceptualises the identity of African women in order to understand the notion of being a woman in an African society. I looked at literature by African feminist scholars from East and West Africa as they have written extensively about African feminism. I draw on the work of Akujobi (2011), Ampofo, Beoku-Betts and Osirim, (2008), Beoku-Betts (2004, 2005, 2008), Kamau (2004) Maundeni (1999), Mwangi (2002), Nkealah (2006), Oduol and Kabira (2000), and Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) to understand femininity in the African context.

My research participants are young female students from Kenya studying in Australia. They come from societies in which femininity is constructed and represented differently than in Australian society. In this study, I do not essentialise notions such as African or African feminism or African women or African culture. I understand that there are differences and similarities in these concepts. Furthermore, different historical and cultural contexts of the African nations complicate these notions. In Africa, the definition and use of the term *feminism* is very problematic. There are misconceptions that surround the concept of feminism because it can be interpreted as being anti-male, anti-culture and anti-religion in its theoretical

framework (Nkealah, 2006). Due to the complexities that surround the use of the term feminism, various women writers and scholars from Africa have come up with terms that describe African feminism.

Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) for example, came up with the term *stiwanism,* originating from STIWA, an acronym that stands for Social Transformation In Africa Including Women. This supports an African-centred feminism and insists on African women's participation as equal partners in social transformation in Africa. Catherine Acholonu (1995) on the other hand uses the concept of *motherism,* which she argues is an Afrocentric alternative to feminism, placing motherhood, nature, nurture, and respect for the environment at the centre of its theorising. Obioma Nnaemeka's (2004) *nego-feminism* refers to feminism of negotiation and acts as a guide in understanding African women struggles. Mary Kolawole (1997) and Chikwenye Ogunyemi (1996) came up with the notion *womanism,* which they argued was more appropriate than *feminism* in describing African women's engagement in social transformation (Arndt, 2002). There are therefore various forms of African feminisms and are multi-faceted, multi-purposed and reflect the diverse nature of feminist scholarship on the African continent (Akin-Aina, 2011). Despite these differences, literature on African feminism shows that it is guided by basic principles that are based on the positioning of African women in traditional African cultures, historical, colonial, and multi-dimensional contexts.

3.2.1 Tenets of African feminism

African feminism, like all other feminisms, promotes equality for women. Literature on African feminism (African Feminist Forum, 2006; Arndt, 2002; Falola & Amponsah, 2012; Kolawole, 1997; Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994) reveals that there are basic tenets that guide African feminism. First, African feminists such as the Black women or women of colour in the Global North recognise that they do not have a homogeneous identity as feminists; instead they acknowledge and celebrate their diversities and share a commitment to transform African societies and

African women in particular (Madunagu, 2008; Turshen, 2010). Secondly, African feminists cast a critical eye on colonialisation and post-colonialism by recognising that their struggles are inextricably linked to their past (Turshen, 2010). Thirdly, they acknowledge that they are part of a global feminist movement against all forms of patriarchal manifestations, and that their experiences are linked to that of other women in the world with whom they have shared solidarity (African Feminist Forum, 2006). African feminism, like all other feminisms, also places patriarchy at the centre of its analysis in order to challenge patriarchy effectively, and assert that other systems of oppression such as race and religion also need to be challenged (Madunagu, 2008). African feminism aims to fight and end all forms of patriarchal oppressions and exploitation. Lastly, African feminism is committed to empowering women with emphases on equal rights in order to improve and uplift their lives (Turshen, 2010). African feminists are constantly negotiating with African traditions and customs in order to free them from oppression and disempowerment.

The principles of African feminism provide an insight into ways African women construct and understand their identity, how they are positioned in the society and how they negotiate their rights and lives in oppressive patriarchal societies that they live in. This is important to my research on Kenyan female international students as it provides a framework in which to analyse how they construct their identity as African women in both Kenya and Australia. How is it different being a woman in Kenya or in Australia? How are they empowered or oppressed because of their gender in both societies where patriarchy is experienced differently? African feminism is also concerned with equal rights for women. My research seeks to understand ways in which my research participants are empowered and understand their rights as women in both Kenya and Australia.

One of the ways that African feminism empowers women is by problematising the subservient position of African women by pointing to the roles of women during the pre-colonial time.

3.2.2 African women in the pre-colonial era

In order to understand the historical context of the way African women are positioned in traditional African culture, I turn to previous studies on African women (Diop, 1989; Falola & Amponsah, 2012; Mbiti, 1988; Shwarz-Bart, 2003). These studies indicate that before the arrival of colonialists and missionaries in Africa in the 1870s, the status and roles of African women were very different. They were not perceived as dependent and subordinate to men or sidelined to positions of power, as is the case today; instead, they had important economic, religious and political roles in the African society. For example, among the Yoruba of Nigeria, relations between men and women were based on notions of seniority; hence, women and men held powerful positions based on their age (Ampofo et al., 2008). Similarly, Kikuyu women from Kenya were in charge of the land and were major food producers. They had power in the production and processing of food. In West Africa, women were in charge of trade and exchange of goods in their communities. In some ancient African communities, women dominated the positions of spiritual and religious power (Kasongo, 2010; Mbiti, 1988). They were also involved in the governance and administration of their society; for example, some ancient African communities such as Kush and Aksum were governed by powerful women (Falola & Amponsah, 2012; Shwarz-Bart, 2003). In traditional African society, women also had a vital role of building and stabilising their communities. The survival of the family and the future of marriage depended a great deal on the African woman. African women played a key role in the education and the teaching of social, ethical and moral values to children, which were part of the cultural standards for evaluating proper societal behaviour (Afisi, 2010).

Although women in pre-colonial African society had certain powers, many cultures were mainly patrilineal and patriarchal; therefore, men had a predominant force. In the pre-colonial era, women were to some extent subordinate to men under the African Customary Law, but in many respects, the roles of men and women were complementary in nature (House-Midamba, 1990). For example, among the Kikuyu of Kenya, although women had no political rights their position was of considerable importance. Their husbands consulted them in all matters that affected the home and many significant ceremonies and rites such circumcisions, centred around women (Leakey, 2007).

3.2.3 African women during the colonial era

The role and status of women changed when Africa was colonised by Europeans between the 1870s and 1960s (Kamau, 2010). Before the arrival of the missionaries and colonialists, African women were involved in the economic output of their communities. However, this changed since colonialists' interests in Africa were mainly economic, and African women lost control of their land. The colonialists wanted land to access raw material for their markets and profitable investment outlets (Nardo, 2010). Colonialists disregarded the African social and economic structures that existed; instead, they introduced structures that sidelined women and made them dependent on men. They emphasised male dominance by transferring men's supervisory rights over land to individual legal ownership (Elkins, 2005). African women did not only lose their land to the colonialists, but their roles as women were also displaced. They were no longer in charge of the family but relied on their husbands who worked for the colonial government. The missionaries also sidelined women with their ascribed message of female subjugation, obedience and domesticity thus redefining roles of women (Akin-Aina, 2011; Mikell, 2011).

As discussed in the previous chapter, the colonial government and the missionaries provided education that put emphases on men as the head of the family and the main

breadwinner of the family, requiring him to work for the colonial government in order to provide for his family (Agesa & Agesa 2005; Kamau, 2010). During the colonial period, women– especially in Kenya–were not provided opportunities through education to gain economic   independence, but instead they were trained on duties that were associated with domestic matters such as cooking, cleaning, gardening and taking care of their families. In some cases, like in Kenya among the Kikuyu, women who were once in charge of food production in their community were rendered helpless. They became labourers in colonial farms where some were subjected to physical and sexual abuse (Ndambuki, 2010; Pedersen, 1991; Presley, 1992).

According to St. Clair (1994), the colonialist perspective of gender roles was that women were subordinate to men and that their roles were less important because they were confirmed within the family unit. It was the men that had the decision-making power, the wisdom and the knowledge to build their communities. During colonialism, the status of an African woman changed from being important and independent to subservient and dependent on men, as is with case in many African communities today.

3.2.4 African women in the post-colonial era

Today, in spite of many women in Africa having various levels of education and conducting work in different sectors of Africa's labour force,[15] traditional African women's roles and responsibilities in Africa is still understood as that of bearing children, maintaining the family and investing in their children's upbringing (Falola & Amponsah, 2012; Mwangi, 2002). As Mwangi (2002) states, "although a great number of women, particularly in the city, participate in the paid labor outside their homes, they also continue to take up domestic responsibilities" (p.23). Femininity in many African societies is constructed using images such as the mother

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[15] Within sub-Saharan Africa, Burundi, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique and Tanzania have particularly high rates (over 80%) of women's labour force participation (Heintz and Valodia 2008b).

and stereotypes of women's roles, abilities and personal characteristics attributed to the ideal woman (Kabanyoro, 2008). Literature on the social values of women in Africa (Beoku-Betts & Ngaruiya-Njambi, 2005; Hussein, 2005; Kiyimba, 2013) shows a widespread portrayal of women as individuals who are passive, receptive, nurturing vessels, not independent and whom deserve status and respect only when they are owned by men. Customary marriage laws in some communities in Kenya, Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe still require men to pay bride price for their wives, thus making men treat them as inferior and at times abuse them (Maundeni, 1999; Ukpokodu & Ukpokodu, 2012). Despite many economic and cultural changes that have taken place in Africa, women are positioned as subservient and subordinate to men and their roles are understood as child-bearing and maintaining domestic responsibilities. The positioning of women as subservient to men is not a surprise because many African societies today are structured along patriarchal systems.

In the following section, I discuss patriarchy and oppression as it is understood within various forms of feminisms. They are important in understanding gender relations and how women are positioned within the Kenyan society, the broader African society and the world in general.

3.3 Patriarchy and the oppression of women

Within various forms of feminism, the concept of patriarchy has a variety of meanings and has been used to analyse the principles underlying women's oppression (Beechey, 1979; Crenshaw, 1989; Walby, 1990; Wing, 2003). Theoretically, the concept has been used to address the real basis of subordination of women and to analyse the particular forms, which it assumes. The literal meaning of the term *patriarchy* is 'rule of the father' and its original use was to describe a specific type of male-dominated family, which included women, junior men, children and slaves (Harrington, Marshall & Müller, 2012; Walby, 1990). Within feminist discourses,

patriarchy is understood as domination by all men over all women in all areas of the society. Feminist scholars (Walby, 1990; Wing, 2003) argue that patriarchy is a "system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women" (Walby, 1990, p.214).

Patriarchy operates in many societies, however not all women are oppressed alike since the cultural and institutional practices of patriarchy are located within social dimensions such as religion, race, class and ethnicity. In African societies, patriarchy is practiced within the African culture and is upheld in many religions (Bennett, 1993; Kambarami, 2006; Njogu & Orchardson-Mazrui, 2006). In patriarchal African society, authority remains entirely in the hands of men (Kariuki 2010; Maseno & Kilonzo, 2010). Women in Kenya for example are constantly reminded of the superior status of men. Young girls from birth grow up in cultural practices that remind them of the inferior status they have compared to their brothers. They are socialised early on in their lives within a system of norms, attitudes, values and skills that tend to emphasise gender differentiation (Kariuki, 2010; Mwangi, 2002; Wamahiu, Opondo, & Nyaga, 1996; Wamue-Ngare & Njoroge, 2011).

It is important to note that there are feminist scholars (Bennett, 2010; Hansson & Henriksson, 2013; Kapasula, 2008) who critique the discourse that portrays African women as victims of patriarchal oppression. The critics assert that the patriarchal discourse dwells more upon the victimisation of African women. Feminists in Africa, while acknowledging that stereotypes of African women that highlight motherhood may at times operate in an oppressive manner due to the way they are often expressed in terms of child-bearing and being a good mother and wife, have tried to read other meanings to motherhood in ways that are empowering for women (Akujobi, 2011). For example, according to Akujobi, "in Yoruba community motherhood is said to confer privileges that give credence to the very foundations of society and women's presumed roles in it and thus symbolize fertility, fecundity, and fruitfulness"

(p.3). The African motherhood role is therefore not seen as subordinate but as central to the preservation and continuation of life.

What I sought when engaging with the literature on African feminism was to understand the notions of being an African female in sub-Saharan Africa. I found that according to African feminist scholars (Akujobi, 2011; Falola & Amponsah, 2012; Kapasula, 2008; Mwangi, 2002), the patriarchal nature of the African societies today constructs the identity of an African woman according to their roles of bearing children, maintaining the family and performing domestic duties. The literature also shows that many African women are positioned by their communities and societies as passive, nurturing and subservient to men (Beoku-Betts & Ngaruiya-Njambi, 2005; Hussein, 2005; Kiyimba, 2001). I also understood that there are essentialised understandings of being an African woman within the African context. However, when my research participants came to study in Australia, they were engaging with different notions of femininity circulating within the Australian context. My research explores ways in which these participants understand who they are as young African women within the African context, and how they construct themselves as young women in Australia where femininity is constructed and understood differently.

Australia is a multicultural society and there are multiple discourses of gender and femininity circulating within the Australian context. For example, femininity is understood differently between various Muslim, Asian, and European communities situated within Australia, and to those born in Australia. However, one of the dominant discourses of femininity that is present in Australia is linked to the notion of whiteness (Aveling, 2004; Joseph, 2013; Kowal, 2011).

3.4 Discourse of whiteness in Australia

Australia was a colony of the British Empire. Most of its early migrants came from the United Kingdom and wanted to remain a country that was made up of mainly of British or European people. Australia's colonial past created a belief that it is a white nation. In 1901, an Immigration Act was passed by the colonial government aimed at excluding all non-European migrants. This Act later came to be known as *The White Australian Policy*. Its assimilation policies sought to establish a unified white Australia (Aveling, 2004). The White Australia policy, which was dismantled in 1973, maintained racial discrimination. Although today there is now a discourse of cultural diversity, given the different waves of migration from Southern Europe, Asia and Africa, there is still a dominant discourse of whiteness because of the legacy of colonial history and the White Australian Policy (Aveling, 2004; Joseph, 2013; Moreton-Robinson 2002). Today, whiteness continues to be core to Australian national identity and is embedded in Australia's institutions and in the social practices of everyday life (Moreton-Robinson 2002; O'Dowd, 2009; Willis, 2012). Whiteness is linked to having power and privilege compared to 'non-whites.' It is "lived experience constituting, among other things, unearned privileges" (Dlamini, 2002, p. 58). The visible and public side of power in Australia is still Anglo-White (Hage, 1998; Kelada, 2008; Mackay, 2004; Willis, 2012) and many senior positions of authority such as politicians, judges, police force and diplomats are held by White people. In my research, I was also interested in how my research participants negotiate discourses of whiteness and femininity in the Australian context.

Over the years, Australian government has passed legislation that ensures women's rights and eliminates any form of gender discrimination. Women have equal access to the same opportunities, and there are now more women who are educated than men (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2011). Women have equal rights as men and they have more choices than before, including reproductive choice. Women not only have equal employment

opportunities, but there are family-friendly workplace policies that allow women to work part-time and take care of their families. A study conducted in 2012 by international consulting and management firm Booz & Company, found that Australian topped a list of 128 countries in women's access to education, equal pay, childcare and anti-discrimination policies (Women in Global Business, 2012). The director of the Federal Government's Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency, Hellen Conway, said the report showed that Australian women were among the best educated in the world and economically independent (The Act Women's Plan, 2013). Despite this, there are still many inequalities that Australian women face today. Men are still paid more than women, and there are fewer women holding managerial positions compared to men (Ibrat, 2014; Leahy, 2011; Noble 2014). A report by Australian Bureau of Statistics shows that on average, full-time working women's earnings are 17 per cent less per week than the average full-time working men's earnings.[16] Misogyny is also present in Australian society. For example, in 2012 Australia's first female Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, made a speech in parliament on sexism and misogyny in reaction to the Leader of the Opposition's disparaging remarks about women. In an interview, he questioned "the assumption that under-representation of women was a 'bad thing,'" and he wondered aloud whether men might be "by physiology or temperament, more adapted to exercise authority or issue command" (Maddison & Sawer, 2013: p.xii.) Violence against women is still common in Australian society; an Australian Bureau of Statistics personal safety survey shows that Australian women are most likely to experience physical and sexual violence in their home, at the hands of a male current or ex-partner. [17] In addition, discrimination by race and gender has been a major feature of society since European settlement in 1788 (Strachan and Burgess, 2002)

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[16] Australian Bureau of Statistics' Average Weekly Full-time Earnings data (cat. No. 6302.0)
[17] Australian Bureau of Statistics Personal Safety Survey 2012

According to Australian Human Rights Commission report, (2000) women also face discrimination as refugees, indigenous, or backgrounds other than English. In spite of the Racial Discrimination Act of 1975 and Sex Discrimination Act of 1984, Aboriginal and women from non- European races continue to face discrimination because of their race and gender particularly in employment sector (Dunn & Nelson, 2011; Sweller, Graham & van Bergen, 2012). The experiences of these groups of women are different to white women given the colonial history and white policy traditions of Australia (Ali & Syed, 2005; Syed, 2007). Non-European women are often perceived as lacking education and training compared to Australian women, have inadequate command of English and adjust slowly to Australian culture (Syed, 2007). While these factors may be the reason for them not gaining unemployment, skilled migrants particularly ethnic women also struggle to find employment. According to Syed (2007), indigenous and non-European women are under-represented in employment compared to white women. When I use the terms white women and non-European women I do not intend to homogenise their experiences because there are individual differences among these groups of women in terms of their socio-economic backgrounds, age, geographical location, level of education and so on which may directly or indirectly influence the way they are positioned in Australia. However, based on Australia's colonial historical legacies and the history of the White Australian Policy white women are more privileged in certain sectors of Australian society compared to non-white women.

The way dominant discourse of whiteness plays out within discourses of femininity and gender in Australian society is important in understanding how African female students studying in Australian universities construct their identity and how they are positioned within universities and in the broader Australian society. To understand racialised and gendered experiences of African female students in Australia, I engage with CRF, which puts race and

gender at the centre of its analysis in understanding how African women or women of colour are positioned within the Western countries particularly in the education institutions.

3.5 Critical race feminism

Critical race feminism (CRF) emerged at the end of twentieth century to emphasise the legal concerns of women who are in racial/ethnic minorities. CRF was conceptualised by Professor of Law, Richard Delgado, a legal scholar who came up with critical race theory, to provide a theoretical framework with which to view women of colour (Wing, 2007). Adrienne Katherine Wing, in her book titled, 'Critical Race Feminism: A Reader,' calls CRF:

> An embryonic effort in legal academia that emerged at the end of the twentieth century to emphasize the legal concerns of a significant group of people those who are both women and members of today's racial/ethnic minorities, as well as disproportionately poor (Wing, 2003, p. 1).

CRF was built on concepts from critical legal studies (CLS), critical race theory (CRT) and feminism jurisprudence (Wing, 2003). CRF draws on CLS and uses its framework to expose how the law has served as a tool to perpetuate not only unjust class hierarchies, which CLS was concerned with, but also race and gender hierarchies (Wing, 2003). The word *critical* in CRF is derived from CLS, a movement for social change started in the 1970s by predominantly white academics in the legal field that critiqued the way that law contributed to illegitimate social hierarchies, producing domination of women by men, non-whites by whites, and the poor by the wealthy (Wing, 2003). The term *critical* as conceptualised by CLS, is concerned with inequalities in society where certain groups of people are marginalised or discriminated against while others are privileged because of their status in the social hierarchies (Wing, 2003). Although CLS was concerned with issues of inequality, its analysis did not

include race or gender (Wing, 2003, 2007). CRF scholars according to Wing (2003) therefore, find CLS inadequately represents the identities of women and people of colour.

CRF also derives from CRT, which was built on insights from CLS. The initiators were Black scholars, including the founders Derrick Bell and Richard Degaldo, who felt that CLS often excluded the perspectives of people of colour (Wing, 2003). They were interested in studying and transforming the relationships between race, racism and power (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). CRT refers to *race* as a product of social thought and relation, meaning it is socially constructed and not biological or genetic (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). CRT explains *racism* as race being used to categorise human differences, where racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race giving them 'power' over other races (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). CRT challenges narrow approaches to providing social and economic justices and addresses contentious race issues in employment, education, racial proofing and immigration status (Crenshaw, 1991; Delgado & Stefancic, 1999, 2001). Although CRT included the perspectives of people of colour, it did not address the needs of women of colour. Some African American women scholars such as Kimberle Crenshaw (1989), Patricia Hill Collins (2002), and Mari Matsuda (1989) recognised a flaw in certain perspectives present in CRT literature: the assumption that the experiences of women of colour were the same as those of men of colour. Given that the experiences of females may differ significantly from those of males, CRF is thus a feminist critique within CRT (Wing, 2007, 2015).

The other major movement that CRF draws from is mainstream feminism, which was developed in response to gender oppression faced by middle-class and affluent white women (Wing, 2003, 2015). CRF embraces feminism that focuses on gender oppression in a patriarchal system. *Patriarchy* refers to a system that men use to dominate, oppress and exploit women (Wing, 2003). However, CRF finds that mainstream feminism essentialises all women, silencing the unique and varied experiences of women of colour (Crenshaw, 1991). CRF

therefore does not identify itself with mainstream feminist movements, because it rejects the essentialist notion, which assumes that women of colour share the same experiences as white middle-class women (Crenshaw, 1989). Wing (2003) refers to this essentialist notion as "identity addition," where experiences of Black women are seen as similar to those of white women, with the only difference being their race.

3.5.1 Tenets of critical race feminism

The tenets of critical race feminism are significant in analysing the experiences of women of colour. Firstly, CRF speaks of the uniqueness of experiences of women of colour by emphasising that the perspectives of women of colour are unique and different from those that impact the lives of Black men, white women and white men (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; Wing, 2003, 2015). Secondly, CRF is against all forms of oppression and the way they manifest in the lives of women of colour due to the intersectionality of race, gender and class. Thirdly, CRF looks through the lens of international law to fight all forms of oppression including gender violence, patriarchal systems, and economic and social oppressions against women globally (Wing, 2000). Fourth, CRF rejects the notions of essentialism and homogeneity; it suggests that women of colour have multiple political identities that should be considered. Fifth, CRF is multidisciplinary, drawing from a wide array of legal and non-legal fields such as Black Feminist Thought (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; Wing, 1997). Finally, CRF supports theories and practices that critique and combat both gender and racial oppression (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; Wing, 2003).

The use of such theoretical tenets allows one to recognise and understand the multi-faceted nature of experiences of women of colour. By drawing on CRF tenets, my study is able to analyse the multiple nature of Kenyan female international students' identities, understand the holistic way that these identities discriminate against or provide privilege to them, and that the experiences of these students is specific to each individual student.

CRF theoretical framework provides a way of understanding multiple positions of individuals or groups of individuals, particularly those stories of socially and politically marginalised persons living at the intersections of identities. CRF uses the term *marginalised* to refer to women being placed in unimportant or powerless positions within their society (Wing, 2003, 2007). It focuses on the experiences of marginalised groups of people, placing race, gender and other forms of oppression at the centre of the analysis and producing counter-stories that fight stereotypes that incorrectly position these groups of people (Cutts, Love & Davis, 2013). CRF seeks to understand how the society is structured through the intersections of race, gender, class and other social hierarchies.

3.5.2 Intersectionality, anti-essentialism and multiple-consciousness

CRF–in its analysis of race and gender–uses the terms *intersectionality*, *anti-essentialism* and *multiple-consciousness* (Garry 2012; Grillo, 2013; Wing, 2003). The term *intersectionality* is derived from the word 'intersect,' meaning one line that cuts through another, or streets crossing each other (Knudsen, 2005). The concept of intersectionality is not an abstract notion; Kimberle Crenshaw, one of the founders of CRF, puts it:

> If an accident happens in an intersection, it can be caused by cars traveling from any number of directions and, sometimes, from all of them. Similarly, if a Black woman is harmed because she is in an intersection, her injury could result from sex discrimination or race discrimination… (Crenshaw, 1989, p.149).

Crenshaw (1989) conceptualised the term to explain how Black women are caught between multiple systems of oppression marked by race, gender and economic hierarchies without being recognised for their unique experiences at the convergence of these systems. Crenshaw's explanation asserts that it is important to look at all systems of oppression at the same time, for example gender and race, and not gender *or* race when examining experiences of African women. When applied in studies of women of colour, intersectionality refers to the way women of colour are vulnerable to experiencing two or more oppressions simultaneously

(Bhopal & Preston, 2011; Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1991; Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; Limbert & Bullock, 2005; Wing, 2003). Intersectionality is now applied to study issues such as "ethnicity, class, age and sexual orientation identities, age, disability, religion, primary language, minority status, nationality, pregnancy status, marital status and immigration status" (Crenshaw, 1991; Wing, 1999, p. 18) that form part of women's identity.

Intersectionality as an analytical tool is "useful in tracing how certain people seem to get positioned as not only different but in some instances, marginalized" (Stauneas, 2003, p. 101). Various studies in the United States and Europe on experiences of women of colour in universities have used intersectionality as an analytical tool to indicate that racial and gender discrimination exists in Western higher education institutions (Carter, 2012; Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; Mirza, 1998; Mirza & Joseph, 2010; Phoenix, 2009). It has also been applied in studies of experiences of African women from different parts of Africa studying in North America and in European universities (Beoku-Betts, 2004; Beoku-Betts & Ngaruiya-Njambi, 2005; Maundeni, 1999). The concept of intersectionality as it relates to identity helps us to understand the multi-dimensional ways people experience life, especially how they see themselves and how they are treated by others because of their multiple identities. In the case of my research, intersectionality helps me to understand the multi-faceted ways in which the African female students in my study experience life because of their race and gender.

Apart from intersectionality, CRF scholars also use the term *multiple consciousness,* which was conceptualised by Mari Matsuda (1989) in discussions on experiences of women of colour. Multiple consciousness refers to the way in which women, especially those in the margins of society, experience "an awareness of oppression they face based simultaneously on their race/ethnicity and gender" (Wing, 2000, p.1). The concept of multiple consciousness is based on the idea that individuals are not born with a defined and fixed identity, rather identity is multiple, partial and at times contradictory (Crenshaw, 1991). Multiple consciousness

enables individuals experiencing oppression to understand how their oppression is not only linked to one form of their identity rather to an inextricable web of other identities such as race, class, ethnicity, culture, religion and economic status. It is through multiple consciousness that African women or people of colour develop the ability to shift their perspective between the viewpoint of a marginalised group to the viewpoint of a dominant culture, while belonging to both (Levit, 1998). According to Wing (2015), women of colour experience multiple consciousness as they learn to adjust in order to survive in racist patriarchal societies. My research is interested in ways in which African female students experience multiple consciousness as they construct their identities and adopt strategies to help them survive in Australia.

Critical race feminists reject the idea of essentialism. *Essentialism* in a feminist context refers to the attribution of a fixed essence to women. Elizabeth Grosz (1994) explains, essentialism entails the belief that "those characteristics defined as women's essence are shared in common by all women at all times" (p.84). CRF disagrees with this notion; instead it recognises the multiple locations and identities that women have (De Reus, Few & Blume, 2005; Wing, 2000, 2003, 2007) and adamantly advocates for race and gender consciousness (Rubinstein-Avila, 2007). CRF acknowledges that the notion of anti-essentialism is a complex one, that there are situations when taking an essentialist approach may be required and emphasises the importance of being a strategic essentialist (Wing, 2003). *Strategic essentialism* is a term conceptualised by Gayatri Spivak (1987) to refer to temporarily accepting an essentialist position in order to achieve a social agenda for a marginalised group. Taking a strategic essentialist position in feminist research is not uncommon. Joseph's (2013) research on Malaysian schoolgirls used Spivak's (1990, 1993) notion of strategic essentialism in dealing with the complexities of ethnic groups of Malays, Chinese and even the Indians. Spivak (1993) argues that where a person is situated is important when taking a strategic or anti-essentialist

position. In my study, I understand that my research participants as a group have many differences such as ethnicity, religion and economic backgrounds. However, taking a strategic essentialist approach in researching their experiences in Australia where I esssentialise their experiences as a group of Kenyan international female students is also important in understanding how they are perceived or positioned, ways in which they see themselves and it provides a stronger voice to a group that would otherwise go unnoticed. The notion of strategic essentialism also provides a social and activist agenda in improving the cultural, educational and economic situation of marginalised groups in emphasizing the collective experiences whilst at the same time acknowledging the importance of personal and subjective experiences.

Like all other theoretical frameworks, there have been discussions and debates about the use of CRF theoretical framework. Questions have been raised as to how one can measure feminist consciousness, intersectionality, empowerment, or liberation (Bengtson, Acock, Allen, Dilworth-Anderson & Klein, 2005). Feminist theorists still debate about how intersectionality should be defined, its appropriate parameters, and how it should be used. Nevertheless, feminists such as Phoenix (2006) who has used intersectionality in her studies, see such debates on its definition and its use as unavoidable. She states that no concept is perfect, and none is able to do all that it needs to do in order to be understood and to accomplish all that it wants to accomplish in women's studies. Davis (2008) reiterates this point by asserting that such debates on intersectionality are a plus in the production of contemporary feminist scholarship. In spite of these debates, CRF has grown from what it was a decade ago. It has crossed borders and is being used as a theoretical framework to study experiences of marginalised groups of women around the world (Andrews, 2000; Razack, Smith & Thobani, 2010; Wing, 2003, 2007).

Today, CRF does not focus on America only. It has extended the notion of race to examine the legal treatment of women of colour, both in developed and developing countries. Wing (2002) uses the term 'women of colour' to refer to all women in and outside United States of America who are socially constructed as people of colour or non-white. Wing (2000) added the word 'global' later in her work to examine multiple levels of discrimination of women around the world. Adrienne Wing's (2003) 'Global Critical Race Feminism: A Reader' introduces the vast number of challenges facing women as a result of their multiple identities around the world. For example, CRF theoretical framework has been applied to analyse the experiences of Afghan women (Wing, 2003), and Muslim women living in Western countries during the 'war on terror,' (Wing, 2015) to mention a few.

In Australia, CRF has been applied in research on Indigenous people. Research by Andrews (2000) used a CRF lens to analyse violence against women in Aboriginal Australian and Black South African communities. Andrews work demonstrates how CRF may provide the theoretical potential for analysing marginalised groups in a global human rights framework. Marchetti (2008) examined why the Australian Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC) did not take an intersectional approach when dealing with problems confronting Indigenous women. The research used intersectionality, as conceptualised by Crenshaw (1989), to examine the marginalisation experienced by Indigenous women as a consequence of Western legal processes. These studies offer an understanding of the analysis of intersectionality of race and gender and how this emerges in marginalising or privileging certain groups of women in Australia. This adds significance to my research, since CRF theoretical framework has not been used to study experiences of girls and women in schools and universities.

Like all feminist theories, CRF promotes gender equity and aims at empowering women in various sectors of the society (Wing, 2003). Education is important in empowering women

as it provides them with knowledge needed to bring change towards greater equality or greater freedom of choice and action, therefore resisting any form of discrimination.

3.6 Education and empowerment

The concept of *Empowerment* is important in my study in understanding the ways in which my research participants' identity practices empower or marginalize them in their different cultural and educational contexts in Australia. There are debates on whether empowerment can be considered a process or an outcome (Bernstein et al., 1994; Parsons, 1991; Rappaport, 1984), or whether it is both (East, 2000; Staples, 1990). From a feminist perspective, it can be seen as both; they focus on consciousness, which is aimed at uncovering the political roots of people's individual experiences of powerlessness and oppression (Gutierrez & Lewis, 1999). According to Black feminist Patricia Collins (1990) in her book 'Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment,' she explains empowerment as an outcome of changed consciousness, resulting from both internal transformations and the effects of these transformations on the broader community;

> Change can also occur in the private, personal space of an individual woman's consciousness. Equally fundamental, this type of change is also empowering. If a Black woman is forced to remain "motionless on the outside," she can always develop the "inside" of a changed consciousness as a sphere of freedom. Becoming empowered through self-knowledge, even within conditions that severely limit one's ability to act, is essential (Collins, 1990, P.111).

Similarly, Kabeer (2001) explains empowerment as "the expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them (P. 437). Both Kabeer (2001) and Collins (1990) in their definition of empowerment argue that there are two dimensions to empowerment; it is a process of change towards greater equality or greater freedom of choice and action, and agency where women themselves must be significant actors in the process of change being described or measured. Empowerment

therefore can be described as a change in mindset where an individual takes control or responsibility of his or her life or situation. It is about rejecting all forms of power domination against women and instead embracing an alternative vision of power based on a humanist vision of self-actualisation, self-definition, and self-determination (Collins, 1990). There is considerable evidence that shows that access to education can bring about changes in cognitive abilities which is essential in enabling women to question, reflect and act on conditions of their lives, and to gain access to knowledge, information and new ideas to help them do so (Kabeer, 2005). My research is interested in ways in which education empowers Kenyan female students studying in Australian universities. It draws on Collins' and Kabeer's explanation of empowerment as it investigates their racialised and gendered experiences. It examines how these groups of women are consciously aware of how the intersectionality of their race and gender positions them in Australia, and the strategic life choices they make in instances where they are perceived or positioned negatively.

3.7 International education

International education is the other body of literature that is important to my research. Apart from negotiating discourses of race and gender in the construction of their identity as young African female international students in Australia, my research participants also negotiate discourses of education—in particular, international education—given that they are positioned as international students by the Australian education system and the Australian Government Department of Immigration and Border Protection.

The term *international education* is not a new concept, but has been in existence for a century now (Dolby & Rahman, 2008; Walker, 2002). In the last decade, scholars have used different terms such as transnational education, comparative education, internationalisation of higher education and globalisation of higher education to describe international education

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(Cambridge & Thompson, 2004; Dolby & Rahman, 2008; Hayden, Rancic & Thompson, 2000; Hayden & Thompson 1995a, 1995b; McBurnie & Ziguras, 2009; Pasternak, 1998; Sylvester, 2002). While there is no consensus about what international education means, it is generally agreed that it constructs itself as a global business made up of spatially dispersed networks of places, institutions, scholars, administrators and students (Sidhu, 2003). International education refers to the broad range of educational activities including knowledge, culture and technology that cross national borders (Clyne, Marginson & Woock, 2001; Joseph, 2008; Ziguras & McBurnie, 2015). Australia and countries in Global North such as United Kingdom, USA, and Canada associate international education with economic value as a result of the recruitment of international students (Altbach, 2004; Dolby & Rahman, 2008; Le & Phan, 2013). There are also scholars who use a critical lens in understanding international education and are concerned about the unequal access to higher education markets, the negative effects of competition on domestic higher education institutions, the influx of low-quality foreign providers, and the potential for worsening of equity in access to higher education (Bashir, 2007; Sawir, 2013; Ziguras & McBurnie, 2015).

The different approaches to understanding international education are based on varying assumptions about the purpose of education, the role of faculty and students, and the educational context (Joseph, 2012, 2013b). The economic approach focuses on the global economic forces that are driving the practices of international education, such as the increase in recruitment of international students due declining state support for higher education worldwide and the rise of offshore and twining programs, and branch campuses overseas (Dolby & Rahman, 2008; McBurnie & Ziguras, 2007, 2009, 2011). Australia, UK and USA have institutions in foreign countries providing education. According to McBurnie & Ziguras (2009), in the last decade there are hundreds of thousands of students' enrolled in foreign education programs in their home countries particularly in Asia. The economic approach is

concerned with commercialisation of international education where international students are seen as 'customers' and the curriculum is seen as a commodity to be traded (Marginson, 2007, 2013). The economic characteristics of international education vary from country to country. It is fully commercialised in countries within Britain, Australia and New Zealand, while it is subsidised in Japan and in some parts of Germany (Ozga & Lingard, 2007). It is estimated that between 2000 and 2009, the number of foreign students worldwide grew by more than 75 per cent to reach 3.43 million, bringing billions of dollars to local economies. For example, international students contributed more than $30.5 billion to the U.S. economy (National Association of Foreign Student Advisers [NAFSA] report, 2015). In Australia, figures from Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) show that international education exports reached a record-high of AUS$18.1 billion (US$13.14 billion) for the 2014/15 fiscal year. All international students—including the research participants in my study—pay tuition fees that are much higher than those of local students, and only high-achieving students receive the limited scholarships that are available (Kotecha, 2012).

The cultural approach emphasises the value of cultural diversity that international students have. This approach argues that there are different forms of knowledge and different ways of seeing and knowing the world (Hébert & Abdi, 2013; Rahnema, 2001; Steiner-Khamsi, 2004). International students come from diverse cultures, they come to their host country with prior knowledge and experiences that are different from the local students. They enrich their host country by sharing their knowledge and experience through their interaction with local students (Harrison & Peacock, 2009; Matthews & Sidhu, 2005; Summers & Volet, 2008). Cultural diversity in the classrooms accompanied by meaningful interaction—both structured and unstructured—encourages both cultural understanding and global preparedness (Braskamp 2009; Gacel-Ávila 2005). Cultural interpretations of international education also acknowledge a hierarchy of knowledge, where one form is privileged above another, legitimated by power

and playing out differently from one context to another. It emphasises the need for a reciprocal dialogue, one that recognises other knowledge and experiences, and not just Westerners as experts and most knowledgeable (Koehne, 2006).

A critical approach to international education recognises that different knowledge exists in hierarchal ways, in which some are dominant and privileged while the others are subjugated (Hébert & Abdi, 2013). Post-colonialist, feminist and race theoretical frameworks provide critical perspectives to international education. The post-colonial lens focuses on the colonial inequalities and their social, political, economic and cultural consequences (Abdi, 2006; Abdi & Guo, 2008; Crossley & Tikly, 2004; Phillips & Schweisfurth, 2014; Spring, 2008). Similarly, CRT application in education addresses racial inequalities within education institutions (Decuir & Dixson, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1998, 2005). It is concerned about racial equality in the construction of curriculum, diversity initiatives and institutional policies (Patton, McEwen, Rendón & Howard-Hamilton, 2007). Feminists' theoretical framework focuses on gender equity in education. Feminists identify education as critical in emancipation and social justice (Maynard & Purvis, 1994b).

My study applies a critical lens and uses CRF theoretical framework to understand racialised and gendered experiences of these young women as international students in Australia. The study examines discourses of international education circulating within Australian context to understand how the young women construct their identity and how they are positioned or position themselves as international students within Australian universities and broader Australian community. By applying a critical view in international education in Australia, my study is interested in understanding how racial and gender inequalities within the education institutions shape the way African international female students construct their identity how these empower and marginalize them within the Australian context.

The growing number of international students in Australia has highlighted the importance of research in the internationalisation of higher education, the wellbeing of international students and their learning experiences. There have been several studies (Joseph, 2008, 2013, 2014; Matthews and Sidhu 2005; Sawir, 2011; Tsolidis, 2001) on the internationalisation of curriculum. These studies call for improvement in the curriculum in order to accommodate the learning needs of international students. Tsolidis (2001) highlights the need for classrooms to be responsive to dynamics brought about by ethnicity, gender and class. She argues that international students have as much to offer to teachers just as the other way round, and further states the need to provide marginalised students—including international students—with socially empowering knowledge in order to be successful. Similarly, Marginson (2007) and Sidhu (2004) discuss the importance of improving teaching methods and teacher-student relations to accommodate international students in Australian universities. Marginson (2007) argues that the curriculum is also seen as not doing enough to foster good domestic students' and international students' relations. Sawir (2011) adds that domestic students need to be more aware of the cultural resources brought by international students.

Apart from studies that have examined curriculum and classroom experiences of international students in Australia, there are also studies (Marginson, 2007, 2010; Nyland et al., 2007; Sawir, 2005) that have explored academic and social experiences of international students discussing academic and social challenges faced by international students. Sawir's (2005) study of international students from Asia discusses how students' prior learning experiences contributed to their learning difficulties in Australian classrooms. She argues that learning difficulties are grounded in weaknesses in students' prior learning experiences that focused on grammar and reading skills in teacher-centred classrooms, and in beliefs about language learning instilled during schooling. Nyland et al., (2007) investigated three different

types of loneliness that international students experience: personal caused by loss of family contact, social due to loss of social networks, and cultural triggered by loss of preferred culture. Marginson (2010), Nyland et al. (2007) and Zevallos (2012) discuss international students' wellbeing and examines security concerns, discrimination and workforce exploitation of international students.

Other studies (Doherty & Singh, 2008; Fotovatian, 2012; Kashima & Loh, 2006; Keohne, 2006; Marginson, 2013) examine how international students construct their identity. Koehne's (2006) study discusses discourses and discursive practices constructing international education. She examines ways in which international students are constructed within the discourses of international education in Australia. Koehne's study discusses the discourses that positions international students and calls for the need for a reciprocal dialogue, one which recognises other knowledge and experiences, and not just Westerners as experts and most knowledgeable. Kashima and Loh (2006), and Doherty and Singh (2008) discuss cultural identities of international students and highlight the 'mobile' nature of international students' identity or their multiple shifting identities. Fotovatian (2012) investigates institutional identity construction of postgraduate students, looks out of classroom departmental interactions and uses a sociocultural perspective of second language in use to map their approaches to the negotiation of institutional identity. Fotovatian's study found that despite similarities among the participants in the beginning as newcomers to a Western university, students chose different pathways for integration, engagement in institutional interactions and identity construction. Marginson (2013), in discussing identity formation of international students, argues that there is need to see international education as a process of self-formation for international students instead of a process of adjustments of international students to local requirements.

Apart from a few studies (Boey, 2013; Bullen and Kenway 2003; Ichimoto, 2004; Kenway and Bullen, 2003; Spark, 2010), there is a lack of a more comprehensive discussion

and debate about the international student experience from a gender perspective in Australia. Kenway and Bullen (2003) argue that the research should not generally focus on the negative positioning of female international students in relation to men in order to highlight their disadvantage instead a more nuanced approach is needed to study their experiences and should be grounded as much as possible in their experience. Although male and female international students may have some common experiences in their host country, female students' experiences are unique depending on their countries of origin, marital status, religion and societal expectations (Boey, 2013). The concept of gender cannot be viewed separately as it intertwines with other identities such as race, ethnicity and religion. International students come from diverse cultures, countries, religion, histories and ethnicities that influence their experiences in their host country. Kenway and Bullen (2003) article examines the role of race and gender in women postgraduate students' experience of intercultural study. Kenway and Bullen's study like my research examines the students' understandings of themselves as 'other', and how this impacts on their representations of 'self'. Their study suggest that these representations reflect a process of negotiation of identity that occurs in what we have called the global university 'contact zone'. Bullen and Kenway (2003) study resonates with my research as it analyzes the staff members' representations of the students from a postcolonial perspective. My research too examines how African female international students are positioned in Australian universities. Bullen and Kenway argue that such representations of the students differ in crucial ways from the students' self-representations, suggesting that in certain subtle ways such staff members are engaging with 'imagined' rather than 'real' women. Ichimoto (2004) discusses the experiences of Japanese women in postgraduate courses in Australian universities. The study looks at the women's lived experiences and interprets how higher education overseas affects their career aspirations and construction of Japanese femininity. Ichimoto's research informs my study in understanding how African female

international students' education experiences shape the way they construct their identities and careers. Although, Boey (2013), Ichimoto (2004), Kenway and Bullen (2003) studies inform my research, they do not provide enough analysis and discussions on how intersections of race and gender play out in positioning of these groups of women and how it influences the way, they construct their identity, which is the focus of my research.

It is evident from the research on international education in Australia that there are dominant discourses on international students circulating within Australia's institutions of higher learning. Some of the discourses—in particular academic discourse—position international students as passive rote learners (Egege & Kutieleh, 2004; Koehne, 2006; Sawir, 2013), who lack competency in English language (Hellstén & Prescott, 2004; Marginson et al., 2010) and are in need of pastoral care (Koehne, 2006). However, there is research (Biggs, 2001; Hellstén & Prescott, 2002; Koehne, 2006) that challenge these ways of speaking about international students, and shows that many international students come from cultures and learning environments that have different learning styles compared to Australia. In Australia, learning is student-centred, focuses on self-directed learning and encourages critical or analytical thinking (Burns, 1991; Robertson, Line, Jones & Thomas, 2000; Samuelowicz, 1987; Sawir, 2013; Sovic & Blythman, 2013; Wadsworth, Hecht & Jung, 2008). International students—in particular Southeast Asian students—are commonly stereotyped as passive, non-critical, rote-learning students who do not engage in deep learning (Ballard, 1996; Mills, 1997; Stupans, Elliot & March, 2011b). International students from Asia and Africa for example are used to different learning styles and attitudes. In some Asian and African countries such as Kenya, learning is teacher-centred and the teacher-student relationship is very formal (Farris & Rieman, 2013; Keriga & Bujra, 2009; Slethaug, 2010). However, these teacher-centered pedagogical approaches do not necessarily imply that the students/learners in these contexts are not critical thinkers. Many international students who come to Australia struggle at the

beginning, but they ultimately adjust to the Australian way of learning and become successful (Kettle, 2005; Koehne, 2006; Robertson, 2013).

Discourses of international education in Australia also position most international students as lacking competency in the English language (Kell & Vogl, 2012; Read, 2015). Although not all international students have problems speaking English, many—especially from Asia—struggle with communicating in English. This makes them shy away from class discussions and hence seen as passive and introverted (Sawir et al., 2012). According to Sawir et al. (2012), many international students in Australia are not proficient in English, mainly because the majority of them come from Asia where English is a second language and is not learnt until later in school. Their language difficulties according to Hellstén & Prescott (2004), Marginson et al. (2012) and Monteiro (2011) make them lack confidence and assertiveness to engage in classroom discussions or participate in group work and presentations. Nevertheless, with time, their language skills improve and they become more engaged in class discussions (Sawir et al., 2012).

International students in Australia are described by their teachers and peers as being motivated, hardworking, friendly and respectful, especially to teachers (Isibor, 2008; Kell & Vogl, 2012). International students are also often perceived as 'shy' and 'introverted' (Harrison & Peacock, 2009) and build friendships with students from their own country or with other international students (Marginson & Sawir, 2011; Montgomery, 2010). According to Marginson and Sawir (2011), although many international students have few Australian friends, they would like to have more Australian friends and believe that local students should take first steps to make friends with them.

The discourses of international education and international students' identities in Australia show an essentialised understanding of international students. Nonetheless, I am aware that international students are different in many ways; for example, they come from

different countries, cultures, religious and economic backgrounds resulting in the experiences of each student being very different.

3.7.1 Understanding how international students construct their identity

Various studies on how international students construct their identity (Doherty & Singh, 2005; Fotovatian, 2012 Marginson, 2014, 2012a; Rahimian, 2014) show that international students do not leave their home countries' identity behind when they travel abroad to study. Instead, they mix and match their identities over time (Kashima & Loh, 2006) as they acquire local attributes for success. According to Marginson (2013), international students are open to advice and are often impressed with what they see in their host countries, but they do not abandon their own ways of being. What this means is that international students' home identity continues to evolve as they study in their host country and the universities provide a site where the making and remaking of identities take place (Doherty & Singh, 2005).

International students construct their identity under social conditions that they do not control and these conditions shape them in ways that is different from student to student (Marginson, 2014). The challenges they experience in pursuit of education in their host countries such as cultural, social, language and academic problems affect their sense of agency and determines how they recreate or change themselves (Sawir et al., 2012; Tran, 2008). International student identities are constantly shifting and involve "a constant movement between flows and closures in relation to their subjectivity," (Koehne, 2005, p. 108) where *flow* implies "the development of new ways of talking and thinking about oneself, the opening up of spaces in relation to subjectivity" (ibid. p. 109). International students therefore have multiple shifting identities that involve keeping their home countries' ways of being, but at the same time taking on host countries' attributes that help them to be successful in their studies.

Identity and positioning

My study also examines how African female students from Kenya studying in Australian universities are positioned or position themselves in Australia. A person's identity is important in understanding how they are positioned or understood. In constructing who we are as individuals, the social interactions and experiences with others frame who we are and how others see us. *Positionality*, which refers to how one is socially located in relation to others (Maher & Tetreault, 1994), is important in understanding how Kenyan-African female students are understood in Australia. According to Spivak (in Martin, 1992), one's subject position is something that is always designated by others, meaning that the identity of African female students in Australia determines the way they are understood or positioned in Australia. The research participants in my study have physical identity markers of being women and Black or African. Within Australian society, these two markers of identity are positioned and understood differently. Individual experiences of a woman will depend on how she is positioned as a woman in a particular society. The way the African female students are understood and positioned in Kenya is very different from Australia, in spite of the two countries being described as patriarchal (Chappell, 2004; Chesoni, 2006; Omwami, 2009). This is because patriarchy is practiced differently in different societies meaning that "women as a group are positioned the same in relation to men, but they are positioned differently in relation to each other" (Kneip & Merkel, 2012, p. 420).

Other than their gender, another identity marker of the African female students in my study is their race. They are Black or Africans. A person's race–as discussed earlier in this chapter–also establishes the way a person is positioned in the society. In a feminist framework, positionality is fundamental in understanding how particular social variables such as race, class and ethnicity intersect with gender identity (St. Pierre, 2000). Belonging or identifying with a particular group has both benefits and disadvantages, since the identity of a particular group

can position them as privileged or marginalised. African women for example are marginalised; according to CRF theory, "African women are consistently situated economically, socially, and politically at the bottom of each society, regardless of what country they live in" (Wing, 2003, p.2).

Studies on international students (Ballard, 1996; Koehne, 2006; Mills, 1997) show that international students are discursively constructed and understood in their host countries. They negotiate multiple subject positions including being an international student. Discourses of international education often position them as passive learners, rote learners, non-critical thinkers or non-contributors, while Western ways of learning are privileged. This privileging of Western pedagogical practices according to Koehne (2005) can marginalise the 'voice' of international students. Koehne goes on to state that international students are not just passive receivers of discursive subject position, but they resist such positioning as agents who both reconstruct their own multiple subjectivities as well as challenge the discursive positionings attributed to them by others (Koehne, 2006). My research is interested in how Kenyan-African international female students are discursively positioned by Australian university communities and the wider Australian society, and ways in which they construct themselves to resist this positioning and position themselves differently.

3.7.2 Discourse of African female/ women of colour in education institutions

I also looked at the way African female international student are constructed in Australia and other Western countries in order to understand dominant discourses around African international students. I draw on studies (Beoku-Betts, 2004; Beoku-Betts & Ngaruiya-Njambi, 2005; Collins, 2000; Mirza, 2009; Mohanty, 2003) that have examined experiences of African women/black women/ women of colour in education institutions in the UK, USA and Canada to understand how race and gender intersect play out in the positioning of this group of women.

Beoku-Betts (2004) study focused on experiences of African women undertaking graduate science studies at universities in North America and Europe. Beoku-Betts discusses how racism, Third World location, and gender bias affected their graduate education experiences in scientific disciplines. She addresses how the African women in her study were aware of how these factors affected how they were perceived within the universities. Beoku-Betts calls for greater awareness of diversity in analyzing women's experiences, which is important in my study. Similarly, Maundeni (1999) examines challenges faced by African female students studying in universities abroad and how those challenges are embedded in their previous experience. She argues that the African culture and gender inequalities in Africa exacerbate their experiences when they study abroad. My research draws on Maundeni's analysis on experiences of African female students in order to understand how African culture and previous education impact ways African female students in my study construct their identities. Both Beoku-Betts and Maundeni assert that African female student's culture and previous education experience adds to their adjustment problems when studying at universities in Global North. African female students also experience racism and negative perceptions about their academic ability. Beoku-Betts (2004) states that:

> This misrepresentation of the Black woman and non-Western woman of colour as intellectually backward in contrast to their White counterparts is well documented in the works of postcolonial feminist and Black feminist scholars such as Avtar Brah (1996), Patricia Hill Collins (1999), Trinh Minh-Ha (1988), and Chandra Mohanty (1988) … those who graduated since the 1980s were more aware of the negative stereotyping and low expectations… (Beoku-Betts, 2004, p. 123).

Beouku-Betts (2004) and Mohanty (2014) further states that African female students or women of colour are discriminated against because of their accents and are seen as not proficient in English, even though they were able to read and write in English.

> ...the complex ways in which the women experienced racial bias as graduate students. While none of them claimed to experience overt racism, they were aware that being asked to take remedial classes and comments on their "accents" and language skills were consistent with racial stereotyping of Black people… (Beoku-Betts, 2004, p.121).

> . foreign student, and a woman at that, meant being dismissed as irrelevant (the quiet Indian woman stereotype), treated in racist ways (my teachers asked if I understood English), or celebrated and exoticised (you are so smart!). (Mohanty 2014, p. 127).

Apart from being looked down because of their accents, African women or women of colour are also seen as voiceless victims of oppressive cultures (Beoku-Betts & Ngaruiya-Njambi, 2005; Mohanty, 2002; Mirza, 1992). African women are not socialized to be assertive unlike their male counterparts (Maundeni, 1999) and their position in patriarchal African societies may result in them being misunderstood as "voiceless" victims. Mohanty (2014) and Beoku-Betts (2004) further state that women from third world countries in general are often misunderstood in Western countries as they are seen to belong to oppressive cultures.

It is not only African/Black female students that experience discrimination in institutions of higher education, but also African/Black professors teaching at the universities in North America and Europe. Beoku-Betts and Ngaruiya-Njambi (2005) state that, "to be a Black, African, woman professor is to be forced to constantly dispel doubts and anxieties on the part of students and faculty who have already conceptualized Blackness, Africanness, and femaleness as markings of inferiority" (p.4). Similarly, Mumbi Mwangi and Kyoko Kishimoto—both university professors in the USA—in discussing their teaching experiences say that "women faculty of colour are also confronted with a hostile and skeptical academic climate that constantly forces them to justify and defend themselves" (Mumbi & Kishimoto, 2009, p. 87).

Studies on educational experiences of Black women in universities in the USA and UK indicate that like their counterparts from Africa, Black women do endure discrimination

because of their race and gender (Crenshaw, 1989; Collins, 2009; Wing, 2003). Some of their experiences particularly in academia show that they are times perceived in terms of racialized and gendered stereotypes as Collins (2009) notes Black women in academia in the US sometimes confront the stereotype that depicts them as not intellectuals making them not attain senior positions. Black women in the UK share similar racialised and gendered educational experiences (Ahmed, 2000; Bhopal & Prestal, 2011; Brah & Phoenix; Mirza, 2006). Like women from Africa and Black women from America, discourses of education within the UK position Black women as inferior intellectually (Mirza, 2006 p. 43).

Literature on the discourses of African female international students' identities is important in understanding ways in which identity markers such as race and gender play out in the positioning of African female international students in Australia. The literature also helps to understand how identity practices of African female student are shaped by their racialised and gendered experiences.

3.8 Conclusion

My engagement with the three bodies of literature found out that African feminism is understood differently in Africa and in other parts of the world. However, like all other feminisms, African feminism places patriarchy at the centre of its analysis and challenges its oppressive nature. Literature on African feminism shows that before colonialism, women were highly regarded and respected in traditional African societies; however, this status changed after the coming of the colonialists. Colonialism and the introduction of religions such as Christianity and Islam changed the way African women are understood and positioned in Africa. Colonialism sidelined women's positions of power and made them dependent and subservient to men. In Africa, patriarchy is practiced in most societies today and many women remain powerless and subservient to men. In spite of women being actively involved in the

labour force, traditional African women's roles and responsibilities are still understood as that of bearing children, maintaining the family and investing in their children's upbringing.

I also found that identity markers of race and gender play an important role in the way African women or women of colour are understood and positioned in Global North. Studies that have used CRF theoretical framework indicate that an African woman or woman of colour in different parts of the world may simultaneously face discrimination based not only on their gender, but also race, nationality, immigration status, religion, disability, ethnicity, and marital status (Wing, 2003, 2015). Women in Africa—just like their colleagues in other parts of the world—accentuate the importance of education in empowering women. Education uncovers women's experiences of powerlessness and oppression and provides them with a mindset where women take control or responsibility of their life or situation.

Despite education, being important in empowering women, literature on critical approaches to education recognises inequalities to education and asserts that there are hierarchal ways in which some are dominant and privileged while the other is subjugated. Studies on experiences of African women and women of colour in educational institutions in Europe and North America indicate that the intersectionality of their race and gender plays a key role in the way African women are positioned and understood (Beoku-Betts, 2004; Maundeni, 1999; Mirza, 1992; Mohanty, 2003). They are often portrayed as voiceless victims of oppressive cultures and not intelligent. These studies also show that in spite of the discrimination and negative portrayal, African women are empowered through education and they learn to survive by taking on strategies that help them succeed in their studies. The identity of African women in education institutions is not fixed; it is constantly changing as they negotiate discourses of race and gender, forming and positioning themselves in ways that enable them to be successful.

Chapter Four – Methodology and Methods

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the research methodology and the research methods used in my study. Research method is a technique, a tool for doing research and for gathering evidence or collecting data. Research methodology on the other hand, is a way of systematically solving the research problem (research framework); it involves describing and analysing methods used, evaluating their advantages and disadvantages, exploring the relationship between the methods used and how they were used, and the production and presentation of data or 'findings' (Arthur, 2012; Kothari, 2006; Letherby, 2003).

I first explain the research methodology used in my study, namely feminist research methodology. I also discuss my positioning in relation to the participants who are international African female students. I next look at the research methods used in my research study.

4.2 Feminist research methodology

My study is located within a feminist research methodology. Just as there are various forms of feminisms, there are also various feminist methodologies (Griffiths, 1995; Hobbs & Rice, 2013; Reinharz & Davidman, 1992; Somekh & Lewin, 2011). In spite of the complexities and the debate about feminist methodology, and there being no clear standard agreement over what constitutes feminist research, many feminist scholars (Bloom, 1998; Collins, 1990; Harding, 1991; Lather, 1992; Litchman, 2012; Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002) agree on certain elements as defining features of feminist research methodology.

Firstly, feminist research is based on the argument that reality and knowledge are socially situated and constructed. Feminist researchers assert that the idea of 'the feminist' as a socially constructed knowing self because, "[t]he feminist researcher 'knows' from a specific and partial social location and so is constituted as a 'knowing self' in particular ways of

thinking and authorizing knowledge" (Ramazanoğlu & Holland, 2002, p. 65) Secondly, feminist research puts women's lived experiences and their everyday lives at the centre of analysis. In so doing, women become subjects and objects of any study, making them co-creators of knowledge. Finally, feminist research has a political and ideological commitment to changing the position of women. It aims at empowering women and giving them a voice to speak about social life from their perspectives. My study is guided by the above principles and draws on Critical Race Feminism (CRF) as an analytical tool in studying the experiences of African international female students from Kenya studying in Australia. The lived experiences and the everyday lives of the African female students are placed at the centre of the analysis. My study aims to empower the students and bring change to the position of African female students in Australian universities and within the broader community.

In research, methodology and methods must be compatible with the theoretical framework and the research questions. Lather (1991) reiterates this point by saying, "data must be allowed to generate propositions in a dialectical manner that permits use of a priori theoretical frameworks, but which keeps a particular framework from becoming the container in which the data must be poured" (p.267). My research is guided by the question: How do African female international students construct their sense of identity through their racialised and gendered experiences in Australian universities? The research draws on feminist theoretical framework (CRF analytical lens) in examining these experiences. I choose to employ an 'African feminist' research framework in conceptualising racialised and gendered experiences of African international female students, with emphases on the interplay of race and gender in their positioning within Australian universities and the broader community.

By choosing an African feminist research framework, I did not want to adopt a eurocentric research framework that assumes that the experiences of white middle-class women as the norm for all women (Wing, 2003). Nor did I want a framework designed by Black

women from Europe and North America that has views that objectify and commodify African women and the notion of a feminist sisterhood (Beoku-Betts & Ngaruiya-Njambi, 2005). Rather, I wanted a framework that understands in context the differences among African women and the ways in which race and gender contribute to the marginalisation practices within Australian universities and the broader community.

4.2.1 Experience as a source of knowledge

Feminist research puts women's experiences and their everyday lives at the centre of its analysis. By examining experiences, people's ways of being and living is understood. I am aware that using experience as a source of knowledge can be problematic as critics of feminist research say that it has assumed an essentialised understanding of gender (Letherby, 2003; Maynard & Purvis, 1994; Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002) where white middle-class women's experiences were seen to represent all women.

The application of CRF as an analytical tool in this research recognises the importance of experiential knowledge in understanding the racial and gendered experiences of African female students from Kenya studying in Australian universities. CRF recognises that experiential knowledge (Delgado & Stefanic, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Villalpando, 2003; Yosso & Solorzano, 2005) is appropriate and critical in understanding experiences of African women or women of colour. The application of CRF in the field of education requires that experiential knowledge of people of colour be centred and viewed as coming directly from their lived experiences. Experiential knowledge can come from various sources such as storytelling, narratives and in-depth interviews (Reese, 2012; Yosso, 2006). My research used semi-structured in-depth interviews, informal conversations and observations. Getting to know my research participants and understanding my position as a researcher was therefore crucial.

4.3 Researcher's position and reflexivity

A researcher's positioning is the process by which the researcher makes explicit his or her personal and epistemological beliefs as a researcher (Nayar & Stanley, 2014). It is important for a researcher to state their position since their positioning can have implications that go beyond theoretical understanding, and the position a researcher takes (knowingly or unknowingly) can have an impact on the research design and the ethical nature of the research process itself (Curtis, Murphy & Shields, 2013). Therefore, in order to achieve an ethically sustainable research, a researcher in qualitative research needs to position themselves to the domain of the research, define her position and be open to ontological assumptions and methodologies used. In other words, the researcher needs to understand their position in the research and that their belief about social reality impacts on the topic selection, research question and research method (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010).

According to Duffy (1985), in feminist research the relationship between the researcher and the participants should be non-hierarchal, reflexive and interactive, and cognizant of participants' feelings and values. There should be collaboration between the researcher and female participants and most importantly, encouragement of interactive dialogue that results in mutual creation of data (Fitzgerald, 1997; Olesen, 1994; Webb, 1993). My position therefore as a researcher, my relationship with my research participants and my personal experience were important in shaping the research process and as Lather (1991) notes, "our own frameworks of understanding need to be critically examined as we look for the tensions and contradictions they might entail" (p.80).

In qualitative research and in feminist research as researchers reflect on their position, identifying their status is important. Whether a researcher identifies him or herself as an insider or outsider will have an effect on the research. According to Given (2009), the term *insider researcher* describes the situation where the researcher is part of the topic being investigated

or is also a member of the group that is being researched (Sikes & Potts, 2008). Researchers are considered insiders because they share multiple identities or profound experiences with the community they are studying, or they can be partial insiders who share a sole identity with a certain extent of distance or detachment from the community (Chavez, 2008).

My research examines the experiences of African female students in Australian universities. As a graduate student in education, I have much in common with my participants, and I am essentially a member of the same social group on a number of levels, classifying me as an insider to some extent. I share multiple identities and experiences with my research participants. We are all women from Kenya studying in Australian universities. I share religion, ethnic groups, languages and geographical areas with some of the research participants. I also have differences with the researchers; for example, my age, the fact that I am an Australian citizen, hold a professional job, have a family and have previous experience as an international student in the United States of America. Being a partial insider and having some common bonds such as race and gender with the research participants provided groundwork for building trust and dialogue (Given, 2008). As a partial insider I felt that I had, some understanding of the topic being investigated (Merton, 1972) because of my connection with the research participants.

Undertaking research as a partial insider offers many benefits to the researcher; Sikes and Potts (2008) summarises this below:

> Insider researchers readily know the language of those being studied, along with particular jargon and are more likely to empathize with those they study because of in-depth understanding of them, less likely to foster distrust and hostility among those they study, are more willing to discuss private knowledge with those who are personally part of their world, are likely to understand events under investigation and insider researchers find that those they study are likely to volunteer information than they would to outsiders (p.177).

I also understand that there is no complete insider or outsider researcher (Trowler, 2011) because as stated by Given (2008), "the experience of a researcher as an outsider or insider cannot be a fixed one given that one's position and identity are not static and are context specific" (p.227). I found that during the research and as I got to know the research participants, I changed my outsider position to insider position. For example, during one of the interviews the participant appeared uneasy and uncooperative. I told her that apart from being a student like her, I was also a mother of two children. I shared information with her about my family and that I lived in the United States of America before coming to Australia. As we continued talking, I found out that I knew her sister who lived in America. This made her more comfortable to participate in the interview because I had a personal connection with her. I changed my position from an outsider to an insider since inside and outside positionings shift during the research process.

I also saw myself as an outsider in the research because I had no prior familiarity with the group and the setting. I left Kenya over a decade ago and I have experienced different ways of being an African woman in Australia and in the USA. My experiences have been very different to the research participants'. I see myself as an outsider because of the age differences between myself and my research participants. We grew up during different times in Kenya and the society has changed over time. Kenya's education system that I went through many years ago has had many changes. Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education has been reviewed twice, and the minimum number of subjects that students are required to take is now 7 instead of 11 (Wango, 2011). My experiences and the research participants' experiences in Australia are also different in that I am a part-time postgraduate student with a family and who has limited classroom interaction because of the nature of my study, unlike the participants who are fulltime international students who attend face-to-face classes. One of the benefits of being an outsider is that I was able to be objective and I asked odd questions about obvious things that

the participants take for granted; for example, a question about how their life is as young women in Kenya. Such a question although general made the research participants think deeply on how they see themselves as young women and reflect on the ways in which they have been raised as young women, which is something they had never done before.

I was also aware that being an insider or an outsider in research has its challenges. Being an insider has problems associated with confidentiality, relationship and impartiality. Critics of insider research state that the researcher can be too subjective which can lead to loss of objectivity (DeLyser, 2001) because the researcher is not able to critically engage with the data. Insider researchers can be inherently biased as he/she may be too familiar with the group of topic and may not ask provoking questions, or may project her/his own views onto the research participants (Merriam et al., 2001). Having a shared identity and close relationship with the research participants can at times create tension for the researcher because he or she may find it difficult to maintain balance, especially when sensitive information is shared that participants may not want to be disclosed (Given, 2008). Given (2008) goes on to say that in such situations, careful attention to ethics is needed to avoid harm to the researcher and or research participants. Insider researchers have to negotiate power with the research participants, especially if there are age differences (Merriam et al., 2001), in order to minimise power differences between them and the research participants.

Being an outsider has its disadvantages that are mainly associated with the advantages of being an insider in a research: lack of enough understanding about the subject being investigated, and challenges of getting rich data because of participants' unreachability and lack of trust. Whether a researcher positions him/herself as an outsider or insider in a research does not guarantee valid knowledge. According to Martyn Hammersley (2013), "there are no overwhelming advantages to being an insider or an outsider. Each position has advantages and disadvantages, though these will take on slightly different weights depending on the particular

circumstances and purposes of the research" (p. 245). There is much to be gained from being close to one's research and there is much to be gained from keeping one's distance and having an outsider's perspective (Greene, 2014).

4.3.1 Reflexivity

One main feature of feminist research is the use of reflexivity (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) which is a "defining feature of qualitative research" (Finlay, 2003, p. 5). Reflexivity is the self-conscious analytical scrutiny the researcher applies to the research, as it is impossible for them to remain 'outside' of the subject matter (Pyett, 2003). Reflexivity makes the researcher aware of their effect on the process and especially the outcome of the research (Creswell & Miller, 1997). Throughout my research I was reflexive as I interrogated my position, past experiences, beliefs and values that may impact the findings.

Feminist research calls for reflexivity as a way of challenging the notions of objectivity, value-free and neutral research (Lumsden & Winter, 2014). Being reflexive as a female researcher conducting research on female participants and investigating gendered experiences of African female students was important in my research. I did not want to have research that was biased or too subjective. I had to be reflective and self-conscious of my position at all times as a researcher, and of my identity that I shared with the research participants. I also reflected on my power position with the research participants; I placed myself on the same level as them and did not see myself as an absolute figure of authority during the research. I was aware of my contribution to the construction of meanings throughout the research process, and acknowledged that it was impossible for me to remain 'outside of' one's subject matter while conducting research, since essentially I am a member of the same social group on a number of levels. I share a collective identity of both a Kenyan woman and an African female student in Australia with the research participants. However, as a researcher I am aware that having

similar experiences with the participants can have a negative impact. As Denscombe (2014) states:

> Researchers know that their self is intertwined with their research activity, but proceed on the basis that they can exercise sufficient control over their normal attitudes to allow them to operate in a detached manner, so that their investigation is not clouded by personal prejudices (p.300).

What was important for me was to understand my role as the researcher, was to be continuously thinking about the data and be well-informed about the area of study. I immersed myself in the data so as to fully understand it to ensure that all questions that arose were answered.

Apart from reflecting on my positions of being an insider and outsider in the research process, I was mindful that each individual research participant's experiences were different and unique. In spite of identity markers such as ethnicity, religion, race and being international students, each of the research participants' socioeconomic status was different. Some came from wealthy families that had good social status in Kenyan society, others came from average income families and others were married and had their family living with them in Australia. My research participants' upbringing and understanding of what was expected of them as young women was different because of their ethnic group, family upbringing, religion and socioeconomic status in Kenya. For example, the way a Muslim research participant is raised is different to another participant who is Christian because both religions hold different values. Their individual family upbringing may be different too, as some of the research participants came from single parent families, along with the fact that women are understood differently across various ethnic groups in Kenya. Being aware of these differences was crucial, and the most important task as a feminist researcher in this study was to understand my social, economic and educational positionings in relation to my research participants. Understanding my participants' differences and negotiating these was also important for me as a researcher.

In dealing with the complexity of these differences, I draw on Spivak's (1996) notion of strategic essentialism. Strategic essentialism seeks to identify the use of labels out of political interest while acknowledging the complexities of the core meaning. In her explanation, Spivak (1996) says that although she does not accept the idea that there are fixed essential qualities of women or men that define them, strategic use of essentialism is at times necessary in order to make sense of the social and political world. Strategic essentialism is most effective as a context-specific strategy, but does not provide a long term solution to end oppression and exploitation (Morton, 2003). As a researcher, it is important to understand the differences that exist between the participants such as nationality, religion, class, language, educational goals among others, but at the same time know when to 'essentialise' them when letting their voices be heard. In my research, essentialising my research participants' identity as young African women and as international students is important in understanding how they are seen or see themselves in Australia.

4.4 Research method

In this section, I first explain the process of recruiting of my research participants. I present their individual profiles in a table that shows their year of study, family, social and educational backgrounds. I next discuss my research methods, semi-structured and in-depth interviews. I also provide a discussion on the interpretation and analysis of my data.

4.4.1 Recruiting my participants

The process of recruiting my participants was challenging because of the small numbers of African female students in Australian universities. I started by visiting Monash University Office of International Students—where I currently study— to find out the numbers of African female students enrolled within the university. The office could not help me with any specific

information because of The Privacy Act an Australian Law that regulates the handling of personal information. However, they let me know that there were about 12 African female students from Kenya enrolled at the university. They advised me to contact the university's African club for further assistance. I did not contact the African club immediately; instead, I placed an advertisement (see Appendix B) in the university online student newsletter with the hope that these students would read the online newsletter and respond.

To my disappointment, I did not receive any response. I then decided to contact the chairperson of the university's African club. I arranged a meeting with him, and when we met, I found out that he was from Kenya. This made it easy for me, as I knew that he must know some Kenyan women currently at the university. I explained my research to him and the problems I was having recruiting participants. He seemed interested in my research and promised he would assist me in getting participants. He sent an email to all the Kenyan women studying at the university. In his email, he explained who I was, the nature of my research and asked the girls to contact me if they were interested (see Appendix D). With his help, I was able to recruit eight students from Monash University. From these eight students, I was able to recruit five more from Deakin University through a method known as 'snowball' sampling or 'chain referral' sampling in qualitative research. This method of recruiting participants occurs when study participants identify or refer others to become members of the sample (Creswell, 2013).

4.4.2 Participants' individual profiles

My research participants were young Kenyan female students studying at Monash and Deakin universities. Their ages ranged between 20–33 years old and they had diverse ethnic, socioeconomic and levels of study backgrounds. Pseudonyms were used to protect the participants' identity.

Table 5: Profile of the research participants

Student	Year/course	Research group	Family background
Sally	1st year graduate, Econometrics	Snob	Sally is 24 years old. Her parents had successful careers in Kenya; her mother worked in a bank and the father was a director in one of the universities in Kenya. Her parents send her money for both tuition and living expenses. She was looking for a job at the time of the interview.
Elsie	Final year bachelor of Psychology	Go-getter	Elsie is 23 years old. She transferred to her current university from South Africa. Elsie works as disability support worker in Australia in order to pay for her education. Her parents come from different ethnic groups in Kenya, where they worked in private companies as managers.
Lucy	Final year Commerce degree	Go-getter	Lucy is 29 years old Indian Christian. Her father had passed away and her mother was finding it difficult to send her money to pay for her education. Lucy worked full time in Australia as a disability support worker in order to earn money to pay her tuition fees and living expenses.
Cyndi	Final year Science degree	Snob	Cyndi is 22 years old. She migrated to Australia with her parents when she was 15 years old. Both her parents are medical doctors in Australia and are from different ethnic communities in Kenya. She completed secondary school in Australia and at the time of her interview, she had just completing a Bachelor of science degree. She lives with her parents and has a part-time job.
Jane	Final year Nursing degree	Struggler	Jane is 33 years old, married and has a son. Her husband is also an international student from Kenya. She had to send her son back to her parents for two years so she could complete her studies. Both her and her husband worked as nursing assistants part-time to earn money for tuition and living expenses.
Ellen	Final year Nursing degree	Go-getter	Ellen is 26 years old and comes from a single parent family. She is very close to her mother and grandmother. At the time of the interview, her sister had just come from Kenya and was living with her in Australia. Ellen worked full-time as a nursing assistant to finance her education and support herself and the sister.
Jaycee	Just completed her Commerce degree	Snob	Jaycee is 23 years old and an Indian Christian. She lived with her older sister. Her parents owned businesses in Kenya and they sent her money for tuition and living expenses. She also worked as a shop assistant during the time of the research. She had a family friend living in Melbourne who was her guardian.
Rachel	Final year Nursing degree	Go-getter	Rachel is 27 years old. She lives with her Kenyan boyfriend (from a different ethnic group). Initially, her aunt sent her money for tuition and living expenses but it stopped due to economic problems in Kenya. Rachel now works as a nursing assistant in Australia and she is able to pay for her education.
Tracey	Master's in Public Health degree	Struggler	Tracey is 34 years old, married and has a 3-year-old son. Her husband is also an international student. She works part-time as a nursing assistant in Australia to finance her education. She struggles balancing domestic, student and work responsibilities. She is a devout Christian.
Georgina	First year of Nursing degree	Go-getter	Georgina is the youngest at 20 years old. Her dad worked as tour guide in Kenya and could not afford to send her money while she studied in Australia. She lived with a family friend when she moved to Australia. She worked as a nursing assistant in an aged-care facility at the time of the interview. She was closer to her father than her mother as she said that she found her mother was too quiet to talk to.
Flo	2nd year of Social Work degree	Snob	Flo is 22 years old and comes from a wealthy Kenyan family. Her father is a wealthy businessman and a Kenyan politician. Her parents send her money for all her expenses in Australia and pay for her travel back to Kenya every year. Her parents wanted her to concentrate on her studies and did not want her to work. However, Flo was working as a disability support worker because she wanted to gain experience and have wanted extra money.
Di	2nd year Commerce degree	Snob	Di is 22 years old. Her father is a wealthy businessman in Kenya. She attended international schools in Kenya. She comes from a Muslim family. She transferred to study in Melbourne from a university in Malaysia. Her parents did not want her to work and they sent her money to pay for her education and living expenses. However, she was working as a waitress in order to gain experience and have extra money.
Lily	1st year Engineering student	Snob	Lily is 20 years old and studying to be an engineer. She came from a Muslim/Christian family. Both her parents are medical doctors in Kenya. She had no family in Australia except a half-sister in Sydney. She had few friends. She received money for tuition and living expenses from her parents. She was not working at the time of the interview.

After recruiting my research participants and briefly getting to know them, the next step in my research was collecting data. The next section discusses the method used in collecting data on the experiences of African female students in Australian universities.

4.4.3 Conducting interviews

The purpose of my research and the research questions guided the choice of my research method. Using various methods of data collection allows for a 'better understanding' of the social phenomena (Green, 2007). I use semi-structured, in-depth interviews, observations and informal conversations in my study. I saw that using these methods would provide rich data on experiences of African female students, as semi-structured interviews collect data that is diverse in meaning, opinion and experiences. I also wanted methods that allowed my participants to feel empowered and that their point of view is valued (Dunn, 2005).

Semi-structured interviews or 'conversations with a purpose' are in-depth because they allow probing of the interviewee (Ellis et al., 2008). They are designed to allow the research participants to tell their story at the same time as ensuring that the aspects of the research the researcher wants to explore are covered (Carter & Thomas, 1996). In-depth, semi-structured interviews are a common method of data collection in qualitative research and they are used to collect rich and insightful information because they are flexible and allow the pursuit of an unexpected line of inquiry during the interview.

The semi-structured, in-depth interviews provided an understanding of my research participants' experiences in their social settings. They provided a unique setting of interpersonal intimacy between the researcher and the participants (Boyce & Neale, 2006), therefore capturing the participants' attitudes, awareness, self-disclosure, knowledge and perspective. In qualitative research, in-depth interviews allow the words of the research participants and his or her experience to shine through, and a set of questions are used to guide the conversations to remain more loosely to the topic (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2010). Semi-

structured, in-depth interviews can vary because the interviewer can decide to change the questions in order to probe the interviewee, or forego some questions based on the details the interviewee gives. These interviews therefore can take on a life of their own and it is important that the interviewer ensures that all topics are covered during the interview (Veal & Darcy, 2014).

The use of interview questions as a method of data collection is effective depending on how well the researcher designs good interview questions based on the topic of inquiry (Boeije, 2010). There are various forms of interview questions that the researcher can choose from, such as opinion/knowledge questions or feelings and sensory questions among others (Glesne, 2006). Designing good interview questions can be complex and challenging as the interviewee behavior can be unpredictable during the interview. An interviewee's mood may change during the interview, which also changes the course of the interview (Bryman, 2012). There also are interviewees who may resist answering questions but instead decide to talk off-topic without answering questions (Glesne, 2006). Being aware of these challenges was important, and I prepared and conducted the interviews with these in mind. I also understood my role as the researcher is that of asking and listening while the research participants' roles are to inform. The interviews included questions that asked about the family background, educational and cultural experiences, and identity as African women and working in Australia. Some of the research questions that guided the interviews are presented in the table below.

Table 6: Guiding research questions

- What made you come to study in Australia?

- How was your first day at university like?

- What is it like to be an African female student in Australia and at the University?

- Who are your friends at university?

- What made you choose your friends?

- What kind of support do African female students receive from the University?

- Describe your educational challenges as an African female international student.

- Describe your experiences as an African female student in Australia.

- How is it different being a young African woman in Australia than in Kenya?

- What do you miss about Kenya?

- Do you work, and what can you say about your work experience here in Australia?

- What advice would you give a female friend from Africa who wants to come and study at your university?

Data was gathered in two stages. The first stage involved getting to know the participants through informal conversations, with the purpose to establish a positive rapport with the participants, and to book a time for the interviews. The second stage involved conducting semi-structured interviews. I used the questions above to guide the interview. During the interviews, I tried to make sure that the participants were comfortable, were not restricted to the interview questions and I allowed them to talk freely about their experiences. The interview questions were mainly used with participants who had difficulty talking and needed a guide on the topic. Some of the participants opened up and shared details that I had not anticipated. They revealed issues that were complex but very relevant to my research. Follow-up meetings were organised with some of the participants to clarify a few things that came up during data analysis.

Apart from semi-structured, in-depth interviews and informal conversations, observations were also recorded. In qualitative research, although semi-structured, in-depth

interviews are the primary source of data collection, researchers' observations of the research participants are also important (Flick, 2009). In semi-structured, in-depth interviews, collection of data involves face-to-face interaction with the research participants; hence, data is not only collected through interviews but also through observations. Observation is the most direct method of collecting data and it takes place during the interviews since it is what the researcher sees and is used to examine phenomena such as communication, non-verbal interaction and activity (Given, 2008). As I interacted and became familiar with the research participants during my study, I observed how they dressed, spoke or interacted with others within the university and in the wider Australian community. For example, during their interviews my research participants talked about how women in Australia dress differently to those in Kenya. I took note of their clothing and compared it to their interviews–how was the way they were dressed different from the Australian women that they described in their interviews? I also made notes on the way they interacted with other students from different countries and with Australians. If, for example, during the interview they stated that that they had friends from different countries, I observed who their housemates and classmates were and they interacted. This was crucial in understanding how they understood themselves or are understood. I also made notes on any significant information that came up during my informal conversations with the research participants.

My participants told me stories of their experiences while studying and working in Australia. Like all forms of qualitative research, analysing the data involved coding interviews for themes and categories. The next section describes the process through which I analysed and arrived at these major themes.

4.4.4 Data analysis

The use of a feminist research framework as discussed earlier in this chapter can be problematic and demands reflexivity in the way the researcher collects and interprets data. As I began

analysing my data, I was aware that, as Reay (1996a) states, that "data interpretation is an imperfect and incomplete process," and that "interpretation is a political, contested and unstable process" (in Holland & Ramazanoglu, 1994, p.133). As I analysed my data, I was continuously aware of how my own identity, values and experiences may affect my data analysis and in writing my thesis. However, this recognition is true for feminist research and all other research, and it is essential to incorporate personal and research experience in the data collection and analysis (Marchbank & Letherby, 2014; Stanley & Wise 1993).

The way in which I went about analysing and interpreting the research data was influenced by my own experiences, values and positioning as an African female student in an Australian university. As I read and reread the transcripts, I found myself comparing their experiences to mine, but at the same time, I was reflexive. As Denscombe (2014) states, "a researcher needs to exercise sufficient control over their normal attitudes to allow them to operate in a detached manner, so that their investigation is not clouded by personal prejudices" (p.300). This is discussed earlier in this chapter when I examined my positioning and reflexivity.

My initial data analysis began by listening to all thirteen interviews and then selecting which ones I would transcribe first. The interviews were 45-60 minutes long. Even though I saw all my interviews as important and did not consider any as irrelevant, I decided to transcribe twelve out of the thirteen interviews, as one of the participants did not provide detailed responses in her semi-structured interview. I used a transcribing agency to assist with five interviews and I transcribed the remaining seven. When I finished transcribing all of the interviews, I then read and reread all transcribed interviews. Guided by my research questions– How do African female students construct their sense of identity? How do they see themselves as young African women in Australian society? How does their race and gender shape the way they identify themselves? How do they negotiate race and gender politics in the different

university environments and in the broader community? –I selected quotes based on certain themes and I began analysing the data by referring to theoretical frameworks of the study.

I started to notice differences and similarities based on the research participants' socioeconomic backgrounds. As noted in the introduction, not many African female students come to Australia on scholarships, as was the case of my participants. The socioeconomic status of each student had a major influence on his or her experiences in general. By *socioeconomic status* I refer to individual students' economic and social positions; such as if they are married or single, or if they come from rich families, or middle-income families. I use the term *rich* to refer to research participants who come from families who can afford to cover the students' tuition and living expenses in Australia. I view these families as rich because they can afford to spend over $30,000 Australian dollars for their children to study in Australia. According Cagney & Ross (2013), the average income for a worker in Kenya is about US$1,800 per year, and 46 per cent of the population live below poverty line (Hatchard, 2014). By using the term *middle-income families*, I refer to those families in Kenya who earn an average income of US$1,800, as indicated by Hatchard (2014).

I was able to create three groups and clustered them based on their socioeconomic background or family financial support. Six of the students received financial support from their families to pay for their education, five worked to finance their education and two worked not only to finance their education but also to support their own families here in Australia. I then looked for patterning within these groups associated with their cultural, educational and social experiences.

Three significant themes started emerging from the socioeconomic groupings. Based on the interviews and by closely examining the statements the participants in the groups used to describe their experiences, I came up with three terms; 'strugglers,' 'go-getters' and 'snobs.' I acknowledge that there is some homogenising when labelling the groups, however I do not

use the terms to represent the experiences of the students as whole, but to describe the groups in terms of what they had in common.

I used the term *strugglers* to describe the group made up of married students who endure the struggles of financing their education and supporting their families. The two students in this group constantly expressed how difficult it was to work study and take care of their families. As one of the strugglers, Tracey told me:

> …it's not easy, and especially when you talk about money… I still have to think about where to get my school fees, so it's not easy at all, it's not easy at all… I come home and have to cook for my family, and my son doesn't know I'm tired, and as soon as they're fed and I've cleaned up everything I'm thinking about my shift, I have to go for a night duty and the following morning I have to be going to school, it's not easy… (Tracey).

They also found themselves changing domestic roles with their husbands as they had to leave their husbands in charge of cooking, cleaning and taking care of their child at times. Their ways of being a woman in Australia was very different from Kenya. In spite of their financial and domestic struggles, they remained focused and hopeful that they would complete their studies.

The term *go-getters* is used to describe the group of students who also worked to finance their education and living expenses. This group had the stereotype markers of most international students; hardworking and focused. Their interviews showed that they were success-driven, full of determination and would not let anything stop them from achieving their goals. They all hoped for a good job after completing their studies. Ellen's comments below summarise the characteristics of this group:

> …And you become more focused I think, and you have got your goals set and you work towards them. And now that I am nearly there, I am very happy, am really excited… I see myself working because I will have finished my degree. I wanna study more after that I am not stopping so I think I am heading to the right direction and I will get to where I want to be… (Ellen).

Snobs is a term I use to refer to the group of students who receive financial support from their families for their studies in Australia. I use this term cautiously as I am aware of its negative connotation, however I use it to describe these students who were from wealthy Kenyan families. In Kenya, as in most societies, wealthy people believe themselves to be superior to others who are financially disadvantaged. These students came to study in Australia because their families could afford it, and viewed education in Australia to be of a better quality than in Kenya (Gudo, et al., 2011). Some of the students had high expectations of what they would experience in Australia, however when they arrived they realised that life was very different. As Flo puts it:

> …I don't know. I remember that moment when I arrived there, I just cried. I wasn't happy. It was not what I expected… It wasn't a good welcome. I thought I'd meet lots of people. I don't know, I just didn't expect that, I don't know, a beautiful room and that wasn't it… (Flo).

Even though they enjoyed the freedom and independence they had while living in Australia, they missed their parents' nurturing and sense of security they had in Kenya. For Flo and Di when asked what they missed most about Kenya they said,

> …Security, not having to worry about rent and bills and food, being taken care of… (Di).

> … And making sure that you have everything… (Flo).

In spite of their families sending them money, these students started looking for jobs in order to have some extra money. For them, having a job helped them to 'fit in' with other students, as most students at the university usually have part-time jobs.

The three terms; *strugglers*, *go-getters* and *snobs* described the groups. I do not intend to homogenise the participants' experiences since their individual experiences were different, but I created the terms based on how they described their experiences. I then looked for social, cultural and educational markers that the students negotiated in constructing their identity. I

looked for patternings that were evident in the way they construct their identities. I used the notions of African feminism, international student and used CRF analytical lens to understand how the research participants constructed their identity, how they positioned themselves or are positioned in Australian universities and within the broader community.

I further looked for patternings within the data to understand how the research participants understood their ways of being and how they positioned themselves or they are positioned in Australia. In Chapter Three, my engagement with literature on African feminism found that the identity of African women is constructed according to their roles of bearing children, maintaining the family and performing domestic duties (Akujobi, 2011; Falola & Amponsah, 2012; Kapasula, 2008; Mwangi, 2002). The literature also showed that many African women are positioned by their communities and societies as passive, nurturing and subservient to men (Beoku-Betts & Ngaruiya-Njambi, 2005; Hussein, 2005; Kiyimba, 2013). Similarly, my research participants' interviews indicated that they had an understanding of what it meant to be an African woman. They described African women as being religious, dressing conservatively, shy, submissive and having domestic and family responsibilities. Their interviews also indicated that they understood how their ways of being an African woman was different from the ways of being a white Australian woman. They described white Australian women as being independent, extroverted, confident and having freedom. Apart from having an understanding of what it means to be an African woman, analysis of the data showed that the research participants constructed new identities in Australia that allowed them to 'fit in' and be successful in their studies. The findings of the research are discussed in the next four chapters.

The process of understanding how the participants constructed their identity was a challenging one. I am aware that people's stories about who they are change with time, and that identity is a fluid process (Longkumar, 2010). As Crepaz (2008) states, "construction of

identity is thus an ongoing process driven by the active shaping of an existing yet constantly changing corpus of narratives" (p.30). However, I kept in mind that it is by telling the stories of their lives that people build notions of who they are (Mishler, 2009; Reid & West, 2014). The research participants' interviews about their experiences provided an understanding of who they are as African female students.

4.5 Unusual patterning

In this section, I discuss Jaycee and Lucy who are Kenyans of Indian descent. They are from the Goan community. The origins of the Goan people is a placed called Goa, situated in south west India. Most of the inhabitants of Goa are Catholics and have partial Portuguese ancestry because of its long history as a Portuguese colony prior to 1961 (Herzig, 2006). Just like other Indian communities that migrated to Kenya, the Goans were recruited by the British colonial government to work in Kenya because they spoke English, were educated and had skills needed by the government (Borges, Pereira & Stubbe, 2000). The Goans do not consider themselves as Indians, mainly because of their Portuguese heritage and that the British colonialists gave them a non-Indian status (Herzig, 2006).

In Kenya, the Goan community was very active during the pre-independence era and joined the Africans in the fight against the British colonial rule. The Africans did not see them as Indians or Hindus, because they shared religion and were open in their social interactions. In my research, Jaycee and Lucy identified themselves as Africans. They did not want to be seen as Indians as evidenced in the comments below;

> …I like to brand myself as an African and then people think I'm from India and
> I say no, no, I'm from Africa… (Lucy)

> …I never really met Africans like myself…I was tired of explaining to people
> yeah I'm Kenyan, I was born there… (Jaycee)

For this reason, I regard them as African in my data analysis just like the other research participants; despite their race, their experiences are very similar. My discussions in the data analysis chapters indicate that they had an understanding of what it meant to be an African woman, an international student and the notions of being a woman in Australia.

4.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have described the research design of my study. I argue the reasons for choosing a feminist framework to conduct this study, and acknowledge the debate surrounding feminist research (Bloom, 1998; Given, 2008; Harding, 1991; Keating, 2013; Lather, 1991; Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002). I mention the importance of experiential knowledge in understanding people's ways of being. My positioning in shaping the research and reflexivity of the study is also discussed. This chapter provides summarised details of the ways in which I went about collecting my data. I discuss the recruitment process and the use of semi-structured, in-depth, interviews, informal conversations and observations to collect my data.

I conclude by explaining how I analysed my data. In this study I have tried to unpack the experiences of African female students. My challenge was to look beyond their visible identities or physical markers to be able to understand how they see themselves or are seen in the Australian society. The next four chapters present the findings of the research. They examine essentialised understandings of young Kenyan women, and different ways of being a young Kenyan woman in Australia through the experiences of the groups labelled 'snobs,' 'go-getters' and 'strugglers.'

In the next chapter, I present my research participants' essentialised understanding of ways of being 'traditional' African women, Australian 'white' women and international students.

Chapter Five – Essentialised notions of the 'traditional' African woman, the Australian woman and international African female student

5.1 Introduction

In my study, I found that my research participants have an essentialised description of what they identified as characterising a 'traditional' African woman, Australian 'white' woman and international African female student. CRF uses the term essentialism to refer to the notion that there are basic shared characteristics of women that are essential to the group's experiences and interests (Harris, 2012 and Wing, 2003). Essentialised understanding is one that ascribes innate characteristics to a group. These characteristics are seen as essential or natural to the group. The terms essentialism and stereotypes are closely connected because they describe characteristics of a group. However, they are different in that stereotyping is way of representing or evaluating other people in fixed, unyielding terms (Ritzer and Ryan, 2010). Stereotype can be described as "fixed idea or image people have about a person or group of people which is always not true in reality" (Gibson, 2000). Stereotyping unlike essentialism commonly involves attribution of negative traits to groups of people who are different from us. However, stereotypes can be positive. Essentialism on the other hand refers to the argument that there are fixed truths to be told about identity categories so that there exists an essence of, for example women, Australians, Asiana and working class (Barker, 2004). My research participants described characteristics that are essential to being an African woman, "Australian" woman and international student. These traits are unique and define who an African woman is, who an "Australian" woman is and who an international student is in Australia. They also talked about stereotypes that described African female international students.

While they all expressed an essentialised understanding of the traditional African women in terms of dressing styles, behaviours and social relations, I will show in the following chapters

that these women in my study negotiated being an African woman in different ways. The discourses this group of young African women negotiated with regards to being a traditional Kenyan woman mainly came from their African family, culture, religion and community.

These young African women from Kenya also had an essentialised understanding of "Australian" women. I use this term cautiously as I am aware that Australia's population is made up people of diverse cultural background. However, I use the term "Australian" woman in this chapter and in other parts of this thesis to refer to white women of Anglo-Celtic and European ancestry based on my research participants' perception of the category of "Australian" woman. My research participants use the term when comparing their ways of being as African women and the ways of being of Australian woman. Their Kenyan background may have influenced their perception of who an Australian woman is. In Kenya, all Europeans are referred to as white regardless of their country of origin. Kenya was under British rule from 1888- 1963. During this time, identities were expressed along racial lines; black, Asian and white. Although there is no segregation today, one's identity is still viewed in terms of the colour of their skin. My participants' perceptions of who an Australian woman is may have been influenced by the dominant discourse of whiteness that circulate within Australia, amidst other cultural discourses (Joseph, 2013).

Apart from the discourse of whiteness that prevails in Australia, Australian national identity is configured in "white" terms (Willis, 2012). This is due to the British colonial past that has resulted in a heritage of belief that Australia is a white nation, and the White Australian Policy that was enacted in 1901 and later dismantled in 1973. The White policy focused on whiteness and discriminated against any person who was non-European and those of colored races by refusing to allow them to enter the country. According to Jon Stratton (1999), the history of Australia's whiteness "takes the term Anglo-Celtic to describe what is now considered to be the whitest group of Australians . . . and later the broadening of the category

'white' to include European" (p. 163). Kenya's colonial background, discourse of whiteness that prevails in Australia because of Australia's colonial heritage and White Policy influenced my research participants' perceptions of Australian-ness and "whiteness" making them view "Australian" woman as white. They described the social and cultural markers of "Australian" women as extroverted, confident and independent.

The young women in my study were international students in various universities in Melbourne; they negotiated discourses of international education and international students. Their interviews indicated that they had an essentialised understanding of international students.

5.2 Essentialised notion of a 'traditional' Kenyan woman

As discussed in Chapter Three, my engagement with literature on African feminism revealed that many African societies define traditional African women according to their roles of bearing children, maintaining the family, performing domestic duties, their religious involvement, and having and teaching their children good morals (Falola & Amponsah, 2012; Mikel, 1997; Mwangi, 2009). In Kenya where the research participants come from, a woman's identity is primarily understood as a function of her reproductive role (as a mother), as well as her married role (Kiome-Gatobu, 2013). Although the research participants came from diverse cultural, educational and economic backgrounds as mentioned earlier in this thesis, the notion of the 'traditional' African woman emerged from their interviews. Most of the young women in my study described the traditional African woman in relation to social behaviour, social interactions, dressing styles, domestic roles and religion.

5.2.1 Social interactions and behaviour

Many of the African female students who participated in my study told me that within the Kenyan culture, most women avoid speaking publicly. They stated that women in Kenya are

often cautious in their interactions with others as they are afraid of how they will be perceived. They added that the way a woman interacts with people is very important in Kenya because a woman's character is judged by the way she speaks and behaves around people. According to these young women in my study, it is important for a traditional African woman to have good social behaviour and it is their mothers and grandmothers who are responsible for teaching them virtues in obedience, good morals, dressing well and taking care of the family. The following excerpts from some of the research participants' comments demonstrate this:

> …My grandmother would show me how I am supposed to behave in front of men…like there is this thing that women are not supposed to laugh loudly in front of men because they will be perceived to be loose or someone who does not have good morals... (Sally).

> …my grandmother taught me as a young African woman the importance of having a good name, keeping a good reputation… (Ellen).

Sally went on to say that if a young woman does not have good morals, her mother is blamed for not teaching her well:

> …there is this thing in society back in Kenya where if you have children that are disrespectful, they spoil the name of the mother and who you are in the society. For example, if I dress badly it's not just me who get judged but it's also my mother… (Sally).

Traditional African women, according to my research participants, are cautious and private in their conversations with people, especially strangers. They told me in their interviews that in Africa women are expected to keep information about themselves and their family private. In Kenya, women are always careful about who they talk to and what they say because they are often judged by the way they interact with others. For example, the Agikuyu community in Kenya have a saying, "*'Mutumia etagwomutumia nigukiririria maundu'*–A woman is called a woman because she keeps things to herself" (Kibunja, 2013, p.7). This means that a woman is expected to maintain privacy and be cautious in her conversations. Most of my research participants said that they were cautious when talking or interacting with friends,

workmates, classmates or other people within their community. Di's comments below demonstrate this:

…You have to be really careful making friends… (Di).

…For a young African female, you have to be careful with what you do or say… (Sally).

Ellen adds in her interview that an African woman is expected to have good company and should be cautious in their conversations:

…As a young African woman you are expected to have good company…you mind your own business and you do not talk about yourself to strangers… (Ellen).

Sally reiterates Ellen's point by comparing how Australian women are open in their conversation, unlike Kenyan women. She told me that she was surprised at how an Australian woman was open in her conversation with a stranger in a bus. This is seen in her comments below:

…I realised that the Australian lady was just giving him information and I was like 'wow she is so open; she is so ready to give that information about herself to this stranger as opposed to women back in Kenya…' (Sally).

She found it unusual for a woman to have conversations about themselves with strangers because Kenyan women are cautious in their conversations and interactions. Apart from discussing traditional African women's social interactions, some of the research participants also commented on gender relations within Kenyan society.

In addition to African women being passive and introverted, some of the research participants told me that African women take back seats in matters concerning the society. As discussed earlier in Chapter Two, Kenya is a patriarchal society where women often take back seats and allow men to take charge of all matters in the society. These views resonated with some of the research participants' comments on the position of African women in a Kenyan

society. Ellen's comments below indicate a subservient position that women hold within the family and in the society:

> …Especially as a female we are more used being on the back seats listening to what the males have to say even in the family… (Ellen).

Ellen's comments show that women are aware of and are used to their back seat position in the families and society, allowing men to take charge and make decisions.

5.2.2 Ways of dressing

The majority of the young women in my study commented on the way Australian women dressed. They juxtaposed Kenyan women's ways of dressing with the Australian women's ways of dressing. They said that Kenyan women are required to dress in a decent way. They told me that African women do not wear tight, short and revealing clothes like Australian women because they would be seen as lacking good morals. In Kenyan society, it is important for a woman to dress well because a woman's character is judged by the way they dress (Quick et al., 1993; Sheldon, 2005). Both Ellen and Sally in their interviews spoke of the importance for an African woman to dress appropriately:

> … as an African woman you can dress up and still look decent… There is no way as an African woman you are going to wear a low cut top and a mini skirt and you get out of the house… (Sally).

> …the way women dress here in Australia, they wear low cuts and shorts… you wouldn't try dressing like that back home. That would be viewed as wrong especially because of culture over there… As an African woman that will be viewed as a bad idea. You wouldn't be walking dressed like that in my country… (Ellen).

Ellen told me that African women dress in a way that is acceptable in the African society; they are not expected to wear clothes that are revealing such as shorts and tight clothes. Sally exemplifies this point by stating that it is a woman's responsibility to ensure that her daughters dress decently, because if they don't they will bring shame to the family:

> …young women in Kenya who dress in a certain way, they don't just spoil the name of the mother but also who you are in the society. For example, if I dress

badly it's not just me who get judged but it's also my mum. So she is very strict on dressing… (Sally).

As seen from my participants' interviews, African women in Kenya are expected to behave and dress in ways that are accepted in Kenyan society. According to my research participants, failure to adhere to these ways brings shame to their mothers and family as a whole because they will be seen as lacking good morals. In addition to having good social behaviour and dressing as expected in Kenyan society, my research participants also spoke of the importance of religion in defining an African woman in Kenya.

5.2.3 Religious involvement

Kenya is widely seen as a religious country with the vast majority of people being Christians, who make up approximately about 80 per cent of the population; Muslims are about 11 per cent and the remainder is made up of Hindus, Bahai and Indigenous beliefs. As noted in other studies on African culture and religious identity (Griffith & Savage, 2006; Mbiti, 1991; Onyinye, 2006), religion is important in defining a traditional African woman. These studies found that the roles of African women are embedded within the religious and cultural practices. The roles emphasised childrearing, running the home and taking care of the husbands' needs and interests. A traditional African woman is also expected to be family-oriented and adherent to religious teaching (Baraza, 2011; Clarke, 2013). The interviews with the young Kenyan women in my study revealed the importance of religion in the identity of a Kenyan woman. Most of the research participants were Christians. One participant was a Muslim and went to the mosque regularly while another had a Muslim father and Christian mother and did not follow either of the religions seriously. My research participants told me that they were either practising Christians or Muslims. Two of them explained that Africans (including women) value their religion and culture. Sally's and Di's remarks illustrates this:

…I think sometimes Africans (including women) are more… what can I say? We value religion and culture more… (Sally).

…I think religion and African culture is sort of intertwined, the whole thing of dress code, being respectful to others, choosing the right friends, it's all sort of intertwined… (Di).

Di's remarks indicate that an African woman understands the way to dress and behave through her religious and cultural practices because in Kenya, religion and culture are intertwined. In many African societies it is difficult to make a distinction between religion and culture (Karanja, 2009; Park, 2013; Slavin & Salvador, 2012). According to Kiome-Gatobu (2013), religion holds communities together and gives individuals within that community a sense of belonging and a sense of self. Kiome-Gatobu (2013) goes on to say that the intertwining of religion and culture has a significant influence on the formation of self.

During the pre-colonial era in Africa, African women were highly respected and had spiritual roles in traditional African religions (Mbiti, 1988). Later when Christianity spread in Africa, its teachings were significant in defining the roles of a Christian woman. While I understand that there are different religious interpretations of a woman's role within various societies. For example, conservative religious leaders may have differing understandings about gender relations compared to feminist religious scholars. Traditional conservative religious understandings of the gender relations focus on the role of women as a mother, a wife, and carer of their families. In current Kenyan society, an African woman who follows religious teachings is highly regarded and respected. The following comment illustrates this:

... an African woman who is God fearing is highly regarded… (Ellen).

Kenyan women are expected to go to church every week and this is evidenced in many of my research participants' interviews. Most of them told me that they belonged to a church community and they had friends from their church, as seen in their remarks below:

…my African friends…. we go to church together… (Rachel).

…that's the church where I go to… (Tracey).

…I really love Australia because of my church… (Lucy).

The young Muslim woman who participated in my study also told me that she prays every day and her father reminds her of what is expected of her as a Muslim woman:

> …My dad does it up until today, he was still telling me you're not just an African woman you are a young Muslim girl…once in a while find a mosque nearby where you can go and read and learn Arabic…I joined the Islamic club here at the university in Melbourne so I'm always at the prayer room… (Di).

In addition to religion being important in defining Kenyan women, domestic roles also emerged as significant in understanding a Kenyan woman's identity. As discussed in the conceptual framework of this research, most African societies have roles that are carried out by women. These roles mainly involve cooking, cleaning and taking care of the family.

5.2.4 Domestic roles

My research participants told me that women are expected to get married, have children and perform all domestic duties such as cooking, cleaning and taking care of children while their men are seen as providers for their families and are not expected to carry out domestic chores. Jane and Ellen told me in their interview that married women are supposed to have children and provide care for them. Jane and Ellen's remarks below illustrate this point:

> …Back at home in my culture African woman is mostly a housewife. So you are pretty much be provided for by your husband if you are married. So you need to have kids, raise a family… (Jane).

> …African women are supposed to get married, have children and take care of the family… (Ellen).

In spite of women in Kenya being educated and playing a significant role in the labour force, they are still expected to get married, have children and take care of their family (Adhunga, 2014; Clarke, 2013). These expectations are embedded within African cultural practices. According to Mbiti (1991), "women were valued highly in traditional African society

because they not only bear life but they nurse it, cherish it, give it warmth and they care for life since every human life passes through their bodies" (p.64). There are many proverbs within African societies that emphasise the role of traditional African woman in having children and taking care of the family. An example is a proverb among the Agikuyu community in Kenya that says 'a woman must not be killed,' which means that to kill a woman is to kill not only her, but her existing and potential children, and humanity (Clarke, 2013).

My research participants also had an understanding of gender roles and they stated that cooking and cleaning is a woman's job. Sally commented that in African society men stay away from the kitchen and instead they wait for their wives to serve them food;

> …in the African society, you wouldn't find a man in the kitchen at all or helping out the wife at all…instead the man sits around waiting for dinner to be served, or waiting for house to be cleaned… (Sally).

In Kenya, gender roles are clearly defined; men are providers for the family and women take care of the family by cooking, cleaning and taking care of children.

In summary, this section discusses the essentialised understanding of a young traditional Kenyan woman's identity. This understanding as seen in the interviews of the research participants is intertwined with the religious and cultural values of Kenyan society. The research participants' engagement with Christian and Muslim religious teachings, African femininity and family values are significant in defining the roles and position of African woman in Kenyan society. According to my research participants, a traditional Kenyan woman has a subservient position in the Kenyan society, she is expected to dress conservatively and take care of her family. The way she is perceived by the society is very important, therefore she has to be careful in the way she talks and behaves in the community, and she is highly regarded if she follows religious teachings. Although the research participants had an essentialised understanding of a traditional Kenyan woman, they constructed their identity very differently in Australia because they negotiated different discourses circulating within

Australian society. They took on different cultural markers in constructing their identities within the Australian context. These identity strategies will be discussed in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight.

5.3 Essentialised notions of "Australian" woman

In this section, I present this group of young Kenyan women's essentialised understandings of the Australian woman. This notion of the extroverted and assertive Australian woman emerged from the individual interviews. My research participants juxtaposed their notion of the traditional African woman against their notion of the extroverted and assertive Australian woman. They set up a binary of the traditional and conservative Kenyan woman, and the extroverted and assertive Australian woman. They described the extroverted and assertive Australian woman in terms of her behaviour, ways of dressing, freedom and independence. My research participants told me that they were referring to Australian women of Anglo-Celtic and European backgrounds or White Australian women when they used the term *Australian women.* This is because the dominant discourse of femininity circulating within Australian context is white femininity. However, the participants were also aware that there were women from various cultural backgrounds in Australia for example, Italian, Greek, Lebanese, Samoans and Chinese, just to mention a few.

5.3.1 The extroverted, assertive and empowered Australian woman

Most of my research participants told me that Australian women exuded confidence when they spoke, especially during class discussions. They also said that Australian women are extroverted in their interaction with people. Elsie, one of my research participants, made a very important observation; that Australian culture values extroversion and confidence. Her comments can be seen below:

…in the culture here (Australia) there's a very high respect for extroversion and confidence because most Aussies including women are very confident and very extroverted… (Elsie).

Like Elsie, some of the other young Kenyan women in my study told me that Australian women are extroverted and they are not afraid to express their opinion whether in public, at work or within classrooms. Many of my research participants compared themselves to Australian women, saying that Australian women spoke with confidence, which many of them admitted they lacked. The following comments by Tracey and Flo illustrate this:

…I see Australians including women do it with all the confidence no matter what they are saying… (Tracey).

…It's something natural, the way Australian women do it, the way they present themselves in class, the confidence. I don't know how they get it… (Flo).

Other than confidence, some of the young women in my study also commented that Australian women were empowered because they are not afraid to try out different things in their lives, such as studying and working at the same time. Jane's comments below exemplify this point:

…because every woman here (Australia) is empowered...they study or most women here work and they are not afraid to try different things…unlike Kenya… (Jane).

Sally, another research participant, told me that she had observed that there were more Australian women who study science courses unlike women in Kenya. She commented that her Australian female friends were studying a PhD and they were encouraged to do so, unlike in Kenya where women are not encouraged and there are no opportunities or incentives to help women. Sally's comments can be seen below:

…some of the university courses like biology and chemistry I find have much more women than I would have seen back in Kenya…some of the my Australian friends who are woman are doing like a PhD in Biotechnology. Over here they encourage you more in terms of studying irrespective of your gender…they are

empowered…there are very few incentives to encourage an African woman to advance herself in terms of their career in Kenya… (Sally).

In addition to empowerment, most of the young Kenyan women in my study also identified other values of Australian women. They said that Australian women have more freedom and independence when compared to Kenyan women.

5.3.2 Opportunities, freedom and independence

Many of my participants spoke of the freedom and independence that Australian women have. They told me during their individual interviews that in Australia, women are able to study, work and take care of their families. Jane, who was a mother of a young child, commented that Australian women were independent in the way they did things unlike women in Kenya;

> …most women here (Australia) are independent. It's more like there is a lot of freedom for women here…most women work and study, they are independent… (Jane).

Some of my research participants also compared Australian and Kenyan women's access to educational and social opportunities. They juxtaposed independent and confident Australian women to passive, subservient Kenyan women who lack equal access to education and job opportunities. Sally's remarks below explain the lack of opportunities for Kenyan women, particularly in science and mathematics:

> …I think in Kenya, African women are not expected to get involved in sciences and maths-related courses as such. And based on that you have to prove a lot and get very high marks to get into those fields whereas over here [Australia], it's more of everyone has the equal opportunity of being involved in whichever field or study they want to… (Sally).

My research participants also discussed Australian women's freedoms in relation to the way they dressed, comparing them to the way African women are expected to dress. They commented that Australian women had the freedom to dress the way they wanted. They found that young Australian women dressed very differently to Kenyan women. They said that young

Australian women like to wear short, tight and revealing clothes, unlike African women. Many of the research participants spoke of differences in styles of dressing between Kenyan and white Australian women, however Sally and Ellen spoke in detail about the way Australian women dressed, compared to Kenyan women. Ellen told me that Australian women have the freedom to wear what they want unlike in Kenya, where women have no freedom to dress in the same way because they are afraid to be seen as lacking good morals if they do. Ellen's comments below illustrate this point:

> …The way Australian women dress here you wouldn't try dressing like that back home. They wear low cuts and shorts. As a woman that will be viewed as a bad idea of you in Kenya. You wouldn't be walking dressed like that in my country… (Ellen).

Sally commented that she was uncomfortable with the way Australian women dressed because their clothes were too revealing. She told me that she noticed that young women in Australia like to wear low cut tops and miniskirts. She stated that she would never dress like them. She told me that she would never wear such clothes because she would feel naked and it is against the way her mother taught her. Sally's remarks are seen below:

> …Like for instance just the other day I was with my housemate who is Australian to the shops and she was insisting on me getting this really low cut dress and a short dress and I was like 'I can't wear that.' And she was like 'Why? And you have the legs.' And I was like 'as an African woman it would make me feel naked it is not what my mum instilled in me on the kind of dressing…' (Sally).

Apart from independence, the research participants also stated that "Australian" women can have 'a fair go' just like men, unlike the women in Kenya.

5.3.3 "Australian" women have 'a fair go'

Most of the African female students interviewed in the research spoke of gender equality within the Australian society. During the interviews my research participants told me that they found that "Australian" women have the same rights as men. Some of the research participants

commented that Australian women were not subservient of their male counterparts, instead "Australian" women are treated equal to men; that they have the same rights in terms of what they can do and become. Ellen's remarks illustrate this:

> …Australian women are not taught the idea of submission and looking after a man. They are equal to men in terms of what they can do, become and [in] raising children…. (Ellen).

Similarly, when it comes to domestic roles, many of my research participants said that Australian women share these roles equally with men. In Australia, domestic chores are not assigned to women only as is in Kenya, but Australian men are also expected to cook, clean and take care of children. Sally's comments below highlight this point:

> …with my housemate who is Australian. I have observed that her parents share domestic roles more compared to African society… (Sally).

> … Australian women are not domesticated…They expect men to do as much work as possible and share chores with them… (Ellen).

This section discusses my research participants' essentialised understandings of Australian women. Most of them described these understandings by juxtaposing their ways of being as Kenyan women to their observations of ways of being a white Australian woman. "Australian" women are described as being extroverted, confident, independent, have freedom and equalities and they are not afraid to dress the way they want.

5.4 Essentialised notion of international students in Australia

Most of my research participants also constructed an essentialised understanding of international students as hard-working, focused and passive learners (Arkoudis, et al., 2012; Doherty & Singh, 2005; Koehne, 2006; Marginson et al., 2008, 2012; Sawir, 2013). International students are often constructed by the Australian media, educators and the public as being hardworking, focused and success-driven, but at the same time they are also seen to

endure academic challenges because of language barriers and different approaches to teaching and learning. Studies on international students (Sawir, Marginson, Forbes-Mewett, Nyland & Ramia, 2012; Snyder & Nieuwenhuysen, 2010) indicate that international students also face discrimination because of their race, and suffer loneliness and isolation.

5.4.1 Being conscientious, focused and success-driven

Many of my research participants that international students work hard in their studies in order to be successful, to complete their studies and get good jobs. This is illustrated in Ellen's comments below:

> …International students want to finish their studies or advance, get jobs and
> they want to be successful… (Ellen).

They also told me that international students worked hard to be more knowledgeable and be able to participate in class discussions without the fear of being looked down upon by other students. Some also told me that international students work extra hard in their studies in order to keep up. Tracey's comments show this:

> …As student from Kenya, you have to go and do a thorough research because
> you don't want everybody to look at you like you didn't do anything…you have
> to work extra harder to get what was expected of me…(Tracey).

Rachel reiterated this point by saying that an African female student had to work hard and go the extra mile in their studies because of their race and gender. Her remarks are below:

> …being a student, being young, being different looking from everybody else
> you have to go that extra mile… (Rachel).

In addition to working hard in their studies, many of the research participants had told me that international students work and study at the same time. The majority of participants–except for a few who came from wealthy Kenyan families–had to find jobs to finance their education and pay for living expenses. Work for international students is difficult; previous studies on international students working indicate that they are poorly paid and many students

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work more than one job (Nyland et al., 2008). This is evident in Ellen, Rachel, Jane and Tracey's interviews describing the social markers of international students. They all said that as international students, they had to work on weeknights and weekends to earn money for tuition fees and living expenses. Tracey and Jane not only had to juggle studies and work, but they also had the responsibility of taking care of their families. Tracey's comments below illustrate this point:

> …as student you have to work hard, go for night duty and the following morning you have to be going to school, it's not easy…you have to really work hard… (Tracey).

Jane commented that in being an international student and paying her own fees, having one job was not enough. She worked different jobs in order to get enough money to study and pay for living expenses. Jane's comments can be seen below:

> …You have to work hard and learn different ways of making money through different jobs. As a student you don't have to depend on one job… (Jane).

Nyland, et al. (2008) states that international students can benefit financially and academically if they worked part-time, however about fifty per cent of the students rely on the job as their only source of income. Many students, just like the research participants in my study, are forced to work more than two jobs and have to work hard in their studies to maintain good grades.

Other than being conscientious and success-driven, international students in Australia and other parts of the world are often described as passive, introverted learners.

5.4.2 Being shy and introverted

As is the case with many international students (Marginson, 2010; Sawir et al., 2012) who are often described as shy and passive learners because of their culture and approach to learning, many of the research participants said that just like many international students they found it

difficult to stand in front of their classes to speak, let alone answer or ask a question because they were not used to public speaking. Ellen's comments demonstrate this:

> …students from other countries are unable to express themselves in classroom discussions… (Ellen).

Rachel said that she found it difficult to participate in class discussions because she was not used to them. Her remarks can be seen below:

> …I was just quietly there in the background, trying to look invisible. However, I needed to get my head around the whole interaction thing of discussions… (Rachel).

Tracey also found presentations difficult because she did not like standing in front of a class, and that if she had a choice she would not do it. However, she understood that she had the responsibility to participate. Her comments are illustrated below:

> …not like standing in front of a class and making a presentation and she said that if she had a choice she would not do it. However, she understands that she had the responsibility to participate that meant she contributes in group discussions and group presentations… (Tracey).

Rachel and Tracey's comments resonate with what other studies (Arkoudis et al, 2012; Koehne, 2006; Sawir et al, 2010) on international students allude that many international students are 'shy', 'quiet', 'silent' and rote learners.

My research also found that although Kenyan female international students are shy they made friends easily with other international students.

5.4.3 Friendships with other international students

As mentioned in Chapter One, there are not many African female students studying in Australian universities. The research participants in their interviews stated that they felt lonely and 'left out' because there were few of them in Australia. Developing friendships was important.

You are the only African here…there are not many of us. You feel a bit lonely, a bit left out… (Rachel).

As discussed in previous studies (Koehne, 2006; Marginson et al., 2010; Sawir et al., 2008), international students suffer from loneliness and many them seek friendships among other international students. My research participants told me that international students find it easy to make friends with other students from different countries because they are tolerant of different cultures and are helpful. Having friends was important for the camaraderie and support in their studies. The following comments illustrate this:

…I have international friends, they with are Chinese, Indonesian, and Indians…the people who I hang around with are more accommodative of the different cultures, different people… (Sally).

…you rely more on other international friends that you have in class and also outside, they are quite helpful. They follow up, 'How are you doing? Can I have a look at your assignment?' Therefore, they are very helpful…They are people from different countries but some were born here… (Ellen).

Having friends from different parts of the world was important for the research participants because it made them feel connected and have a sense of belonging as seen above. However, just as it is evident in other studies on international students (Lee & Rice, 2007; Marginson et al., 2010; Marginson & Sawir, 2011), the research participants endured discrimination because of their race and gender.

5.5 Stereotypes of African female international students

My research participants' interviews indicated that they all shared similar views on ways in which African female international students are understood in Australian universities. They described cultural and educational markers associated with the positioning of African female international students in Western universities. Their comments resonate with findings from previous studies on African women studying in universities in Europe and North America

(Beoku-Betts, 2004; Maundeni, 1999; Mirza, 2003; 2006; Okeke-Ihejirika, 2006; Wane, 2009) which state that African female students are often positioned as 'unintelligent,' exotic, negatively labelled and are often discriminated against because of their race and gender.

5.5.1 'Unintelligent'

Previous studies on African female students studying in Europe and North American universities (Beoku-Betts, 2004; Maundeni, 1999; Okeke-Ihejirika, 2006) point out that indeed there is covert racial and gender discrimination against African female students in Western universities. This occurred when issues regarding accents, language skills and low academic expectations of African female students were raised. Comments by my research participants indicate that they understood what it means to be an African female international student in Australian universities. They said that African female students are at times viewed as 'unintelligent' by some of the local students and lecturers because of their race and gender. This is seen in the comments below:

> …but people would not expect you to have abilities as an African woman and they would be very impressed that you did...being an African woman is not all that it's cut out to be…they would say 'What does she know, she's from Africa, anyway'…they're putting me down in that argument simply because I'm a woman and possibly just because I'm an African, they would put me down in that sense and that would be annoying in that I have the same abilities… (Elsie).

> …maybe during the tutorials someone will look at you like 'Oh you're black so you're not supposed to be reasoning like the rest of us,' they are there… (Tracey).

> …There is some situations where I find because of my race and because I am a woman, people treat me differently… (Flo).

Elsie's comments show that the intersectionality (Collins, 1993; Crenshaw, 1989) of my research participants' gender and race positioned them as unintelligent or lacking in abilities. Crenshaw (1989) uses the term *intersectionality* to denote the ways in which Black women or women of colour experience discrimination because of their race and gender. This

misrepresentation of African/Black women as unintelligent is documented in other studies (Brah, 1996; Collins, 1999; Mirza, 1992; Mohanty, 2002).

5.5.2 Speak with accents

In addition to the misrepresentation of African women as unintelligent and in spite of having good command of the English language, my research participants faced problems regarding their ability to speak in English. As mentioned in Chapter Two, English is the mode of instruction in all Kenyan schools; nonetheless it the third language for most Kenyans. Although my participants had good command of English language, they had difficulty being understood in classroom discussions because of their accents. They often got frustrated when they were asked to repeat during classroom discussions and when having casual conversations. They said that as African female students they were looked down because of their accent. For some, the problem with their accents made them not want to participate in discussions, while others felt different and as though they didn't belong. Sally and Tracey's remarks below show the challenges they faced because of their accent:

> …Coming from Africa you would also have an accent so when you ask the lecturer something the lecturer would be like 'Pardon? What did you say…?' It would be like 'Oh man how am I speaking! Is it something that am saying differently'…So those are some of the challenges that you have faced… (Sally).

> …Well as an African female student there are those things when maybe you'd say something and maybe they won't get it because of your accent so that time you are quickly reminded that all these people are not what you are, so that's one of those times that you feel that way… (Tracey).

One of my research participants told me that she did not have problems with her accent, instead one of her lecturers was surprised at how well she spoke and wrote in English as he initially had low expectations of her English language abilities. Elsie had to explain to her lecturer—who had assumed that she was a refugee from Sudan—that she had learnt English

since childhood and had attended schools in Kenya that only taught in English. Elsie's comments are seen below:

> …I am a bit dark in complexion, so they thought I am maybe from Sudan and just learnt English here so they were very impressed that I had learnt English so fast… (Elsie).

The above comments point out that African female students are misunderstood and there is a negative perception about African female students in Australian universities. Beoku-Betts' (2004) study on African women pursuing graduate studies in North America and Europe point to the racial and gendered misrepresentation of African women. She states that "while none of them claimed to experience overt racism, they were aware that being asked to take remedial classes and comments on their 'accents' and language skills were consistent with racial stereotyping of Black people" (p.121). Similarly, African female students in Australian universities experience discrimination because of their accents. Beoku-Betts (2004) states that accents can be used as racial stereotypes of African women and be seen as way of positioning African female students as 'different' or as 'outsiders,' excluding them. This is seen in Rachel's comments below:

> …Yes especially when you talk to some people. They ask you to keep repeating things. It is as if your accent is so bad that they cannot understand. It makes you feel really out of their group sort of thing. Moreover, you feel like as African female student you do not fit in… (Rachel).

5.5.3 'Outsiders' or 'different'

Like all international students, my research participants were expected to return to their home countries after the completion of their studies. Previous studies on international students (Koehne, 2006; Mahat & Hourigon, 2006; Sawir et al., 2010) show that they are often perceived as 'invisible' or as 'outsiders.' Many of my research participants told me that African female students are made to feel different and are treated like outsiders at work and in their classes.

They used different terms such as 'left out,' 'not accepted,' and feeling 'different' and 'lonely' to describe ways that international African female students in Australian universities are seen or positioned in Australia. Ellen's remarks illustrate this:

> …As an African female student, it can be hard at work. Because you can get people who are not accepting of other nationalities or they would not trust you in the first place…It was hard. Sometimes you feel like you want to quit. You do not feel like you are accepted. You feel like you are intruding into people's lives. In addition, it is hard when you feel like you are not being supported… (Ellen).

Some of my research participants said that they did not belong because they were the only African female students in their classes as seen in the comments below:

> …You feel you are the only one here, you feel a bit lonely, a bit left out… (Rachel).

In addition to being discriminated against as young Kenyan women, living and studying in Australia, my research participants told me that they had to negotiate negative perceptions of young African women living in Australia.

5.5.4 Negatively perceived

My research participants' interviews revealed that many of the participants endured negative stereotypes of young African women in Australia.

There are not many women from Africa studying in Australia. According to data from Australian Bureau of Statistics, the numbers of students from Kenya seeking higher education in Australia towards the end of 2015 was approximately 1,408 (refer to table 4). Migration from Africa to Australia remained very limited until the 1990s.[18] Many of the Africans living in Australia came as refugees from Sudan, Sierra Leone, Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Liberia, Somalia and Rwanda. In the past, the Australian media had presented a biased and inaccurate portrayal of African refugees—especially Sudanese refugees—in Australia

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[18] African Australians Project: Migration between Africa and Australia: a demographic perspective (2010)

(Hebbani, Obijiofor & Bristen, 2012; Roberts, 2005). The refugees were often portrayed negatively and in a racist manner such as "violent" and "difficult to integrate" (Phillips, 2011). Many Africans (black) are often perceived as Sudanese refugees. For this reason, many of the research participants endured racial discrimination because of their identity. Some mentioned that they were often assumed to be refugees from Sudan. For example, Elsie stated that she could not be hired because the person hiring assumed she was Sudanese:

> …they told me, sorry, you would not be good for business, I cannot hire you, you wouldn't be good for business and I asked what exactly they meant and he said that he was just being honest, but he does not employ Sudanese… (Elsie).

Sally on the other hand, said that there are times when she was singled out in a store because she was African. The storeowner kept asking if she needed help. This is illustrated in her comments below:

> …They look at you because you are an African and ask can we help you… like am I going to steal something… (Sally).

In addition, some research participants also mentioned being sexually harassed because of their racial and gender identities. Non-Black men in Australia because of their small number at times view Young African women in Australia as exotic and different, and they are often targets of sexual attacks. Three of the research participants in my study told me that they had experienced sexual harassment, and a white Australian man raped one of them. Flo and Di told me in their interview that a white man sexually harassed them one time when they were travelling on a bus. The man made lewd gestures at them and when they ignored him, he verbally abused them saying that African women were known to be promiscuous. Flo said that she believed that the man was harassing them because of their race and gender as seen in her comments:

> ...they just find African women different and fascinating, but the way they objectify you, stares... (Flo).

Georgina's experience was very sad. A man that she met online raped her. She told me that she was so traumatised that she sought counselling afterwards. Her remarks are illustrated below:

> You know how you feel lonely and the computer was the only thing I have. I started joining these blogs meeting new people but I am not meeting ladies its men, you think they will be good to you will get someone to be with you. I lost my virginity from one and by force, he was white man… (Georgina).

She informed me in her interview that she had learnt her lesson and was trying to move on. She also told me that she found out from a friend later on that African girls are often sexually assaulted in Australia because of their 'exoticness.' Her comments can be seen below:

> …that's what most of white men do here you know. They have never touched black skin; they hear they are good and all that. That's what I learnt later. I learnt from a friend in school, she is Sudanese. She has gone through a lot too even though she came when she was younger… That's what men from other races do to black girls. She helped me through a lot… (Georgina).

This section examined the essentialised notions of being African female students in Australian universities. African female international students are perceived as not intelligent, speak with accents and are outsiders. They endure discrimination, negotiate negative stereotypes because of their race, and gender identity.

5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I provided the thirteen young African women's essentialist understandings of four identities; a traditional African woman, Australian woman, international student and an international African female student. Their notions of these identities are gained from their experiences within multiple settings. The research participants' interviews indicated that they had an essentialised understanding of their identity as young Kenyan women, their roles and expectations. Their understanding of ways of being a young Kenyan female came from discourses of femininity, family values, religion and culture that are present in Kenyan society.

In Kenya, religion and culture is important in defining one's identity (Kiome-Gatobu, 2013). There are physical and social markers that define traditional African woman which are prescribed by both religion and cultural values. The markers of female identity in Kenya include physical appearances, gender relations, social interactions and family responsibilities. My research participants told me that traditional Kenyan women are expected to dress conservatively, have good social behaviour, be cautious in their interaction with others, follow religious teachings and take the responsibility of caring for her family.

The research participants' interactions with the Australian women and observation of Australian culture provided them with an essentialised understanding of white Australian women. In their interviews, they described attributes of Australian women in terms of their social interaction, behaviour and gender relations. The research participants commented that Australian women are empowered, have a voice and are not afraid to speak up for themselves, unlike African women. They also stated that in Australia, women have same liberties and freedoms as men, especially in family and community matters. Many of my participants said that Australian women share the responsibilities of taking care of their children and performing household duties with their husbands. They said that Australian women have freedom and independence compared to African women.

My research participants were international students and in the course of their studies, they made friends and interacted with other international students and local students. Their engagement with discourses of international education enabled them to have an essentialised understanding of international students. Similar to the findings of previous research on international students in Australia (Doherty, 2004; Koehne, 2006; Marginson, 2007; Sawir et al, 2008; Sidhu, 2004; Tsolidis, 2001) most of my participants understood international students as hardworking, focused, shy and often establishing friendships with other international students. In addition to their understanding of international students, the African

female students in my study also gained an understanding of what it means to be an African female studying in Australian universities through their engagement with discourses of race and gender that is present within Australian universities and society. They said that international African female students are seen as exotic, promiscuous, not intelligent and are discriminated against because of their race and gender. These findings are similar to earlier research on international African female students (Beoku-Betts, 2004; Maundeni, 1999), African women teaching in Western universities (Beoku-Betts & Ngaruiya-Njambi, 2005; Kishomoto & Mwangi, 2009) and Black women's educational experiences in Western countries (Collins, 2002; Gilchrist, 2013; Mirza, 2006, 2013).

In the next three chapters, I examine different ways in which my research participants negotiate multiple discourses of gender, race and education in the construction of their identities as young African female students in Australia.

Chapter Six – Go-getters: 'You have to go that extra mile.'

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the identity practices of five young Kenyan women who I identify as 'go-getters.' I named this group go-getters because their individual interviews revealed their determination and desire to succeed, even though they had to juggle studying and working in order to finance their education and pay for their living expenses in Australia. They are focused and their interviews indicated that they had selected courses that would guarantee them a job in Australia or any part of the world. Three of the young women were studying to be nurses and one a psychologist. The ways in which the go-getters constructed their identity was very different from the other groups discussed later in Chapters Seven and Eight. By exercising agency, the go-getters seized the opportunities that were available in Australia such as freedom and independence to make the most of their time in Australia. They took on identity markers such as being confident, assertive, and independent in ensuring that they remained successful in their studies and in life. They are ready, as one of my research participant said, to "go that extra mile."

6.2 Go-getters

The 'go-getters' group is made up of five students: Rachel, Ellen, Elsie, Lucy and Georgina. The students come from families that are considered of average income by Kenyan standards.[19] According to World Bank data, more than a half of Kenya's population live below the poverty line on less than one US dollar a day (World Bank report 2013).

In her interview, Ellen told me that she was raised by her mother and grandmother. Her mother owned a small farm and her mother's family and friends were only able to raise enough

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[19] Average income for a working Kenyan is about US $1,800 a year and 46% of the population live below poverty line -world bank report,2013)

money for Ellen's university fees for first semester. She told me that she knew before she left Kenya that she had to look for a job as soon as she arrived in Australia. At the time of the interviews, Ellen was working full-time as a nursing assistant in several aged care facilities in Melbourne while studying second year of a Bachelor of Nursing.

Similarly, Rachel's parents could not afford to pay for her to study in Australia. Rachel's aunt who owned a small retail shop in Kenya was only able to send her money for the first few months. Rachel had to look for a job, and during her interview, she told me that she was working full-time as a disability support worker. Rachel was also a second year Bachelor of Nursing student.

Elsie told me that although her parents had good jobs working in banks in Kenya as managers, they could not afford to pay for her education the entire time she was studying in Australia because it was expensive. Elsie was working full-time as a disability support worker in Melbourne to raise money for her education and living expenses. She said in her interview that her parents had initially sent her to South Africa to study, but Elsie decided to transfer to Australia because she felt that studying in Australia would give her more opportunities. Elsie was in her final year studying Psychology. She was planning to get a job in Sydney because she wanted to join her boyfriend.

Lucy, who is from an Indian-Christian community in Kenya, came from an average income family. Her father died when she was young, leaving her mother in charge of a jewelry shop in Nairobi. Lucy had to work as a nursing assistant in order to finance her education because her mother could not afford to send her money every semester. Lucy was completing a bachelor's degree in Marketing.

Georgina was the youngest in this group. She told me during her interview that her mother did not work but her father worked as a tour guide in Kenya. Her father was only able to afford Georgina's airplane ticket to Australia and tuition fees for the first semester. She said

in her interview that her father had arranged with a family friend to host her for a few months in Australia while she settled in. According to Georgina, this arrangement did not go well and she was forced to look for accommodation elsewhere. She moved from house to house, living with people she barely knew until she was able to save money and move into shared accommodation. Georgina was studying to be a nurse and was working full-time as a nursing assistant at the time of her interview.

In the next section, I show the different ways that the go-getters negotiated and constructed their new identities as they balanced between being a 'traditional' young Kenyan woman and an outgoing, independent woman in Australia. My interpretation of the way these girls negotiated and constructed their identity is premised on their interviews, my observations and informal discussions with them.

6.3 Ways of being an independent, outgoing young African woman in Australia

My research participants' understanding of ways of being a young Kenyan woman was shaped by multiple discourses such as African femininity within Kenyan context, religious teachings of women, and national and global views on women. The go-getters' interviews indicated that they had an essentialised understanding of being Kenyan women. They told me that there are certain ways that young women in Kenya are expected to behave, dress and interact with others. They said that when they moved to Australia to study, it was different because Australia had different expectations of ways young women are supposed to talk, dress and behave. Many of the go-getters said in their interviews that they initially felt lost because they did not understand what was expected of them as young African women in terms of social relations, dressing and behaviour. This is illustrated in the comments below:

> ...in Africa there are social definitions of who you are, what you can do and what you cannot do. There is none here... the society does not expect much of you.... You sort of lose your sense of identity... (Rachel).

The go-getters negotiate identity strategies that would enable them to be successful in their educational and work contexts and within the broader Australia society.

6.3.1 Being an obedient, extroverted, confident young African woman in Australia

In Chapter Two, I discussed how Kenyan women are socialised to be submissive and introverted (Choti, 2009; Park, 2013). Similarly, in Chapter Five, I argued that many of my research participants had an essentialised understanding of a Kenyan woman. A Kenyan woman is expected to be subservient, cautious and introverted in her social relations. The go-getters' interaction and observation of Australian society created an awareness of the need to change their ways of being shy and introverted. They observed that Australian culture values extroversion and confidence. Their desire to succeed made them take on these values, and as Joseph (2013) puts it, they "use identity strategies to manage the new environment" (p.33). The following comments by Elsie illustrate how the go-getters understood that being confident is important in Australia, an identity marker that they took on:

> …you don't have to be outspoken so much as just ooze confidence or if you can't ooze it, then pretend you have it and it's the most important thing in this country [Australia]…if you can't be anything else, be confident… (Elsie)

Most of the go-getters told me that they had become more confident in their interaction with others, and felt Australian and accepted. The excerpts below from their interviews illustrate this:

> …it can seem different at first but as you get to put that into action, you just get confident every day and you feel like you are one of them... (Ellen).

> …I felt much more confident in myself. If you are competent in what you are doing and confident in yourself, most of them [Australians] really like you and appreciate what you are doing so… (Rachel).

The go-getters said that showing confidence in their interaction with others—especially in classroom discussions—was important because they would otherwise be disregarded. This

is evidenced in Elsie's comments below. She said in her interview that her interaction and observation of Australian people had made her realise that showing confidence is very important in Australian society. She asserts that for an African female student living in Australia, having confidence is important for them to be successful and to avoid being discriminated against because they are different. Her comments can be seen below:

> ...I became confident and with confidence in who you are as an African and as a woman, people start respecting you. People have a harder time putting you down when you are that confident… (Elsie).

This change in their ways of being was noticeable when they went back to Kenya to visit their families. Rachel pointed out that when she went back to Kenya to visit, her family noticed that she was more confident than her peers in Kenya, and told her that was a good thing. She said that she was a different person than she was in Kenya. Her comments are seen below:

> …Well I am more outspoken now. I can do a lot more. I am more confident than my peers, the same age, the same level of study. I am more money wise; I just cannot go spend whatever. Yeah I am also able to manage my life. Yeah they think I am different. My family has said I am different but in a good way… (Rachel).

Having confidence and being extroverted as opposed to being shy and introverted was an important identity strategy for the go-getters as they re-worked their ways of being, knowing and doing in Australia. As Elsie commented in her interview that African females' shy and introverted nature could make them easy targets of discrimination, she alluded that having confidence is important in fighting discrimination. According to Witcher (2013), "anyone can overcome barriers of all types by having confidence" (p.115). The go-getters gaining confidence and being extroverted were important identity markers that they used to enhance their ways of being in Australia. Although having confidence allowed them to be in control of their lives and made them independent, they still remained obedient to their families in Kenya as seen in the comments below;

> …I am used to my parents; they talk you know. They are humble; you are not free to speak your mind…. I was supposed to listen not to tell … Georgina

Georgina told me in her interview that there were times when she was frustrated with her parents for not sending her money but she never spoke out because she is supposed to listen to her parents.

6.3.2 Being a free and independent young African woman in Australia

The go-getters come from a patriarchal Kenyan society where gender inequality is prevalent across all sectors of the society, and where gender-based violence is common (Kameri-Mbote, 2000; Lumumba & Mbondenyi, 2014; World Bank, 2007). As discussed in Chapter Five, traditional Kenyan woman have a subservient position in Kenyan society and do not have the same freedom and independence as men (Kihiu, 2010; Lumumba & Mbondenyi, 2014; Prah, 2013). The go-getters told me that when they were living in Kenya they did not have the same freedom and independence they had in Australia. They stated in their interviews that they were aware of the rights of women in Australia. They said that Australian women are independent, have freedom and the same rights and equal opportunities as men. Some said that Australia was a free country where there is freedom of expression, the right to be heard and where women have same rights as men. The following comments illustrate this point:

> …And it is a free country. You can always say what you think about something without you feeling like you did not have to. I like that you can exercise your rights freely. You have a chance to be heard… (Ellen).

The go-getters also recognised that living and studying in Australia gave them opportunities for personal growth and autonomy. In Australia, they were living alone without their parents to tell them what to do or make decisions for them. Instead, they learnt to survive by taking charge of their lives and making decisions without involving their parents. Ellen, Georgina and Rachel's comments below illustrate this point:

...I think here you learn to be independent because you have to make all the decisions; you have to do everything for yourself. You do not have any one. Therefore, I have to learn to do everything by myself... (Ellen).

...There has been a lot of personal growth and personal realisation of who I am without any interference from the society. I guess there is a level of maturity; you do things that you thought you could not do it without anyone there to hold your hand and guiding you like back home... (Rachel).

…I have become more independent I can handle my own money… (Georgina).

Georgina, Ellen and Rachel's interviews indicated that they understood that they had new expectations of life in Australia such as balancing work and study, managing money and they adopted them. Their parents were not there to help them with day-to-day decisions and they had to learn to be independent in many aspects of their lives, including managing money. The go-getters recognised that being independent was an important trait for educational and social success in Australia. They not only learnt to be independent thinkers in Australia, but they took advantage of the freedom they had by trying things they would not normally do in Kenya. For example, Georgina told me that she started drinking alcohol when she came to Australia:

…Because I did not want that control and stuff I had in Kenya. In addition, I am somewhat used to being alone here. Moreover, I never used to drink in Kenya. In addition, here, I am not a drunkard no, but I take wine... (Georgina).

In their individual interviews, the go-getters said that they had more financial freedom in Australia than they did in Kenya. They all talked about the financial freedom that they had and they were all happy that they could earn their own money and manage it however, they wanted. The following comments from their interviews illustrate this:

…I know how to handle my money. I have my own bank account. I can do budget... (Georgina).

…Here if you work hard you can buy your own car; you have your own money, you do not have to ask your parents and you can still have some more money when you work… (Rachel).

As stated earlier in this chapter, many of the go-getters worked to finance their education and to pay for their living expenses. They all told me that they had learnt to budget their money wisely to ensure they had money for tuition and living expenses. Some, like Rachel and Ellen, could afford to buy things that they would otherwise not be able to afford in Kenya. During the interviews I observed that both Ellen and Rachel owned cars. Ellen told me in her interview that working hard had made it possible for her to buy things that she could not afford in Kenya. She commented that:

> … I like that I can afford most of the things that I would not afford back home even my family would be struggling to provide for me. If you work hard, you can buy your own car… (Ellen).

As the go-getters became accustomed to the Australian way of life, they understood their new expectations and responsibilities. They learnt to manage their money and pay bills, as is expected for many working Australians. Since the go-getters were success-driven, they took the opportunity they found to work in Australia while studying. They remained successful by juggling working and studying full-time.

In addition to financial freedom, the go-getters also told me that they had the social freedom to dress the way they wanted to in Australia. They said that in Australia, women are free to choose the way they dress; unlike in Kenya where women are cautious about the way they dressed because a woman's character is judged by the clothes she wears. Some of the go-getters told me that they had changed their dress styles since moving to Australia. Renne (2013), states that changes in dressing are the main markers of identity formation. Avtar Brah (2005) also says, "the identity of a diasporic community is far from fixed or pre-given" (p. 180). The go-getters' observation of the Australian society and their realisation of the social freedom they had made them construct their identity differently by changing their ways of dressing. During the interviews, I observed that Georgina and Ellen wore leggings and tight jeans-clothes that they would not normally wear in Kenyan society. In recent times there have

been attacks on women in Kenya for wearing tight clothes, prompting some women's rights organisations to come up with a campaign slogan "My dress, my choice"[20] to protect the rights of women. The Kenyan president condemned the attacks and asked men to respect women.

Ellen admitted in her interview that she had changed her way of dressing to keep up with the fashion in Australia. She told me that in Australia, she had a choice to wear clothes that she would otherwise not wear in Kenya. Her comments are seen below:

> …my dressing has changed; you have to keep up with fashion. I wear everything, even I heard my boyfriend the other day saying that I have to be careful the way I am dressing because this shorts I can only wear them in the house… (Ellen).

In addition to having social freedom to dress the way they wanted, go-getters also told me that they had the freedom to do things they would otherwise not do in Kenya. For example, Ellen told me that she liked the freedom she had in Australia because she did not have to tell her mother where she was going or what she has been doing. Her remarks are seen below:

> ...I also like that I do not have to tell my mom where I am going. Like I am not in that time frame. I just feel so responsible. That I do not have anyone to push on me where have you been and all that kind of stuff… (Ellen).

It is apparent from their interviews that the go-getters' identity formation involved keeping some of their ways of being such as valuing religion and adopting strategies that enabled them to have a sense of belonging and add to their new ways of being. According to Joseph (2013), ways of being and knowing are produced by one's personal subjective engagement in the practices, discourses and institutions that lend significance (value, meaning and effect) to the events of the world. Their engagement and interaction with discourses and practices in Australia provided them with social and cultural opportunities that they previously did not have, and they adopted them as they created their identities.

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[20] sbs.com.au/news/article/2014/11/18/massive-protests-after-horrific-attacks-women-miniskirts

6.3.3 Being an empowered young African woman in Australia

The go-getters stated in their interviews that their educational, social and cultural experiences in Australia made them feel empowered. Feminist scholars (Mohanty, 2000; Wing, 2003) argue that from a feminist perspective, empowerment encompasses many aspects of a woman's life. It enables women to take control of their own lives, set their own agenda, be heard, respected and treated as equal. In general, it means changing the processes and structures responsible for women's inferior status in the society (Collins, 1990; Rahman, 2013; Young, 1993). All the young women in their individual interviews told me that studying Australia had empowered them to do better for themselves. Many of them reflected on their successes in Australia thus far and felt the need to work even harder. As indicated in previous studies (Beoku-Betts, 2004; Gatua, 2009; Maundeni, 1999), African women studying in developed countries are often empowered through their educational experiences and want to be successful. Many of the go-getters said that they felt empowered when they reflected on their experiences in Australia. For example, Rachel and Ellen told me that their educational experiences in Australia motivated them to do more. Their comments below illustrate this:

> …there are times, when you feel really empowered especially when you see its end of the year and you look at what you have done and you say I have achieved this much this far. Just because you are far from home it pushes you to do a bit more and you achieve something out of it... (Rachel).

> …That makes you feel like you are in charge of your life…Yeah that really makes me feel really strong and encouraged. In addition, I feel I can do anything or I can just be anywhere... (Ellen).

Rachel and Ellen's comments indicate that as African female international students construct their sense of identity in Australia, their new ways of being empowers them. The go-getters' experiences in Australia enables them to set their own agenda and rework their identities in order to be successful. They feel strong, courageous and push themselves more in order to have some achievement as seen in the comments below:

> …it pushes you to do a bit more and you achieve something out of it… (Rachel).

...But again, when you sometimes fall you just dust yourself and just go…and that is what I feel really, I really feel much stronger… (Georgina).

The go-getters' essentialised understanding of who they are as young Kenyan women enabled them to reflect on their identity and identify aspects that are not suited to their new environment; they developed traits such as assertiveness, independence and empowerment that allow them to fit into the Australian ways of being. They also kept some of the identity markers of a traditional Kenyan woman such as being cautious in their social relations, valuing religion, and dressing conservatively in Kenya as illustrated in the following remarks:

…I became a bit more careful with how I approached people and dealt with people… (Elsie)

… I really love Australia is because of my church community. I go to some youth meetings, a few Bible studies and just church on Sundays… (Lucy).

…… If its dressing here, just like I had said I don't have to keep worrying about what my mom is going to say but in an African setting you have to dress a certain way like… the way people dress here you wouldn't try dressing like that back home… Ellen

Their identity practices were also strategic in that they kept some of their ways of being young African women from Kenya such as religion, social relations, obedience and dressing.

The next section discusses ways of being an African female international student in Australian universities through the experiences of the go-getters.

6.4 Being a confident, conscientious international Kenyan female student in Australia

Previous studies on international education (Arkoudis et al., 2012; Forbes-Mewett & Nyland, 2012; Quayle & Harper, 2014) indicate that international students are sometimes viewed as a homogeneous group who have shared experiences. Studies on international students in

Australian universities (Koehne, 2006; Marginson & Sawir, 2011; Quayle & Harper, 2014) highlight the importance of the examining international students as a diverse group made up of individuals with a wide range of experiences. In this section, I discuss the ways in which the go-getters construct themselves as African female international students in Australia as they negotiate discourses of race, gender and international education within Australian universities. The young women in my study told me in their individual interviews that they encountered challenges as international students. They told me that they lacked confidence when compared to Australian students. They were also afraid to speak up or voice their opinion because of their accents. They said that at times they felt singled out because they were few, and their race and gender made them feel different, isolated and lonely. This is demonstrated in the following comments:

> …because I am shy, I was young and shy. In addition, you have that feeling oh my God; my English is not to that level. So you are really scared and do not want to talk, you just want to keep quiet (Ellen).

> …I was not confident but now I have become confident… (Elsie).

> …I felt lonely a bit felt out because I was the only African here… (Rachel).

In spite of these feelings of loneliness and isolation, many of the go-getters' interviews indicated that after their second year as international students, they adopted and became used to Australian ways that helped them settle and stay focused in their studies, as seen in the remarks below:

> ...Well, by third year here you feel like a normal student. You do not feel like an international student as much. You adapt and grow with the system. I sort of assimilated into the system. It helps you just settle in and stay focused on your studies... (Rachel).

In the next section, I examine these ways that the go-getters adapt as they construct themselves as international students within Australian universities. I discuss different identity

strategies that they take on as they negotiate different discourses available in Australian universities and within the broader community.

6.4.1 Tuning in to new learning expectations

As mentioned earlier in this thesis, the Kenyan education system is rigorous and competitive in part due to the colonial legacy of the British education system that focuses on tests and examination, and where learners' performance on these determines their future (Ukpokodu & Ukpokodu, 2012). However, there are also national imperatives driving the current education reforms such as the Kenya's economic plan—Vision 2030—that sees education as important in helping Kenya achieve economic growth. Kenyan students are assessed using standardised testing and—given the importance of these standardised tests—teachers focus heavily on preparing the students to pass the tests. Many of the go-getters told me in their interviews that they did not anticipate any academic challenges when they arrived in Australia because of the rigorous and competitive nature of Kenya's education system. However, some said in their interviews that they found assessments in Australia very different from Kenya because in Australia they were expected to discuss and reflect their answers through writing essays. This is illustrated in Rachel's comments below:

> …In Kenya, we just had to do a question answer type of questions. It can be a long answer but it is a question and answer type. While here [Australia], the assignments are more you build your case, you discuss things, reflect things. Therefore, it is different... (Rachel).

Essay writing was also a challenge to some of the go-getters, as they were not used to writing long pieces as part of their assessments. The comment below illustrates this;

> …The structure is different; Referencing was pretty hard for me. In addition, writing a 3000-word essay, though I had done a bit university education in Kenya, it was not the same… (Rachel).

Ellen, just like Rachel, found writing essays difficult. She told me that she did not know how to use a computer and therefore found it challenging to complete assignments. She also

said that were times when she was not sure if she understood what she was meant to do as seen in her comments below:

> …I did not know how to use the computer. That was difficult for me because all the assignments we had to do them on computer. I did not have a computer at home as well. Therefore, that was hard. And also doing the assignment. I wasn't used to that kind of assignment. Back home I was used to writing the test. In addition, I was like 'I don't think I am answering the questions the way they are supposed to be answered...' (Ellen).

In their interviews, the go-getters said that they found ways of overcoming their academic challenges; they sought help from study support centres within the universities and they got used to Australian universities' pedagogical practices. The following remarks shows this:

> …there was International Study Support Centre where they help you with your assignments …Yes you get to know what they expect of you and you know what is expected from you. Moreover, you know how to get around it… (Rachel).

Ellen told me in her interviews that in spite of the challenges that she encountered at the beginning, she had learnt the way things are done in Australia. She said that she also learnt to interact freely with her teachers without holding back. Her comments are seen below:

> …I have learnt the way things are done here which has helped. I have also learnt, if it is the teacher I have also learnt to be flexible, just interact with them freely without holding back that I am doing wrong or should not be talking, or I am talking too much. I have come a long way I would say... (Ellen).

Although the go-getters learnt to adjust to Australia pedagogical practices, they also had to learn to deal with discrimination.

6.4.2 Negotiating discrimination

Some of the go-getters said in their interviews that there were times when they were looked down upon by some of their classmates and lecturers. They told me that they were sometimes viewed as unintelligent. As stated in Chapter Three, previous studies on African female students studying in Western universities (Beoku-Betts, 2004; Maundeni, 1999; Mirza, 2010;

Okeke-Ihejirika, 2006; Phoenix, 2009) indicate that indeed there is covert racial and gender discrimination against African female students. This occurs when issues regarding accents, language skills and low academic expectations of African female students start to emerge. Critical race feminists (Collins, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 2004; Wing, 2003) in their discussions about discrimination in educational institutions, assert that African female students or women of colour in Western universities endure discrimination because of the intersection of their race and gender.

Two of the go-getters said in their interviews that they endured negative remarks and rolling of the eyes by some of their classmates during classroom discussions. The participants told me that they felt that they were being looked down because of their race and gender. Elsie's comments below highlight this point:

> …at some point in their discussions they would make snide comments under their breath thinking I didn't hear, but people make snide comments all the time and you can hear them; 'What does she know, anyway, she's from Africa,' things like that, they're putting me down in that argument simply because of what I was, an African and possibly because I'm a woman… (Elsie).

Elsie's comments show how the intersectionality of race and gender positions African female international students as not intelligent within this particular classroom context in the university. This portrayal of African women is documented in the works of other feminist scholars (Collins, 1991; Mirza & Joseph, 2010, 2013; Mohanty, 2003). The negative portrayal of African female students did not deter the go-getters from achieving their educational goals; instead, it made them work harder to prove that they were capable of earning good grades. Rachel's comments below exemplify this point:

> ...Because I feel being a female, being young, being different-looking from everybody else you have to go that extra mile… (Rachel).

Elsie and Rachel's comments are consistent with findings from Barr and Birke (1998), Joseph and Mirza, (2010) and Mirza (1998), and discussions on how institutionalised racism

and sexism negatively affects African women or women of colour, who are made to feel excluded and need to prove that they are academically capable. Collins (2009) explains that when a certain group is marginalised and discriminated against, the group develops 'oppositional consciousness' and refute dominant ideas that positions them as inferior. Similarly, the discrimination and negative portrayal of go-getters enabled them to develop this oppositional consciousness and they fought discrimination by working hard to prove that they are intelligent, hence refuting ideas that positioned them as inferior.

It was not just grappling with the notion of not being academically capable; some of the go-getters said that they struggled being understood because of their accents in spite of being competent in English.

6.4.3 Speaking English in order to be understood

Many of the go-getters told me that they studied in regular Kenyan schools where English was used as in the mode of instruction. However, they said that they found it difficult being understood in class discussions in Australia because of their accent. Although in reality there is no language that is accent free, in many Western countries like Australia, USA Canada and UK immigrants face discrimination because they speak English differently compared to native speakers (Dewaele & McCloskey, 2015: Munro, Derwing & Sato, 2006). According to McGregor (2001), the general Australian accent, which is fairly neutral and spoken widely, is often preferred. Many international students experience discrimination because of their foreign accents and find it difficult to communicate in their classes. (Kell &Vogel, 2012; Marginson et al, 2010). Some of go-getters said that they had to keep repeating themselves in order to be understood. This can be seen in the excerpts below:

> …Yes especially when you talk to some people. They ask you to keep repeating things. It is as if your accent is so bad that they cannot understand. It makes you feel really out of their group sort of thing, you feel like you do not belong here, and you feel like you do not fit in… (Rachel).

… You kind of feel you do not want to ask questions because you do not know if they are going to understand most of the time. They actually do not get you, so you kind of feel you do not want to ask. Obviously, they will not even understand you… (Ellen).

Rachel and Ellen's assertions are supported by previous studies by Ahmed (2000), Beoku-Betts (2004) and Mirza (2006), in which they state that poor language skills and accents can be used to discriminate African female or women of colour studying in Western universities. For the go-getters, the problem with their English did not deter them from being successful. Rachel and Ellen told me that after living in Australia for more than one year, they learnt ways to speak so that they were understood in spite of their accent and with time, they did not worry about not being understood, as seen in the comments below:

…but then after you stay here for a while… one or two years you take with smile. In addition, if they do not understand you, you do not really worry much about it… (Rachel).

…Yeah once you get used to them [Australians], then you get into the routine of knowing how to phrase the same English that they will understand you… (Ellen).

Some of the go-getters like Georgina changed the way she spoke as she got used to the Australian way of speaking. This was evident in her interview because she often used inappropriate language as seen in her comments below:

…So even now when they talk I am 'Bullshit, you are wasting my time...' Ooops! Therefore, I should not have said that. My language is a bit changed… (Georgina).

Other than learning to speak clearly in order to be understood, learning how to use technology also proved important for the go-getters.

6.4.4 Being a conscientious, technology-savvy African female student

Although the go-getters' individual interviews showed that they did not want to be seen as academically incapable, they all acknowledged that they lacked computer skills. Many of them told me in their interviews that they did not use computers in Kenya. They all said that they

struggled adjusting to the use of technology in their classes. They told me that they needed a computer to be able to communicate to their lecturers, look for information, send assignments and find out what is going on in their universities. Ellen and Georgina's remarks below illustrate this point:

> ...Yes. I do know how to use the computer now. Before it was difficult for me because all the assignments we had to do them on computer. I did not have a computer at home as well. Therefore, that was hard. In addition, also doing the assignment. I was not used to that kind of assignment. Back home (Kenya) I was used to writing the test… (Ellen).

> …Everything was Internet, all assignments, you put them on computer and you send them. I did not have a computer… (Georgina).

In spite of this challenge, they all told me that they got used to the technology and were happy with the progress they were making in their studies as they continued to work hard to achieve their goals, as seen in the comments below:

> …Yes I have made great progress, I can use a computer, and I have learnt the way things are done here which has helped… (Ellen).

Learning how to use technology was not enough for the go-getters. They informed me in their interviews that they had to work extra hard in their studies because they had to juggle studying and working full-time. Many of them said that they worked long hours on the weekend and attended university full-time during the week. They had to work extra hard in their studies in order to keep up with the other students because they used most of their free time working odd jobs. One of the students told me that she had to plan her time wisely so that she could work, study for tests and have enough time to complete her assignments. Her comments can be seen below:

> …sometimes you feel that you have to work extra hard during the test and even in an assignment. In case you answer the questions wrongly, that leaves you…you have to plan your time ahead in case you go to the people who assist with the assignments and they say you haven't answered the question directly the way it is supposed to be answered. Then you can have enough time to do it again… (Ellen).

Another student, Rachel, stated that as a young African female student she had to work hard and do her best to succeed because she was different:

> …first thing, just be ready to work hard because you are an African woman and different. You need a lot of determination to make it the best that you can… (Rachel).

Rachel's comment shows African female students have to work hard because their race and gender can disadvantage them, as they may encounter discrimination and exclusion. However, their focus and determination helps them to be successful.

6.4.5 Finding a sense of belonging

Most go-getters said in their interviews that there were times when they felt lonely despite having friends. Some indicated that their lack of belonging as the reason for their loneliness. For someone like Georgina, she felt lonely because she had friends but could not see them as often because of their class and work schedules:

> … No, I think it is all right but the lonely part. I still feel a lot alone even though I call friends. But then when you are free they are not. That so hard about friendship here… (Georgina).

Many of the go-getters told me that they were the only Africans in their classes. They felt lonely and at times marginalised because they were different, as illustrated by Rachel's comments below:

> …I felt like that all the time. I was the only African here… I feel a bit lonely, a bit left out... (Rachel).

In their efforts to try to belong, most the go-getters told me that they made friends with other international students in their classes. Previous studies on this (Forbes-Mewett & Nyland, 2008; Kashima & Loh, 2006; Koehne, 2006; Marginson, 2013; Sawir et al., 2008; Sherry, Thomas & Chui, 2010) indicate that most international students socialise with other international students. Most participants in this study were the only African female students from Kenya in their class. Many mentioned feeling excluded because they looked different

from their classmates. This feeling of loneliness and exclusion made them search for friends within their classes. Some made friends from their tutorial groups as the class sizes are smaller and students are able to get to know each other. Many of the go-getters told me that they had friends from different countries. They said that they found it easier to make friends with other international students because they all came from different countries and therefore had something in common. The research participants said they relied on the camaraderie of other international students for help in their studies, and for socialising. Ellen's comments illustrate this point:

> …I rely more on the friends that I have in class and also outside. Like I have friends that I made in first year and they are quite helpful. They follow me up, 'How are you doing? Can I have a look at your assignment?' Therefore, they are very helpful…They are people from different countries but some were born here… (Ellen).

In her individual interview, Georgina described her group of friends as "little world" because they all came from different countries. She told me that they were not only friends at the university, but they also planned social events together:

> …we call ourselves the little world because we have different people. We have Zimbabwe, we have Japanese, we have Chinese, we have Mauritius, we have me Kenyan, and we have Nigerians. Like on Tuesday, Australia Day, we are planning to have some fun together… (Georgina).

Many of the go-getters told me that they were the only African women from Kenya in their classes. Therefore, they made friends with other young women from different countries. They became strategic in their interaction with their friends from different countries. They had friends from different countries, Australia and Kenya. They commented that they identified with all their friends. They told me that they tried to fit in with all the groups and did not feel like they identified more with one particular group than another. This can be seen in the excerpts below:

> …it is hard to say because the people I interact with are from different cultures. I do not class myself as anything really, you know, so I cannot classify… (Lucy).

> …I have very different sorts of friends actually, because my African friends are all together and I have different African friends. I have a group of Sudanese friends who I hang out with and they're just Sudanese friends and I have a group of other friends just from other different parts of Africa and then this batch of Kenyan friends and then I have my Caucasian friends and Asian friends and I have kept them in those little batches… (Elsie).

One of the girls in her interview told me that there were times when she had to stand in front of a mirror to remind herself that she was an African woman because she was the only African female in her classes; most of her classmates were either Caucasians or Asians:

> …It's funny sometimes I even feel like am light-skinned until look at my hand and am like 'OK (laughs)'… (Georgina).

Georgina told me that being around people of other races and made her comfortable with anyone and she had no issue with people of other races as seen below:

> …I do not have an issue with any people... (Georgina).

One of the girls told me that she had 'lost her identity' when she came to Australia. She said that there were no social structures or expectations that defined her as a young African woman in Australia. There was no family or community support. She told me that she felt that she was on her own. Her comments can be seen below:

> …You feel somewhat lost. There are social roles and norms that you grow up knowing this is who I am. This is what is supposed to be doing. When you get here, all those structures break down. It is just you. You do not have the community support, family support that you had back home. You are just another individual there. You rather lose your sense of identity… (Rachel).

In spite of the challenges that they face, the go-getters constructed themselves and created new identities. Rachel went on to tell me that although she felt lost when she first arrived in Australia, being in Australia had enabled her to understand who she was. She said

that by pulling out the best traits that she had, she was able to grow and develop skills that she used to her benefit. This can be seen in her comments:

> …You have to develop your own framework. I still have values from home. I still do things that I could have done home but I have the freedom not to do those things if I want. I think the moment you get here, you feel a bit lost but after a while, the whole transition makes you dig deep into yourself and pull out the best traits that you have. In addition, use them to your benefit… (Rachel).

Rachel's comment affirms understanding of identity that it is not fixed but fluid, contextual and multiple. The go-getters had multiple, contextual and shifting identities. They developed, as seen in the comments above, their own framework where they kept some of their values from Kenya and took on new ones in Australia. They recreated themselves by reflecting on their experiences, observing their new environment and taking on identity strategies that allowed them to be successful in Australia.

In the construction of their identity as young African women studying in Australian universities, the go-getters took on some of the identity markers of essentialised notions of international students such as hardworking, focused and success-driven. They also took on other identity markers that are important such as being confident, working extra hard, keeping friendships with different groups of students, and learning to speak in ways that allowed them to be understood. These strategies helped them become successful in their studies, find a sense of belonging, negotiate discrimination and any negative notions that positioned them as inferior.

6.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed interesting and contradicting ways of being an African woman and an international African female student through the experiences and eyes of the group labelled the 'go-getters.' The go-getters come from average income families in Kenya. They are focused and success-driven. Their interviews indicated that they had an understanding of what it meant

to be a young Kenyan woman. Their observations of and interaction with Australian society made them realise that their ways of being as young Kenyan women was different to ways of being young white Australian women. They juxtaposed their ways of being young Kenyan women to ways of being young white Australian women. They saw young Kenyan women as shy, cautious, obedient and subservient, unlike the Australian young women who they saw as being independent, extroverted, outspoken and confident. They were strategic in constructing their identity and took on some of the identity markers of the essentialised Kenyan women and white Australian women. They learnt to become confident, extroverted, and independent but at the same time maintained virtues of a Kenyan woman such as being careful in their social relations, being conservative in their dressing and valuing their religion and African culture. They constructed multiple identities by integrating their existing practices of being a woman in Kenyan society to ways of being a woman in Australia.

As international students, the go-getters constructed their identity very differently. According to Montgomery (2010), international students acquire new values and beliefs in their country of education. The go-getters too gained new attitudes and understandings. They adopted identity markers that helped them become successful and negotiate discriminations and misrepresentations of African women in Australia, as was demonstrated in their interviews. As stated in Chapter Three, critical race feminism places gender, race and other forms of oppression at the centre of its analysis, producing counter-stories that challenges stereotypes that position these groups of people in negative ways (Cutts, Love & Davis, 2013). The go-getters challenged negative stereotypes that positioned them negatively by taking on identity strategies that enabled them to negotiate discrimination and racism in Australian universities and broader society. They constructed themselves as confident, independent and conscientious international African female students. The go-getters' observation of Australian society made them realize that confidence is highly valued and that displaying it would make it as one of the

research participants said "as an African and as a woman, people start respecting you. People have a harder time putting you down if you show confidence". They also worked hard in their studies to prove their intelligence and avoid being looked down upon. They learnt to speak English in ways that made them be understood in spite of their accents and they formed friendships with other international students as they looked for a sense of belonging among them.

The identity strategies that they adopted as young African women and international students also paved ways for them to be successful, not only in their university studies but also in the other activities they undertook outside the university including gaining employment and Australian permanent residency. The go-getters' identity practices enabled them to be empowered within their education, work and social spaces. Through empowerment, the go-getters expanded their ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was not available before (Kabeer, 2001). They seized opportunities they found in Australia such as working while studying, and adopted identity strategies that enabled them to remain successful in their studies.

Many of the go-getters' interviews indicated that they wanted to work in Australia after the completion of their studies. Recent contact with two of the go-getters found that they had successfully completed their studies and were now living as permanent residents in Australia. Rachel completed her Bachelor of Nursing degree and was working at a leading hospital in Melbourne. She was married to a Kenyan man—also working as a nurse—and they now have a son. They recently bought a big house on the outskirts of Melbourne. My recent contact with Ellen found out that she too had completed her nursing degree and was working in a hospital.

In the next chapter, I discuss a group of Kenyan female international students I labelled the 'snobs.'

Chapter Seven – The 'snobs': "I know the right things to do without being told by my parents."

7.1 Introduction

This group is made up of six students: Di, Flo, Jaycee, Lily, Sally and Cyndi. These young women come from rich families by Kenyan standards. I refer to these families as rich in Kenyan standards because they can afford to send their children to study in Australian universities. Their families spend over A$38,000 per year to pay the students' tuition and living expenses (HBSC, 2013), while half of Kenya's population earns less than two dollars a day (Cagney & Ross, 2013). I use the term *snob* to describe this group of students based on their lifestyles in Kenya, and the way in which their parents sent them money to ensure that they had everything they needed in Australia. The participants told me in their interviews that their parents sent them to Australia because they wanted them to get a quality education. As Sally indicated in her interview, her father told her that she was not going to a university where "people will ask, 'Which university is that?'"; instead, he wanted her to attend a top-ranking university. As seen in their interviews, the snobs' attitudes changed as they adjusted to life in Australia. Most said in their interviews that they found life difficult when they first arrived in Australia because they had to learn to take care of themselves. They told me that they encountered many challenges that international students face such as loneliness and culture-shock, however they took on opportunities that were available in Australia such as freedom and independence. Unlike the go-getters who took on the freedom and independence that was available in Australia to understand their rights as women and for financial benefits, the snobs adopted the freedom and independence to venture into different things and be themselves. As Lily said in her interview, "the whole independence issue I can do more here, you can be yourself more." While these young women continued to maintain their comfortable lifestyles that they had in Kenya and

continued to be themselves, their interviews also indicate that they matured, learnt to be responsible and were able to take charge of their lives as they negotiated new discourses of gender, race and education in Australia.

7.2 The 'snobs'

This group is made up of six students: Di, Flo, Jaycee, Lily, Sally and Cyndi.

Di and Flo were family friends; their parents owned successful businesses and occasionally ran for political offices. Di was in her second year studying Psychology. She told me during her interview that she first studied in Malaysia before transferring to Australia. She stated that when she first travelled to Malaysia, her parents accompanied her because they wanted to make sure that she settled well and had everything she needed. Her parents rented an apartment for her; bought her everything she needed and made sure she was comfortable. When she moved to Australia, her parents again ensured that she was comfortable by sending her money for tuition and living expenses. In her interview, Di said that she spoke to her parents regularly and that she visited them during the summer holidays.

Flo was a close friend to Di; however, unlike Di who had no family members in Australia, Flo had a brother who was studying in Sydney. Flo told me in her interview that her parents wanted her to study in Sydney but she preferred Melbourne because she did not want to stay with her brother. When Flo first arrived in Melbourne, she lived in the university hostels. She stated in her interview that she did not like living at the university because she felt lonely. When her friend Di moved to Melbourne, she decided share an apartment with her. Flo's parents owned many successful businesses and her father occasionally held political positions in Kenya. Although Di and Flo's parents did not want them to work, they both told me that they worked part-time because they wanted to gain experience and have their own money.

Jaycee, another research participant in this group, said that she decided to study in Australia because she had a sister living in Melbourne. Her parents owned successful businesses in Kenya and could afford to pay for education and living expenses in Australia. Jaycee's parents had rented them an apartment and they had a family friend as their guardians. Jaycee told me that she was studying Commerce and was in her second year. Although her parents sent money, Jaycee had a part-time job where she worked as a sales representative in a phone company. She told me that she was working because she wanted extra spending money.

Sally was studying a Masters in Econometrics and at the time of the interview, was in her first year of study. She told me that her parents could afford to pay for her tuition and send her pocket money because they had good jobs in Kenya. Her father was a professor and a director of a top university in Kenya, and her mother was a bank manager. Her father wanted Sally to study in Australia because he wanted her to study in one of the best universities in the world. Sally did not know anyone in Melbourne when she came to study and had to rely on the university to get her accommodation. Sally was not working at the time of the interview but was thinking of getting a job because she wanted to have some extra money to buy a car.

Cyndi's parents were medical doctors in Kenya and had migrated to Australia when Cyndi was in her first year of university. Cyndi lived with her parents and they paid her university fees. She told me that she had completed a science degree and was now studying to be a paramedic. Cyndi worked part-time as a cashier in a grocery store to earn pocket money.

Like Cyndi, Lily's parents were also medical doctors in Kenya. Lily told me that she did not know anyone when she first arrived in Australia. She was staying at the university hostels and her parents were sending her money for tuition and living expenses. Lily was a first year student studying Engineering. During the interview, Lily told me that she was homesick and was not comfortable talking about her experiences. She returned to Kenya after her first

year. Lily was not working at the time of the interview because she wanted to focus on her studies.

The next sections look at different ways of being young African female students in Australia through the experiences of the snobs. It was evidenced in their interviews that the snobs had an essentialized understanding of what it meant to be a young African woman in a Kenyan context and an extroverted, assertive 'white' Australian young woman. They exercised agency and reworked their identities as they negotiated discourses of gender, race and education that were present in Australia.

7.3 Balancing being an obedient, respectful young African woman and being an independent, responsible young woman in Australia

The snobs had an essentialised understanding of being young African women. Many of them told me that their parents wanted them to grow up to be good African women; to have good morals and be respectful. They told me that their parents kept in touch and constantly reminded them about their cultural values and traditions. During their interviews, the snobs told me that young Kenyan women are usually shy, introverted, obedient and conservative in their dressing. However, they construct new identities in Australia through their engagement with discourses of race, gender and education that are present in Australia, and interactions and observations of the Australian society. In Australia, their race, gender and immigration status-international student seemed more significant in defining who they were, unlike in Kenya where one's socio-economic status seems more important. They told me that they faced racism, discrimination and found Australians' extroverted nature overwhelming. Some of them told me in their interviews that they felt their ways of being as shy and introverted young Kenyan women was not valued in Australian context. Their interviews indicated that they learnt to balance being obedient and respectful to their parents–as is expected of them in Kenya–and being assertive and independent young African women in Australia. They were strategic in the way they

constructed their identity in Australia; they chose when to display certain qualities that they found important in their social relations. For example, they showed confidence when it was appropriate and chose when to be dependent from their parents as discussed later in this section. They constructed multiple and shifting identities as they negotiated different ways of being in the Australian context.

7.3.1 Being free and independent from parents

The snobs told me in their interviews that they did not have freedom to do what they wanted in Kenya such as going out or choosing friends because their parents controlled and monitored them. Di's comments below illustrate this point:

> …I have to say where I am going or I am dropped and picked up at a certain time. I am never outside the house when it is dark. I do not go out in the evenings with friends. My dad would not see that happening… (Di)

All six students in this group labelled as 'snobs' said that they had more freedom and independence in Australia than they did in Kenya. They all said that they felt in control of their lives here because they could make decisions without relying on their parents. Unlike the go-getters–whose freedom and independence in Australia was financial based–the snobs' freedom and independence involved taking control of their lives and not having their parents telling them what to do. In Australia, they made decisions about their friends, when to go out, what to wear, what to buy and so on. For example, Jaycee told me in her interview that she had freedom to make her own decisions. She said that:

> ...Here you are pretty much on your own; you make your own decisions, so you have that freedom… (Jaycee).

Lily stated that she had more freedom and independence in Australia than she did in Kenya. She told me that she was able to be herself since her parents were not there to control and monitor her. Lily's remarks are seen below:

The independence rocks. It is the whole independence issue, I can do more here, and I do not have a curfew that tells me you have to be home at this time. Or you have to do this or I do not want to see you do this. Because of what people will think so you can be yourself more and yeah… (Lily).

Flo on the other hand, told me that she was free to manage her time without her parents' involvement. She could study and work at the same time, as illustrated in her comments below:

…it is made me more independent for sure. Time management has killed it, I am especially able to manage my time working and going to uni here, but back home everything involves my parents… (Flo).

Apart from the independence, most of the snobs also said that they liked having financial freedom. Unlike the go-getters who worked to finance their education and living expenses, many of the snobs did not need to work because their parents sent them money. However, they told me in their interviews that they wanted to work in order to gain experience, earn extra money and have control of their own money. They balanced being obedient to their parents and wanting to be independent by not letting their parents know that they were working. Both Flo and Di told me in their interviews that they were working without their parents' permission because they wanted to have extra money to stop relying on their parents all the time. Their comments are shown below:

…I have not told my dad that I am working. I want to have extra money… (Flo).

…My dad doesn't know and I won't tell him because my dad's very conservative...I've never attempted, but I'm guessing he would say we're okay, you don't need to work. However, I want to have extra money… (Di).

Flo went on to explain that she worked to be financially independent. She said that she was saving the money she was earning so that she would not ask her father for money to spend when she went back home to visit;

…I work to be independent. I do not know, it is hard for me, so even when I go home, I always make sure I have saved enough money for the little holiday. I do not want to go back and start asking, Dad, please give me some money for me… (Flo).

Di told me in her interview that she worked because there was an opportunity for her to work. She also said that having extra money made her not rely on her parents and provided her with security in case her allowance ran out. The following excerpt illustrates this:

…Honestly, me working is because the opportunity is there, you make extra money so that you do not have to call home. If, for example, I use my allowance badly, I can still rely on myself to survive with food and everything, so I thought why not… (Di).

Most of the snobs also told me that they had freedom to do things they would otherwise not do in Kenya. They took advantage of the choices that were available to them in Australia such as how to spend their money, choosing how to dress, which friends to have, when to go out and so on. For example, Di–who was Muslim–told me that she had a choice of whether to cover up or not. She said that as a young Muslim girl in Kenya, she was expected to cover her head when she went outside. However, in Australia she decided not to cover up completely. She said that she had become a rebel in that she does not always cover up but she still dresses decently. This is seen in her comments below:

...Back home I think that the choices that I have had throughout growing up are based mostly on my religion. Covering is one thing where I have become a rebel. I do not dress in short indecent clothes or anything, but I do not completely cover up… (Di).

Although Di said that she had more freedom in Australia to do things that she would otherwise not do in Kenya, she maintains some of her religious values. For example, she told me that she did not consume alcohol or eat food such as pork, which are not allowed in her religion even though she decided not to cover completely as required by her religion. Her comments below illustrate this:

...but when it comes to things like drinking alcohol, which is a very common thing here, even in uni, I was surprised people can drink in uni but am careful I

do not. When it comes to the food, for example pork or going to a place where they serve pork that is something still I do not eat… (Di).

Di's comment demonstrates that the snobs' identities were fluid and contextual; they were strategic in taking on different identity markers for different settings. They took on different identities to suit the different contexts. Similar to Di's experiences, the other snobs had the freedom to make friendships without their parents' permission. Many of them told me that they had friends from different countries. They were not restricted to just Kenyan friends. They said they had freedom to choose their friends, unlike in Kenya where their parents chose friends for them. Jaycee said that she was dating an Australian man and she enjoyed being around him and his friends, however she was not sure how her mother would react if she told her:

> …I have an Australian boyfriend...after class we sit somewhere with his friends and play board games or something weird like that. It was nice, we would all eat and talk together…I do not know how my mother would take it… (Jaycee).

The snobs enjoyed the freedom and independence from their parents. However, they balanced being obedient, respectful young African women from rich Kenyan families and being independent young African women in Australia. They stayed in touch with their parents and when they went back to visit them they were dependent on their parents and remained obedient as seen in the remarks below;

> …if you met me back home(Kenya), even a year from now, I'm a totally different person from the way my parents treat me to the way I'm forced to live back home am more independent here… (Di)

As they adopted the independence and freedom that is available in Australia, they matured in their sense of responsibilities and decision-making.

7.3.2 Becoming mature and responsible

Many of the snobs said in their interviews that being far away from their parents and having to make their own decisions made them more mature and responsible. Many of them told me that they were no longer reliant on their parents to tell them what to do; instead, they said their experiences in Australia had helped them learn to survive without their parents' involvement. Di said in her interview that she grown to be responsible and she does things on her own terms without being told by her parents. This is evident in her comments below:

> …I will do it on my terms here so it has been more real. I can go home any time I want. Of course I am responsible, but on my terms. It actually makes me grow because I know the right things to do without being told by my parents… (Di).

Flo's comments were similar to Di's in that she had also become responsible. She told me that her mother trusted her because she was more responsible and only called to see if she was okay. This is illustrated in her remarks below:

> …I think my mum knows that now that - she trusts me and she knows I have become more responsible. When she calls, she is just calling to check up how everything is and find out if I am okay... (Flo).

In Kenya, the snobs told me that they were obedient, respectful, dependent young women. However, in Australia, they constructed themselves as independent, responsible and mature young women. They also learnt to be open-minded as they interacted with other people from different cultures.

7.3.3 Being tolerant, resilient and open-minded

The snobs told me that in Australia, they interacted with people from different cultures, religion and sexual orientation. They learnt to be open-minded about lifestyle practices such as homosexuality that may not be accepted in Kenya. For example, Sally told me in her interview that she had been exposed to many things in Australia that she was not used to in Kenya. She commented that:

…I am more tolerant. I have had to see a lot of stuff that back home I would not be used to. For example, I had roommates who are lesbians. I just learnt to hold back from commenting or saying stuff whenever I wanted to, even though I did not want to. I have also been tolerant of certain ways of living as if some people believe that you have to take drugs, drink alcohol, or live a promiscuous life... (Sally).

As seen in Sally's comments above, Australian values are very different from Kenyan ways of being and living. The snobs' interviews indicated that they lived a sheltered life in Kenya because their lives revolved around their parents. However, in Australia they were exposed to different morals and values that would not be acceptable in Kenya. While they do not approve some of these morals, they, like Sally, learnt to cope because they were aware that Australian ways of being are very different from their own culture. They told me that they became tolerant and open-minded.

Similarly, in spite of the snobs coming from rich families, their experiences as young African women in Australia had given them a different perspective in life. They told me that they had become resilient and more determined to be successful. They also said that exposure to different cultures made them more open-minded. For example, Sally and Flo told me that their educational experiences made them feel stronger and capable of handling any situation. This is seen in their comments below:

…I think the experiences that I have here have made me a stronger person, so honestly in any situation back at home, I think I can be able to tackle it, so I like the way that would reflect in my life… (Sally).

…I have become a stronger a person and am able to know that everything is possible through hard work and determination… (Flo).

Di, on the other hand, stated that her experiences in Australia and her interactions with people other than those surrounded by her family in Kenya had given her a different outlook on life. Her comments are shown below:

...the experience just broadened my horizons. I have seen all sorts of people. I have been exposed to a lot more than back home because back home I am just around my family… (Di).

In this section, I discussed ways the snobs balanced being a young African female and being a young woman in Australia. It examined how the snobs constructed their identity as young women in Australia. Their interviews indicated that due to processes of identity negotiations, the snobs constructed themselves as independent, assertive, mature, responsible and open-minded individuals, contrary to their ways of being in Kenya. However, these are identity strategies that they use to enable them to survive and succeed as they study in Australia. The next section discusses their ways of being an African female international student in Australian universities.

7.4 Being a strategic out spoken Kenyan female international student in Australian universities

As previously stated, many of the snobs came from wealthy families. Some mentioned in their interviews that they attended private elite schools in Kenya. One the students even said that she had attended an international school in Kenya. They had all attended good schools and were fluent in English. The snobs' educational experiences in Kenya prepared them well compared to the go-getters and strugglers because they attended Kenyan schools that use international curriculum models from countries like Canada, US, Britain and Australia. Many of the snobs did not therefore anticipate any problems in their studies in Australia because they were used to international curriculums in Kenya. Like many international students in Australia (Koehne, 2006; Marginson et al., 2010; Sawir et al., 2008), the snobs were hardworking, focused and had family support. They also endured some feelings of low confidence, discrimination, loneliness and lack of sense of belonging as international students. Like the go-getters and

strugglers, they negotiated different identity markers as Kenyan female students in Australia. However, the way they adopted these markers was very different as discussed in this section.

7.4.1 Choosing when to be confident and assertive

As discussed in Chapter Five, many African women are socialised as passive, are not expected to raise their opinion in public, and avoid public speaking. Many of the snobs in their interviews told me that they lacked the confidence or assertiveness that was displayed by many Australians. Flo for example, told me in her interview that she did not like asking questions in class because she was afraid of looking stupid, and that she lacked the confidence that was portrayed by Australians during class presentations. She said that she was intimidated by their confidence as shown in her comments below:

> …I find it is really hard. Like back home, if I had an issue I would not be scared to look stupid. However, here I am really scared, I really hold back. Australians kind of intimidate me. For them, confidence it's something natural, the way they do it, the way they present themselves in class. I don't know how they get it, but that's something I don't just do, I wasn't used to back at home, so it's a bit hard for me… (Flo).

Unlike the go-getters who took on confidence as an identity strategy to help them become successful in their educational and work contexts, instead the snobs were cautious and strategic when showing confidence and assertiveness. They chose to display these qualities when they found it necessary. For example, Sally said in her interview that she was forced to be assertive because she wanted her views heard and not ignored:

> …I believe I have learnt to be more assertive but it is more forced by situations because if you do not get your views heard you kind of are ignored. I have learnt how to express my views in a way that does not offend people. Because of that, I have learnt to be more assertive and express my opinion more. As opposed to Kenya where I used to sometimes, sit in the background not worrying… (Sally).

Sally's remarks show that the snobs took on some of the Australian identity markers with caution, and learnt to use them in ways that were appropriate. Similarly, Di and Flo chose when to display confidence. Di told me that she had participated in class discussions only when

she was sure she had the right answer. Flo, on the other hand, told me that she was confident and loved group work instead of class discussions. Their remarks are shown below:

> …I lift my hand only when I know the answer and I am confident I am right…
> (Di).

> …I do not like class presentations but I love group work, am confident… (Flo).

The snobs understood that being assertive or showing confidence was important but they did not have to display it all the time. When they returned to their families in Kenya, they reverted to their old ways of taking a back seat and letting their parents take charge, as seen by the comments below:

> …Even until now, when you go home, you are still treated as kids we let our parents take care of us and when I come here, I learn how to do everything on my own, so it is back and forth, back and forth… (Flo).

It is not uncommon for international students like the snobs to show lack of confidence and assertiveness. Previous studies on international students (Poyrazli et al., 2001; Sawir et al., 2007) assert that the lack of close family support and unfamiliar cultural and linguistic environments make international students have low self-confidence compared to their peers. However, with time international students learn to be confident, as they understand the expectations of their new learning environment (Sawir, 2007). Forming friendships is important in the way international students construct their identity. The snobs also indicated in their interviews that having friends was important.

7.4.2 Identifying with different groups of friends

As discussed earlier, there are not many African female students in Australian universities and Australia as a whole. As seen in previous studies on international students (Forbes-Mewett & Nyland, 2008; Khawaja & Stallman, 2011; Koehne, 2006; Sawir et al., 2007), many international students experience loneliness and often seek a sense of belonging. Likewise,

many of the snobs told me that they felt lonely because they did not know anyone when they first arrived. Their first few weeks in Australia were very difficult for them. Many said that they felt lonely in their classes because there were not many other African female students. The snobs were not as outgoing as the go-getters and they struggled initially in their search for friends, but they eventually developed friendships. The following excerpt from Jaycee illustrates this point:

> …But I mean with time you had to make friends because you know, you cannot just sit alone all the time. Then in time, it got comfortable and yeah… (Jaycee).

Flo said that living at the universities' halls of residence was very lonely because she did not have any friends. She told me that when she first arrived in Australia she was looking forward to living on campus because she wanted to meet new people, but nonetheless found it difficult to make friends. She ended up getting an apartment with a friend from Kenya. This is illustrated in her comments below:

> …It was not a good welcome. I thought I would meet lots of people. I do not know, I just did not expect that, l felt lonely so I just called a taxi and I did not care where my friend lived. I just decided stay with her… (Flo).

Many of the snobs said in their interviews, as illustrated in Flo's comment, that they felt lonely because they were homesick and lacked a sense of belonging. They told me that they had to make new friends within their classes. In their interviews, they stated that they made friends with other students in their classes and in their tutorial groups and that; they had friends from different cultures. Like the go-getters, the snobs also made friends in order to fit in, have support and companionship. They viewed friendships with other international students as very important because it was a way of understanding different cultures and exchanging ideas, hence broadening their thinking. For example, Di said that having friends from different cultures was important because it enabled her to know and understand different cultures. This seen in her comments below:

…Yes, I always feel it is important to get to know different cultures, just to get to know about other people so my friends, all of them come from my classes… (Di).

Flo told me that having international friends was important because she was able to study and discuss assignments with them. They shared ideas and encouraged each other as a group. Her comments below illustrate this point:

…I have friends in the course that we're studying together…usually assignment time we're always study together, bringing ideas, trying to help each other, just working as a group, as a unit because we all international want to do well so we're just trying to help each other reach that goal… (Flo).

Sally also had international friends and she told me that she found them easy to get along with because they were friendly and tolerant of other cultures. She said that international students were willing to learn about other cultures, as seen in her comments below:

...I have international friends because they are people who are more accommodative to the different cultures and different people. I am friends with are Chinese, Indonesian, and Indians. Therefore, that is a pretty mixed up group of people already. Therefore, its people trying to learn from each other's diverse cultures and see what is different in each of one culture… (Sally).

Similarly, Jaycee said in her interview that she liked her group of friends since they were from different countries and she did not feel left out or different;

...So it was a very odd group. It was made up mainly of international students and then one or two Australian students. It felt somewhat nice that I was mixing I came here to mix with everyone. I just feel very connected to the group as well not left out because am different... (Jaycee).

The snobs also said that they had Kenyan and Australian friends. Studies on international students (Koehne, 2006; Sawir et al., 2007) indicate that international students not only socialise with students from their home countries or with other international students, but they also have Australian friends. Some of the snobs said in their interviews that they could

identify with various groups of students in Australia. They told me that they met with their Kenyan friends to share Kenyan food and connect with Kenyan culture. Sally said that she identified with Kenyan and Asian friends because they had similar experiences. The comments below illustrate this point:

> …I identify myself mostly with Kenyan friends but also Asians. I have Indian friends because Indians have an appreciation of culture as much as Kenyans do. However, I also identify with Indonesians because I also go to a church which is basically Indonesian... (Sally).

Sally found that apart from Kenyan friends, she also identified with Indians because she had previous interactions with them in Kenya, and knew that they valued religion and culture. She also identified with her Indonesian friends because they went to the same church.

Jaycee also told me that she could identify with various groups of friends. She had friends from different countries including Australia; this is shown by her comment below:

> …I had group of friends who were Kenyan, international students and then one or two Australian students… (Jaycee).

In Australia, the snobs were free to choose their friends, unlike in Kenya where their friends were vetted by their parents. They chose friends from different cultures but still kept their Kenyan friends. They told me in their interviews that they could identify with all their friends from different cultures. They met with their Kenyan friends to connect with Kenyan culture and kept international friends so that they could learn other cultures, for support in their studies and for a sense of belonging. As seen in their interviews, each group of friends was significant in building their sense of belonging and for helping them be successful in their studies.

Although the snobs reached out to other students and made friendships with different groups of students, they said in their interviews that there were times when they felt singled out as African female international students.

7.4.3 Speaking out against the misrepresentation of African women

The snobs also told me in their interviews that they had to negotiate negative racial stereotypes of African female international students in Australia. In their interviews, they commented on the ways in which African female students are perceived in the university and Australian society as a whole. The snobs told me that they endured snide comments made about them in some of their classes and within the community. They said that some Australian students looked down upon them because they were African. Like the go-getters, they fought this misrepresentation by working hard to prove that they were capable of earning good grades. This is illustrated by Flo's comments:

> …In terms of group work, I always try to do my level best, I give it 100 per cent so that I do not know, I don't like when they look at us as Africans, and look down at us… (Flo).

Apart from being looked down upon by other students, the snobs also told me that young African women in Australia were viewed as promiscuous. According to Di and Flo, young African women are seen as sexually attractive by Australian men because of their 'exoticness.' Di and Flo said in their interview that one time when they were riding a bus, a middle-aged Australian man sexually harassed them. The man made sexual gestures towards them and when they ignored him, he verbally abused them saying African girls are known to give in easily. Di and Flo stood up against the man by telling him they were not that type of woman and that African women are not like that. Their comments are seen below:

> … I don't know if they just find us different and fascinating, but the way they objectify you, stares, they stereotype you…this man who was trying to stare at me in a sexual way because he was just trying to suggest… and I was like, 'No, there's no way it's going to happen, I'm not that type of woman…' (Flo).

>   …He asked why is it that we are being objective and usually most African women, they are very willing to go ahead and give themselves, but I just told him that is not how you should see it that is not how all of us are… (Di).

Flo's and Di's comments show that unlike the go-getters who dealt with discrimination and negative misrepresentations of African women by staying quiet, the snobs were not afraid to speak up. In their interviews, the snobs suggested that perhaps there were some young African women who were promiscuous as they believed that white men were rich, but they were not going to let a few young women ruin the reputation for all young African women;

>   ...There is a group of young African women who act in a certain way. It is reflecting on the rest of us in a negative manner. A rich white man will come and tell us this, we will get excited, in that sense, and that is not us… (Flo).

For the snobs, being an African female international student in Australia was very different from being a student in Kenya. They created multiple shifting identities as they negotiated different discourses present in Australia. They used identity markers such as 'being confident,' 'being autonomous,' 'identifying with different groups of friends,' 'giving 100 per cent in their studies' and 'speaking up against negative representations of African women.' They had different identities in different contexts; for example, as international students in Australia they were independent, confident and outspoken, unlike when they went back to Kenya where they remained obedient, respectful and dependent of their parents. The identity strategies they took on in Australia helped them become successful in their studies and find balance in the new culture and learning environment.

7.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed ways of being an African woman, international African female student and a woman in Australia through the educational and cultural experiences of a group labelled 'snobs.' As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, the snobs came from rich

Kenyan families. Their ways of being young African women in Australia was very different from their ways of being in Kenya. They came from very privileged families in Kenya since their families could afford to pay for tertiary education in Australia. The cost of tertiary education in Australia is expensive, even to an average Australian.

The snobs' lives were very different in Australia. Unlike in Kenya where they were identified by their family's wealth status, in Australia they were identified by their race and gender. They negotiated various identities and discourses of race and gender in the construction of their identities. They went through a process of self-formation as they negotiate discrimination and negative stereotypes because of their race and gender. As previous studies on international students (Marginson, 2013) indicate, an international student is a somewhat different person in host country settings because he/she has a changing identity. In Australia, they were on their own and they learnt to become independent, assertive and confident, and do things they would otherwise not do in Kenya. They, as Joseph (2012) puts it "(re)negotiated their identity practices in ways that shape their sense of belonging and participation in their new environment" (p.27). They were strategic in the way they constructed their identities; choosing when to be independent or dependent, confident or unconfident and to speak up or not to speak up for themselves.

The snobs liked the freedom and independence they had in Australia, and they were free from their parents' control. They had no restrictions on where to go, who to be with or what time they had to be home. They could, as one of the research participants said, "be yourself more." However, since the snobs' identities were contextual and shifting when they returned to Kenya to visit their parents, they expressed identity markers such as being dependent and reliant on their families so they were able to get everything they needed for example their finances for a good education, finances for a good life. They also chose when to display assertiveness or be outspoken in their interactions within the universities and community.

As international students in Australia, the snobs had opportunities for novel activities and personal growth. They formed friendships with other international students with whom they shared ideas with and learned from their different cultures. Their education experiences and interactions with other international students empowered them in that they broadened their way of thinking and decided to take up opportunities such as working. Although they did not have to, they saw it as important for gaining experience and for financial security.

In Kenya, the snobs told me that they had never experienced discrimination because of their race and gender. They told me that it was very different in Australia and in their interactions with the faculty; students and the broader Australian society made them aware that African women are looked down upon because of their race and gender. The snobs' experiences of discrimination made them adopt identity strategies such as being out-spoken and giving 100 percent in their class discussions that enabled them to deal with discrimination. Their experiences consciously made them aware of their situation, empowering them to speak up against discrimination.

The snobs' experiences of racism in university made them work extra hard in their studies and fight any negative connotations about African women's academic abilities. Their experiences were not different from other African women or women of colour studying in Western universities. According to Carter (2012), Evans-Winters and Esposito (2010), Mirza (1998), Mirza and Joseph (2009), and Phoenix (2009), African women or women of colour are likely to suffer discrimination because of their race and gender. According to critical race feminist theory, Black women or women of colour can experience discrimination because of the intersection of their race and gender within a larger system, such as in universities, which are structured by race and patriarchy (Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010). CRF in its analysis of discrimination experiences of Black women or women of colour uses the term *multiple consciousness* (Matsuda, 1992) to explain the awareness that these women have that their

discrimination is because of their race and gender. Similarly, the snobs' understood that their race and gender made them to be treated differently; this is evidenced in the comments below:

> …there is some situations where I find because of my race and because I am a woman, people treat me differently… (Flo)

Having this awareness or multiple consciousness helped the snobs understand how to deal with discrimination in Australia where discourses of race and whiteness are dominant (Jackson, 2014). They understood how their discrimination was not only linked to one form of their identity—gender or race—but both and how politics of race and gender positions them in Australia.

The snobs' cultural and educational experiences indicated that they had multiple and shifting identities. They had contradictory identity practices, choosing to take different identity markers as they negotiated discourses of race and gender, African feminism and international education.

The next chapter examines the experiences of the group labelled 'strugglers.'

Chapter Eight – The 'Strugglers': "Somehow you'll achieve it if you're determined."

8.1 Introduction

The previous chapters have discussed ways of being a young African woman and African international female student in Australia through the experiences of the groups labelled as the 'go-getters' and the 'snobs' consisting of young, single Kenyan women between the ages of 18–24. In this chapter, I discuss the identity practices of the 'strugglers,' Tracey and Jane. During their interviews, they spoke of their struggles of trying to balance their studies, parental duties and work, hence the term *strugglers* was used to describe the group. In spite of the challenges they encountered, the two women said in their interviews that they were happy to be in Australia studying. In their individual interviews, Jane and Tracey told me that the reason they left Kenya to study in Australia was a lack of education opportunities for women. Tracey wanted to study a Master's degree in Public Health while Jane wanted to study a Bachelor's degree in Nursing. As I discussed in Chapter Two, there are few education opportunities for women compared to men in Kenya. They told me that their courses were only offered in one private university in Kenya, which had limited admissions. They both acknowledged in their interviews that it would not have been possible for them to study, work full-time and keep up with domestic roles if they were living in Kenya. In Kenya, a married woman who studies and works at the same time is seen to neglect her family responsibilities (Gacheri, 2013; Mwangi, 2002).

Tracey told me in her interviews that she had a full-time job in Kenya, working with the Ministry of Environment before moving to Australia. She told me that she got the job in Kenya with help of a family friend who was well-connected in the government. Although Tracey had a Bachelor's degree in Science, she wanted to study a Master's degree in Public Health in order to get into management. Tracey told me that their family and friends raised

money for her and her husband to study in Australia. They were both international students and did not have any scholarships to study in Australia. They had to work to finance their education and living expenses. Tracey's son was three years-old. He was attending kindergarten at the university where Tracey was studying. Her husband had just completed a Master's degree at the same university. He was working part-time as he helped Tracey to take care of their son while she studied. Tracey said that she was finishing her studies soon. She told me she was excited about it, but was unsure about her future, as she did not know whether to return to Kenya or stay in Australia. In her individual interview, Tracey talks about the hardships she endured while trying to balance studying, working and taking care of her family. In spite of the challenges that she encountered, she looked at her experience in a very positive way. She told me that she believed that she had become a more efficient person because she is able to juggle motherhood, work and study.

Jane told me in her interview that she worked as a sales representative at a computer software company in Kenya. She had no tertiary qualification and she had gotten the job in Kenya through a friend. She said that she was not making a lot of money and wanted to study so that she could get a better job and earn more money. She therefore decided to come to Australia to study. During her interview, she told me that the reason she chose to study in Australia was that her husband had lived in the USA for two years and he heard that it was cheaper to study in Australia than in the USA. Jane and her husband raised the money to come to Australia through family and friends, and by selling their property. Jane and her husband were both international students and she told me that they both worked as disability support workers in order to finance their education and living expenses. Jane said in her interview that during their first year in Australia, she had a son and was forced to take him back to her sister in Kenya because she could not afford childcare. During the interview, she told me that her son who was by that time three years-old, had just returned from Kenya. Jane could now take care

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of him since she was about to complete her nursing degree and her husband had completed his and was working as a Division 1 nurse. Jane told me that she was also looking forward to applying for permanent resident visa and work as a nurse in Australia. Jane, like Tracey, had to balance and adapt to a life of studying, working and taking care of her family.

8.2 Balancing being a 'traditional' married African woman and being an independent and empowered married woman in Australia

Jane and Tracey told me in their interviews that living in Australia had given them an understanding of what it meant to be a woman in Australia. They had an essentialised understanding of being a married African woman in Kenyan society who they describe as obedient to her husband, subservient and has the primary responsibility of taking care of her family. Throughout their interviews, they compared their lives as women in Kenya and in Australia. They spoke about the independence, freedom, opportunities and empowerment that women had in Australia. It is evidenced in their interviews that they struggled at the beginning to find a balance between being an African woman and being a woman in Australia. They told me during the individual interviews that they found it difficult to change to ways of being a woman in Australia–especially sharing domestic responsibilities–because they were afraid that their husbands would disapprove. This is seen in Tracey's comments below:

> …it's normal to have tensions sometimes and in fact in my first semester that was the hardest, I was afraid to ask my husband for help with house work because African men do not do house work. I would really get moody sometimes because I feel like he's (my husband) not doing as much as I expect from him. I realised later it was actually my mistake, I did not tell him, it's as if I just expected he should understand that he needs to help… (Tracey).

Jane and Tracey took on some of Australian women's ways of being such as being assertive, voicing their opinions and sharing domestic responsibilities with their spouses; but at the same time they kept on some of their traditional African woman ways such as being

obedient, family-oriented and valuing religion and culture. The identity strategies that they took on in their new ways of being a woman in Australia are discussed below.

8.2.1 Being a traditional, obedient African wife and an independent woman in Australia

Jane and Tracey told me in their individual interviews that they had more freedom and independence in Australia than they did back in Kenya. Their understanding of freedom and independence was very different from the 'snobs' and the 'go-getters' groups of women. For the snobs, the freedom and independence they experienced in Australia involved taking charge of their lives and not relying on their parents. The go-getters' sense of freedom and independence involved having money, managing it and affording things they previously could not. The strugglers on the other hand, told me that they saw freedom and independence as being able to do things as married women that they previously were not able to do in Kenya. For example, in Australia they were able to work, study and maintain household responsibilities. Unlike in Kenya, if they wanted to study and work at the same time they would have to seek their husband's permission because of family responsibilities, as illustrated in the comments below:

> …But studying here makes it a bit different because every woman here studies or most women here work and most women here are independent. You just feel you want to do your thing. It is more like a lot of freedom for women unlike in Kenya most women here are independent… (Jane).

In Australia, the strugglers negotiated new gender relations in the Australian context and some instances they did not require their husbands' permissions but also at the same time negotiated the highly patriarchal gender relations prevalent in the Kenya. They told me that in Australia they had the freedom to pursue their studies and felt in charge unlike in Kenya. Jane commented in her interview that she had the freedom and independence to do study and work without asking anyone's permission. She also said that the freedom and independence in Australia allowed her to work more than one job and not to rely on one job. She stated that she

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had more choices in Australian compared to Kenya; she could change her jobs and study whenever she wanted. Her comments below illustrate this:

> …I know I do not have to depend on one job I can change my career whenever I want. I can study whatever I want and I can do pretty much whatever I want... (Jane).

Jane and Tracey also told me in their interviews that they felt there were more opportunities for women in Australia in education and the workforce. They spoke of the different opportunities available for women no matter what age. Jane said that women can change careers and study at any time and she gave the example of a woman in her fifties who was in her class. Her comments can be seen below:

> …I came here because but at home, not many women my age go back to school or go back to uni. However, here everybody goes to uni irrespective of what age. Like in my class, I have a 55-year-old woman. She was a cop before and then she decided to change her career so she came to study nursing at 55 years of age... (Jane).

Tracey shared Jane's views that there were more opportunities for women in Australia. However, she said that the male-dominated life in Kenya made women stay away from new opportunities. She said that in Australia such opportunities are available for both men and women:

> …There are new opportunities out there but because of the male dominating kind of life that we have back home [Kenya], most of women maybe would shy off from that. I think that in Australia the experience for female students would not be very different from the males… (Tracey).

The strugglers' interviews indicated that they had an essentialised understanding of being an African woman in Kenyan society. Their negotiation with different discourses on ways of being a woman in Australia through discourses of gender and marriage in Australia enabled them to take on identity practices that allowed them to be successful in their studies as they juggled being a mother, wife, student and worker. They kept to their ways as African-

Kenyan women such as being obedient to their husbands and carrying out their domestic responsibilities. However, at the same time they took on the freedom and independence that women in Australia have, such as working and studying at the same time, working different jobs to earn more money and sharing domestic chores with their husbands.

8.2.2 Being a traditional African mother and an empowered woman in Australia

Although Jane and Tracey endured hardships such as exhaustion, lack of sleep as they juggled their studies, work and family responsibilities, their interviews indicated that they felt empowered by the opportunities and liberties they had in Australia. They were empowered in that they were able to expand their abilities through their studies, work and understanding of Australian culture and make strategic life choices such as juggling work and studies, working two jobs in order to be successful. They were able to manage the roles of being a mother, wife, full-time student and employee by organising their time well. They stayed focused and determined to complete their studies. Their comments below show their determination:

> …where I don't look at barriers ahead of me, because I've been looking at it like if I manage somehow to go through this program with all these hurdles I don't think anything would stop me from achieving what I really want to achieve, so however much there seems to be barriers on the way, you just take each step at a time and you look at your goal. Somehow, somehow you will achieve it if you are determined…. (Tracey).

> …I was just saying I wanted to do a course that would get me some money. In addition, probably do a business. However, studying here makes it a bit different because every woman here studies or most women here work and most women here are independent. You are empowered. You just feel you want to do your thing… (Jane).

Tracey's remarks indicate that in spite of the financial problems and challenges of balancing family time, studies and work, she was felt more determined to complete her studies. She told me that she would not let anything stop her from achieving her goal. Tracey's challenges of managing her studies, working and taking care of her family pushes her to work harder and prove to herself that she can do it. Her comments are seen below:

> …coming from class I'm so tired, my head is aching and I have assignments to
> think about, I come home and have to cook soon as they're fed and I've cleaned
> up everything I'm thinking about my shift, I have to go for a night duty and the
> following morning I have to be going to school, it's not easy and I have to really
> work hard and prove to myself that I can do it… (Tracey).

According to Kabeer (2001) empowerment is a process of change towards greater equality or greater freedom of choice and action. Jane's comments above point out that she was empowered because in Australia, she had more freedom to choose to study, what to study and work at the same time and she took action to do that. Jane told me that the freedom and independence in Australia made it possible for her to study and become what she wanted to be, unlike in Kenya where it would be difficult for her to earn enough money to study, work and raise a family.

Apart from being empowered to study and to become successful, both Jane and Tracey commented on how they were no longer afraid to speak up or express their views. As mentioned elsewhere in this thesis, African women usually lack confidence to speak up for themselves. Jane and Tracey told me that they had noticed that most people in Australia—especially in the university—were very articulate and full of confidence. Their interaction with Australians made them learn that they had to participate in class discussions with confidence or they risked being spectators in the discussions that would affect their learning. Tracey's comment exemplifies this point:

> ...if you do not participate, you are just then maybe a spectator and you will not
> maybe learn as much… (Tracey).

Jane told me in her interview that her personality had changed to some extent since she moved to Australia. She said that unlike in Kenya, she was no longer afraid to speak up and voice her opinion:

> … I think I have grown so much in terms of my personality. If I want something,
> I will go for it. If I am not happy with something, I will say it. However, back

at home [Kenya] I would not even say it. I will sort of get angry and go or even ignore the whole thing. But now I feel like I can now speak up a lot… (Jane).

As discussed in Chapter Three, education empowers women to take control of their lives. Empowerment involves a change in mindset where an individual takes control or responsibility of his or her life or situation. Access to education can bring about changes in cognitive abilities which are essential in enabling women to question, reflect and act upon the conditions of their lives and to gain access to knowledge, information and new ideas to help them do so (Kabeer, 2005). The strugglers were empowered through their studies in Australia making them reflect on their ways of being women in Kenya and Australia. They become aware of their situations and they take on opportunities and new ideas in order to make changes in their lives. They took on identity strategies in their endeavours to succeed in their studies while at the same time maintaining their ways of being a married Kenyan woman.

8.2.3 Being a traditional African mother and being a mother in Australia

The strugglers said in their interviews that although they had to work, study and take care of their families, they were spending more time taking care of their children than they would have if they were living in Kenya. In their interviews, Jane and Tracey told me that in Kenya, they had help from their families or they had a housemaid who helped them cook, clean and take care of their child. In Kenya, maids are not expensive to hire because many people are without employment and people from rural areas are willing to work as maids for little money. In Australia, the situation is different, as Tracey told me in her interview, there were no maids or family to help with house chores or taking care of their child. Instead, they had to keep up with their domestic responsibilities while juggling work and studies. They told me that they also had to create time to spend with their child in order to fulfill their parental roles. The following remarks from Tracey illustrate this:

> …maternal roles are the same, all over, but now the environment sort of shapes what you are able to do and what you can do. I would say back home you have all that support around you… as a mother, you still don't spend as much time

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with your child as I found here. Despite having so much to do, as a mother I have to create time for my son, be with him, play with him, as much as I feel tired, as much as I have so much pressure from my work, just to make him feel you know loved and cared… I am actually spending longer times with my son here than I used to do back home [Kenya] as much as I did not have much to do back home... (Tracey).

Tracey's comments above demonstrate how balancing being a 'traditional' married African woman and being a woman in Australia changed the way she carried out her maternal roles in Australia. In Kenya, a married woman has help from other relatives or house maids to take care of her family (Swadener, 2000). However, in Australia a married woman is required to share domestic chores with her husband and find time to spend with her child.

As discussed previously in this chapter, Jane and Tracey found it difficult managing full-time work, being full-time students and taking care of their families. They had to ask their husbands for assistance. Their husbands—contrary to African traditions—had to perform domestic chores. Jane and Tracey liked that their husbands could take up some of the domestic chores. Jane stated that living in Australia had made her husband take up some of the household duties such cooking which he otherwise would not have done if he were living in Africa:

...When your husband can do things when you are not there. They can cook for themselves; they can pretty much do everything when you are not there… (Jane).

Tracey's husband had also done the same; he had taken on some of the domestic duties that she used to do in the house such as cooking and cleaning because she could not manage studying, working and completing domestic chores. She said that her husband would not have done the duties if they were living in Kenya because they are seen as women's duties. During the interview, she told me how difficult it was for her to gather the courage to ask her husband for help because she was afraid that he might find it offensive. Back in Kenya, men do not need to cook or clean for their families because either they can hire a maid or their wives

perform the duties. However, when she asked him and explained what she needed him to do, he had no problem. She was happy that he accepted. Her remark below shows this:

> ...it is normal to have tensions sometimes and in fact, in my first semester that was the hardest, I would really get moody sometimes because I feel like he is not doing as much as I expect from him. I am busy anyway; you were in school you know how it is so he should understand that, I am going through the same and do what is expected of you. But I realised I have to tell him, so as far he's been perfect, to deal with the child when I'm not home, of course he would make sure that there is food for the baby, he'll get into the kitchen and cook, in fact he's a good cook…(Tracey).

Tracey's comments indicate the sharing of domestic duties was not a smooth transition for the strugglers and their families. African men are not expected to cook, clean or look after children because they are women's responsibilities. Traditionally in Kenyan society, men and women are trained and expected to conduct different duties; women perform a bulk of household chores and parenting while men do most outdoor work (Hennon & Wilson, 2013). There were tensions between the strugglers and their husbands as they tried to share their domestic responsibilities. They had to negotiate new gender relations with their husbands given their new roles here and they did not have maids or family to help with various domestic chores. However, they told me in their interviews that they were grateful that their husbands were able to carry out some of the duties and no longer relied on them, as seen in their comments below:

> ...I mean I cannot ask more of him, he's really tried to do the best he can to help us, to support us, and he put a smile on our faces… (Tracey).

> …so you really do not have to be there. When your husband can do things when you are not there. They can cook for themselves; they can pretty much do everything when you are not there. You are grateful… (Jane).

The strugglers' new ways of being as women in Australia is also evidenced in the way they constructed themselves as international students. They had to balance meeting the demands of being a student with the demands of being a parent, wife, mother and employee.

8.3 Balancing being a 'traditional' married Kenyan woman and a hardworking, success-driven international student

As international students, Jane and Tracey took on some of the markers of an international student; hardworking, focused and determined to succeed. They told me that they also had to deal with challenges of working, being a full-time international student, mother and wife. This section provides the dynamics of the multiple identities that they constructed as they negotiated their new ways of being an international African female student and a 'traditional' married African woman in Australia.

8.3.1 Being an efficient mother and a hardworking confident African female student

Jane and Tracey told me that they worked hard and this is evidenced in their day-to-day life working full-time at night and on the weekends to earn enough money for their tuition fees and living expenses. They were both full-time students and attended most of their classes during the day. Jane and Tracey stated in their interviews that they had to manage their time well in order to study, work and complete household duties. Tracey's comments below show how she had become an efficient person as she had to study, work and take care of her family and yet she continued to work hard;

> …I am being an efficient human being here and I have to really work hard and prove to myself that I can do it. I have to pay my fees…I'm so tired, I have assignments to think about, I come home and have to cook for my family. I have cleaned up everything I am thinking about my shift, I have to go for a night duty and the following morning I have to be going to school, it is not easy… (Tracey).

Jane too found it a hard being a mother and studying. She told me that me that in Kenya it was different because there was help. In Australia, she had no help and had to do everything:

> …like being an international student, I am a full-time student and I have to be in uni at all times. In addition, being a mum at the same time will be hard. Here you have to be there to look after family… you have to cook or sort of oversee that the family… (Jane).

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Due to financial strains, the strugglers had to have more than one job. They told me that they worked different jobs to meet their financial needs. Jane stated that she did not have to depend on one job to earn money; instead, she made money by working different jobs. Tracey said that she worked night shift and on the weekend to earn enough money. Their comments can be seen below:

> …I learnt different ways of making money through different jobs. I know I do not have to depend on one job I can change my career whenever I want. I can study whatever I want and I can do pretty much whatever I want… (Jane).

> …I am thinking about my shift, I have to work night duty and on weekend… (Tracey).

The strugglers working two jobs also meant that they had to work extra hard in their studies in order to keep up. In their interviews, they said that they had to be well-prepared in their group and class discussions because they did not want other students looking down on them. Tracey, for instance, told me that she felt that she needed to work extra hard in order to participate and contribute meaningfully to her tutorial group. She also said that she did not want to appear unprepared or unknowledgeable.

> …when you know you have a responsibility to participate, you have to go and do a thorough research because you don't want everybody to look at you like you didn't do anything, so to me it was an opportunity to learn and I mean work extra harder to get what was expected of me… (Tracey).

Jane shared Tracey's views, however she told me that felt some of her group members were pulling her down when they did not meet her expectations. She said that she wanted to do well in her studies and was frustrated when members in her discussion group did not put in any effort. Her comments below illustrate this point:

> …The only problem came when we had to do a group presentation. In addition, people do not meet your expectations. So you sort of feel like other people are pulling you down… (Jane).

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Although the strugglers were hardworking, focused and determined to succeed–like many international students–they also spoke of their lack of confidence and assertiveness, especially in classroom discussions and presentations. When Jane and Tracey spoke of their classroom experiences, they mentioned their initial lack of confidence when participating in classroom discussions. They told me that they had to learn to stand in front of the class to make a presentation. As discussed in Chapter Two, in Kenyan schools' instruction is teacher-centred and students rarely stand in front of the class to talk to their peers. Women in Kenya are used to taking back seats and therefore lack confidence in public speaking. Tracey explained her lack of confidence initially was as a result of her experience in Kenyan school. She told me that in Kenyan schools, people lack confidence because they are afraid of what others may think about them. She explained how the Kenyan teachers commended correct answers in class discussions and condemned wrong answers. There was also teasing from other students if one's answer was wrong. Her remark illustrates this:

> ...You know your raise your hand, you answer a question and if it's wrong you know you are told a blunt 'No!' and the other children laugh at you, and you feel so stupid, you feel so awkward, tomorrow you won't have the guts to put your hand up again. They really made me feel so stupid and like I was so dumb I did not know anything, and it rather makes you lose confidence in yourself and you stop trying… (Tracey).

Tracey further stated that the reason why she found it difficult to ask questions or participate in class discussion in Australia was that she was afraid of what other students would think of her. She said in her interview that she did not feel confident to answer questions in class, even when she knew that she had the right answer because she was afraid of being seen as not knowledgeable. Her comments below exemplify this point:

> ... I still felt it difficult to say anything in class because I don't know what they're going to say about me, maybe they'll say 'Oh this black woman doesn't know anything,' so because of that fear that was built in me and it's still in me, I still can't feel confident enough to say anything, as much as I know it's right

sometimes, I would still feel like well somebody else will say not me…
(Tracey).

However, Tracey went on to tell me that with time she had to learn to be confident. She had to participate in group discussions and presentations, as it was a requirement of her study. She also did not want to be a spectator in the classroom discussions. Her comments below illustrate this point:

> …Well if I had a way out of it I would have, but I did not have a choice. Well of course participating gives you a hands-on, so if you do not participate you are just then maybe a spectator. To be able to stand in front of the other people and present my findings gives me confidence… (Tracey).

The strugglers' ways of being in Australia were very different compared to being in Kenya as they negotiated discourses of race, gender and education circulating within Australia. They learnt to be assertive and confident in their classes in order to be successful in their studies. They also learnt to negotiate with discrimination.

8.3.3 Negotiating discrimination by being silent

Both Jane and Tracey said in their interviews that were incidences of when they were treated differently because of their race and gender. They told me that this happened at university and in work placements where some of their colleagues looked down upon them. Tracey said that there were times when she felt that people acted differently towards her in class because of her race and gender. She told me in her interview that some people in her tutorial group had a condescending attitude towards her because she was Black and they did not expect her to be intelligent. However, she said that she did not care and was not bothered by such attitudes as seen in her comments below:

> …In school, well you have those few elements like I said maybe during the tutorials someone will look at you like 'Oh you're Black woman so you're not supposed to be reasoning like the rest of us,' they are there, but I'm sort of expecting it when it happens, so even at work it happens very often but I really don't care… (Tracey).

For Jane, she stated that when she was on her work placement, some of her workmates treated her as if she was not intelligent. According to what Jane told me, there were people who were genuinely interested in understanding her African culture, however there were others who looked down upon her because she was an African. Her comments can be seen below:

> …They ask you so much with an aim of trying to understand you. However, others are close-minded. They do not want to know. They see you as an African woman and to them an African does not know so from the beginning of the shift. They will be explaining to you every little thing. Even when you feel that, this is common sense… (Jane).

As seen with the go-getters in Chapter Seven, and from previous studies (Beoku-Betts, 2004; Mirza & Joseph, 2010, 2013; Mohanty, 2003) on African women in Western universities, African women are treated differently because of their race and gender. African women are often stereotyped as under-achievers in education. The strugglers underwent similar experiences; however, they told me that they did not allow such notions about them deter them from achieving their goals. They remained focused in spite of their awareness that they were being looked down because of their race and gender. They chose to remain silent and work hard in their studies.

In spite of being treated differently by some of their classmates, the strugglers also said in their interviews about the need to belong. They had friends from many different cultures.

8.3.4 Being a traditional African woman student seeking a sense of belonging

As international students, Jane and Tracey told me that they felt the need to belong. They told me that they first made friends with other Africans because they wanted to have a sense of belonging, but later made friends with other international students because of their shared experiences. They said that they liked having international friends because they found them supportive, especially when working on class assignments. Jane told me that she initially

interacted more with other Africans, but she later made friends with people from different cultures. This is seen in her comments below:

> …Because you want to belong, that is another thing you want to belong so we would end up grouping with other Africans most of the time but I also learnt to interact with other people. I have very many friends from different cultures Australian, Chinese, Koreans… (Jane).

Like Jane, Tracey had international friends and she interacted with other students in her classes. She told me that her friends from her tutorial group were multicultural and that the group was supportive and encouraged each other. Her comments can be seen below:

> …I had friends I would say…most of the people in my tutorial group were very supportive. It was mixed with male and female from all over, we had Indians, we had Africans, we had Aussies, and we had people from all over the world. I remember this particular guy in the maths statistics tutorial group he would actually, if he noticed I was stuck, he would always turn around and help… (Tracey).

As international students, the strugglers saw themselves as hardworking not only in their studies, but in their ability to balance domestic responsibilities, studying and working. Although they stated that they lacked confidence, they learned to be assertive in their interaction with others as they adjusted to life in Australia. Although they occasionally experienced discrimination in their classes and work, they did not let it affect them; instead, they worked hard in their studies to prove that they were capable of being successful. Although they had their families with them, they experienced loneliness at the universities and sought friendships with other students. Most international students (Marginson, 2007, 2010; Nyland et al., 2007; Sawir, 2005) experience loneliness and make friends with other international students because they had similar experiences.

Balancing being an international student and a traditional Kenyan married woman was challenging at first for the strugglers. They adopted different identity strategies such as being

assertive and confident to help shape their identities and enable them to be successful in their studies.

8.4 Conclusion

The strugglers had different ways of being married African women studying in Australian universities and as women in Australia. They negotiated discourses of race, gender, international education and family in constructing their identities in Australian context. The strugglers had an understanding of what it meant to be a married African woman from their experiences living in Kenya. The notion of African woman as a wife and mother is dominant within Kenya (Beoku-Betts & Ngaruiya-Njambi, 2005; Kabanyoro, 2008; Kiyimba, 2013). An African woman has a duty to take care of her family and is expected to carry out all domestic responsibilities, as was demonstrated in the strugglers' interviews. As I stated in Chapter Two, femininity in Kenya and other parts of Africa is constructed using images such as the mother and stereotypes of women's roles, abilities and personal characteristics attributed to the ideal woman (Kabanyoro, 2008). Women are expected to perform all domestic duties even as they venture into opportunities such as employment and education (Mwangi, 2002). The strugglers' interviews indicated that they understood what was expected of them as mothers and wives, and they had to balance taking care of their families, studying and working. They shared domestic chores with their husbands to enable them to study and work at the same time.

In Australia, the strugglers like the snobs and go-getters also negotiated various discourses such as education, race and gender that are present in Australian society. However, they had responsibilities as mothers and wives and they learnt ways to carry out these roles in Australian context. They balanced being a traditional married African woman and independent, conscientious empowered and confident student, mother and wife in Australian context. They adopted identity strategies that helped them to become successful as mothers, wives, students, and employees. In Australia, they had the freedom to pursue their studies without the fear of

being judged by society. In Kenya society, married women who study and work at the same time are seen to abandon their maternal responsibilities (Mwangi, 2002). They also became assertive in their social interactions and were not afraid to voice their opinion. They even shared domestic roles with their husbands. The challenges they faced in balancing life as both a student and mother empowered them and made them more determined to succeed. By comparing their experiences in Kenya and Australia, the strugglers found that women in Australia generally had more independence, freedom, equal opportunities and were not afraid to speak up. The strugglers became more assertive in their social interactions and they took advantage of the opportunities available to better themselves and increased their desire to succeed.

As international students, the strugglers negotiated discourses of international student and international education. As is characteristic of most international students, the strugglers were hardworking and focused. They learnt to be efficient as they managed their time juggling work, studies and family responsibilities. They had to work hard in their studies because they were afraid of being seen as not intelligent. As seen in a previous study on international students (Koehne, 2006; Sawir et al., 2007), the strugglers had networks of friends from Australia and other countries. They also had to deal with challenges they faced as international students such as discrimination, pedagogical challenges and their lack of confidence. These challenges— although unique to the individual group of international students—are common to many international students (Koehne, 2006). As international African female students studying in Australian universities, the strugglers' intersectionality of their race and gender positioned them as 'unintelligent;' sentiments that are echoed in studies on experiences of Black women or women of colour in education (Beoku-Betts, 2004; Carter, 2012; Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; Mirza, 1998; Mirza & Joseph, 2010; Phoenix, 2009). The strugglers regarded their experiences as international students important in empowering them to become open-minded and successful in their studies. To some extent, their experiences transformed them into

different beings. They no longer wanted to be positioned as a passive, obedient wife but constructed themselves as independent, confident, empowered and equal to their husbands.

In the next chapter, I discuss the findings of my research.

Chapter Nine – Identity practices and discursive positioning of African female international students in Australia

9.1 Introduction

This thesis examines the experiences of African female students from Kenya studying in Australian universities. It is guided by the research questions: How do Kenyan female international students construct their sense of identity through their racialised and gendered experiences in Australian universities? How are Kenyan female students positioned and how do they position themselves within the Australian education sector and broader community? I have drawn upon previous studies on African women or women of colour studying in Western universities (Beoku-Betts, 2004; Beoku-Betts & Ngaruiya-Njambi, 2005; Maundeni, 1999; Mohanty, 2004; Molara-Ogindipe, 1994; Okeke-Ihejirika, 2010), discourses of international education (Bullen & Kenway, 2003; Doherty & Singh, 2008; Joseph, 2008, 2012; Kashima & Loh, 2006; Koehne, 2006; Marginson, 2007, 2013; Matthews, 2002; Sidhu, 2004; Tsolidis, 2002; Ziguras & McBurnie, 2015) and critical race feminism (CRF) (Collins, 1990; Crenshaw, 1989; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Matsuda, 1991; Wing, 2003, 2015) to provide an argument for this focus.

There are previous studies (Beoku-Betts, 2004; Harris et al., 2015; Maundeni, 1999; Mwangi, 2002; Okeke-Ihejirika, 2006) that focused on the challenges faced by African female students and ways in which the intersectionality of their race and gender position them in Western universities. The findings of my research resonate with these studies' conclusions, particularly in the work of Maundeni (1999) and Beoku-Betts (2004). Maundeni's work states that the challenges African female students face when studying in Western universities are embedded within their previous experiences as women in Africa. She argues that the way in which African culture and traditions both position women as having a lower status than men and socialises women to be passive and subservient affects their ability to adjust to new ways

of life when they go overseas to western countries such as the US, Canada, UK and Australia to pursue their studies. Their ways of being women in Africa including the dominant discourses of the traditional, passive and subservient African women makes them reluctant to seek help from their lecturers or to participate in class discussions in their new education environments. Kenyan female international students in my study too found it difficult to participate in class discussions because in Kenya as one of the research participants put it "females are more used to being on the back seats listening to what the males have to say even in the family" (Ellen-research participant) and the education system does not encourage discussions instead as seen in the comments below,

> …if I had a similar exposure like this (public speaking) before I would be different. We have a very, I would call it a bad culture back home (Kenya) where it is somewhat intimidating in a way, you your raise your hand, you answer a question in class and if it is wrong, you know you are told a blunt no… (Tracy)

Kenyan female students studying in Australian universities previous education and cultural experiences in Kenya influenced the ways in which they adjusted to their new learning environment in Australia. This is similar to Maundeni (1999) findings; however, my study finds that Kenyan female students do not allow their experiences prevent them from being successful in their studies. Instead, they adapt to their new learning environment by taking on new identity markers that they view important such showing confidence, extroversion and speaking up against misrepresentation of African women that are important in Australia.

Beoku-Betts' (2004) study discusses how African women's gender, race and third-world location influences the way they are perceived in Western universities. Beoku-Betts' study reveals that racial and gender bias, and negative perceptions of African societies as a result of being marginalised in the global system have created unique educational experiences of African women studying in Western universities. My study also finds the educational experiences of Kenyan female students to be unique compared to other international students

because they are likely to face race and gender discriminations because of their small numbers and there are negative perceptions of Africans in Australia (Harris et al., 2015; Roberts, 2005; Spark, Harris & Chi, 2013). Results released this week of a survey conducted by Monash University for Scanlon Foundation found that although African migrants in Australia endure the most discrimination yet they remain positive in their attitudes (Markus, 2016). My study like Beoku-Betts' examines how intersections of race and gender identities discriminate Kenyan female international students and uses critical race feminism conceptual framework to analyse their racialized and gendered experiences. My research finds that although they face discrimination and are negatively perceived Kenyan female students construct their identities in ways that empower and allow them to negotiate discrimination and dispel misrepresentations of their African identity.

There are also other studies (Collins, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Mirza, 2009; Mohanty, 2004; Phoenix, 2004) on experiences of Black women, and women of colour (African American, Black Caribbean and Indian women) in institutions of learning in Western countries. Collins, Ladson-Billings and Mohanty work discusses educational experiences of African American women and women of Indian decent. Mirza (2009) and Phoenix (2004) work focuses on the experiences of Black and Indian girls/women in British schools and universities. All these studies highlight the ways in which race and gender bias intersect to discriminate or position African women or women of colour differently. Although these studies do not homogenise the experiences of African/Black or women of colour, they generally focus on how the intersectionality of race and gender marginalises these groups of women within education institutions in Western countries. These studies bring an awareness of the way education institutions' policies and practices may marginalise African or Black women or women of colour.

My study extends upon these previous studies on African women/women of colour by conceptualising the identity of African woman and draws on CRF conceptual framework and literature on international education to analyse ways in which the intersectionality of race, gender and being international students plays out in the positioning of African female international students, and how they position themselves in Australia. My research focuses on how they construct their identity first in Kenya, and later in Australia as they negotiate discourses of gender that is present in both countries. My study looks at how these women are understood within the African society and in Australia. It examines the implications of these identities, and how the different positioning empowers or disempowers them.

In order to understand the essence of African female identity, I engaged with literature on African feminism and found that there are certain essentialised notions that describe ways of being an African female in Africa. These notions are based on the way women/girls are expected to behave, dress, their expected roles and positioning within an African patriarchal society (Beoku-Betts & Ngaruiya-Njambi, 2005; Hussein, 2005; Kabanyoro, 2008; Kiyimba, 2013). In some parts of Africa, for example Kenya, women are marginalised by their culture and they are made aware of their lower status in society as young girls:

> From birth, various cultural practices and symbolism persist in reminding her …of the lower status she occupies in society vis a` vis her brothers. She is socialised early into a…system of norms and values, attitudes and skills that tend to emphasize gender differentiation in…adult roles and aspirations (Wamahiu et al., 1996, p. 19).

In my study, I also engaged with literature on discourses of international education in Australia and also other parts of the world. This provided insights into how international students are understood and ways in which they construct their identity. As discussed in Chapter Three, previous studies (Bullen & Kenway, 2003; Kashima & Loh, 2006; Koehne, 2006; Sawir et al, 2012) on experiences of international students indicate that there are essentialised or generalised views within the universities that describe this group. Dominant

discourses about international students in the universities describe their behaviours, academic and language abilities, and how other students, staff and society perceive them in general. Discourses circulating within the universities in relation to international education describe international students as passive learners (Koehne, 2006; Kutieleh & Egege, 2004; Sawir, 2013), lacking competency in the English language (Arkoudis, Baik, Marginson & Cassidy, 2012; Hellstén & Prescott, 2004) and in need of pastoral care (Koehne, 2006). International students are described by their teachers and peers as being motivated, hardworking, friendly and respectful especially to teachers (Isibor, 2008; Kell & Vogl, 2012), and they are also seen as 'shy' and 'introverted' (Harrison & Peacock, 2007).

My study reveals that young African women studying in Australian universities have contextual and strategic identity practices. They construct their identities by negotiating multiple discourses circulating within Australian in relation to race, gender and international education. They keep some of the ways of being a traditional Kenyan woman and at the same time take on some ways of the assertive, confident 'white' Australian woman in constructing their new identities as young Kenyan women in Australia. My research had three main findings; that young Kenyan women understand their roles, expectations and position in a patriarchal Kenyan society, that are different ways of being a young African woman from Kenya studying in Australian universities, and that Kenyan female students are discursively positioned in Australian universities and within the broader community. These findings of my research are discussed in detail in the next sections.

9.2 What it means to be a young African woman: "A woman is a flower in a garden; her husband is the fence around it."

All thirteen research participants were different in many ways; although they were all Kenyans, they came from different ethnic communities (Luhyia, Kamba, Kikuyu, Goa and Luo), religions (most Christians and one is Muslim), age groups (between 20- 34 years old),

socioeconomic backgrounds (rich and middle-income families) and had different marital statuses (most were single and two are married). However, they all shared an essentialised understanding of what it meant to be a young woman in Kenyan society. Based on their narrative interviews, it was clear that there were certain notions that described the identity of an African woman such as position, roles, relations and expectations. These notions are well understood within the Kenyan/African culture regardless of ethnic community, religion, age and socioeconomic background.

The patriarchal nature of the African societies puts the status of women or girls as always below that of men. Women live in the shadows of men and often take the back seat. A Ghanaian proverb describes the position of a woman in African society by stating that "a woman is a flower in a garden; her husband is the fence around it" (Mbiti, 2015 p. 208). This proverb shows the ways in which a woman is understood in African societies; that a woman is beautiful and she has the important role of bringing life, however she still needs a man's protection. In this proverb, the woman is portrayed as weak, and the man on the other hand is shown as a strong protector. This portrayal of woman as dependent on man was evidenced in the way my research participants described the position of women or girls in Kenyan and African society as being inferior to that of men. This group of young Kenyan women in my study used words such as "back seats," "inferior" and "degrading" when discussing their status within the African community.

My study establishes–through my research participants' understanding of ways of being a young woman in Kenyan society–that indeed young women in Kenya, regardless of their socioeconomic status, are aware of their 'peripheral' or 'back seat' position within the society, where men are in charge of family and many matters of the community. Women are conscious of their position and roles within Kenyan society. The young women in my study told me that Kenyan women are expected to perform all domestic duties, which include cooking, cleaning

and taking care of the children. As evidenced in my research participants' interviews, there is also an understanding that a woman in Kenya can juggle a career and domestic responsibilities and–when in a different society such as Australia–construct their identities differently, no longer taking the 'back seat' position.

The three groups of research participants discussed in my data chapter; the 'go-getters,' 'snobs' and 'strugglers,' all had an understanding of the position and role of women in Kenya, but they displayed this differently. The go-getters used the term 'backseat' to describe the position of Kenyan women as being secondary compared to men, and some found this degrading to women, as seen in the comments below:

> …In Kenya, we are more used to being on the back seats listening to what the males have to say, even in the family… (Ellen).

> …Well back home in Kenya I know who I am and what is expected of me. In addition, yeah though back in Kenya we are still fighting identity. That some norms are degrading to women… (Rachel)

The snobs on the other hand, described the position of Kenyan women in relation to their observation of their parents' roles and responsibilities. Many of them told me that their mothers were in charge of the day to day matters of the family such as cooking, cleaning and taking care of the house while their fathers expected to be served dinner and were never involved in cooking or cleaning. This is illustrated in Sally's comments below:

> …You find the male sitting around the sitting room, reading a newspaper and waiting for dinner to be served, or waiting for house to be cleaned. It is the women work to do that and it is not meant to be a man's job to help in the kitchen… (Sally)

The strugglers too had an understanding of their position as married women in Kenya. In their interviews, they discussed their responsibilities within their family unit, which was mainly to cook, clean and take care of the family. This understanding and expectations of their role brought tension within their marriages in Australia because they found it difficult to ask their husbands for help when they struggled to study and keep up with housework.

In the end, they had to ask their husbands for help, and they were relieved when their husbands

agreed to assist. This is seen in the comments below:

> …it is normal to have tensions sometimes and in fact, in my first semester that
> was the hardest, I would really get moody sometimes because I feel like he is
> not doing as much as I expect from him with. But I realised I have to tell him to
> assist, so after telling him then he was okay, he doesn't mind doing
> it(housework)…(Tracey).

My research revealed that many young women in Kenya are generally not assertive and

do not display confidence when compared to white women in Australia. My research

participants–particularly the strugglers and go-getters–were aware that they lacked confidence

that is displayed by many white Australian women. This is a result of young women in Kenya

being socialised to be passive, receptive and taking back seat positions in society (Beoku-Betts

& Ngaruiya-Njambi, 2005; Mwangi, 2002). The strugglers and the go-getters blamed their

ways of being as young African woman in Kenyan society for their lack of self-confidence in

Australia. The following excerpt illustrates this point:

> …We have a very, a bad culture back home (Kenya)… and it rather makes you
> lose confidence in yourself. I see students here (Australia) contributing in class,
> they have all the confidence; they do not fear expressing what they feel…
> (Tracey).

The snobs on the other hand, had confidence and were not afraid to participate in class

discussions because they had attended elite schools in Kenya. Most elite schools in Kenya use

curriculum models from countries such as Australia, UK, Canada and USA (Bosberry-Scott,

2010). However, they were intimidated by the Australians' extroverted nature and felt that they

did not have the same confidence. This is evidenced in the following remarks:

> …Like back home in Kenya if I had an issue I would not be scared to look
> stupid. I would not mind at all asking for help. However, here I am really scared,
> I really hold back. Australians rather intimidate me. For them, confidence it's
> something natural… (Flo)

My study also found that my research participants understood that displaying confidence and extroversion is important in Australian society and this made them take on these identity markers. However, they did not all construct their identities the same because they had different socio-economic backgrounds, family values, religion and are different as individuals. The snobs, as discussed in Chapter Seven, were strategic in the way they took Australian ways of being; they chose when or when not to be confident, or when to show extroversion;

> …If I know the answer and I am confident I am right, then I do not mind lifting my hand or asking for clarification... (Di)

The go-getters and the strugglers saw confidence as an important identity marker that they needed in order to be successful as young African women in Australia, and to avoid being looked down upon because of their race and gender. The following comment illustrates this point:

> …You don't have to be outspoken so much as just ooze confidence or if you can't ooze it, then pretend you have it and it's the most important thing in this country because culture here (Australia) there's a very high respect for extraversion and confidence…with confidence in who you are as an African and as a woman, people start respecting you and have a harder time putting you down when you're that confident … (Elsie)

The findings of my study also established that young women from Kenya understand what the Kenyan society expects of them. The snobs, strugglers and go-getters stated that in Kenya they are expected to dress, talk and behave in certain ways, because women are judged more harshly than men are. They described their way of dressing as conservative compared to the way young white Australian women dressed–low-cut tops, shorts, miniskirts and tight-fitting clothes. They said that in Kenya they would never dress as Australian women do because they would be seen as lacking good morals. Although Kenya does not have a strict code of

dressing, a woman's character is often judged by the way she dresses, behaves and relates to people. The following comments illustrate this:

> …the way women dress here in Australia, they wear low cuts and shorts… you would not try dressing like that back home (Kenya). That would be viewed as wrong especially because of culture over there…As an African woman that will be viewed as a bad idea. You would not be walking dressed like that in my country… (Ellen).

In spite of this awareness, as these young Kenyan women immersed themselves in the Australian culture and constructed new identities, they took on new ways of being such as Australian ways of dressing including wearing tight clothes and low-cut tops in order to fit in and keep up with fashion. For women, changing their ways of dressing is one of the main markers of identity formation (Renne, 2013). Many of my research participants were also strategic in taking on this new marker of their identity; they dressed like Australians while in Australia but kept their conservative ways of dressing including loose fitting clothes once they returned to Kenya.

It was established through the findings of my research that religion is another important element in the identity of an African woman. In many African communities, a woman who practices her religious faith is highly regarded and respected (Mbiti, 1990). In Chapter Three when discussing the roles and positions of African women during pre-colonial era, I stated that in traditional African societies, women had important religious roles. In some ancient African communities, women dominated the positions of spiritual and religious power (Mbiti, 1988). Religion was important to all of my research participants. The go-getters, snobs and strugglers continued to go to church or mosque in spite of them being aware that many people in Australia no longer practice or hold the religious beliefs (Census Report, 2016) unlike many Kenyans. Religion remained to be essential in the identity of the young Kenyan women in Australia since

a religious African woman is highly regarded within Kenyan society. This is illustrated in the comment below:

> ... an African woman who is God fearing is highly regarded… (Ellen).

My study revealed that living and studying in Australia made my research participants conscious of freedoms, equality and opportunities that are available for women within the Australian context. They understand that living in a country like Australia has different expectations for women than from Kenya. The go-getters, snobs and strugglers' observation of and interaction with Australian women made them develop an essentialised understanding of Australian women. As noted in Chapter Five, my participants told me that they refer to white Australian women when they use the term *Australian women*. They also told me that they were fully aware that Australian women are from different cultural backgrounds, but there is still a dominant discourse of white femininity circulating within the Australian context. I have highlighted some of the markers of this white Australian femininity in Chapter Five, including being extroverted, independent and confident. This conceptualisation of Australian women's identity provided them with an understanding of the way women are positioned, and their roles and expectations within the Australian society. They all took on some of the Australian identity markers such as confidence and extroversion in order to be successful as students and as young women in Australia.

In sum, the young women in my study–irrespective of their socioeconomic status–had an essentialised understanding of being an African woman in Kenya. Their engagement with discourses of gender and equality allowed them to embrace Australian values that empowered them as women such as assertiveness, speaking up for their rights and taking on gender equity ideas that would enhance their identity as women in Australia. But, at the same time ignoring

values that are completely against their beliefs such as atheism that would further marginalise them as women in African societies. This is further discussed in the next sections.

9.3. Identity practices of Kenyan female international students in Australia

Although there are some identity markers that may seem fixed and apply to the values and beliefs of a collective group; for example, gender, national identity, religious identity, ethnic identity and so on. According to current theorization of identity, a person does not have a fixed identity; rather, the self is defined by a continuing discourse in a shifting communication of oneself to others (Joseph, 2008; Mirza & Sheridan, 2003; Mohanty, 2014; Wing, 2000). Similarly, Critical Race Feminism uses the term "multiplicative" to configure identity and explain that everyone has multiple identities (Wing, 2000). Before coming to Australia for their studies, my research participants had multiple identities in Kenya such as their national, ethnic, religion, female and socioeconomic status just to mention a few. They also understood what the Kenyan society expected of them as young women. There were certain values and cultural practices that they were meant to adhere to in relation to their social relations, behaviour and appearance. They also wanted to have a good education; they wanted to study and get good jobs. When they arrived in Australia, they had to negotiate different positioning and identities as international students, young African women and as women in Australia. They found that Australia had different expectations, values and cultural practices different from what they were used to in Kenya as seen in the comment below:

> …the sort of particular rules and regulations we had back home and the social definitions of who you are, what you can do and what you cannot do. There is none here… (Rachel).

My research participants constructed new identities as they adjusted to life in Australia and tried to fit in. Unlike in Kenya where they would be commonly referred to as 'young girls,' in Australia they were identified mainly by their race and then gender; 'African women,' and

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other times as international students. They hence negotiated different positions as female, African and international students. Their engagement with the discourses of international students, race and gender, and their interaction and observation of Australian women's ways of being provided them with an essentialised understanding of international students and Australian women. They took on some identity markers of international student, Australian woman and retained some of their own identity markers of African women. Research on how international students construct their identity (Haugh, 2008; Kashima & Loh, 2006; Koehne, 2005, 2006; Marginson, 2012) indicates that international students discursively construct their identity in multiple and hybrid ways as they mix and match their identities over time, and acquire attributes for success in their host country.

My study revealed that the socio-economic backgrounds of Kenyan international female students in Australia influenced to some extent their ways of being. In Chapters Six, Seven and Eight, I presented the groups I identified as 'strugglers,' 'snobs' and 'go-getters,' and discussed the ways in which they constructed their identities. It is evidenced in my data chapters that these groups constructed their identities differently as they took on different ways of being and doing in the Australian context.

The snobs came from wealthy families; their parents paid for their education and sent them money for living expenses. In Australia, they maintained their family values and practices since their parents kept in touch with them and sent them money for airfares to travel back to Kenya during holidays. However, they wanted freedom and independence that was available in Australia to make decisions about their lives without their parents' involvement. In Australia, the snobs created their identity as international students and young African women in Australia. They took on ways of being international students such as being conscientious, focused and, like many university students, juggled work and studies. Although they did not have to work,

most of them wanted to work for the extra money, experience and the interaction with different people. This seen in the comments below;

…I work for me extra money and you interact with people … (Flo).

…I work for experience and with experience comes the money… (Di).

The snobs' socio-economic background enabled them to create identities as independent, outspoken, and assertive young African women in Australia. They wanted to be in control of their lives, spoke against discrimination and displayed assertiveness in their social relations. They also understood that being part of the Australian culture was important to them and therefore kept Australian friends and tolerated some Australian cultural practices such as same-sex marriages, making them more open-minded. The following remarks illustrate this:

…I think my thinking is more open-minded compared…I think maybe my generation will be the most accepting because it's been the most mixed. In Australia, I have worked with so many different types of people here, sexual orientation and at the end of the day, they are just people… (Jaycee).

…I think the only thing I can say I have changed is that I am more tolerant. I have had to see a lot of stuff that back home I would not be used to. However, since I am living in a shared accommodation and I am in a different country, I have had to make new friends…I had 3 roommates, who are two who are lesbians and one who is gay. (Sally).

My study also discovered that when the snobs returned to Kenya during breaks from their studies, they shifted to their old identity practices of being dependent on their families and having everything done for them. Nonetheless, most of them stated that they had a deeper appreciation of their lives in Kenya than they had before. They told me that the freedom and independence that they had in Australia had made them wiser and many did not want their parents controlling their lives. This is illustrated in the comments below:

…Of course I am responsible, but on my terms. It actually makes me grow because I know the right things to do without being told by my parents... (Di).

The snobs' upbringing in Kenya—, which involved their parents controlling their lives—influenced their identity practices in Australia. Being independent was important for them and therefore most of them took the opportunities they found in Australia such as juggling work and studies, freedom of choice and cultural diversity to create new identities that allowed them to mature, be open-minded and responsible in their own terms, as evidenced in the comments below:

> …I am responsible, but on my terms. It actually makes me grow...the experience just broadened my horizons. I have seen all sorts of people. I have been exposed to a lot more than back home because back home I am just around my family… (Di).

Like the snobs, the go-getters understood what it means to be a young African woman in Kenyan society. However, they were brought up in average income families with few luxuries. They understood that they had to work hard in their studies in order to get well-paying jobs in the future. The limited educational opportunities for girls in Kenya made the go-getters decide to study in Australia. While in Australia they stayed focused and driven, taking on some ways of Australian women such as being confident and independent in order to be successful, and did away with African cultural values that positioned them as passive and subordinate. In Australia, they valued freedom and independence that enabled them to earn money to pay for their education, afford to rent an apartment and buy a car. Many of them were empowered to work harder in order to be successful. Based on their narrative interviews, some of them saw their time in Australia as a beginning of a new identity because they were on their own and they had to figure out how to survive as young African women, international students and as women in Australia. This shown in the following remarks;

> …the social definitions of who you are, what you can do and what you cannot do. There is none here. It is you and you alone. You are just another individual there. You rather lose your sense of identity… Rachel

The go-getters' drive and determination to succeed made them create their identities as hard-working, success-driven, focused, independent and confident young African women in Australia. They took on identity strategies that propelled them to be successful in their studies and survival in Australia.

The strugglers too had multiple shifting identities similar and different from the go-getters and the snobs. In Kenya, the strugglers were mothers and wives, and they had a good understanding of what it meant to be a woman, a mother and a wife in the Kenyan society. There are not many educational opportunities for married women in Kenya; therefore, it was a big opportunity for them to study in Australia and to bring their family along. As seen elsewhere in this thesis, in many African communities women rarely leave their family to study abroad (Mwangi, 2002). In Australia, they had to struggle balancing family responsibilities, studying and working, hence the term 'strugglers' used to describe them. Their interviews showed that they adhered to their African culture and traditions more compared to the go-getters and snobs because they were married. They told me in their interviews that they were afraid to take some of the Australian ways of life such as sharing domestic chores with their husbands because they were afraid of what their husbands might think of them. In spite of these challenges, the strugglers created their identities in ways that allowed them to be successful, by balancing studies, work and carrying out domestic responsibilities. They became, as one of them described herself in the comments below, efficient human beings:

> …I will look at it positively, okay I am being an efficient human being here and I have to really work ahead and prove to myself that I can do it… (Tracey).

Although the go-getters, strugglers and snobs constructed their identities differently both as a group and individuals they all understood identity markers that were valued and important in an Australian context. They were flexible in the way they constructed their identity and they took on different identity markers that worked for different contexts. Each individual

student modified and created her own identity in a manner that was unique to her, however the physical markers of her identity—gender and race—positioned her very differently like all other African women in Australia, and in other parts of the world.

Ways Kenyan female international students position themselves in Australia

My research found that many of the Kenyan female international students in my study uniquely positioned themselves and did not view their physical markers of their race and gender as a disadvantage. Instead, they saw their Black/African woman identity as unique because it made them stand out, allowing them to be seen and heard as demonstrated in Tracey and Di's remarks below:

> …I feel like I want to be different, it is that I have to be different. I feel a desire or a need to express my African self-more and sort of stand out and be culturally counted so to speak… (Tracey).

> …I actually enjoy being different. I feel like it makes us unique and stand out. In class if I am the only Black girl, I feel like it adds - it is nice to be different… (Di).

Many of them negotiated discrimination by viewing the physical markers of their identity—race and gender—as an advantage since it makes them be noticed and be heard as seen in the comments above. According to Cleveland's (2004) study on African American women, when Black/African women are confronted with negative experiences about their identity, they resist negative labels by asserting their identity as Black women. Instead of Kenyan female international students seeing themselves as victims of racism and discrimination, some of them asserted their identity by using their race and gender to position themselves in ways that was beneficial for them. They fashioned themselves as unique beings, and took on identity markers such as being confident, autonomous, hardworking, open-minded, outspoken and having friends from different cultures.

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The group of Kenyan female students in my study create their identities in ways that provide them with opportunities to get the most out of their educational and cultural experience. My study found that African female students—just like all international students—leave their home countries to be different, whether through education or cultural experience. They form their identities between their home countries, host countries and larger global community (Marginson, 2013). This group of Kenyan female students are aware of the importance of being global-minded and having a broad world view (see comments below), and as seen earlier in this chapter, they develop friendships with African students, domestic students and others from different parts of the world. This is important because international education fosters functional relationships and social networks. It enables international students to acquire new values and beliefs in the country of education, to develop greater tolerance and more cosmopolitan relations (Montgomery, 2010). The new values and beliefs that the Kenyan female students acquire from Australia and their social networks of friends from different cultures allow them to understand others, providing them with different ways of thinking and tolerance towards cultural practices that are not accepted in Kenya, such as same sex relationships. The following comments illustrate this:

> …my friends are Chinese, Indonesian, Indians… is a pretty mixed up group of people already. Therefore, it is people trying to learn from each other's diverse cultures and see what is different in each of one culture. You have to adjust to different cultures, different ways of thinking… (Sally).

> …I think maybe my generation will be the most accepting because it has been the most mixed. I have worked with so many different types of people, sexual orientation and at the end of the day, they are just people… I think my thinking is more open-minded compared to Kenya… (Jaycee).

Kenyan female students' desire to succeed enables them to construct themselves as young women who are globally minded and culturally sensitive, similar to Taylor's (2014) argument that intercultural sensitivity is critical in being global-minded. They learn to

understand and tolerate cultural practices that are found in Australia such as same sex marriages, even though the practices are not acceptable in Kenya.

My study found that Kenyan female students are also empowered young women. They are determined to succeed in life and hence study courses such as nursing, psychology, economics and public health that would guarantee them jobs in any part of the world. Their educational experiences empowered them to learn to survive by taking on identity strategies that allow them to excel in their studies and in Australia in general. Rachel's comments below illustrate this point:

> …there are time, when you feel really empowered. Especially when you say, its end of the year you look at what you have done so far there is a lot of personal pride in who I am and what I have been able to achieve… (Rachel).

Feminist scholars (Mohanty, 2000; Wing, 2003) argue that empowerment encompasses many aspects of a woman's life and enables women to take control of their own lives, set their own agenda, be heard, respected and treated as equal. All three groups—the strugglers, snobs and go-getters—were each empowered differently due to their socioeconomic background. The go-getters were empowered in ways that enabled them to stay focused and successful. They took charge of their lives, set their own agenda and took on opportunities they found in Australia such as working to ensure that they were successful. Rachel's comment above illustrates this point.

The snobs on the other hand were empowered in ways that allowed them to be independent and in control of their lives. They took the opportunities they found in Australia to manage their lives. They became stronger and broadened their horizons as seen in the comments below:

> …I think the experiences that I've got here have made me a stronger person it's just broadened my horizons I've been exposed to a lot more than back home because back home I'm just around my family… (Di).

Just like the go-getters and the snobs, the strugglers were empowered through their educational experiences in Australia. They gained access to knowledge and new ideas through their studies and negotiating various discourses present in Australia. They said in their interviews that they felt empowered to work harder and try doing different things:

> …you are empowered. Besides education, speaking up as well I learnt different ways of making money through different jobs. I know I do not have to depend on one job I can change my career whenever I want. I can study whatever I want and I can do pretty much whatever I want… (Jane).

Ways of being African female students from Kenya in Australian universities is produced by their personal engagement with the practices and discourses present in Australia. Kenyan female students are dynamic and strategic in the construction of their identity. They are young women who are proud of their African identity, value its uniqueness and are flexible in their thinking in that they take on Australian ways of being and maintain relationships with people from other countries in order to enhance their identity in Australia and the world.

9.4 Discursive positioning of African female students in Australia

Different ways of being an African female student in Australia positioned the research participants differently. In Chapter Three, I stated a person's identity is important in understanding how a person is positioned or understood. *Positionality*, which refers to how one is socially located in relation to others (Maher & Tetreault, 1994), is important in understanding how African female students are understood in Australia. In Kenya, the way a woman is positioned and understood is very different from Australia. In Kenya, gender biases within the customary social practices and statutory laws of Kenya undermine women, placing them as subservient, dependent and who deserve status and respect only when they are owned by men (Hussein, 2005; Kiyimba, 2013; Njiro, 1999). The patriarchal nature of Kenyan society often

limits educational opportunities for women, resulting in women like my research participants to seek education in Western countries such as Australia.

In Australia, the Kenyan female students in my study have physical identity markers of being women and Black or African. Within Australian society, women are positioned and understood differently compared to Kenya. Although patriarchy is practiced in both countries, not all women are oppressed the same since the cultural and institutional practices of patriarchy are located within social dimensions such as religion, race, class and ethnicity. In Australia, women have the same rights and access to opportunities as their male counterparts, unlike in Kenya where women's rights and freedoms were limited until 2010 when the constitution was changed (Kimani & Maina, 2010).

While Australian women have more freedoms and opportunities compared to women in Kenya, my study demonstrated that there are other inequalities within Australian society such as racial discrimination. In spite of Australia being a culturally diverse country given the different waves of migration from southern Europe, Asia and Africa, there is still a dominant discourse of whiteness that prevails in Australian society. This is because of the colonial historical legacies and in particular, the White Australia policy that came into law in 1901. The White Australia policy is still palpable (Ang, 2003, p.51) and people from other races are often perceived and positioned differently. Racial discrimination in Australia is linked to the history of colonisation and migration. The original inhabitants–Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders–were dispossessed of their land and discriminated against by British and European settlers. Today, racial discrimination–although not as prevalent as it was in nineteenth century–and prejudice is often directed towards migrants, especially of non-English speaking backgrounds (Correa-Velez & Onsando, 2013).

My study showed that based on my research participants' interviews, Africans in Australia do indeed experience discrimination and there are times when they are

misrepresented as Sudanese refugees, this is evidenced in the experience of one of my research participants. My study showed that based on my research participants' interviews, Africans in Australia do indeed experience discrimination and there may be times when they are misrepresented as Sudanese refugees as seen in the following comment by one of my research participant:

…I cannot hire you, he said that he was just being honest, but he does not employ Sudanese… (Elsie- research participant).

In the past, the Australian media had presented a biased and inaccurate portrayal of Sudanese refugees in Australia (Harris et al., 2015; Roberts, 2005; Spark, Harris & Chi, 2013). The refugees were often represented negatively and in a racist manner, as 'violent' and 'difficult to integrate' (Nunn, 2010; Phillips, 2011). Although Australia sees itself as a 'fair go' country, recent public debates about African Australians has brought about myths and stereotypes that have resulted in discrimination. Studies on African migrants in Australia (Correa-Velez & Onsando, 2013; Henderson, 2012) indicate that many Africans living in Australia—especially women—experience discrimination in employment and education.

According to a human rights report (Communique, 2010), African refugees—particularly the Sudanese—in Australia find it difficult to get jobs because they are seen as 'lazy' and 'not trustworthy.' My research found that indeed some employers do not hire Sudanese people, as seen in the comments below and in spite of Elsie explaining that she was not Sudanese; the man would not hire her:

…I cannot hire you, you would not be good for business and I asked what exactly they meant and he said that he was just being honest, but he does not employ Sudanese… (Elsie)

Correa-Velez and Onsando's (2013) research on African refugees in Australia stated that many African refugees experience discrimination when looking for jobs because of their race and/or lack of Australian experience. Those who are hired end up working low-paying jobs as there is no recognition of their overseas qualifications or skills. Similarly, Henderson's (2012) research indicates African women refugees find it difficult to obtain employment mainly because they are perceived to be uneducated or not proficient in English. Africans pursuing education opportunities available in Australia have reported experiencing discrimination from some of their teachers who negatively stereotype them, as lacking the capacity to learn (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2010). My study found that some of their lecturers and fellow students do indeed have a low opinion of African female's academic abilities. Some of my research participants endured snide comments by their fellow students, and some of their lecturers were surprised when they did well in their assignments. This is shown in the comments below:

> … at some point in their discussions they would make snide comments under their breath thinking I didn't hear, but people make snide comments all the time and you can hear them, 'what does she know, anyway, she's from Africa,' things like that, but that doesn't really bother me… (Elsie).

> …All my lecturers would be extremely surprised that I knew English so well and all my assignments, when I got my assignments, it was always the same thing, 'Wow, it was so impressive, you know English so well. When did you learn English? Did you learn English here?' (Elsie).

> …In school, well you have those few elements like I said maybe during the tutorials someone will look at you like 'Oh, you're Black so you're not supposed to be reasoning like the rest of us,' they are there...(Tracey).

My research uncovered that many of the participants were aware that the physical marker of their identity—Black and female—was the reason why they were treated differently, as seen in the comments above. They particularly mentioned their race as reason to why they were being looked down upon. All three groups— strugglers, snobs and go-getters— experienced some form of discrimination in their studies and at work. The go-getters and the

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strugglers had similar experiences in which they endured negative remarks and rolling of the eyes by some of their classmates during classroom discussions. They learnt to ignore discrimination and stay focused on their studies as seen in the excerpts below:

> …you expect it anyway; being a foreigner and being Black, yeah it is expected, but it did not bother me… (Tracey).

> … You do not feel like you are accepted. In addition, it is hard when you feel like you are not being supported. In addition, so far I have done really well. I have also learnt you know that people can say what they want to say… (Ellen).

The findings of my research revealed that the strugglers and go-getters also constructed their identities in ways that helped them deal with discrimination. As seen in some of their comments below, they became confident, worked extra hard in their studies and worked well in their jobs to avoid being looked down upon because of their race and gender:

> … You do not feel like you are accepted, however as long as you are doing your job properly and get experience, you get confident every day. I think that is when you start feeling good… (Ellen).

> …with confidence in whom you as an African and as a woman, people start respecting you because confidence, people have a harder time putting you down when you are that confident… (Elsie).

> …you have to go and do a thorough research because you do not want everybody to look at you as if you did not do anything. I mean work extra harder to get what was expected, it gives you confidence with what you are doing… (Tracey).

The snobs also experienced discrimination in their classes and within the broader Australian community. As discussed in Chapter Five, women in Kenya are socialised to be quiet and passive. Unlike the go-getters and the strugglers who dealt with discrimination and negative misrepresentations of African women by staying quiet, the snobs were not afraid to speak up. As I mentioned in Chapter Eight, the snobs came from rich families and attended elite schools. They were generally outspoken and assertive and were therefore not afraid to speak against discrimination. In Australia, the snobs dealt with discrimination by being

outspoken and working hard in their studies to avoid being looked down upon as evidenced in their comments below:

> …I just told him that is not how you should see it that is not how all of us are… (Di).

> …In terms of group work, I always try to do my level best, I give it 100 per cent so that I do not know, I do not like when they look at us as Africans, and look down at us… (Flo).

This positioning of African women and all non-white women as being inferior in education and employment is well documented in the works of post-colonial feminist and Black feminist scholars such as Mirza (2008), Mirza and Joseph (2010), Mohanty (2014). Ladson-Billings (2009) and Phoenix (2009). These feminist scholars' work brings to light the marginalisation of Black women or women of colour's experiences in higher education institutions, both as staff and students. The work of Collins (2010), Mirza (2008) and Mohanty (2002) highlights how the intersections of race and gender influence the work experiences of working-class Black women or women of colour. My study found that apart from being made to feel different because of their race and gender, African female students in Australian universities feel that they are at times treated differently because of their accent. My research participants—particularly the strugglers and the go-getters—said in their interviews that they struggled to fit in and felt different because of their accent. This is illustrated in the comments below:

> …Yes especially when you talk to some people. They ask you to keep repeating things. It is as if your accent is so bad that they cannot understand. It makes you feel really out of their group sort of thing. In addition, you feel like you do not fit in… (Rachel).

> …it because of your accent so that time you are quickly reminded that all these people are not what you are, so that's one of those times that you feel that way. Apart from that I do not really think, I think it is more to do with just the language… (Terry)

My research participants said that they were often asked to repeat their statements during classroom discussions, in spite of them being fluent and proficient in English, unlike many other international students. See comment below;

..... I could speak better English than other international students... (Jane)

It is not unusual for international students who are proficient in English to face communication difficulties because of their accents. Mohanty (2002) had similar experiences where she had difficulties being understood and her knowledge and understanding of English language was questioned. Although my research participants interviews did not indicate discrimination because of their accents. Beoku-Betts (2004) states that accents and language skills are consistent with racial stereotyping of African students studying in Western universities. My study found that during the first year of their studies, the research participants had problems being understood because of their accents however as they learnt to negotiate and adjust to the Australian way of life, they learnt to speak in ways that they would be understood. This is shown in the comment below:

… once you get used to them(lecturers). Then you get into the routine of knowing how to phrase the same English that they will understand… (Ellen).

My research participants' experiences of discrimination made them more cautious and aware that in spite of more freedom and independence for women in Australia when compared to Kenya, racism and other forms of discrimination still exist even though there is anti-discrimination law that is meant to ensure that everyone is treated fairly and equally. Their experiences made them conscious of how their race and gender identities discriminate them. CRF refers to this awareness as having 'multiple consciousness.' This term refers to the way

in which women, especially those in the margins of society, experience "an awareness of oppression they face based simultaneously on their race/ethnicity and gender" (Wing, 2000, p.1). 'Multiple consciousness' allowed my research participants to understand how their oppression is not only linked to one form of their identity—gender—but to their race as well. As evidenced below:

> …There is some situations where I find because of my race and because I am a woman, people treat me differently… (Di)

CRF conceptual framework calls for women of colour or African women to understand the nature of their discrimination and develop multiple consciousness to fight negative representation of Black women by countering stories that portray them negatively. Counter-storytelling is a tool that CRT and CRF scholars employ to expose race-neutral discourse, revealing how white privilege operates within an ideological framework to reinforce and support unequal societal relations between whites and people of colour (Solorzano & Yosso 2002). Counter stories oppose dominant stories that carry multiple layers of assumptions. The findings of my research demonstrate that when Kenyan female students studying in Australian universities understand ways in which their multiple identities position them in their classrooms and broader Australian community, they construct their identities in ways that counter dominant stories and assumptions about their identities as African women in Australia. They work hard to prove they are capable of doing well in their studies. The following comments illustrate this:

> …I have to really work ahead and prove to myself that I can do it... (Tracey)

> …I always try to do my level best; I give it 100 per cent. I do not like when they look at us as Africans, like when they look down at us… (Di)

The Kenyan female students in my research do not allow negative stereotypical images and misrepresentations of African women define who they are in Australia. Instead, they construct themselves as young women who are confident, empowered, conscientious and independent. Amidst the intersectional challenges they face because of their race and gender identities, these African female students learn to negotiate race and gender politics present in Australian society. They strategise and re-work their identities in ways that make them become successful in their new environment and negotiate discrimination.

9.5 Conclusion

The experiences of Kenyan female students in my study provide useful insights into the identity practices of African women studying in Australia. African female students from Kenya have multiple shifting identities. According to Wing (2000), identities are fluid, contextual and multiple; identity is not fixed, but one that is constantly constructed. It is a dynamic process that results from engagement with the social environment and therefore it is temporary and unstable (Isin & Wood, 1999). African female students in my research formed their identities as a result of their engagement with Australian society and through negotiating different discourses present in Australian society.

They have identities that are complex since more than one aspect of their lives such as educational, social, cultural, familial and linguistic changes are involved. Their interaction with Australian society provides them with an understanding of the position and expectations of being a woman in Australia. Throughout the processes of negotiation and contestations, they recreate their identities by taking on some of the Australian ways of being. This process of their identity formation is reflexive as they are constantly aware of their changing subject positioning, they are reflecting on their identities and refashioning themselves in ways that allow them to remain successful in their studies and in their day-to-day lives in Australia.

In the next chapter, I will summarise the findings of my research by re-examining the research questions. I will then provide a summary of highlights of each chapter and discuss the implications of my research to the future of research on experiences of African women studying in Western countries.

Chapter Ten – Conclusion

10.1 Introduction

When I embarked on this research journey several years ago, I anticipated I would find out the identity practices of African female students particularly Kenyans in Australian universities. However, I did not expect it to be a journey that brought so much understanding and appreciation of who I am as an African woman. Prior to my studies in the USA and now in Australia, I never really thought about my identity as an African woman. My research has helped me question my identity and has allowed me to understand its essence. What I found intriguing was that the role and status of African women has changed over time. Before the colonisation of Africa, the status and role of African women was very different (Diop, 1989; Falola & Amponsah, 2012; Mbiti, 1988; Shwarz-Bart, 2003). African women were not perceived as dependent and subordinate to men or sidelined to positions of power, as is the case today. Instead, they had important economic, religious and political roles within African society. However, this changed when colonialist and missionaries arrived in Africa in the 1970s. Colonialists' emphases on male dominance and gender roles meant that women were subordinate to men and that their roles were less important because they were confined within the family unit (St. Clair, 1994). I also found that women's roles and responsibilities in Africa (despite their level of education and employment) are still understood as those of bearing children, maintaining the family and investing in their children's upbringing (Falola & Amponsah, 2012; Mwangi, 2002; Travers, 1997). An African woman's religious identity plays an important role in the way she is understood in African society, and a woman who follows religious teachings is highly regarded. My identity as an African woman is therefore defined by my religion as a Christian, roles and responsibilities.

The unpacking of who I am as an African woman set the foundation for understanding my identity in Australia. I am not only an African woman, but I have other identities; African, woman, student, migrant, mother, wife and so on. All of these identities have different meanings in Australia and Kenya, making my identity more complex. Although my and the research participants' experiences are similar because of the many identities that we share such as our race, gender, nationality and religion, we are also different in many ways since identity is fluid, contextual, and not fixed. An individual's identity is unique and one can change their identity knowingly or unknowingly. My research sought to find out the different ways African female students studying in Australia constructed their identity.

10.2 Researching African female students from Kenya in Australian universities

This thesis comprises ten interrelated chapters. In Chapter One, I presented the rationale and background of my research on experiences of African female students from Kenya in Australian universities. As an African woman studying in Australia, I discussed my experiences and personal interest in this study. The research was conducted in order to provide an understanding of different ways in which African female students particularly those from Kenya negotiated and constructed their sense of identity in Australia. My study was guided by the questions: How do African female international students construct their sense of identity through their racialised and gendered experiences in Australian universities? How are African female students positioned and how do they position themselves within Australian education sector and the broader community?

In order to understand ways in which African female construct their identity, I started in Chapter Two by first discussing Kenya, which is where the research participants came from. This chapter highlights how the patriarchal nature of Kenya's society and the education system pushes Kenyan female students to seek educational opportunities in countries like Australia. Having knowledge of Kenya's education system and the Kenyan society was essential in

understanding the cultural and educational background of the research participants. The gender and economic disparities that are rooted in Kenya's education system are highlighted in this chapter. I explained the causes of these inequalities to be related to colonial education's influence; favouring boys, encouraging cultural practices among certain communities that discourage educating girls, and how poverty prevents some girls from attending school, forcing them to take up domestic responsibilities while either their mothers find work, or they are forced to get married at an early age so that their parents get dowry.

Chapter Three explained the conceptual framework that informed my study. I engaged with three main bodies of literature. I examined literature on African feminism (Beoku-Betts & Ngaruiya-Njambi, 2005; Kamau, 2010; Kolawole, 1997; Kuria, 2003; Mwangi, 2002) to understand the essence of African women's identity. I read literature on international education (Bullen & Kenway, 2003; Joseph, 2012; Kashima & Loh, 2006; Koehne, 2006; Matthews, 2002; Marginson, 2013; McBurnie & Ziguras, 2007, 2009, 2011; Sidhu, 2004; Tsolidis, 2002) in Australia and across the world to understand cultural discourses and Identity practices of international students. My study also engaged with critical race feminism (CRF) theoretical framework (Collins, 1990; Crenshaw, 1989; Ladson-Billings 2009; Matsuda, 1991; Wing, 2003, 2015) in order to understand ways in which intersections of race and gender identities marginalise groups of women and other people across the world. CRF framework focuses on the experiences of marginalised groups of people, placing race, gender and other forms of oppression at the centre of the analysis, and producing counter-stories that challenge stereotypes that incorrectly position this group of people.

The research methodology and the research methods used in my study are discussed in Chapter Four. I explained that my study is located within a feminist research methodology. I wanted a framework that helps me understand ways in which race and gender contribute to how Kenyan female international students navigated the different cultural processes and

structures in their own families, communities and broader Australian society including universities. Chapter Four provided summarised details of the way in which I went about collecting my data including the recruitment process and the use of semi-structured, in-depth, informal conversation and observations. The use of multiple methods of data collection allowed me to explore deeper into the experiences of my research participants. I also explained ways in which my positioning as an African female student with Kenyan heritage shaped the research, and the benefits of being a partial insider as I shared multiple identities and experiences with the research participants.

The research findings of ways in which African female students from Kenya construct their identity and how they are positioned or position themselves within Australian society, particularly in the universities, are presented in Chapters Five, Six, Seven and Eight. Although the research participants had many differences such as religion, ethnicity and socioeconomic status, they all had a common understanding of what it meant to be an African woman in Kenya.

Chapter Five presented their essentialised understanding of an African woman in Kenya, an Australian (white) woman, and an international student. They all expressed an essentialised understanding of the 'traditional' African woman in terms of dressing styles, behaviour and social relations. This is provided by discourses of femininity, family values, religion and culture that are present in Kenyan society. My research participants told me that traditional Kenyan women are expected to dress conservatively, have good social behaviour, be cautious in their interaction with others, follow religious teachings and have the responsibility of taking care of their family. The research participants' interactions with Australian women and observations of Australian culture provided them with an essentialised understanding of Australian women. They juxtaposed their notion of the traditional African woman against their notion of the extroverted and assertive Australian woman. They set up a binary of the 'traditional' and 'conservative' Kenyan woman and the 'extroverted' and

'assertive' Australian woman. They described 'extroverted' and 'assertive' Australian woman in terms of her behaviour, ways of dressing, freedom and independence. Not all of my research participants' interviews constructed an essentialised understanding of international students such as hardworking, focused and passive learners, as seen in other studies of international students (Koehne, 2006; Marginson et al., 2012; Sawir, 2013). Rather, they described social and educational markers associated with both international student and an international African female student. Their ways of being an international student such as hardworking, focused and their friendships with other international students resonate with many previous studies on international students (Arkoudis et al., 2012; Doherty & Singh, 2005; Koehne, 2006; Marginson et al., 2008). Their interviews also indicated an understanding of ways African female students are perceived in universities in Europe and North America (Beoku-Betts, 2004; Maundeni, 1999; Okeke-Ihejirika, 2006); unintelligent, speaking with accents and negatively stereotyped.

Chapters Six, Seven and Eight explored different ways in which the groups identified as 'go-getters,' 'snobs' and 'strugglers' constructed their identities. These groups were based on their different socioeconomic statuses. Each group constructed their identities differently and they took on different identity strategies. The 'go-getters' came from middle class Kenyan families, and their individual interviews showed their determination and desire to succeed even though they had to juggle studying and working in order to finance their education and pay for their living expenses. They adopted identity markers such that helped them become successful and negotiate discrimination and misrepresentations of African women in Australia. They learnt to speak English in ways that made them be understood in spite of their accents, and they developed friendships with other international students as they looked for a sense of belonging among other international students. They also worked extra hard to prove that they were academically astute.

The identity practices of the group labelled 'snobs' is discussed in Chapter Seven. The snobs came from rich Kenyan families who could afford to send them money for tuition and living expenses. Unlike the go-getters who took on the freedom and independence that was available in Australia to understand their rights as women and for financial benefits, the snobs adopted the freedom and independence to try out different things and be themselves away from their parents. They created multiple shifting identities and used identity markers. They had different identities in different contexts; for example, as international students they were independent, confident and outspoken, unlike when they went back to Kenya where they remained obedient, respectful and dependent on their parents.

Chapter Eight discussed ways in which the group labelled 'strugglers' constructed their identity. The strugglers had their spouse and child with them in Australia. They juggled studying, working and carrying out their family responsibilities. The way they constructed their identity was different from the snobs and go-getters in that they had different expectations as married women and as mothers. The strugglers took on identity strategies that enabled them to be efficient in their roles as mothers, wives, students and workers. They became independent and had the freedom to pursue their education dreams without the fear of being judged by the society, as would be the case in Kenya. They also became assertive in their interactions and were not afraid to voice their opinion. They learned to share domestic responsibilities with their husbands. The challenges they faced in trying to balance life as a student and mother empowered them and made them more determined to succeed. They no longer wanted to be positioned as passive, subservient wives, but constructed themselves as independent, confident, empowered and equal to their husbands.

In Chapter Nine, I provided the analyses of ways in which African female students from Kenya constructed their identity in Australia through the conceptual lens of African feminism, international education and CRF. Identity practices and discursive positioning of African

female students was discussed. African female students from Kenya have multiple shifting identities. They form their identities between their home countries, host countries and larger global community. As the Kenyan female students constructed their identity in Australia, they reflected upon their identity as African women from Kenya and replaced some of their ways with Australian ways of being that they found essential in their new environment. They developed their identity from being shy, passive, submissive African women to assertive, independent, outgoing African women since Australian society values confidence and extroversion. As international students, the identities of African female students from Kenya are discursively constructed and they had multiple and shifting identities in relation to multiple discourses present in their school environment and larger Australian society.

My research found that all the three groups of research participants did not let the negative perceptions and positioning of their African identity hinder their efforts to succeed; instead they viewed their physical markers of their identity as an advantage because it made them stand out, allowing them to be seen and heard.

10.3 Main finding of my study

As I mentioned earlier in Chapter One, my experiences as an international student in the United States and now as research student in Australia triggered my interest in understanding how female students from Africa studying and living in Australia construct their identity. The purpose of my research was to understand different ways of being a Kenyan female international student through their racialised and gendered experiences in Australian universities. I was interested in finding out how politics of race and gender play out in the ways in which these young Kenyan women from different socioeconomic backgrounds construct their identity within the Australian context. Lastly, I also wanted to find out how the intersections of African female students' identities positioned or influenced the way they position themselves in Australian universities and within the broader community.

The findings of my research contribute to three areas of study: international education, critical race feminism and African feminism. There are few studies on gendered experiences of international students in Australia and other parts of the world. In Australia, apart from the work of Boey (2013); Bullen and Kenway (2003); Ichimoto (2004); Kenway and Bullen (2003); Spark, 2010), there is a lack of a more comprehensive discussions and studies about the international student experience from a gender perspective in Australia. My research has not only focused on gender but also on race since gender, identity intersects with other identities such as race, ethnicity and religion. The use of Critical race feminism conceptual framework in my research to analyse experiences of international female students is significant. CRF has been used in studies in the US and UK (Carter, 2012; Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; Mirza, 1998; Mirza & Joseph, 2010; Phoenix, 2009) to research experiences of black women or women of colour in institutions of higher education. However, there is paucity of literature across the world showing its application in international education. Hence, the use of critical race feminism in analyzing experiences of international students has made an important contribution to the field of international education and critical race feminism.

Previous studies (Beoku-Betts, 2004; Beoku-Betts & Ngaruiya-Njambi, 2005; Maundeni, 1999; Mwangi, 2003) that have examined experiences of African women either teaching or studying in North America and Europe have demonstrated that this group of women are indeed discriminated against because of their race and gender. However, these previous studies do not explain how intersections of the race and gender playout in the way they construct their identities. My research not only examines how race and gender plays out in positioning African female students in Australian universities but also how it shapes the way they construct their identities. My study also contributes to literature on African feminism. The findings are significant in that there is lack of literature showing application of African feminism conceptual framework in international education. My study found that Kenyan

international female students have an essentialised understanding of a "traditional" African woman. They construct their identities in ways that allows them to uphold some of their African values and at the same time take on some Australian ways of being.

My study found that African female students from Kenya in Australian universities have no fixed identities; they have multiple shifting and contextual identities. When the thirteen research participants in my study lived in Kenya, they constructed their identities in relation to their age, religion, gender, ethnicities, socioeconomic status and so on. In Australia these previous identities, although important, were no longer central in the construction of their identity. Instead, other identities such as their race, gender and their status as international students became principal. My research found that there was a relationship between the social and economic status of the research participants, and the way they constructed their identity. Their socioeconomic status in Kenya to some extent influenced the way they constructed their identities, as students who came from rich families had different expectations and experiences compared to those who come from average income families. This was evidenced in the research participants' interviews.

The group I labelled 'snobs' who came from rich Kenyan families took on the freedom and independence they found in Australia to undertake different things and be themselves away from their parents' control. They constructed different identities in different contexts; for example, as international students, they were independent, confident and outspoken but when they went back to Kenya, they remained obedient, respectful and dependent upon their parents. The 'go-getters' on the other hand came from middle-class Kenyan families and they had the drive to succeed. Therefore, they constructed their identities in ways that allowed them to be successful. The 'strugglers' who came from middle-class families but had their spouse and child living with them while they studied, adopted identity strategies that enabled them to be

efficient in their roles as mothers, wives, students and workers. They constructed themselves as independent, confident, empowered and equal to their husbands.

My research found that Kenyan female students in Australian universities are proud of their identity as African women and often feel the need to exert it, especially when confronted with discrimination. However, despite such negative experiences, African female students see their identity as unique in that it makes them stand out, allowing them to be seen and heard. The African female students in my study also understood what their identity as women entailed in Kenya–they knew their roles, responsibilities and expectations. In Australia, they are a dynamic group that is strategic in the way they construct their identity. They have varied identities in different settings.

In regards to positioning of Kenyan female students in Australia, my study ascertains what previous studies on African women studying in Europe and North America (Beoku-Betts, 2004; Maundeni, 1999; Mirza, 2003, 2006; Okeke-Ihejirika, 2006; Wane, 2009) had concluded; that African women in Western universities face discrimination because of the intersections of their race and gender identities. African female students in Australian universities too are negatively stereotyped and misrepresented. They are perceived as not being intelligent, having poor language skills because of their accents and are exoticised because of their race and gender. However, my study reveals that Kenyan female students do not allow this negative representation and misleading information about them define their identity. Instead, they position themselves as confident, conscientious, outspoken young women. They resist discourses of race and gender that position them negatively in Australia by asserting their identity as African women and seeing their identity as unique, in that being different allows them to stand out making it possible for them to be seen and heard.

I have acknowledged this recommendation by discussing it further in Chapter Ten under main findings

Apart from being strategic in their identity practices, my research found that Kenyan female students were also strategic in their career and migration aspirations. They studied courses such as nursing, psychology or commerce that guaranteed them jobs and permanent residency in Australia. The identity practices that they took on not only helped them become successful in their studies but also work. My recent contacts with some of the research participants: Sally, Flo, Ellen, Jane, Tracey, Rachel and Cyndi found that they were all living and working permanently in Australia. Sally's graduate degree in econometrics enabled her to gain Australian citizen, as economists are high demand in Australia. She teaches economics in one of the universities in Melbourne. Ellen, Jane and Rachel all completed nursing degrees. They are now citizens and are working in various hospitals in Melbourne. Flo was able to obtain Australian citizenship through her degree in social work. Tracey graduate degree in public health enabled her and her family become an Australian citizen. She works in a hospital in Melbourne.

10.4 Reflections on the research

My interest for this research came about when I arrived in Australia in 2007 to begin my postgraduate studies. I noticed then that there were not many Africans in the university or the community as a whole. I felt isolated, unlike my previous experience studying in the United States of America, where there were many Africans and African Americans. I found myself searching every day for someone who looked like me. One day when I was leaving the library, I met a young African female student. She appeared lost and when she saw me, she smiled. I approached her and introduced myself. I found out that, it was her first day at the university and that she arrived in Australia a few days before. I spent some time with her and our conversations were mainly about the rarity of Africans in Australia and our feelings of rootlessness and displacement.

I shared my experiences of living and studying the United States of America, I told her that although there were many Africans and African Americans that I interacted with on daily basis, there were times when I felt very lonely and experienced a lack of belonging. While in the USA, I was subjected to feelings of isolation and discrimination, mainly because of my race and gender. I felt that my African culture and especially the way African woman are socialized to be passive, obedient and always taking back seats in society disadvantaged me in my ability to adjust to the Western way of life. I was often described as shy, quiet and lacking confidence.

Although my graduate studies did not require classroom attendance, I wondered how it was being the only African woman in the classroom. I was curious to find out how the student that I met felt being the only African female student in the class. How other students and lecturers perceived her in her classes? How did she identify herself? These questions and my own experiences studying in the United States of America made me interested in conducting a research based on the educational and cultural experiences of young women from Africa studying in Australian universities. I felt this research would be unique because of their small numbers. By making it a research on African female students, it would bring to light the experiences of a group that is otherwise marginalised, not only because of its small numbers, but also by their race and gender.

When I started collecting data, I found it difficult to get research participants because there were not many African female students at the university. The African club that was run by African students studying at the university was very helpful in finding participants for my study. However, I also used the club for networking and making friends with other students, not just for finding participants. My interaction with the research participants was very special and although many of them were very young, we had a lot to talk about our experiences. Many saw me as a big sister and they often asked for advice on certain decisions they had to make.

In order for me to understand how they constructed their identities while in Australia, I had to acquaint myself with their everyday lives. Cornell and Hartmann (2007) argue that in order to understand identity practices, one has to understand the process of identity construction, and one has to examine how this process plays out in multiple settings. I therefore arranged meetings at the university, cafes and in their homes. I wanted every participant's interview to be unique and therefore I spent initial meetings just socialising and building a rapport them. It was in these informal conversations that I picked the uniqueness of every participants' experience and I wanted their voice to be heard. I was careful not to impose my understanding and experiences as an African woman. Hence, I used research questions as a guide and did not ask the questions directly; instead, I encouraged the participants to talk freely. I wanted the participants to share their story of their experiences in Australia so far.

By reflecting overall research process, I can say that it has been a rewarding experience. It has given me a sense of belonging in Australia. I have come to understand who I am and what is expected me as an African woman working and living in Australia. I know that my Kenyan heritage is important and I still keep some of my cultural practices however, I consider myself as Australian because I have adjusted to Australian ways of being. I have taken on some of the Australian cultural values such as extroversion, and adopted an easy-going nature. For example, I take my children to football games, my family supports different football teams and I occasionally invite friends over for a barbeque. Just like the research participants in my study, I have multiple, shifting and strategic identities.

My engagement with literature on African feminism and my research participants' interviews has made me conclude that there is need by African women to explore their history in order to regain their confidence and status. Before Africa was colonised by the Western countries, African women were highly regarded by their communities. They were seen as symbols of unity and continuity of life in their communities. Such historical understandings

empower women in order to engage in sustainable struggle against oppression within the African culture.

10.5 Implications for future studies

A major contribution of this thesis is its attempt to study experiences of international students by applying a feminist conceptual framework and methodology. By using notions of African feminism to understand the identity of African woman, my study reaffirms the status and position of women as being passive and subservient in the patriarchal African society; socialising them to be passive, obedient and voiceless beings. My study also echoes the African feminism principle that views education as important in empowering women. Education changes their mindset and the way they see themselves. It makes them independent and in control of their lives.

The use of CRF analytical lens in unpacking the experiences of African female students studying in Australian universities was significant in that it there is no literature showing it has been applied to study experiences of women in Australia's education sector. The use of CRF in my research adds to what other previous studies on African women or women of colour have argued; that African women or women of colour are sometimes looked down upon and disregarded in institutions of education because of the intersections of their race and gender identities. However, my research goes further to analyse how these group of women construct their identity in order to deal with such negative experiences and remain successful in their studies.

International education is a broad area of education that is impacted by issues such as migration, ethnicity, culture, religion and race. My research takes into account the complexity of international students' identities. It adds to studies on international education by highlighting the multifaceted nature of identity practices of international students, particularly those that may be ignored because of their small numbers. The study restates that international students

have multiple shifting identities and there are many ways that they are positioned or position themselves in their host country. My study indicates that there are various ways of being an African and female student in Australian universities.

The feminist perspective that has been applied in understanding ways in which female students from Kenya studying in Australia construct their identity and how they are understood can be adapted in other studies. For example, it can be used to examine how intersections of race and gender play out in the way other groups of women from different countries or ethnic backgrounds are positioned, or how they construct their identities. For example, the framework can be applied to study young women with Chinese, Afghan, Bangladeshi or Indian backgrounds. All of these groups of women come from cultures where femininity is understood differently, and their race and gender would affect the way they are understood in Western countries.

10.6 Concluding comments

This study was designed to provide a deeper understanding into the ways of being an African female student from Kenya studying and living in Australia. I end this thesis by looking back at the quotes that I referred to at the beginning of Chapter One:

> Although they constitute a plurality of the global population, African women are consistently situated economically, socially, and politically at the bottom of each society, regardless of what country they live in (Wing, 2000, p.2).

> They (African female students) discussed how prejudice and discrimination against them as Black women had affected their experiences in graduate school. Among the issues they mentioned were doubts by their professors about their ability to do the work, feelings of exclusion, lack of support, perceptions about their inability to speak English, and negative perceptions of African societies (Beoku- Betts, 2004, p.121).

I used the quotes to emphasise the position and ways in which African women are perceived in countries in the Global North. Although my study reaffirms these quotes, I can conclude that Kenyan women studying and living in Australia do not allow discourses that

describe them negatively define who they are; instead, they construct their identities in ways that allows them to uphold some of their African values and at the same time take on some Australian ways of being. They draw on their essentialised understanding of African women, international students and Australian women to make sense of their new identities in Australia. They adopt identity strategies that make them successful in their studies and lives. They do away with some of their Kenyan identity practices for instance passiveness, subservience and introversion, and take on new markers such as extroversion, assertiveness and independence that they observed are important for their success in Australia. Nevertheless, they keep some of their Kenyan identity practices that are essential to their identity such as religion. The way African female students construct their identity and position themselves in Australia can be summarised by the following quote from one of the research participants;

> …I think the moment you get here, you feel a bit lost but after a while, the whole transition makes you dig deep into yourself and pull out the best traits that you have. In addition, use them to your benefit… (Rachel).

African female students from Kenya living and working in Australia observe, strategise and negotiate politics of race and gender, and move in between their identities as African women, international students and women in Australia. They are flexible in their identity construction and understand their identities in different contexts as they draw on strategies that are most beneficial to them in their host country.

I hope my research provokes debate and inspires further research on the identity of African women. I hope the findings are useful to African female students, universities administrators and policymakers.

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Appendix A: Tables on student enrolment in Kenyan universities, secondary and Primary schools

Student Enrolment[1] by Sex in Universities, 2011/12 - 2014/15

Number

INSTITUTION	2011/12		2012/13		2013/14+		2014/15*	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Public Universities								
Nairobi...........................	27,084	17,219	30,710	20,185	38,693	25,376	42,328	27,618
Kenyatta.........................	21,328	15,892	25,633	31,559	37,758	32,248	43,165	33,714
Moi................................	14,124	11,409	17,372	14,273	18,547	15,684	22,458	20,838
Egerton..........................	7,050	5,095	4,577	3,101	7,044	4,896	8,661	5,267
Jomo Kenyatta (JKUAT).........	9,818	4,119	19,048	9,870	19,729	10,847	20,860	11,469
Maseno............................	2809	1742	3,953	2,159	3,922	2,247	7,356	7,412
Masinde Muliro...............	10,958	6,402	6,295	3,901	5,606	3,445	7,480	4,213
Technical University of Kenya.....	187	642	405	135	5,102	1,915	5,391	2,024
Technical University of Mombasa...	1,000	1,038	1,828	524	3,993	1,050	4,186	1,234
Chuka	-	-	-	-	7,318	2,663	9,716	3,931
Karatina	-	-	-	-	2,700	2,014	3,095	2,209
Kisii...............................	-	-	-	-	913	531	4,780	3,495
Meru..............................	-	-	-	-	2,001	903	2,825	1,174
Multi Media....................	-	-	-	-	697	331	754	346
South Eastern	-	-	-	-	1,988	1,037	3,676	2,138
Jaramogi Oginga Odinga......	-	-	-	-	1,259	771	2,537	1,638
Laikipia...........................	-	-	-	-	857	574	3,260	2,652
University of Eldoret..........	-	-	-	-	8,059	4,507	9,447	6,215
Kabianga........................	-	-	-	-	1,004	681	3,375	2,366
Dedan Kimathi+................	-	-	871	338	1,546	584	4,715	1,578
Pwani.............................	-	-	-	-	2,666	1,591	2,981	1,603
Masai Mara.....................	-	-	-	-	2,585	1,851	4,118	3,036
SUB-TOTAL..................	94,358	63,558	110,692	86,045	173,987	115,746	217,164	146,170
Private Universities	33,114	27,598	29,554	24,905	39,980	31,666	42,454	37,994
GRAND TOTAL................	218,628		251,196		361,379		443,783	

Source: Individual Universities/ Kenya Education Network, University of Nairobi

* Provisional

+ Revised

[1] Enrolment excludes Diploma/Certificate.

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Enrolment in Secondary Schools by Class and Sex, 2010 – 2014

Number

Class	2010		2011		2012		2013		2014*	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Form 1..............	266,707	232,226	276,965	244,636	282,555	249,573	327,775	289,753	339,134	328,017
Form 2..............	232,145	211,799	240,552	219,469	274,195	239,743	288,238	253,739	324,143	304,455
Form 3..............	216,786	181,823	224,637	188,408	239,149	218,278	267,221	228,869	291,440	261,088
Form 4..............	169,899	141,999	206,552	166,501	223,132	188,198	244,463	204,204	247,537	214,060
TOTAL..............	885,537	767,847	948,706	819,014	1,019,031	895,792	1,127,697	976,565	1,202,254	1,107,620
GRAND TOTAL......	1,653,384		1,767,720		1,914,823		2,104,262		2,309,874	

Source : Ministry of Education, Science and Technology

* Provisional.

Primary School Enrolment by Class and Sex, 2010 – 2014

'000

Class	2010[†]		2011[†]		2012[†]		2013[†]		2014*	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Standard 1	715.6	655.1	713.9	656.8	712.2	658.1	710.5	659.1	708.9	663.4
Standard 2	681.0	649.8	679.4	651.8	677.8	654.9	676.2	639.8	674.6	640.9
Standard 3	679.4	640.6	677.6	646.5	676.0	648.6	676.1	652.0	673.9	632.9
Standard 4	630.6	590.1	676.0	637.4	674.2	643.3	672.6	645.3	675.4	651.3
Standard 5	589.3	572.6	603.0	579.3	646.5	625.7	644.8	631.5	643.3	633.5
Standard 6	536.7	519.5	575.5	560.9	589.0	567.5	631.4	613.0	629.7	618.6
Standard 7	503.9	513.4	510.2	512.9	547.2	553.9	560.0	560.3	600.3	605.3
Standard 8	453.3	422.0	451.6	428.1	449.8	433.0	448.1	436.8	446.3	452.4
TOTAL	4,789.8	4,563.1	4,887.3	4,673.7	4,972.7	4,784.9	5,019.7	4,837.9	5,052.4	4,898.4
GRAND TOTAL...	9,352.8		9,561.1		9,757.6		9,857.6		9,950.7	

Source : Ministry of Education, Science and Technology

* Provisional

[†] Revised enrolment from 2010 to 2013

Appendix B: Poster

What is it like to be an African female international student in Australia?

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS NEEDED

My name is Grace Kamuyu, a PhD student at Monash University. I am doing a research on understanding ways of being African female international students in Australia. The aim of the study is to understand how African female international students from East Africa construct their sense of identity in Australia. The study explores their cultural and educational experiences focusing on race and gender in order to understand ways of being African female international student in Australian universities and the broader community. The research hopes to better your experiences by raising awareness among policy makers, lecturers, counselors, students and others interested, of your experiences as African female international students in Australian universities.

STUDENTS:
- if you are currently attending Monash or Deakin Universities,
- if you from East Africa (Kenya Uganda and Tanzania)
- if you are undergraduate student in your 1st 2nd or 3rd years of study,
- if you are willing to talk about your experiences in Australia

Welcome to join in this research!

If you are interested in this research, and you think you might have time for
- a 30-40 minute in -depth interviews (2-3 times)
- writing a small narration on your experiences

Please contact me :
Grace Kamuyu
Phone: 87867672
Mobile: 0420399254
Email: Grace.Kamuyu@education.monash.edu.au

You may also welcome to contact the Chief Investigator for this research:
Dr. Cynthia Joseph
Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Education, Monash University

Appendix C: Consent form

Consent Form for Student Participants

Title: Ways of being African female students in Australian Universities: Gender, Race and International Education.

NOTE: This consent form will remain with the Monash University researcher for their records

I agree to take part in the Monash University research project specified above. I have had the project explained to me, and I have read the Explanatory Statement, which I keep for my records. I understand that agreeing to take part means that:

I agree to be interviewed by the researcher	☐ Yes	☐ No
I agree to allow the interview to be audio-taped	☐ Yes	☐ No
I agree to write a personal reflection	☐ Yes	☐ No
I agree to be involved in further interviews if required	☐ Yes	☐ No
I agree to allow the data to be used in future research	☐ Yes	☐ No

and

I understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can withdraw prior to submitting the Questionnaire without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way.

and

I understand that any data that the researcher extracts from the interview / questionnaire / personal reflection for use in reports or published findings will not, under any circumstances, contain names or identifying characteristics.

and

I understand that any information I provide is confidential, and that no information that could lead to the identification of any individual will be disclosed in any reports on the project, or to any other party.

and

I understand that data from the interview /transcript/audio-tape/Questionnaire/personal reflection will be kept in a secure storage and accessible to the research team. I also understand that the data will be destroyed after a 5 year period unless I consent to it being used in future research.

Participant's name_____

Signature_____

Date_____

Appendix D: Email sent by Monash African Club

---------- Forwarded message █████████████████████
From: Monash African Club ███████████████
Date: 9 October 2009 11:34
Subject: Jambo - Kenyan, Tanzanian and Ugandan Ladies Needed for a Research Project at Monash University

██

Sema ,

Grace Kamuyu, who is a PhD student at Monash University is doing research on the plight of being an African female international student in Australia. The aim of the study is to understand how African female international students from East Africa construct their sense of identity in Australia. The study explores their cultural and educational experiences focusing on race and gender in order to understand ways of being African female international student in Australian universities and the broader community. The research hopes to better your experiences by raising awareness among policy makers, lecturers, counsellors, students and others interested, of your experiences as African female international students in Australian universities.

The research will involve a 30 to 40-minute ███████████████████████████(location and date). If you are interested, please reply to ██████████████████ with your full names, email address and phone number.

Asante Sana,
Eddie Mwiti
Monash African Club President

Appendix E: Explanatory Statement

22nd June, 2009

Explanatory Statement for Student Participants

Title: Ways of being African female students in Australian Universities: Gender, Race and International Education.

This information sheet is for you to keep.

My name is Grace Kamuyu and I am conducting a research project supervised by Dr. Cynthia Joseph, a Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Education towards a PhD degree at Monash University.

In my research, I am inviting African female international students from East Africa, who are in their 1st,2nd or 3rd year of study at Monash or Deakin Universities. The aim of the study is to understand how African female international students from East Africa construct their sense of identity in Australia. This study explores your cultural and educational experiences in order to understand ways of being African female international student in Australian universities and the broader community.

The research will provide information and bring awareness among policy makers, lecturers, counselors, students and others interested, of your experiences as African female international students in Australian universities.

Taking part in this project means that you will be interviewed approximately 2-3 times during a period of 6 months. Each interview will be around 40 minutes and will be at Deakin or Monash Universities or other public places suitable for the interviews. These interviews will be audio taped and then transcribed. In addition, I might request that you write about a page of some of your experiences as an African female international student in Australia. I will also be doing some general observations of your classes and other university events.

There are no foreseeable risks of harm or side-effects to the potential research participants. All possible efforts will be made to maintain your anonymity. You will not be identified by name or position. A pseudonym (false name) will be used for you and the school involved when I transcribe the research data.

Being in this study is completely voluntary - you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide not to participate you may withdraw by not returning the Questionnaire. Not participating in the research will not disadvantage you in any way.

No findings which could identify you will be published in a thesis, journal article or conference paper. Your anonymity will be protected because names will not be included in any data or audio taped interviews. When data is transcribed, a pseudonym (false name) will be used.

Only my supervisor and I will have access to this data which will be stored for at least five years as prescribed by the university regulations.

The data may be used for further research in later years.

If you would like to be informed of the aggregate research finding, please contact me by email grace.███████████████████████████████████
The findings are accessible for 5 year after the completion of the study.

If you would like to contact the researchers about any aspect of this study, please contact the Chief Investigator:	If you have a complaint concerning the manner in which this research <insert your project number here, i.e. 2006/011> is being conducted, please contact:
Dr. Cynthia Joseph Faculty of Education Room 327 ████████████████	Executive Officer Standing Committee on Ethics in Research Involving Humans (SCERH) Building 3e Room 111 Research Office Monash University VIC 3800 ████████████████

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this.

Grace Kamuyu

Appendix F: Pre-interview forms

Do not staple

Questionnaire for Participants Background Information

1. Name: [_____]

2. Age: [_____] years

3. Country [_____]

4. University

[_____]

5. Undergardauate study

[_____]

6. What year of study

[_____]

7. My contact details in order to arrange interviews:

    a. Home phone number: [_____]

       OR

    b. Mobile phone number: [_____]

    c. Email: [_____]

       OR

    d. Other contact details: [_____]

Appendix G: Editorial assistance acknowledgement

Professional Editorial Assistance for PhD Thesis Acknowledgement

PhD students must also sign the following declaration and have it signed by their supervisor and the editor doing the work.

Declaration

1. Professional editorial work undertaken in the preparation of this thesis has been done according to Monash University's *Guidelines for Editing Research Theses.*

2. The requirements for using professional editorial assistance were discussed with the principle supervisor beforehand.

3. Professional editorial intervention was restricted to: Language and Illustrations and Completeness and Consistency as defined by the current Australian Standards for Editing Practice (ASEP).

4. Where a professional editor provided advice on structure, they gave exemplars only and did not undertake a structural re-write themselves.

5. Material for editing or proofreading was submitted in hard copy, or where an electronic copy was submitted to the editor, their mark-up was done using Track Changes

6. The name of the editor and a brief description of the service rendered, in terms of Australian Standards for Editing Practice, has been included as part of the list of acknowledgements or other prefatory matter.

Acknowledged by:

Candidate's Name:

Thesis title:

I declare that I have complied with the above conditions.

Signed: Date:

Editor's Name: Sarah Letch

I declare that I have edited/proofread this thesis in compliance with the above conditions, as instructed when engaged by the candidate.

Signed: Date: 23/05/2016

Supervisor's Name:

Signed: Date: