

**Lights and Shadows of Personal Experiences of International University
Students Living in Geneva, Switzerland - Thematic Analysis**

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Abstract

In our interconnected world, there are a lot of people who have opportunities to study and/or work abroad, and learn more about new countries, cultures and people. In light of this view, this thesis examines personal experiences of international university students, who decided to live and study in Switzerland. Its main aim is to provide insight into advantages of living in Switzerland but also into problems such as discrimination, xenophobia and racism, and especially inform counsellors who work with or advocate for migrants and ethnic minorities in the country. Two research questions were found: (1) What are personal experiences of international university students living in Switzerland? (2) How do these experiences impact students' wellbeing? Semi-structured interviews were conducted with five participants, which were subsequently analyzed according to principles of thematic analysis. Three major themes were detected: (1) Opportunities and Challenges in Acculturation, (2) Perpetual Foreigner, and (3) Systemic Perspective. The research unveiled that the natural beauty of the Swiss landscape, the slower pace of life, multicultural dimension and order were the most appealing factors to the participants. The findings of the study also revealed the presence of experiences of discrimination, covert racism and xenophobia that negatively impact students' wellbeing.