The lived experience of xenophobia within a South African university

by

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Declaration

I, Thomas Sorensen, student no 204031230, hereby declare that the *treatise* for Magister Artium in Counselling Psychology is my own work and that it has not previously been submitted for assessment or completion of any postgraduate qualification to another University or for another qualification.

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To my family, friends and loved ones – thank you for all your support and patience. The favours and assistance rendered will not be forgotten.

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Abstract

South Africa’s borders were opened up in 1994 after Nelson Mandela became president. Since then South Africa has been battling xenophobia as immigrants from African nations started to come to the rainbow nation for a better life away from persecution, civil wars, and extreme poverty. Still, up until 2008 when massive riots broke out in Alexandria Township in Gauteng, xenophobia was an unknown word to most people outside academic, social work, and government circles. This has all changed now as 2008 will in all likelihood be remembered as the year when xenophobic violence erupted in South Africa and became a general feature in our daily media bulletins, prime time television broadcasts, and in our society as a whole. The South African university where the current study took place was also affected by xenophobia although without any displays of public violence.

The current study sought to understand and describe the lived experience of xenophobia by individual, international, African students at a South African university. The study adopted a qualitative approach and the methodology used was multiple case studies employing Tesch’s model of content analysis. The findings of the study showed that the research participants, as a combined group, have lived through a wide range of xenophobic experiences excluding physical violence and that the research participants’ personal characteristics influenced their exposure to and experience of xenophobia. The study contributed to the understanding of the lived experience of xenophobia within a South African university by international, African students.

Keywords

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Chapter 1: Introduction: Background and Motivation

1.1 Introduction

This chapter informs the reader of the researcher’s background and motivation for the present study on the lived experience of xenophobia within a South African university. Following this information, the aim of the research study is clarified as a logical consequence of the background and motivation and a chapter outline of the present study is provided.

1.2 Rationale

Since the year 2000, the researcher of the present study has been living in South Africa and has had official status as a permanent resident since 2003. As a European immigrant, the researcher has never really felt severe xenophobic hostility from local South African citizens but the mere presence of xenophobia in South Africa, “The Rainbow Nation”, from South Africans towards African immigrants has always been puzzling to the researcher. Especially, since immigrants, from Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Mozambique, Swaziland and other neighbouring states that had been havens of safety for South African exiles during Apartheid, were targeted. And surely (black) South Africans who lived through Apartheid should know what it feels like to be at the receiving end of discrimination, prejudice, injustice and violence and one would not expect the practise of these in the new South Africa.

At the end of 2007, the researcher started to think of ideas for a possible topic for a master’s treatise. Whilst reading a book by a Danish psychologist, Finn Abrahamowitz (1996), that used Christopher Bollas’ (1992) theory on intellectual genocide to explain the genocide of Jews during World War II, the researcher could not help to notice the similarities in how the hatred of Jews started and was reinforced in German society and how certain parts of the South African population had started to regard African immigrants. The main difference was, of course, that no genocide had taken place in South Africa but the similarity
between the origin and reinforcement of prejudice was enough for the researcher to think that the study could be worthwhile. After advice from the researcher’s supervisors it was decided to perform research on a university campus rather than amongst the general population which could become a quite cumbersome and possibly dangerous task. In 2008, massive riots broke out in Alexandria Township in Gauteng and 2008 will likely be remembered as the year when xenophobic violence erupted in South Africa and became a general feature in South African media bulletins. At this time (in 2008) the researcher had not made much headway into the study and when xenophobia suddenly became an extremely contentious word that everybody knew the sensitivity of the study became a surprisingly delicate and challenging matter.

Nevertheless, believing that the present study could be of value and importance in understanding the lived experience of xenophobia at greater depth, the researcher and supervisors ultimately decided to continue and complete the study. Thus, this study was done to illustrate what it feels like to live with and be subjected to xenophobia at a university.

The South African university that this study concerns has been actively combating xenophobia. In 2008, after the widespread South African xenophobic outbreaks, this university embarked on a campaign to encourage acceptance and tolerance of foreign nationals aimed at eradicating xenophobia from its campuses. The necessity for this campaign was evident already earlier in 2008 as a local student group posted xenophobic and offensive posters around some of the institution’s campuses. The group was made to apologise but the damage had been done and xenophobia had surfaced in public at the South African university where the present study took take place even before the violent outbreaks commenced in Alexandra Township. In another effort to combat xenophobia, the Student Counselling and Career Development Centre (SCCDC) of the university also ran prejudice and stereotype reduction workshops throughout 2008 and 2009, partly focusing on
xenophobia using examples from current international, African students who had experienced xenophobia on campus.

Further to these xenophobic examples that the researcher has observed at grass root level, the South African Council on Higher Education's Quality Committee (CHEQC) issued an audit report in 2009 (Audit report on the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University executive summary, 2009) on the university that this study concerns, in which it stated the following: "The Panel heard of some cases of xenophobia in relation to international students, particularly students from other African countries, which seem to have taken place in residences. In the context of the recent xenophobic attacks in the country, it is important that the university investigate this issue and acts on its findings promptly. In relation to international students, the Panel found evidence of a sense of isolation among these students. This does not seem to originate only from their physical location in the residence system but also seems to be related to the lack of a culture of service in the International Office" (p. 11).

The CHEQC recommended that said university "establishes the nature and extent of cases of racism and xenophobia among students and between students and staff, and develops appropriate interventions in order to create an institutional culture based on the values underpinning its mission and vision" (p.11). Thus, this present study will add value to said university's efforts in following the recommendations of CHEQC by informing about the international students' experiences of xenophobia.

1.3 Aim

To describe the lived experiences of xenophobia by international, African students at a South African university.
1.4 Chapter Outline

Chapter one provides an overview of the background and motivation behind the present study as well as the focus of same. Chapter Two describes various ethological theories relevant to xenophobia, provides hypothetical applications as well as criticisms of these theories. Chapter Three is a comprehensive literature review of xenophobia. Chapter Four outlines the methodology employed in the study including the benefits of qualitative research designs and details pertaining to the sampling procedures, data collection, and content analysis. In chapter Five the findings of the research are discussed. Chapter Six provides the conclusions and limitations of the research and concludes with the implications of the study and recommendations for further research.

1.5 Conclusion

The background information and the researcher’s motivation for the present study were discussed in this chapter. In addition, the aim of the study was specified and a chapter outline of this research treatise was provided. The following chapter will provide an outline of various ethological theories relevant to xenophobia including hypothetical applications and criticisms of said theories.
Chapter 2: Experience of Xenophobia – Ethological Theories

2.1 Introduction

There are a number of theories within the field of psychology that can provide explanations of the dynamics amongst different social groups as well as insight into discrimination or actual violence. In this chapter, five theories that are relevant to the dynamics of xenophobia will be outlined. These five theories are: Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1982), Realistic Group Conflict Theory (Sherif et al., 1954), Social Cognitive Theory (Fiske & Taylor, 1991), Intellectual Genocide Theory (Bollas, 1992), and Bulhan’s (1985) theoretical perspective on violence.

2.2 Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory (SIT) (Tajfel 1982) outlines three basic assumptions relating to the formation of social identity, with the first one being that people categorize the social world into in-groups and out-groups. Further, it states that people derive a sense of self-esteem from their social identity as members of an in-group and that people’s self-concept depends partly on how they evaluate the in-group relative to other groups. Thus, if in-group members consider themselves superior to out-group members they are likely to reinforce each other and elevate their self-esteem but the opposite may also be the case if an in-group is a sports team that always loses and thinks that all the other teams (out-groups) are better than them a deterioration in self-esteem may be the result. In terms of xenophobia in the current research context, it could be hypothesized that the two groups of students perceive each other as out-groups and seek to improve their self-esteem by evaluating the in-group they belong to, as superior to the out-group.

Foster and Louw-Potgieter (1991) stated that Tajfel (1982) developed a theory that accounts for the social psychological aspects of group relations on a large scale. In addition,
Foster and Louw-Potgieter (1991) stated that SIT provides the most useful framework for understanding political violence in South Africa. Back then, Foster and Louw-Potgieter were referring to violence between supporters of the struggle against Apartheid and the National Party government but comparisons can very easily be made to the outbreak of xenophobic violence as experienced in South Africa since 2008. Those violent outbreaks in Alexandria in Johannesburg and elsewhere in the country could also be said to be political, although not between opposing parties but between opposing factions of society with very different points of view i.e. a nationalistic, unwelcoming faction (the in-group) guarding its country and culture against a minority group of foreigners (the out-group) who want a chance to settle down and make a life for themselves.

De la Rey (1991) stated that a fundamental aspect of SIT concerns people’s need and motivation for a positive self-concept and Worchell (1996) added that people will discriminate against out-groups and favour in-groups i.e. they will compete against out-group members and co-operate with in-group members.

SIT is considered to be all-encompassing as it can successfully explain prejudice and discrimination such as social categorisation, stereotyping, social comparison and social identity as well as social psychological process on the intra-personal, inter-personal, positional and ideological levels (Augustinos & Walker, 1995; Leynes, Schadron, & Yzerbyt, 1994). Concerning categorisation, Augustinos and Walker (1995) stated that there is only a need and motivation to foster and maintain the superiority of one’s in-group if there is some kind of relation to out-groups. This is because people are unable to use social categories alone to enhance or denigrate social identity unless a comparison is made to an out-group that is relevant to and affects the social identity of the in-group members. Reicher (1987) stated that the significance of self-categorisation is that category membership becomes salient so the individual conforms to those attributes which define the category. Hence, if other group
members’ behaviour is disrespectful, hostile and maybe violent to an out-group, such as foreigners, a person who considers him- or herself to be a member of this in-group will conform and likewise become disrespectful, hostile and maybe violent towards foreigners.

In relation to crowd violence, as experienced during the xenophobic outbreaks in South Africa since 2008, it should be mentioned that Campbell (1992) found that SIT views violent behaviour as a recipe for living when it comes to social group memberships as well as power relations. Campbell (1992) stated that group memberships, whether the group is the church, family or comrades, present individuals with behavioural options or, as he termed it, “recipes for living” id est people as members of a group adapt to and follow the conduct of other group members. Further, Nqweni (2002) stated that crowd violence is a comprehensible response by a specific group of people in a certain, specific situation reacting to their social circumstances id est a coherent form of conflict between groups.

Criticism of SIT have been voiced by Augustinos and Walker (1995) who found that SIT focuses more on social identity than individual identity and pointed out a lack of articulation of the role of self-esteem in respect of the inter-group differentiation. Augustinos and Walker also pointed out that certain costs for individuals as well as society are implied in terms of SIT as in-group members may have demands placed upon them in order to achieve group cohesiveness and uniformity. Thus, by identifying strongly with a certain in-group, an individual may increase his or her positive social identity but at the expense of individual autonomy. At societal level, the costs are tensions and hostilities amongst competing groups as inter-group tensions are a likely result of positive inter-group differentiation (Augustinos & Walker, 1995). These costs can certainly be said to have been incurred by individual South Africans as well as South African society, as citizens have been found criminally guilty of offences as part of xenophobic mob attacks and South African communities have suffered destruction and mayhem. These damages have cost the Republic of South Africa millions of
rands in direct costs (in terms of destruction of property, deployment of police and army personnel as well as erection of tent camps and food provisions etc.) and, likely many more millions indirectly, as South Africa’s reputation as a happy rainbow nation has been severely tainted, damaging short as well as long term business and tourism opportunities (Blieden, 2008).

2.3 Realistic Group Conflict Theory

In Realistic Group Conflict Theory (RGCT), prejudice is viewed as an inevitable consequence of competition amongst groups for scarce resources or power (Le Vine & Campbell, 1972). It argues that prejudice might decline if the needs of competing groups were better fulfilled but that it is unlikely to vanish completely, as conflicts of interest between groups are inevitable. RGCT was developed by Sherif et al. (1954/61) after a classic study called the Robbers Cave Experiment. Sherif conducted his research in a summer camp posing as camp janitor where 22 twelve-year-old boys were divided into two groups in the same large campsite but remained ignorant of each other's presence for the first couple of days. The experiment was broken into three phases: 1. In-group formation, 2. Friction phase (first contact between groups, sports competitions, etc.), 3. An Integration phase (aimed at reducing friction). Hostility between the groups soon escalated to the point where the study team concluded the friction-producing activities could not continue safely and phase three was commenced in order to lessen friction and promote unity between the two competing groups. The tasks in phase three were referred to in the study as super-ordinate goals id est a desire, challenge, predicament or peril that both parties in a conflict needed to get resolved, and that neither party could resolve alone. The collaborations subdued the hostile behaviour and the two previously competing groups bonded.
Viewing xenophobia, in the current research context, in terms of this theory, it can be hypothesized that xenophobic sentiments arise due to poverty and competition for jobs and various educational advantages or opportunities as Xhosa-speaking students perceive immigrants as competitors that have no right to exist in South Africa.

Nhlapo (2001) found that many South Africans actually perceive a relationship between their economic problems as well as other social problems that they face and the presence of immigrants in South Africa. According to Sears, Peplau and Taylor (1988) the prejudice that arises as a result of the conflict between competing groups is more severe towards the group that is the weaker group or the group that is the most threatened. Hence, in the case of xenophobia, it is the immigrants who will be more subjected to prejudice than the South Africans, as the immigrants are away from home and are in the minority. To elaborate, not only are the foreigners, as mentioned, fewer in number but as many of them are illegal immigrants who do not speak an indigenous language and are not as familiar with the local context as the South Africans, it is more difficult for them to achieve a satisfactory lifestyle as they battle prejudice and legal matters or bureaucracy, for example, at the Department of Home Affairs. Thus, it is more difficult for the foreigners than for South Africans to acquire housing, education, and occupations which leaves with them fewer choices than local South Africans and affects their lifestyle negatively. On a university campus, local students could see international students as taking up places in courses or residences, preventing locals from being admitted and local students may also resent other university resources being spent on foreigners such as financial support for an international student society or an international office and international students’ residences.

Brown (1988) suggested that as RGCT concerns goal attainment or lack of same, goal relationships could affect how in- and out-group members relate to each other. This was reinforced by de la Rey (1991), who, on the basis of Sherif et al.’s (1954/61) evidence,
concluded that incompatible goals or competition between groups will lead to conflict between groups whereas super-ordinate goals or co-operative activities between groups promote social harmony. Groups are often formed to achieve certain goals and the striving for these goals can enforce group cohesion and group boundaries. When previously opposing groups suddenly experience that they have common goals, an assimilation of group members will occur and group boundaries will blur so that the distinction between in- and out-group members becomes blurred and less pronounced. In criticism of this, de la Rey (1991) found that establishing, or the existence of, super-ordinate goals does not change the real source of conflict and that merely changing in- and out-group members’ perception of the interests of their respective groups is not adequate to achieve real social change. Another point of criticism levelled at RGCT by de la Rey (1991) concerned the issue of power which is not addressed by the theory and, as de la Rey (1991) contends, power plays a vital role in any real life group conflicts and severely affects the balance between the groups. As the subject of power is not included in RGCT, de la Rey stated that applying it to the South African context would result in a weak application. In addition, Duckitt (1992) stated that RGCT has only been looked at in terms of direct competition between groups relatively equal in power and status and that all RGCT does is to illustrate real conflict between competing groups.

2.4 Social Cognitive Theory

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) developed from the work of Miller and Dollard (1941) concerning social learning theory and outlines how an individual’s behaviour is affected by both his personal characteristics and the social environment as it is perceived by this individual (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). Miller and Dollard (1941) argued that people learn through clear observations based on their own motivation for learning.
SCT posits that through imitation the individual observer would solidify the learned action and, in return, be rewarded with positive reinforcement (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). In general, social cognitive theory is based on the idea that people learn by watching others and the fact that human thought processes are also central to understanding personality. Thus, supporters of SCT agree that there is a fair amount of influence on development, generated by learned behaviour displayed in the environment in which one grows up, but also that the individual person’s cognition is equally important in determining moral development (Santrock, 2008). People learn by observing others, with the environment, behaviour, and cognition being the chief factors in this process and influencing people’s development. These three factors are not static or separate but intertwined in a complex way and are regarded as reciprocal. Hence, behaviour witnessed can change a person’s way of thinking (cognition) whereas the environment a person has lived in may influence later behaviour (Santrock, 2008). Bandura (1989) himself described SCT in other and more theoretical terms and stated that SCT employs a model of causation that involves triadic reciprocal determinism id est behaviour, cognition as well as other personal and environmental factors function as interacting determinants that influence each other bi-directionally. Thus, reciprocal causation does not mean that the different sources of influence are of equal strength or occur at the same time as some may be stronger than others and it can take time for a causal factor to affect cognition and activate reciprocal influences (Bandura).

Boyd and Richerson (1985) analysed the mechanisms of cultural development from a social learning perspective and found that environmental conditions, multiple modelling influences, and personal experiences operate interactively and affect behavioural variants in the population id est social learning influences can shape cultural evolution by favouring behavioural variants that have proven to be effective in certain environments. Commenting on SCT, Semin (1980) stated that within the sphere of social cognition and research into
reasoning and attributions, SCT has dominated what is likely the most comprehensive and significant framework in modern social psychology.

In the current research context, this theory could possibly explain xenophobia as being due to individuals possibly with a propensity to being xenophobic, judgmental, or racist, living in a social environment that encourages such beliefs. However, taking into account the reciprocal triadic dynamics of SCT it is also theoretically possible that a student, with no propensity whatsoever to being xenophobic, can end up being prejudiced towards and discriminating of foreigners. This can happen if environmental factors and people around this student live out xenophobia as if it was the most natural thing in the world and especially if this student somehow got a positive impression of or received positive reinforcement from one or more situations in which others were being subjected to xenophobia.

McClelland (1985) argued that the main criticism of social cognitive theory, in his opinion, is that it is too volitional and that people are driven by unconscious motives that are largely fixed from an early age. McClelland (1985) provided the example of people claiming that they lack insight into their own behaviour and that they could not break bad habits because they were unconscious of the motivation behind their bad habits.

2.5 Intellectual Genocide Theory

Christopher Bollas (1992) formulated a theory to explain the genocide of Jews by Nazis during World War II. He stated that the general public hate of Jews in Germany, was less pronounced than in many other European countries but as times got tough and problems increased in scale for the average German, the leaders of the German society pointed at the minority population of Jews in Germany as the root cause of the societal problems. According to Bollas, the genocide of the Jews developed as follows: It started with a distortion. The majority distorted the picture of the minority which they had been told was the enemy. This led to representatives of the minority being seen as less intelligent, less
trustworthy, more dangerous, dirtier, and more ill. Things were blown out of proportion and general mud-slinging, caricature and attacks on the minority group members’ character (malicious gossip) occurred. Fictional information about the minority group was revealed and simple name calling started, like hymie, kike and shyster. Accumulation into a category was the last intellectual step: “Oh well, Schwartz is a Jew (as if that explains everything)”. Bollas called it active intellectual genocide, since he was of the opinion that it is the intellectual thinking that needs to change into another paradigm in order to facilitate an actual genocide (Abrahamowitz, 1996).

Bollas (1992) developed his theory as he thought that identification of ordinary genocide (the genocide of everyday life) could aid people in scrutinizing themselves, their beliefs and their actions and possibly motivate them to confront others when they see that a certain group or individual has employed this kind of representation of a group of people. Not much scientific research has been conducted on Bollas’ (1992) theory and little direct criticism in the professional psychological literature has been levelled against his theory on intellectual genocide. Thomas (2007), in his paper on “Victims of the Genocidal Mind: Societal Indicators and Individual Case Treatment Considerations” acknowledged Bollas’ (1992) theory and went a step further and used the term, “the genocidal mind”, which encompasses intellectual genocide as well as the minds of the individuals who have indeed experienced acts of genocide.

Thus, in terms of Bollas’ (1992) theory, xenophobia, in the current research context, could be explained as the result of an intellectual erosion of the way in which immigrants are thought of, culminating in violence. No genocide has happened yet in South Africa since xenophobia started to grow in the early 1990s but there has been violence and murders and the theoretical possibility of a future genocide as a result of growing xenophobia cannot be excluded. As mentioned, it is exactly to avoid such disastrous events from happening that
Bollas (1992) developed his theory so that people experiencing xenophobic acts or attitudes in others or themselves can step up and confront not only what is happening on the surface but also the underlying root causes of the xenophobia experienced.

2.6 Bulhan’s Theoretical Perspective on Violence

A widening of the concept of violence was presented by Bulhan (1985) as he saw human violence as inhibiting human growth, limiting and negating potential, productive living, and causing death. Thus, he saw human violence as occurring on three levels, that is on a personal, institutional and structural level.

According to Nqweni (2002) personal violence is the easiest of Bulhan’s (1985) three levels to identify and assess as it is a phenomenon often expressed in dyads or triads involving direct actions or experiences that one can allocate a time and a place to. In theory, a specific perpetrator can be identified (although during the xenophobic outbreaks in South Africa during 2008 that was rarely the case) as well as one or more specific victims having suffered some kind of injury. Bulhan (1985) stated that violence at the personal level allows for a sequence of imputing intent, the rendering of judgement and subsequently exacting retribution. Structural violence, on the other hand, is, according to Bulhan (1985), incorporated in a society’s accepted and established structures of relating to one another, dispensing welfare and conducting everyday affairs, as well as distributing goods and services. Hence, it sets out the parameters and systems of relations and practices that allow for daily living or everyday life as people are socialised into a certain structure from a young age and live up to the roles they were prescribed, making it difficult to differentiate structural violence. Nqweni (2002) stated that such structural violence leads to not immediately visible but deadly inequalities in communities, societies or nations and can cause injury or even death for those who lack power, influence or supremacy. In the words of Kotze (1978) structural violence is merely underdevelopment of a society as the result of great differences
between rich and poor and/or an unequal distribution of material as well as immaterial resources resulting in great divides or as a stratified society based on race or class. Schramm and Shuda (1991) concurred with Kotze (1978) stating that structural violence occurs when there is a difference between actual and potential realisation of any individuals in a society.

The institutional level of violence is, according to Bulhan (1985), at the intermediate level of complexity and extent and thus mediates between personal and structural violence. Bulhan (1985) specified that a dynamic inter-relationship exists between the three kinds of violence, and that each kind of violence should be understood with reference to the other two, as the three kinds of violence are inter-dependent and each reinforces the other. In addition, Bulhan (1985) concluded that the expression of these three kinds of violence can differ from one society to another. Bulhan (1985) further emphasized the historical links between violence, oppression and racism, and stated that a violent act is essentially a cauldron of violence brought into being and maintained by dint of violence. Thus, this violence allows the order in society to influence daily living and as it develops, the violence takes on different shapes and forms and becomes less obvious and pronounced as it integrates into institutional and interpersonal reality.

In the current research context, the research participants’ phenomenological experiences concerning xenophobia were related to Bulhan’s (1985) theoretical perspective on violence and in Chapter 5, “Findings and Discussion”, it will be discussed, if any violence that a research participant may have experienced in terms of xenophobia was overwhelmingly personal, institutional, or structural in nature. In this respect and to facilitate easily such determination, Bulhan’s (1985) definition of violence, partly based on the work of other authors (Gelles & Straus, 1979; Newman, 1979; Straus & Steinmetz, 1974; Wolfgang, 1976), should be clarified. Bulhan (1985) defined violence as “any relation, process or condition by
which an individual or a group violates the physical, social and or psychological integrity of another person or group" (p. 135).

Not much criticism has been put forward against Bulhan’s (1985) theoretical perspective on violence by his peers in the social psychological field except that some writers such as Wrangham and Peterson (1997) have stated that violence is inherent in human personality.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter explored Social Identity, Realistic Group Conflict, Social Cognitive, Intellectual Genocide theory, and Bulhan’s (1985) theoretical perspective on violence and the criticisms of the respective theories. The hypothetical applicability of the different etiological theories to lived experiences of xenophobia in South Africa was also explored. The following chapter will provide a literature review of xenophobia.
Chapter 3: Literature Review of Xenophobia

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the reader with an in-depth understanding of xenophobia in South Africa by first defining xenophobia and then describing xenophobia in a global context. Then the chapter concentrates on xenophobia in terms of its existence in current South Africa society, identifying the root causes of xenophobia as well as outlining the local, historical development of said phenomenon. Immigration into South Africa as well as particulars pertaining to foreign students in South Africa will also be outlined.

3.2 Definition of Xenophobia

Various definitions of xenophobia exist and various experts offer different reasons as to why they define xenophobia as they do, often depending on the unique circumstances pertaining to the situation or specific xenophobic phenomenon that they focus on. Xenophobia is derived from the Greek word xenos which means stranger and it is defined as a fear or hatred of foreigners (Wilson, 1998). Nowadays, in popular academic writing, xenophobia is used to explain opposition to immigration and migration (Mattes, McDonald, Taylor, Poore, & Richmond, 1999). In addition, Harris (2000) has suggested that in South Africa xenophobia is linked to a foreign target and Tshitereke (1999) argued that the fear of immigrants has translated into intense tension and violence by South Africans towards foreigners. Further, Tshitereke (1999) stated that xenophobia is a social condition that requires a social explanation and that it differs from other phobias that are psychological conditions. According to Shindondola (2002) it is clear that xenophobia in South Africa is directed from local South Africans towards black foreigners from Africa and not, for example, African-Americans or Europeans. In addition, The South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) stated in 2004 that xenophobia in South Africa has a particularly
racialized expression with largely black African foreigners facing abuse and discrimination. Often though, experts have difficulties separating xenophobia completely from discrimination, racism and violence. The distinction between these phenomena is difficult as the victims might have one perception of why a perpetrator acts in a certain way but the perpetrator could in theory have other reasons for the behaviour and only in rare circumstances do the victims get an explanation. For example, a report for the International Organization on Migration by Misago, Landau, and Monson (2009) regarding the riots in Alexandria Township in Johannesburg where foreigners were attacked concluded that an influx of African immigrants was only one of several contributory factors together with lack of service delivery and township politics were actually to blame for the attacks that were influenced by criminal elements. Nevertheless, around the world xenophobia was seen as the main cause.

For the purposes of this treatise, the term xenophobia will be used to relate to fear, intense dislike, hatred, discrimination towards, or violent actions against African immigrants by local Xhosa speaking South African citizens.

3.3 Xenophobia in Global Perspective

Chilwane (2008) stated that xenophobia is a global problem that requires an international solution and European Union (EU) research showed that in 2005 there was a racial attack or incident every three minutes within EU’s borders (Ford, 2005). Thus, xenophobia is a worldwide phenomenon and as globalization has increased so have xenophobic sentiments amongst the indigenous population of countries that have experienced an influx of foreigners. In fact, the new millennium has shown growing support in Europe for right wing political parties in countries such as Austria where Jörg Haider’s Freedom Party was elected into government and France where Le Pen is a popular nationalistic leader supported by film diva Brigitte Bardot (Suellentrop, 2002). Before this, in the early nineties, Europe was shocked by
the ethnic cleansings that took place in the former Yugoslavia and, of course, one of the most
grotesque examples of xenophobia, was the mass killings of Jews by the Nazi’s during World
War II. Xenophobia is by no means a new phenomenon. Hjerm (1998) conducted a study on
xenophobia in four Western countries (Australia, Germany, Britain and Sweden) and found
that both civic national identity and national pride were positively associated with
xenophobia, whereas the reverse holds for ethnic national identity and national pride in all
four countries, despite their different conceptualizations of the nation-state. In Africa,
xenophobia is also a familiar phenomenon and recent genocide has taken place in Rwanda
(Bell, 2008), and South Africa has been battling xenophobia since the abolition of Apartheid
in 1994 when South Africa’s border control of immigration was relaxed.3.4 Immigration and
Xenophobia in South Africa

A distinction can be made between the immigration and prevalence of xenophobia in
South Africa during the Apartheid years and the situation in South Africa post-1994. This is
outlined in the following discussion.

3.4.1 Xenophobia and Immigration during the Apartheid Era

The Apartheid Government had a specific immigration policy aimed at encouraging white
immigration and discouraging black immigration to South Africa (Morris, 1998). According
to Cooper (1989) close to 900,000 white families moved to South Africa between 1960 and
1987. The South African government recruited these families and successful applicants were
provided with financial assistance. It was estimated that immigrants filled 25-40 percent of
new high-level and middle-level managerial positions during those years (Cooper, 1989). The
massive influx of these immigrants made it possible for the National Party government to
sustain this job market development and the corresponding preferential white immigration
policy until its demise in 1994. The vast majority of the skilled positions were reserved for
people whose racial classification in terms of the Population Registration Act of 1950 was white (Cooper, 1989).

The racist immigration policy, however, did not mean that black people were not allowed to enter the country. Many black people immigrated to South Africa, in the same period, as migrant workers, mainly from Malawi, Mozambique and Lesotho. A significant difference was the fact that blacks were not allowed to enter the country as permanent residents. Since blacks were excluded from this by law, much of the early immigration debates concentrated on Indians brought to South Africa as indentured labourers (Klotz, 1997). The Apartheid era immigration policy contained two uniquely South African components, one being the regulation of the movement of non-whites between the four distinct colonies at the time of the Union of South Africa that prohibited Indians from moving freely between the provinces until 1975. The other unique South African component was the favouring of Indians born in South Africa as compared to first generation immigrants (Klotz, 1997).

Cooper (1989) stated that in 1986 there were 378,125 foreign workers from southern African countries registered in South Africa and many of these workers later settled permanently in South Africa. In addition, due to the civil war in Mozambique approximately 58,000 Mozambiquans fled to South Africa throughout the 1980s but South Africa also received refugees from other countries during this decade. Some of the registered workers managed to legalise their residence status in South Africa after settling here permanently but not all and many remained in South Africa illegally. In 1989, the Aliens and Immigration Laws Amendment Act of 1984 was enforced, resulting in 51,415 illegal immigrants being repatriated (Cooper, 1989).

As can be gathered from the above paragraphs, before 1994 most black foreigners in South Africa were either unskilled labourers or refugees mainly from other southern African countries. According to Cooper (1989), the extent of xenophobia directed at these southern
African foreigners appears to have been limited and the majority of these immigrants managed to integrate successfully into the local communities. These foreigners achieved successful integration by adapting well to local customs and languages, which was relatively uncomplicated for them since as southern Africans they were not that different from the majority of black South Africans in terms of dress code and lifestyle. In addition, many had local spouses and learned an indigenous South African language all of which made them blend in relatively well. Not much is known about the influx of undocumented immigrants in the years before 1990 as they were exactly that – undocumented. Cooper (1989) attributes this lack of knowledge and documentation to mean that they were not perceived as a major threat by the indigenous South African labourers and unskilled workers. More significantly, perhaps, Cooper (1989) also noted that the indigenous South African working class had other battles to concentrate on with the main one obviously being Apartheid and the struggle for freedom. Apartheid was seen as the main reason why they lacked quality of life, employment and the opportunity for upward mobility. The blame for issues such as unemployment and the fight for scarce resources was only directed towards immigrants after Nelson Mandela’s release in 1990. Another reason why xenophobia was limited during this time was probably also that Africans were not keen on living under Apartheid and this system kept many African “would be immigrants” from living in South Africa permanently (Cooper, 1989). This, however, started to change during the last years of Apartheid when distinctions such as “them” and “us” became more prominent and fears of foreigners became evident.  

3.4.2 Xenophobia and Immigration after 1990

As can be seen from the above, policies to control immigration have been in place for a long time and even inside South Africa there was no free movement of people. Since South Africa became a democracy the laws directed at movement within the country’s borders have been eliminated but the laws limiting immigration from other countries remain although
changed in certain aspects. However, the policing of these laws has become more lax which has been evident in terms of the patrolling of South Africa’s borders. It has, in previous years, not been difficult for television crews to obtain footage of, for example, Zimbabweans crawling under the border fence into South Africa and in 1990 the government led by the National Party initiated a less aggressive approach by reducing the voltage of its border fence with Mozambique from lethal to stun level (Klotz, 1997).

It is believed that the number of immigrants, legal as well as illegal, increased dramatically after February 1990 (Chimere-Dan, 1996). However, exactly how many immigrants were in South Africa during the 1990s is debatable and no official figures are available. Local South African media provided the very vague estimate of somewhere between 1.5 and 8 million legal immigrants by mid-1990 (Shindondola, 2002) and Crush (1997) estimated that there were less than 1 million illegal immigrants in the country. In 2008, the South African Institute for Race Relations estimated that there were between three and five million illegal immigrants in South Africa and that the majority of these were from Zimbabwe.

Another noteworthy change in immigration to South Africa after the demise of Apartheid was the increase in immigrants from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Nigeria (Kadima & Kalombo, 1995). Although no official figures for Nigerian immigrants existed at the time, 2,862 Nigerians applied for political asylum between January 1994 and April 1997 (Morris, 1998) and Kadima and Kalombo (1995) estimated that in the middle of 1995, 23,000 Congolese immigrants were living in the Johannesburg area alone. Morris (1998) found that the Nigerian and Congolese immigrants were more easily exposed and subjected to xenophobia than southern African immigrants as they differed physically and culturally more significantly from black South Africans than immigrants from neighbouring countries. Morris (1998) argued that immigrants from Nigeria and Congo are easily identifiable by their
physical features, their clothing style, their bearing, as well as their inability to speak an
indigenous South African language. All these characteristics make them stand out and
become easy targets for scapegoating when locals are discontented whether it be due to
unemployment, lack of food or the crime levels. According to Bouillon (1996) French-
speaking Africans sense hostility in the way South Africans behave towards them as soon as
they realise that they do not speak a South African language. Harris (2000) found that racism
plays a major part in the xenophobia that is expressed in South Africa, as white foreigners are
not at all subjected to the same kind of discrimination and hatred as African immigrants are.
This means that in South Africa unlike some other places, physical appearance and cultural
characteristics are triggers of xenophobia id est a black and a white immigrant both with the
same French accent from a former French African colony will be treated differently. Further,
Shindondola (2002) stated that being a black immigrant in South Africa makes one a
potential target of abuse, discrimination and prejudice and that black foreigners in South
Africa are subjected to the same level of discrimination and stereotyping as black foreigners
in other parts of the world. Shindondola (2002) also found that the high rate of
unemployment, the unsympathetic nature of police and immigration officers, combined with
the long period of isolation, were part of the obstacles to welcoming African immigrants in
South African with open arms and friendliness. Matsinhe (2009), in his doctoral thesis
“Cleaning the Nation: Anti-African Patriotism and Xenophobia in South Africa”, also found
evidence suggesting that the police in South Africa held negative beliefs about immigrants,
whether legal or illegal, and that they strongly felt that South Africa would be better off with
a complete ban on immigration.

For most African immigrants, the xenophobic sentiments of South Africans have been
unexpected. Nwandiko (1997) stated that Nigerians found living in South Africa akin to a
culture shock, especially, since they had expected a heartfelt welcome and existence in South
Africa due to Nigeria’s support for the ANC during the struggle. The Human Rights Watch African Division (1998) was shocked to observe the hostility which South Africans directed at immigrants and refugees in need, particularly taking into consideration how many African nations assisted South African refugees and exiles during the struggle against Apartheid and also provided financial assistance to those opposing Apartheid.

As this study concerns lived xenophobic experiences at a university, the next section will focus on the different kinds of foreigners or immigration statuses that exist in South Africa and provide specific information concerning international African students in South Africa.

3.5 Xenophobia within the Nelson Mandela Metropole

Xenophobic attacks on African immigrants in South Africa and killing of these foreigners, which the locals derogatively call “makwerekwere” have been widely publicized by the international media and in 2008 the Nelson Mandela Metropole (NMM) was also affected. For years there have been sporadic unrest and violence in NMM townships, especially in Walmer, Motherwell, and Uitenhage. Although the local authorities in NMM received forewarnings from the xenophobic attacks in Johannesburg and Cape Town and measures were put in place to try and curb any local xenophobic violent outbreaks, there was an exodus of especially Somalis returning to their home country as they feared for their lives if they were to remain in the NMM (Brandon & McCabe, 2008; Mthala, 2008).

In light of the xenophobic developments on a national level, the university in the Nelson Mandela Metropole which is the concern of the current study, embarked on a campaign to encourage acceptance and tolerance of foreign nationals in an attempt to eradicate xenophobia from its campuses. The necessity for such a campaign was already evident earlier in 2008 as a local student group posted xenophobic and offensive posters around some of the institution’s campuses. The group was made to apologise but the damage had been done and xenophobia had surfaced in public at a university in the Nelson Mandela Metropole even
before the violent outbreaks commenced in Alexandra Township in Gauteng. To fully understand xenophobia in South Africa, it is helpful to look at the historical background of and to focus on certain aspects of the historical immigration into South Africa. Thus, the following section provides an overview of immigration and xenophobia in the South African context.

3.6 Research Findings Related to Xenophobia in South Africa

Shindondola (2002) conducted research on xenophobia at Rand Afrikaans University (RAU) concerning the views, opinions and experiences of international students at RAU and found that South African xenophobia mainly targeted those that were regarded to be from poor countries regarded as less affluent than South Africa. Thus, these immigrants were seen as stealing jobs and houses and were not regarded as fair competitors for employment but rather as “snatchers”. Further, Shindondola (2002) also found that no foreign white students reported any negative treatment from any South Africans but almost all international black African students reported having been called derogatory names and discriminated against. Overall, Shindondola found at RAU that immigrants to South Africa were selected for xenophobic sentiments on the basis of race and country of origin. Similarly, in a grounded theory investigation into xenophobia in South Africa, Nhlapo (2001) found that black South Africans were more concerned with economic survival and that concern caused them to harbour xenophobic tendencies towards African immigrants. Furthermore, already in 1998, “The Human Rights Watch” found that South Africans’ tolerance for immigrants and refugees was diminishing.

According to a study conducted by Crush and Pendleton in 2004 for the Southern African Migration Project (SAMP), the South African National Congress government sought to overcome the divides of South Africa’s past by building new forms of social cohesion via an aggressive and inclusive nation-building project in the years after 1994. The subsequent
growth in intolerance towards outsiders was an unanticipated, causal by-product of this project and violence against foreign citizens and African refugees has become increasingly common in South Africa and communities are divided by hostility and suspicion (Crush & Pendleton, 2004). In May 2008, South Africa saw the most violent and shocking outbreak of xenophobia yet as, according to Matsinhe (2009), over 60 foreign African nationals were killed, more than 600 were injured, and a massive number of 30,000 African immigrants were displaced. It is worth mentioning, that although these xenophobic attacks were nationwide, they started in Johannesburg and caused the most havoc there and subsequently spread to the rest of the country (Matsinhe, 2009). Evans (2009) stated that, in the aftermath of these xenophobic attacks, 1400 people were arrested and one year later 70 cases in which the accused were found guilty had been finalized with 35 of the accused being acquitted. In total, 280 cases were withdrawn whilst 156 cases were still pending at the time the study was undertaken. After these very explosive outbreaks of xenophobic violence in May 2008, a report by Hadland (2008) for the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) managed to identify three main causes for the violence:

1. Relative deprivation, specifically fierce competition for jobs, commodities, and housing between unskilled South African township inhabitants and African immigrants.

2. Group processes, including psychological categorization processes that are nationalistic rather than superordinate.

3. South African exceptionalism, or a feeling of superiority in relation to other Africans as well as exclusive citizenship, or a form of nationalism that excluded others.

In a later report for the International Organization on Migration by Misago, Landau, and Monson (2009) it was found that lack of service delivery or an influx of African immigrants was likely to have played a contributory role, but township politics were actually to blame for
the attacks that were influenced by criminal elements. Further, the report stated that community leadership was potentially lucrative for unemployed township inhabitants, and that such leaders had organised the attacks on immigrants. Such local leadership could be illegitimate and often violent when emerging from intense competition or a political vacuum and the leaders enhanced their authority by reinforcing resentment towards foreigners according to the report.

3.7 International Students in South Africa

The Aliens Control Amendment Act of 1995 was replaced in 2002 by the new Immigration Act for South Africa (Act 13 of 2002). It is an objective of this new act to prevent and deter xenophobia within any sphere of government or organ of state as well as at community level but also to discourage, detect, deport and punish illegal foreigners. The Act provides three broad categories of foreigners excluding tourists and naturalised foreigners. The three categories are as follows:

1. Permanent resident: This is an immigrant who has received a permit to reside in South Africa permanently.

2. Temporary resident: This kind of resident is in possession of either of the following permits: visitor’s permit, diplomatic permit, study permit, treaty permit, business permit, crew permit, medical treatment permit, relative’s permit, work permits, retired person permit, corporate permit, exchange permit, and asylum, cross-border or a transit pass. It should be noted that whilst an immigrant seeks refugee status, the immigrant is classified as an asylum seeker.

3. Undocumented immigrant: An undocumented immigrant is a person who is in South Africa in contravention of the law and includes prohibited persons id est an illegal foreigner.
Concerning undocumented immigrants, it is worth mentioning that, in the past, the South African government and immigration officers have deported illegal immigrants although this is in contradiction of a resolution taken by the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The SADC resolved that: “undocumented migration flows will not be reversed either by the brutality of law enforcement agencies, xenophobic upsurges, deportations, erecting electric fences along borders or mounting heavy police and military presences along borders, but rather by regional states co-operating to address the root cause (not symptoms) of uneven development within the framework of deep integration” (Shindondola, 2002, p.30).

As for international students, based on the above-mentioned categories, they are thus temporary residents who have acquired study permits. According to a resolution by the SADC in 1997, which South Africa agreed to, a reservation of a minimum of 5% admission for African students from SADC countries would be made at South African universities and, in addition, the international African students from the SADC countries would be treated as domestic students and not, for example, be charged higher study fees than local students which was previously the norm. The South African universities had 10 years from the time at which the agreement was signed to put this resolution into effect and it has also been implemented by the university where this study took place. However, SADC students, according to Sanderson (2010), are still being charged a foreign administration fee that local students do not pay and they also cannot receive the same financial assistance id est bursaries and awards as local students can. The South African government, however, does subsidise SADC students at the same levels as local students (MacGregor, 2007).

Part of the reason for increasing the number of students from SADC countries is, according to a statement by the South African Ministry of Education in 2001, that this would contribute to the broader human resources development in the entire region and also enrich the educational experience of South African students and promote cohesion and broaden the
overall understanding and cooperation between the SADC countries in terms of social, cultural, economic and political ties (Shindondola, 2002).

International students at South African universities are required to provide a legal permit to their university of choice in order to register and, as tertiary institutions check these permits before registration, all international students can be expected to be in the country legally. The need for these permits does not seem to have discouraged foreign students and South Africa has seen a sharp rise in the number of international students that has increased by more than 400 percent since 1994 i.e., from 12,557 international students to 53,733 in 2006 (MacGregor, 2007). Of these international students, two out of three hail from SADC countries. The largest contributors are Zimbabwe followed by Namibia, Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland. The highest growth, however, since the end of Apartheid, has come from other African countries as African student numbers, excluding students from the SADC, increased by nearly 100% in five years from 2001 to 2006, making up 16% of all foreign students (i.e., 8,569 students). There were 7,673 students from outside Africa in 2006 that comprised 14% of the total foreign student population (MacGregor, 2007). The university where this study was conducted had approximately 25,000 students of which approximately 10 percent were international students (“SA Study”, 2011). According to Fazela Haniff, president of the non-profit International Education Association of South Africa, the costs of international students are greater than the income they generate at some universities (MacGregor, 2007). Amongst other reasons, is the fact that universities incur costs to discourage xenophobic attitudes towards other African students in particular (MacGregor, 2007). Fazela Haniff also stated that South Africa should welcome international students, as the nation needs intellectual capital (in MacGregor, 2007).
3.8 Conclusion

It should be evident from the above literature review that xenophobia is a worldwide phenomenon and problem. In South Africa, xenophobia has been particularly widespread, venomous, and violent since the early 1990s and its root causes can be found partly in the immigration history of South Africa, partly as an unforeseen side-effect of a nation-building programme, as well as relative deprivation, specifically fierce competition for jobs, commodities, and housing. These factors have interacted in a complex way with group processes, including psychological categorization processes that are nationalistic rather than superordinate, South African exceptionalism, or a feeling of superiority in relation to other Africans as well as exclusive citizenship, or a form of nationalism that excludes others. In addition, criminal elements have at times exploited xenophobia to manipulate township masses for violent mobilisation, creating greater divides and more hatred, all of which contribute towards xenophobia in South Africa being a very complex phenomenon with no easy or simple explanations or solutions.

In the following chapter, the research design and methodology employed in this study of xenophobia will be outlined.
4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an outline as well as a description of the case study research design and methodology employed in the present research. The chapter describes the methodology applied by looking at the research design, sampling methods, procedures, and data analysis methods used to achieve the aims of the study. The ethical considerations that were part of the investigation are also discussed.

4.2 Primary Aim of the Study

The aim of the study is to describe the lived experience of xenophobia by international, African students at a South African university and thereby add to the knowledge base of psychology.

4.3 Research Design

The choice of which research approach to employ, either quantitative or qualitative, depends on the nature of the research aims (Noor, 2008). The present study employed a qualitative approach and the distinct advantages and disadvantages of the qualitative research method are described below.

A clear advantage of qualitative studies is that they can provide detailed descriptions and analyses of quality or substance of human experience (Marvasti, 2004). Denzin and Lincoln (1994) found that qualitative research emphasizes processes and meanings that are not rigorously examined and measured in terms of quantity, intensity or frequency. Qualitative researchers are interested in insight, discovery, and interpretation rather than hypothesis testing. One disadvantage of qualitative research is that it can be very time consuming and thus often also costly (de Vos, Strydom, Fouche, & Delport, 2005).
The qualitative method focuses on individual characteristics and experiences of human beings; hence it was selected for the present study that concentrated on the experiences of four individuals. The case study approach was selected as it provides a suitable research design in which to give an account of a subject’s experience in accordance with the research aim id est in this case the lived experience of xenophobia (de Vos et al., 2005). More specifically, the exploratory-descriptive case study approach was selected for the purposes of the present study of the lived experience of xenophobia as it can provide richly, detailed descriptions of an individual case leading to an in-depth understanding of the case in question (de Vos et al., 2005). The researcher aimed to provide an accurate representation of the lived experiences of the four research participants involved in the present case study without generalizing their stories to other cases but instead relating them to existing theories.

4.4 Case Study Research

The objective of case study research is to provide an accurate description of single cases which can then lead to the development of theories or general principles. For this reason, case studies have often contributed to generating hypotheses that can then be tested by other research methods (Edwards, 1990). Yin (2003) argues that case studies continue to be a relevant method of research especially when the research concerns a contemporary, real-life phenomenon. Further, Yin (2003) defined a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p.13).

Bromley (1986) described a case study as any singular case, example or incident that, when described and analysed, can be said to contribute to and promote understanding of an area of inquiry. In addition, Lindegger (1999) stated that case studies are thorough investigations of individuals, single families, units, organisations, communities or social
policies and that case study research can be defined as ideographic research in which individuals are studied as individuals and not as members of a population.

In order for case study methods to remain scientifically valid and reliable, certain principles need to be adhered to and these are discussed in the following paragraphs.

4.4.1 The Principles of Case Study Research Methodology

According to Yin (2003), statistics are not employed to prove any kind of significance in case studies as these are generally used for qualitative research purposes only. Instead, validity is established by following a logical process incorporating analytic generalization, analytic induction, and content analysis as the researcher seeks to conceptualise the significant components of the case studies. This conceptualisation will then include assumptions concerning the theoretical perspectives used to frame the conceptualisation and any relationships assumed to exist within them (Edwards, 1990).

4.4.2 Types of Case Studies

Edwards (1990) mentions four types of case studies and states that certain case studies can fit into more than one of the categories described. The four types are as follows:

4.4.2.1 Exploratory-Descriptive Case Studies

Exploratory-descriptive case studies seek to provide an in-depth and detailed description and understanding of an individual case. This kind of case study represents the details of an individual case without attempting any form of generalization (Edwards, 1990).

4.4.2.2 Descriptive-Dialogic Case Studies

This type of case study is focused on describing a specific phenomenon. The case, however, is not considered unique but rather one that is already incorporated in an existing theory. Another purpose, for which the descriptive-dialogic case study is used, is for debating conflicting points of view within existing theories (Edwards, 1990).
4.4.2.3 Theoretical-Heuristic Case Studies

Theoretical-heuristic case studies are first and foremost utilised for developing or testing an existing theory. Since this type of case study concentrates on testing aspects of existing theory only certain case studies are suitable for this kind of research. Thus, cases are selected depending on the aspects to be studied (Edwards, 1990).

4.4.2.4 Crucial or Test Case Studies

This type of case study refers to a case that is specifically selected and can provide a crucial test of a particular, theoretical proposition. The theory behind the theoretical proposition must have been well developed and operationalised. In addition, the selected case must allow the researcher ample opportunity to argue convincingly concerning the theoretical construct that is being tested (Edwards, 1990).

4.5 Preliminary Methodological Considerations

Before commencing with a case study, the researcher should consider the possible weaknesses of this approach. The weaknesses that relate to the present study are:

4.5.1 Researcher bias

Yin (2003) warns that case study researchers may utilise the case study approach to substantiate a preconceived stance or opinion. A suitable way for researchers to counteract subjectivity is for the researcher to examine his feelings concerning the subject and to develop empathy with the subject (Anderson, 1981). Another way to achieve objectivity, according to Edwards (1990), is through case conceptualization, supervision and peer discussion (Edwards, 1990). The researcher has studied psychology at NMMU for 6 years and has had extensive training in being sensitive to cultural differences during his professional and academic undertakings as a psychology student, student psychologist and most recently intern psychologist and also facilitator of cultural diversity workshops for the SCCDC. During the transcription procedure the researcher bore in mind that both personal
and cultural bias exist and this was counteracted by the researcher’s professional training which had sensitised him to these aspects of interviewing. Thus, the fact that the researcher and the research participants were from different race groups was handled professionally by the researcher in the light of his extensive professional training and experience in working with a diverse population of people from other cultures and race groups during his 6 years of training and education at NMMU. The researcher also counteracted researcher bias by discussing the four cases on numerous occasions with his two supervisors.

4.5.2 Validity and reliability criticisms

Runyan (1988) found that the most significant criticisms of the case study approach are those that concern the validity and reliability of the method due to the perceived lack of controls and the difficulties with generalising the findings. Yin (2003), on the other hand, argued that the quality of a case study design can be measured by four tests common to all social science methods id est construct validity, internal validity, external validity and reliability.

Construct validity

Yin (2003) provides the following description of construct validity: “Establishing correct operational measures for the concepts being studied” (p.34) and further states that construct validity can be addressed in case study research by using a range of data gathering methods for evidence such as interviews, documentation and archival records, psychological testing and direct observation (Yin, 2003). By establishing a chain of evidence, an external observer is able to follow the source of any evidence and trace any steps taken by the researcher. In the present study, information was not sought from different sources as the focus of the research was the lived experience of xenophobia from the point of view of the individual, research participants. However, the research participants were questioned in detail about their experiences of xenophobia and their feelings and thoughts surrounding these experiences.
**Internal validity**

Internal validity has been described as establishing a causal relationship, whereby certain conditions are shown to lead to other conditions. This is, however, solely a concern for explanatory research and does not apply to descriptive or exploratory research (Yin, 2003). Thus, although the data collected for the present research is factual, accurate and systematic, descriptive and exploratory research cannot be used to create a causal relationship, where one variable affects another and this form of research has a low requirement for internal validity.

**External validity**

According to Yin (2003), external validity is establishing the field to which a generalisation of the study’s findings can be made. In case studies, analytical generalisation is applied in that the researcher attempts to relate a particular set of results to a broader theory. The way in which the case study method achieves external validity is by studying people or phenomena in their natural contexts or as close to this as the researcher can get (Yin, 2003). In the present research, the researcher achieved this by conducting individual interviews with the research participants about their personal experiences of xenophobia on campus.

In accordance with the above, the researcher of the present study related the findings to existing theories and not to the general population as discussed in chapter 5. The theories that the findings were related to were Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1982), Realistic Group Conflict Theory (Le Vine & Campbell, 1972), Social Cognition Theory (Fiske & Taylor, 1991), Intellectual Genocide Theory (Christopher Bollas, 1992), and A Theoretical Perspective on Violence (Bulhan, 1985).

**Reliability**

Reliability refers to demonstrating that the mechanics of the study can be repeated with the same results (Yin, 2003). Thus, if a study has reliability the same research findings and conclusions should be arrived at by researchers following the same procedures in a similar
study (Yin, 2003). The purpose of reliability is to minimise any possible errors and biases of the study.

The issue of reliability in the current study was addressed by clearly detailing the steps followed in the data collection process and data analysis method applied in the present research. For example, all audio recordings have been stored and coded and the study has been clearly documented in the form of a treatise, with a detailed chapter on the methodology that was utilised.

4.6 Participants and Sampling

A non-probability or purposive sampling method was employed to gather participants (N=4) for the present study. Non-probability sampling refers to a procedure in which one cannot specify the probability that any member of the population will be included in the sample (Cozby, 2007). Neuman (2003) stated that in purposive sampling, the researcher uses his own judgment to select the research participants in order for them to be able to correspond with the research aims. Research participants can be included according to characteristics such as specific knowledge or experience relating to the goals of the study. An advantage of this sampling method is that it provides the researcher with the opportunity to select research participants that have direct knowledge of the phenomenon being studied, so that they can provide directly relevant perceptions and opinions relating to the study (Henning, van Renburg, & Smit, 2004). Cozby (2007) stated that this sampling technique affords the researcher the opportunity to deal with participants who have actively been involved with or affected by the phenomenon being studied and as such can provide specific and relevant information. Neuman (2003) also stated that an advantage of purposive sampling is that the researcher becomes able to select unique cases that are particularly informative and relevant.

A further benefit of this sampling method is that it is inexpensive and convenient to make contact with prospective participants whilst an obvious disadvantage of purposive sampling is
that it can increase the risk of selection bias, which may result in difficulties related to the
generalization of results to the population (Cozby, 1997; Neuman, 2003) and another
disadvantage is that it does not allow representation of the entire population to be a part of the
study as they may not have any experience with the phenomenon being assessed. Thus, non-
probability sampling does not lend itself well to generalising the results to the population as a
whole as it does not generate a group of participants that can be said to be representative of
the population (Cozby, 2007). As previously mentioned, it should be noted that the researcher
of this study is not attempting to make any form of generalization from the specific cases to
the population but only aims to relate the research participants’ lived experiences to existing
theories.

For the selection of research participants the following inclusion criteria were employed in
order to select suitable participants:

1. The participants had to be international African students, at least one male and one
   female.

2. The participants had to have lived in South Africa and studied at the specific
   university for a minimum of 2 years.

3. They must have experienced xenophobia on the university campus.

4.7 Procedure and Data Collection

Permission to conduct the study was gained from the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan
University after the research protocol was reviewed by the Research Ethics Committee
(Human). Thereafter the research participants were selected through referrals from Student
Counseling Career and Development Centre (SCCDC) and the International Students
Society. A letter of recruitment (see Appendix A) was given to the research participants and
informed consent was obtained from them in writing (see Appendix B).
Data for the study were obtained by having the participants complete a biographical questionnaire. The biographical questionnaire included demographic data on the participants' age, nationality, race, gender, academic year of study and degree, and how many years the participant had lived in South Africa. This information served to confirm that the research participants were suitable for inclusion in the study (see Appendix C).

Subsequent to this, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted individually with each of the participants. All interviews were audio-recorded in accordance with the permission granted by the research participants when they signed the informed consent form. The venue for the interviews was an office used for regular client consultations in the university psychology clinic. This data were then transcribed and analysed using Tesch’s model of content analysis (Tesch, 1990).

Semi-structured interviews are beneficial both for the researcher and the research participants as they are flexible. This flexibility provides the researcher with the opportunity to follow up particularly interesting aspects that may arise during the interview. For the participants, this form of interview allows the participant to provide a more comprehensive description of the phenomenon being studied by allowing additional information to be gathered during the interview process (de Vos et al., 2005). With this form of data collection the participants are given some control in terms of the direction that the interview takes and have the opportunity to introduce a topic that the researcher had not considered (de Vos et al., 2005). Semi-structured interviews make use of a set of predetermined questions on an interview schedule and are guided, rather than dictated, by the schedule. The interview schedule (see Appendix D) used open-ended questions which allowed the participants to provide as much or as little information as they chose (Breakwell, Fife-Schaw, Smith & Hammond, 2006). The semi-structured format meant that questions are set out before the
interviews and the interviewer asks the participants these questions and then follows up, explores and probes the answers given by the participants as required.

The participants were debriefed verbally by the researcher after the interviews in order to ensure that the interviewees were comfortable and to answer any questions they may have had regarding the interviews. According to Struwig and Stead (2001) debriefing with the interviewees after the interviews is of vital importance.

4.8 Data Analysis

The audio-recorded data were transcribed separately by the researcher and an independent coder, a clinical psychologist also educated at NMMU, using Tesch’s (1990) model of data analysis.

The steps of the model that were followed by the researcher are:

1. The researcher gets a sense of the whole, by reading through all the transcripts. Some ideas are jotted down.
2. One interview is chosen to start the analysis. Thoughts are written down as they occur.
3. The researcher completes this with several of the participants’ transcribed interviews. A list of all found themes is compiled. Similar themes are clustered together and formed into columns. The columns are then arranged according to major themes.
4. These themes are then abbreviated and codes and descriptive wording are given to each theme.
5. The researcher allocates the most appropriate descriptive wording for each of the themes and then turns them into categories. Grouping themes that relate to each other reduces the total number of categories.
6. The researcher makes a final decision on the abbreviation for each category and then assembles them alphabetically.
The data that belongs to each category is then assembled and a preliminary analysis performed.

Consensus discussions are held by the researcher and an independent coder regarding the findings.

Furthermore, Guba’s model of trustworthiness (1985) was utilised in order to maintain objectivity whilst analysing the data (Krefting, 1991). Guba’s model (1985) outlines credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability as the criteria for assessing qualitative research.

According to Guba and Lincoln (1985), credibility refers to the confidence in the truth of data and involves prolonged engagement and persistent observation. In the words of Willig (2008) credibility refers to whether the researcher has established confidence in the truth of the findings. This can be achieved by presenting accurate descriptions of human experience so that people with knowledge of such experience would be able to instantly recognize the description. In the current study, the researcher has described the lived experience of the research participants accurately employing audio recordings, the work of the independent coder, the researcher’s own professional training, and his experience of the interviews.

Transferability refers to the extent to which findings can be transferred to another setting and generalised (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Krefting (1991) stated that transferability refers to the degree to which the findings can be generalized to other contexts and that research meets this criterion when the findings from a study fit into contexts outside of the study situation. In this study no transference of findings was attempted by the researcher as transference of findings is not part of the aim of the study. Dependability refers to data stability and concerns the issue of whether independent researchers using the same conditions and same data would replicate the research findings (Guba & Lincoln, 1985; Krefting, 1991). Confirmability refers to the objectivity of the research data such that two or more independent people would agree about
data relevance or meaning (Guba & Lincoln, 1985), which was reiterated by Krefting (1991) when he stated that confirmability refers to freedom from bias in the research procedures and results. The independent coder employed in the present study served to ensure the dependability and confirmability of the research conducted.

4.9 Ethical Considerations

When conducting research, a researcher will invariably be met with and forced to make decisions regarding ethical considerations. It is imperative that the ethical aspect of research is handled in a professional manner.

According to Vorster (2002), ethical guidelines provide a foundation for the researcher to evaluate his own conduct. In the present study, the researcher consistently strived towards maintaining proper ethical practice and a level of professionalism and accountability that one would expect from a study at a tertiary institution involving human beings and a potentially sensitive issue such as xenophobia. Thus, the approval of the Faculty's Research, Innovation and Technology Committee as well as the Ethics Committee (Human) of the university was sought and achieved before commencing the study.

It was foremost in the mind of the researcher that a variety of factors must be considered when dealing with people from different cultural contexts. First and foremost was the issue of confidentiality; i.e. to keep all details of the research participants’ anonymity private and to not disclose any details to third parties, hence pseudonyms were used. The respondents were informed that their data would remain confidential and that their data would not be used for any other purpose than that described in the study and this was in accordance with what transpired during the research. The data recorded from the participants were coded so as to ensure the anonymity of the participants, and the data have remained confidential. The strict measures that were taken to ensure confidentiality included storing the audio-recordings safely during the study and after the research has been completed the audio-recording will be
destroyed and all identifying information relating to the research participants will be deleted or disguised in the findings of the research. Voluntary, informed consent was obtained from all participants in writing before they participated in the research. This was done to protect both the participants, researchers and the research itself (de Vos et al., 2005). It should also be mentioned that the participation in the present study was on a voluntary basis with no remuneration or incentives offered to the participants.

4.10 Conclusion

The methodology of the present study has been outlined by describing and discussing the research design, sampling method, data collection method as well as the data analysis method that has been employed. In addition, the researcher’s methodological considerations and ethical precautions have been mentioned. In the following chapter, the findings and discussions of the study are presented.
Chapter 5: Findings and Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the findings of the study as provided by the four research participants during their individual interviews, detailing their lived experiences of xenophobia. As previously stated, the present study is descriptive so no generalisations will be made. Instead, the focus is on the thoughts and feelings of the research participants in relation to their experience of xenophobia, their impressions of the country as they first arrived and settled in, and their expectations of their stay in South Africa versus the reality they had to confront. The data obtained from the interview process with the participants are examined in relation to the various themes that emerged from this process.

5.2 Defining the Experience of Xenophobia

During the data analysis that was conducted according to Tesch’s (1990) Model five main themes emerged. These themes were; (1) Varying definitions of xenophobia, (2) The appeal of South Africa, (3) Cultural mores, (4) Xenophobic experiences, (5) Reciprocal bias/vicious cycle. These 5 main themes all have subthemes which are illustrated in the following table:
Table 1.1

**Thematic Analysis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Subthemes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Varying definitions of xenophobia</td>
<td>What is xenophobia?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Defining experiencing xenophobia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The appeal of South Africa</td>
<td>Reasons for coming to South Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>First impressions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Mores</td>
<td>Difficulties integrating into society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cultural differences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IsiXhosa as a main barrier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xenophobic experiences</td>
<td>Experiences related to lectures and studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experiences related to campus life and leisure activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subtle xenophobia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Structural violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Xenophobia or racism?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reciprocal bias/vicious cycle</td>
<td>Assumptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Xenophobia can cause bias on both sides</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personality characteristics influencing integration and the way xenophobia is handled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal growth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In qualitative research it is these themes that guide the focus of the study and with each of these themes the relevant links to the appropriate literature will be discussed. Each theme and
subsequent sub-theme will be examined individually and, by providing relevant quotations from the interview transcriptions, will be linked to the appropriate literature.

5.3 Varying Definitions of Xenophobia

5.3.1 What is xenophobia?

The four research participants, who were three males and one female from Nigeria, Cameroon, Lesotho and Tanzania, provided somewhat similar but not identical examples of what constituted xenophobia in their opinion. In order to protect the identity of the research participants, the pseudonyms Alfa, Bravo, Charlie, and Delta will be used to refer to them. Alfa said that xenophobia is aggressive behaviour that turns into violence but that it is also a lack of recognition of people from other countries. Delta felt that xenophobia is not embracing foreigners as human beings but treating them in a hostile manner different to how locals are treated. Charlie concurred with these sentiments and stated that xenophobia to her is not being accepted in a country where she is foreign and Bravo simply understood xenophobia as being disliked by locals. These thoughts regarding the definition of xenophobia were illustrated by the following statements made by the research participants:

*When people don’t like foreigners to come to their country because they feel like those foreigners are taking away their opportunities especially economical ones (Bravo).*

*From my point of view I think that would be hostile behaviour towards people who are not of the same nationality. They are not treated with the same friendliness, they are not embraced as human beings – they are seen as not citizens of my country and given different treatment and the different treatment of course is not a positive one (Delta).*
For me xenophobia is a lack of recognition of people from other countries, a kind of aggressiveness towards these people because you are not from that country so you are not a part of that country. You are from outside. Mainly it’s a behaviour that turns into violence of course (Alfa).

It is not being accepted in another country where you are not from (Charlie).

Overall, the research participants all agreed that xenophobia results in very negative sentiments and behaviour towards foreigners. As mentioned in the literature review of xenophobia in Chapter three, for the purposes of this treatise, xenophobia has been defined as the fear, intense dislike, hatred, discrimination towards, or violent actions against African immigrants by local Xhosa speaking South African citizens in the Eastern Cape Province (Harris, 2000; Shindondola, 2002; Tshitereke, 1999; Wilson, 1998) which relates well to and incorporates all of the varying definitions provided by the research participants.

5.3.2 Defining experiencing xenophobia

All four research participants in the present study experienced xenophobia in one form or another but to varying degrees. Interestingly enough, during the researcher’s initial screening of research participants three of the four participants somehow vaguely queried whether they had indeed experienced xenophobia as none of them had been violently attacked or beaten up. It seemed as if the research participants took prejudice and discrimination as a given and only really considered it proper xenophobia worth talking about if they were attacked in the manner that they had seen on TV during the 2008 riots or heard about from other foreigners’ horror stories of similar experiences of xenophobic violence.

During the interview process it became apparent that the participants’ own definitions of xenophobia and their individual perceptions of the phenomenon influenced their perceptions and experiences of xenophobia. Based on the research participants’ statements that will be
provided later in the present chapter, it also became blatantly obvious that xenophobia is far more than merely violent or aggressive behaviour with physical consequences although these other elements of xenophobia that exist within society are rarely commented on by mass media such as newspapers and TV. Presumably, the lack of attention given to these other forms of xenophobia is due to the fact that they are not as sensational and immediately visible as the xenophobia involving violence.

Finally, it should be noted that as emphasised in Chapter three the exact distinction between xenophobia, racism, discrimination, and prejudice can be unclear due to subjective experiences and lack of clarity over the perpetrators’ motives. It will be evident in subsequent sections of this chapter that the research participants were also sometimes unsure which form of discrimination they were subjected to in their lived experiences.

5.4 The Appeal of South Africa

This section examines each of the participants’ initial impressions when first arriving in South Africa as well as the background for them coming to South Africa as opposed to any other country by initially dealing with why the participants chose South Africa and then each of the participants’ own first impressions and the accuracy of these impressions will be examined.

5.4.1 Reasons for coming to South Africa

According to the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC) Expat Experience Report of 2009 the general experience for middle and upper class people immigrating to South Africa is a high standard of living, a wonderful country where one can buy more than at home and an amazing wildlife. HSBC rated South Africa as the 6th best
country for expatriation. However, the HSBC noted that for immigrants of a lower socio-economic status the standards of living have been lower.

Although describing it differently, the research participants all had very similar reasons for coming to South Africa. They all stated that South Africa offers better education than their home countries and apart from Charlie, who did not elaborate, they all expressed the view that South Africa is the richest and most developed country in Africa offering quality tertiary education. Further to this, two of the participants then mentioned the lower costs associated with studying and living here as the main reason for choosing South Africa over the United Kingdom and the United States of America, whereas Delta expressed a wish to be part of the development and life in South Africa that he saw as the flagship of Africa. He stated:

*South Africa is second to none amongst African nations in terms of development and sustainability. And to me it is a challenge. It is something I am proud of, something I want to be a part of, that in Africa at least we have a country, a place that we can still boast of and where things happen.*

Alfa expressed the view that Egypt is also very developed and can compete with South Africa but that the social customs and religious freedom and diversity in South Africa are closer to what he was used to back home. He was fearful that an Islamic religious/cultural barrier (described in his terms as differences regarding religious customs and social norms and freedoms) would put a damper on his social life in terms of partying, socialising and consuming alcohol. He expressed this in the following way:

*Egypt can compete with the level of development. But the thing with Egypt is mainly Islamic. You know, you want to go somewhere where the social customs are more closer to what you have back home, cause otherwise you are just going to be a...*
student. So Egypt was a possibility but that whole Islamic barrier was the thing that kept me back from Egypt.

In addition, the use of English, as one of the eleven official languages in South Africa and as the primary medium of academic instruction in South Africa, was also an important factor in him choosing South Africa as he would have more opportunities to learn the language better and thus become better equipped for integrating into the global world. He stated:

…the other thing with South Africa was the language. English is becoming like a standard, like an international language. They are standardizing everything in English so you want to go somewhere where you can learn the language in order for you to better integrate in the global world.

Overall, it can be concluded that the research participants all came to South Africa to get a better education and better opportunities than what their home countries offered them. They were attracted by South Africa’s perceived positive reputation as superior to other African countries and the lower costs associated with studying in South Africa compared to the costs of studying in Europe or USA.

5.4.2 First impressions of South Africa

First impressions are made almost instantaneously and there is a common observation that first impressions are notoriously persistent which according to Nauert (2011) is supported by recent research. Nauert (2011) referred to a study that compared first impressions to contradictory subsequent experiences and the conclusion was that new experiences that contradict a first impression become bound to the context in which they were made, whereas first impressions still dominate in other contexts. Further, foreign visitors form first impressions of a country and its citizens as they walk from the aircraft to the airport exit.
(Fukuda, Hatori, & Matsuo, 2010) so the overall lived experience of visitors in a country will be significantly influenced by their immediate impressions after arriving.

Except for Charlie who had once been on holiday in Durban, none of the research participants had ever been to South Africa before coming here to study. Those, who had not been to South Africa before, were all very impressed when arriving at OR Tambo Airport in Johannesburg. Alfa described the time when he first set foot in South Africa this way:

*First impression was like – wow – this country is just amazing. Of course coming in to Johannesburg airport, the airport is like well-built and the standard is like in Europe.*

*It is almost un-imaginable that you are in Africa.*

Delta had been nervous before arriving due to xenophobic fears but described his first impression as follows:

*...because of the xenophobic attack happened shortly before me coming here I started to have some kind of doubt and asking myself if this is the right thing I am doing.*

*Some of my friends were warning me and asking me if I really thought that going to South Africa would be the right thing to do with all that had happened. So I started having doubt in my mind. When I came here it was quite opposite to what I had heard in the radio and media. People were friendly from the airport, everybody was friendly and laughing.*

The very positive first impressions didn’t last, however, as most of the research participants in the present study were disillusioned when they arrived in Port Elizabeth and were able to compare this city to their favourable impressions of South Africa on TV and to their experience of OR Tambo airport. In general, it was the difference between the rich and the poor areas in the city and the absence of skyscrapers and other impressive infrastructure
that could rival the constructions in Johannesburg and first world countries that disappointed the research participants. Below follow verbatim quotes from the four research participants in the present study, illustrating some of the disappointment they felt after arriving to Port Elizabeth:

*When I first came, especially to the Eastern Cape, I was mostly disappointed because I expected to find skyscrapers and flyover highways like in American cities (Bravo).*

*The buildings and places were not exactly as I expected as I had only seen beautiful pictures and places looking like America. And then I saw places like Walmer Location and the differences were so obvious between the good and bad places. I was disappointed, a bit disappointed but I realized that this is still Africa and told myself that. It was still ok (Delta).*

*The other reality are things you discover later on, far later on, that the reality is not really like you picture it in your head. There are both sides of the reality. When I came to PE there was a contrast; Johannesburg is that vast huge city, PE is way smaller (Alfa).*

“I expected it to be nice and positive (coming here) because here there are lots of opportunities not like in my home country. It was not really like I expected though (Charlie).”

The general sentiments by the research participants regarding the local people were also that they did not live up to the positive expectations they had before coming here, apart from the previously mentioned experience by Delta when he arrived at the airport and people were laughing and friendly. Charlie expressed her dissatisfaction in the following words:
I expected it to be nice and positive...... It was not really like I expected though. We are not taken as part of South Africa as much as we, from Lesotho, are inside South Africa. I was expecting that we would be treated not like other people from outside countries...... Because they give us that thing that they are accepting each and everybody without any difficulties but they are not.

Alfa also found almost immediately that the locals did not live up to expectations:

Even though we knew the past and the history of Apartheid and so forth which we had followed on TV back home I was expecting something more different and now I just find a society where things are more self-preservative and where people are more self-centred and where people are, to some extent, even scared of other people. It didn’t at all seem like the “Rainbow Nation” I had expected.

Overall, it can be concluded from the above that the lived experience of the research participants with regards to first impressions of South Africa was mostly a disappointing one although OR Tambo Airport and Johannesburg had impressed them. This, however, seemed to eventually exacerbate their disappointment with regards to Port Elizabeth and the local inhabitants.

5.5 Cultural Mores

Cultural mores are the folkways, including the philosophical and ethical generalizations as to societal welfare which are suggested by them, and inherent in them as they grow (Fischer, 1989). In other words, cultural mores are folkways of central importance accepted without question and embodying the fundamental moral views of a group or culture. As the participants from this study all came from different socio-cultural groups and have different cultural mores incorporating their beliefs, customs, habits, norms and views, it is important to
examine the perceived effects that each participant’s own cultural mores had on their experiences in South Africa.

This section will explore the difficulties that each of the participants faced when attempting to settle in their new environment and then examine the various cultural differences that each of the participants noticed during their time at a university in the Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan area. Finally, this section focuses on the enormous cultural and social importance of language when a foreign resident attempts to integrate into a new and different society.

5.5.1 Difficulties integrating into South African society

When integrating into a new society, individuals often experience culture shock which can be defined as the anxiety, feelings of frustration, alienation and anger that a person may experience when placed in a new culture. A common reason for culture shock is individuals moving to a foreign country. Culture shock consists of at least one of four distinct phases: Honeymoon, Negotiation, Adjustment, and Mastery (Pedersen, 1995). There is no true way to completely avoid or prevent culture shock, as individuals in any society are personally affected in various ways by the cultural contrasts they experience (Barna, 2009).

The research participants experienced various difficulties with integrating into society both with regard to socialising, studying and safety and security matters. The crime level was an issue for the research participants although they had very different expectations and experiences of crime in the Nelson Mandela Bay area and South Africa. Bravo had expected the worst before coming to the Nelson Mandela Bay area and mostly stayed at his place of residence in town for the first two months because he was scared of going out, until he could move into a residence on campus:
I was not comfortable when first coming here because I didn’t know anyone and because of the fear for crime I had, I couldn’t go out and was stuck inside. It wasn’t comfortable at all. I just stayed at home and wasn’t talking to strangers. I had come 2 months early so only really really went out when school started. And then I also moved onto campus residence. By then I also felt more comfortable as I felt safer on campus.

After spending several years in the Nelson Mandela Bay area this research participant has, however, been pleasantly surprised with regards to the crime level which he expressed with the following words:

Before I came here I used to think that crime in South Africa is too much and the moment you get out of the airport someone will stab you with a knife or something but up to this day I have never encountered any situation like that.

5.5.2 Cultural differences

Alfa, also had problems relating to culture shock as described in the previous section. However, Alfa had expected a very safe society and a level of crime that would correspond to South Africa’s leading position on the continent in terms of economic development and infrastructure. Thus, he was unpleasantly surprised with the social customs and habits here:

“And another thing I noticed was that suddenly from a certain time at night you no longer see white people in the streets – especially from 22:00 or 21:00. You cannot see them anymore in the street. I picked that up very quickly. Back home you see like massive amount of people in the street at 22:00 or 23:00. Crime isn’t really much of an activity or much in the news back home. I didn’t like this about South Africa. I didn’t. ...... 21:00-22:00 at night you cannot speak to people when they are out in the street – they will be scared.”
Bravo believed that the cultural differences between him and South Africans were generally too great to be overcome. He described his attempts to integrate and make South African friends in the following way:

*I don’t have many South African friends because we differ in ideology so we can’t really click because we differ the way we think, we differ the way we see things, we differ the way we do things. We’re very different so it is very difficult to find a South African that you are compatible with, that you can be friends with so I have very few South African friends.*

5.5.3 IsiXhosa as a main barrier

It has been well documented that language is essential to the culture of a population and that the inability to speak and understand a given language can be a major barrier for successful integration. For many people, language is not just the medium of culture but also a part of culture. According to O’Neil (2011) language is arguably the most significant component of culture because and it is impossible to understand the subtle nuances and deeper meanings of a foreign culture without having an advanced knowledge of the language. Kwok (2006) found that cultural and language differences often become a barrier between indigenous and non-indigenous populations. Similarly, Rubin and Jernudd (1971) stated that language is a uniquely powerful instrument in unifying a diverse population but that the power of a language also can become a major source of internal conflict and disintegration.

Charlie felt strongly that the predominant African language spoken at this tertiary institution, isiXhosa, had been a barrier for her. This surprised her, as another of South Africa’s eleven official languages, Sesotho, is her home language but this has not really helped her at all.
Most of the time the Xhosa people speak Xhosa. They don’t even care whether you understand or you don’t. Even the staff at the library – they see me as a black person and they take for granted I know Xhosa, why not? So they speak Xhosa to everybody. And it is not everybody who knows their language. And the attitude you get from the staff is that they look down on you, like they are thinking “why do you speak like that?” They are not expressing it out loud but you can see it on their faces that they are saying: “Why do you speak like that? Why do you have to speak in English with me?” And I’m like: “I’m not Xhosa and I don’t understand a word you are saying.” And the staff will then say: “Okay, sorry!” But they are rude.

Charlie elaborated further on the problems with isiXhosa and her perceptions of how people have criticized her for lack of knowledge of this indigenous language with the following statements:

One thing I can say which has offended me ever since I got here is that Xhosa people always want to know why can’t we be able to speak their language when we are in their world. They have that thing that we are intruders you know so if we are here we have to speak their language and they don’t even care to learn our language. I have tried to explain this to some Xhosa people but get a defensive response. I have told them that I don’t even want to learn your language because you are so rude and so proud. One lady acknowledged that she knows, as Xhosa people, they are rude.

Some people could hear that I couldn’t speak Xhosa and they demanded to know why I can’t speak Xhosa when I am still living in PE (Port Elizabeth) and they were telling me Xhosa is an official language. And I was like: “Sotho is an official language in South Africa. We have 9 official languages in South Africa and Sotho is one of them.
Even if I come from Lesotho, it doesn’t make me a lesser person. This behaviour was all unexpected to me here even after the xenophobic attacks in 2008.

Charlie was not alone in her negative experiences with the isiXhosa language as a major barrier or problem to successful integration and acceptance within the local population. Delta provided some views about his experiences with this issue as well:

“One thing I noticed at the initial stages when you are together with them (local Xhosa speaking persons) you all of a sudden discover that the language has changed and there is nothing you can relate to and no one really cares whether you are around or not. It’s like indirectly they are telling you: “If you want to stay, stay, otherwise well that’s your problem. Most of the time I find myself leaving. There are a number of times I have tried to attack them and ask them like: “Look guys it’s not everybody here who understands the language so why not speak a language we can all understand?” I got answers like “when in Rome, do as the Romans”, “you don’t expect us to come down to your level so if you came to our country, you must come to our level”, “It’s either you learn the language and understand it or not.” And to me it is not easy. I have no one around me and now the only ones that are around don’t want to make friends with me because they would have to come out of their comfort zone. I had to come out of my comfort zone to come here. And it’s a global world now, most people move and geographic demarcation as far as I’m concerned should mean less. Few people have been able to reason with me. The attitude I get is that they believe “It’s our country and it’s either you transform but don’t expect us to transform to your expectations.””

Further to providing insight into this student’s feelings relating to the use of Xhosa as a barrier, the above statement also illustrates a deep hurt in this student who, throughout his
years of study in South Africa, has been very passionate and willing to integrate into the country and to make local friends.

In conclusion to this section, it can be stated that the overall lived experiences of the research participants with regards to the local culture and especially the local language were surprisingly negative to them and made them feel unwelcome, excluded, and different.

5.6 Xenophobic Experiences

Little literature exists on the lived experience of xenophobia and this lack of previous research on the subject matter illustrates the relevance of the present study as the researcher had to rely on the theories put forward in Chapter two.

The xenophobic experiences that the research participants had during their years in South Africa have been similar in some ways and quite different in other ways. They all had very few or no South African friends despite spending extended periods of time, surpassing two years, in the country and they had all been unpleasantly surprised by the attitude and reception that they have had with local South Africans as evident from the examples previously provided.

The various lived experiences of xenophobia by the international, African student interviews ranged from discrimination on the sports field to prejudice and neglect by lecturers, being ignored or overlooked by fellow students, being met with defensive and dismissive attitudes by university staff members, being informed of rumours of alleged plans of violent attacks on international students by officers of an official university student body, to local students advising criminals about what they can steal from certain international students. This will be described on the following pages using the students’ statements from their interviews and relating these to relevant theory and literature on the topic.
5.6.1 Experiences related to lectures and studies

Alfa had not experienced any xenophobia by lecturers but he believed that was because of the campus he studied on and the fact that he was mostly taught by white lecturers. His thoughts on xenophobic sentiments between lecturers and students were illustrated with the following statement:

“I am sure if you compare to studies in South Africa on xenophobia in classes where the majority of the lecturers were white, then you will not really feel that there is a problem with xenophobia. But in the case where the lecturers are black you are going to see that there is a problem.”

This suspicion is in agreement with a research finding by Shindondola (2002) who, as mentioned in Chapter three, found that no foreign white students at RAU reported any negative treatment from any South Africans but almost all international black African students reported having been subjected to derogatory name calling and discrimination. It should be noted though that Shindondola (2002) did not differentiate between xenophobic treatment from lecturers, administration staff or students.

Whilst interacting with her South African class mates in connection with her studies Charlie had felt unwelcome. She felt that South Africans, in general, prefer to stick with people of very similar demographics to themselves: “I study with Xhosa people, Afrikaans and coloured people. I have a feeling they love their own kind. They always close door for other people. They are not so friendly, they are not so accommodating.”

Delta had problems with some of his lecturers like Alfa had hypothesised about when he stated that in cases where the lecturers are black one could experience that there is a problem. Below follows an example provided by Delta about how he felt a lecturer was discriminating against him:
I had one nasty experience with a lecturer. It was my first year too and to be honest it still has a lasting impression with me. It was one of the first set essays of we wrote. I submitted my essay and I think I got 75 quite alright but there was no red pen to show there were errors that needed to be corrected or anything. Initially when I got my mark I was quite happy but later I started to see other people’s essays and they got 80 and 95 etc. and most of those people who passed with 80, 85, 90, blah, blah their essays were full of red marks, comments and corrections and all that. I had to go the lecturer and say: “Excuse me, ma’am, I just want to be very sure what is wrong here so in case some other time I’ll know what to do next time so I can get a good mark. The response was: “Oh, but actually I didn’t know it was your paper”. And I was like: “Ok, what does that have to do with my mark – knowing who I am.” And without any correction and any explanation she eventually gave me 80. But even with that I felt so bad and since then as much as I tried to be objective and see everybody as equal I got the impression that if you belong to a certain group you cannot go above or below a certain mark. And that is one of the experiences I have not been very comfortable with.

In general, about xenophobic and stereotyping attitudes by his lecturers this student had the following comment: The way some lecturers talked about other countries while I am in the class and they start to mention names and stereotyping, I don’t feel comfortable. This is both black and white.

5.6.2 Experiences related to campus life and leisure activities

Alfa made the following statement regarding his experiences of xenophobia on campus:

Around 2008 when the xenophobia was very intense there were some closed events on campus. The VC (Vice Chancellor) organized a talk shop on xenophobia. A report
was given to me by a friend from Botswana. Some local students were inside and as the debate was now opened, some local students complained that we take their food and places to live and their women and those types of complaints. So the hatred was also on campus but it didn’t manifest in violence. What they would rather do when we had student gatherings (I was president of the International Students’ Association for two years) is they would insult you by speaking in Xhosa and they would insult you in Xhosa in such a way that you didn’t understand what they were saying.

Alfa had attended many functions during his time at the tertiary institution that this study concerns and experienced prejudice and biased treatment from South Africans which he elaborated on in the following example that he provided:

*Let me describe a scenario from a function. Once it was during an SRC AGM. When we go there we advocate naturally for the international students and express ourselves and express our strongest point of view and so forth. Sometimes they (the local students) tend to pretend that we want everything for ourselves. One of the complaints is that first we have an office that is separated and providing us with everything that we want and so forth and now we come to the AGM to impose on them to give us more. You get those types of views. They are biased and not impartial. They don’t look at us (the international students) as students coming to the SRC AGM and making requests. They look at us as foreigners asking for something. This was students from other societies that had these sentiments.*

As mentioned in Chapter two, in Realistic Group Conflict Theory (RGCT), prejudice is viewed as an inevitable consequence of competition amongst groups for scarce resources or power (Le Vine & Campbell, 1972). It argues that prejudice might decline if the needs of competing groups were better fulfilled but that it is unlikely to vanish completely, as conflicts
of interest between groups are inevitable. In the same chapter it is also hypothesized that xenophobic sentiments can arise due to poverty and competition for various educational advantages or opportunities. For example, Xhosa-speaking students could perceive immigrants as competition that have no right to exist in South Africa. This seems to be exactly the case in the example that the student from Cameroon provided above and this example also ties in well with two research findings in Chapter two by Nhlapo (2001) and Sears et al. (1988). Nhlapo (2001) found that many South Africans actually perceive a relationship between their economic problems as well as other social problems that they face and the presence of immigrants in South Africa, whereas Sears et al. (1988) reached the conclusion that the prejudice that arises as a result of the conflict between competing groups is more severe towards the group that is the weaker group or the group that is the most threatened. It can definitely be said that the prejudice from local students towards the international, African students on the campuses of the university that this study explored is more severe than vice versa.

Rather startling, Alfa also told of alleged xenophobic plans and sentiments within the Student Representative Council (SRC). It should be clarified here that these statements have not been confirmed by any other student in this study and the researcher has also not sought to have these statements confirmed by any other party as the lived experience of xenophobia is the focus of this study and as such anything else is beyond the scope of the present study. The student said the following with regards to xenophobia within the SRC:

*The whole sentiments of xenophobia were also shared by the SRC of 2008. I heard of an internal unconfirmed report that some members of the SRC wanted to actually start violent xenophobia on campus. I heard that from people sharing meetings with SASCO (South African Students Congress) political groups. They wanted to export it (violent xenophobia) also here on campus. It made me start to prepare myself for it.*
This statement of alleged plans by the SRC may seem rather shocking and unbelievable initially but, when bearing in mind that Chapter three of this treatise mentions that earlier in 2008 an official local student group posted xenophobic and offensive posters around some of the university’s campuses, the statement becomes more believable and realistic. Especially as the student group was made to apologise by university management and did not do it on its own initiative.

Concerning the development of xenophobia in 2008 after the much publicised xenophobic riots elsewhere in South Africa, Alfa expressed the following:

*It was going to turn into dirty crime which in fact really did go into that process to some extent but we will not really associate that with xenophobia completely because in that same period there was a high increase in crime around Summerstrand (suburb in the Nelson Mandela Bay area) where students were targeted. Their laptops were stolen, their personal property were stolen such as cell phones and anything of value. They were really, really targeted and it was going to an extent where it was so violent and some international students, one guy from Norway and a girl from Ghana, and my friend from Angola, they came close to being killed during this whole process. So that is how dangerous the crime was. And those people actually doing that they are the same people from the township and they are motivated mainly by that whole sentiment, by that whole feeling of “the foreigners that come into our country they have a lot of money” so it is not really motivated by any other fact or passion than they are foreigners and they have a lot of money. Most of the time it was people from the township who committed the crimes but of course it was students who provided them with the information about who has what.*
Bravo, for his part, had only experienced xenophobia in one specific area but in a very
disheartening way that had left him disillusioned as he had tried in vain to do something
about it. His fellow foreign students have given up addressing the issue resulting in him
ending up alone in his struggle. He felt discriminated against on the sports field by people
from his own team, purely because he was not a South African citizen:

*In 2009 I played for a South African team and I could see that I was more able than
other players who played in the first team but I was not given opportunities simply
because I was the only non-South African. Actually that pained me so much that I
moved out of that team before the season finished.*

This research participant also experienced negative treatment from the Xhosa sport
officials who, in his opinion, favoured teams with local players when they were playing
against teams fielding international students. He stated:

*So these guys that run the league are mostly South Africans and they always try to
make sure that the international teams don’t win the league. They fix matches; they
put referees of their own that can influence our matches. Once I confronted the people
who were being xenophobic towards me. In a football match we could tell the referee
was favouring the South African team. So after the match I went to the organisers of
the league and I talked to them. But they said: “No, you are just saying that because
you lost. There’s no such thing and we are not favouring any team.” And this other
time, I wrote an email to the organiser and told him about this thing of favouring the
South African team. He said: “There’s no such thing. We try to be fair every time and
we treat every team equally.”*

Bravo also illustrated his feelings of isolation, despondence, and pessimism with the
following quote:
Most of my teammates feel the same but we are all foreigners so there’s nothing we can do. So we just try to do the best we can. We have never won the league but are leading the log this year. When we open the 2nd half of the season there will be so much drama I am sure of that. They will try to make sure we lose and don’t end up winning the league.

Bravo ended up feeling somewhat despondent and had all but given up doing anything to change the status quo: “So, there’s nothing more I can do. And I have been trying to get support from other people but they have given up. They think that there’s nothing that can be done.”

The experiences of Bravo can be related to several of the theories mentioned in Chapter two more specifically Social Identity Theory (SIT), Social Cognition Theory (SCT) and Realistic Group Conflict Theory (RGCT). Concerning SIT one example was provided in Chapter Two Experience of Xenophobia – Ethological Theories that related to sports teams and another that related to groups of different nationalities which illustrated that if in-group members consider themselves superior to out-group members they are likely to reinforce each other and elevate their self-esteem but that the opposite may also be the case id est if an in-group is a sports team that always loses and thinks that all the other teams (out-groups) are better than them, then a deterioration in self-esteem may be the result. Bravo could be said to have experienced both at the same time as he played on an international football team in a league where all the officials and the overwhelming majority, if not all, the players from the other teams were local South Africans. This way Bravo and his teammates fell victims to prejudice and discrimination that SIT relates as stemming from the local South Africans’ need to improve their self-esteem by putting down or discriminating against the football team consisting of international students. As De la Rey (1991) stated, a fundamental aspect of SIT concerns people’s need and motivation for a positive self-concept and Worchell (1996) added
that people will discriminate against out-groups and favour in-groups and that is what Bravo experienced as a football player in the local university league.

In terms of SCT, the university football league could also be a breeding ground for new students to become xenophobic if the behaviour as described by Bravo is indeed the norm. This is due to the reciprocal triadic dynamics of SCT as it is theoretically possible that a student, with no propensity whatsoever to being xenophobic, can end up being prejudiced towards and discriminating of foreigners. This can happen if environmental factors and people around this student live out xenophobia as if it was the most natural thing in the world and especially if this student somehow got a positive impression of or received positive reinforcement from one or more situations in which others were being subjected to xenophobia. And in the hype that can follow a football victory and the increase in self-esteem amongst members of the winning team this is exactly what can happen.

The relation to RGCT in this case is quite simple: The soccer teams compete for one first place in the league, one winner’s trophy, so the resource is scarce and prejudice is viewed as an inevitable consequence of competition amongst groups for scarce resources or power (Le Vine & Campbell, 1972).

5.6.3 Subtle xenophobia

As indicated earlier in this chapter, xenophobia can be experienced in different ways and not all are explicit and violent as the experiences often portrayed by mass media but that does not necessarily mean that the pain or suffering experienced by the victim is less significant. Speaking of his experiences in social settings during his studies and in his spare time and at the university residence where he resided, Delta had the following to say about how he experienced the reception he generally had from South Africans:
It's mainly just a cold shoulder I get from South Africans rather than overt, obvious xenophobia.

...To many of them you are not a South African, they see you as if you are from another planet and probably not even qualified to take that adjective “human being” or something the way they treat you. At times I greet them and regret that I did it because they don’t even greet back. For me, because of the way I was brought up, I cannot help but greeting someone when I walk past them but to greet someone and the person just looks at you and you get nothing in return it makes you wonder: “What have I done wrong?” They just look at you and things like that I find very uncomfortable. It’s quite discouraging and at times it can be frustrating because you are trying to break the barrier and feel welcome but it’s like in different languages and with a different body language they are trying to tell you that “you don’t belong here”. That was one of the reasons why I decided to move out of the residences after two and a half years.

Much like Bravo, Delta had also not read the specific negative reports concerning the xenophobia experienced by his countrymen that could have prepared him for the situation he would meet in South Africa. These feelings and sentiments of Delta are put into perspective by the finding of Nwandiko (1997) mentioned in Chapter three that Nigerians found living in South Africa akin to a culture shock, especially, since they had expected a heartfelt welcome and existence in South Africa due to Nigeria’s support for the ANC (African National Congress) during the struggle.

5.6.4 Structural violence

According to Bulhan (1985) violence can also be structural in nature and practiced by the rules, regulations and bureaucracy of institutions. This was also the case at the institution
where this study took place according to Charlie, who expressed that she felt discriminated against by bureaucratic regulations upheld by the university:

> For me to be accepted here as an international student there is a fee I have to pay which is much more expensive than those of local students. There are lots of things like I have to have a medical aid, I don’t get the opportunity of making a down payment. I have to pay my whole fees in full before I can even start registering.

These regulations do indeed seem to be unfair and the research participants’ indignation and dissatisfaction justified as it was mentioned in Chapter three that South Africa did agree to a SADC resolution in 1997 that international African students from the SADC countries would be treated as domestic students and not, for example, be charged higher study fees than local students which was previously the norm (MacGregor, 2007). The South African universities had 10 years from the time at which the agreement was signed to put this resolution into effect but that has not been enough time for the university that this study concerns (MacGregor, 2007). Bearing in mind that structural violence, in terms of Bulhan’s Theoretical Perspective on Violence (1985) as provided in Chapter two, is incorporated into a society’s accepted and established structures of relating to one another, dispensing welfare, and conducting everyday affairs, as well as distributing goods and services, the university’s conduct with charging students from SADC countries higher fees than domestic students can be said to be an act of structural violence. This is also supported in the consideration that structural violence sets out the parameters and systems of relations and practices that allow for daily living. Kotze (1978) stated that structural violence is merely underdevelopment of a society and an unequal distribution of material as well as immaterial resources resulting in great divides or a stratified society based on race or class. This is exemplified by Charlie not having the same payment structure made available to her as the local South African students have. Nqweni (2002) mentioned that structural violence might not be immediately visible but
in this instance it seems quite apparent. The subjective statements and experiences of Bravo with regards to his uphill battle for sports field success and the conduct of the soccer league organisers is also an example of structural violence but can be harder for an outsider to clearly identify. The structural violence concerning the higher study fees, however, seems obvious and unquestionable even for outsiders.

5.6.5 Xenophobia or racism?

Some of the research participants at times wondered whether the treatment, prejudice or discrimination to which they were subjected was rooted in racism rather than xenophobia. It is difficult to distinguish between these two phenomena at times and it is also possible for a person to be both the victim of xenophobia and the victim of racism at the same time. Alfa described a meeting with a white South African in the following way:

*Another day, and that is not really xenophobia but racism. I was walking home around 21h00 and a white gentleman was driving by in his car. I was holding my cellphone. He stopped his car and when I passed he asked me twice what I was doing in this area. First he was angry that I was in that area and later I realized that he was also drunk. When I realized that I decided to just let it be.*

Charlie made the following statement that illustrates her difficulties distinguishing between the two phenomena:

“...I don’t know the difference between xenophobia and racism maybe I confuse the two words because I tell myself those people are racist. The type of treatment they are giving us it is not always that I take it as a xenophobic one I also take it as a racist one.”
Overall, as mentioned, the lived xenophobic experiences of the research participants cover a wide spectrum of experiences interviews ranging from discrimination, being ignored or overlooked to prejudice and neglect by lecturers and rumours of criminal activities. The research participants were affected by these experiences in different ways; some took them to heart and were hurt whereas others relied on conflict resolution skills to deal with the adversity they faced or simply closed themselves off to the locals in order to protect themselves.

5.7 Reciprocal Bias/Vicious Cycle

Reciprocal bias/vicious cycle is defined by the Oxford Dictionaries (2011) as a sequence of reciprocal cause and effect in which two or more elements intensify and aggravate each other, leading inexorably to a worsening of the situation. During the analysis of the transcripts of the interviews it became apparent that one of the effects of the participants’ experiences of xenophobia has been in how it has affected their views and opinions of other cultural groups. This section aims to examine the reciprocal bias/vicious cycle that can be formed not only by the local cultural groups for foreign groups but also from the foreign groups towards local cultural groups. Following this discussion, the section then examines some of the personality characteristics that the participants identified within themselves to help them deal with xenophobic experiences and concludes with how these experiences acted as a catalyst for personal growth in some of the participants.

5.7.1 Xenophobia can cause bias on both sides

Bravo mentioned that his experiences had made him likely to generalise his negative impressions from the context of local university sport to society and South Africans as a whole. He made the following comment about what it had felt like to be subjected to xenophobia:
It has affected me on the way I view South Africans because it means I might not build some sort of hostility towards them but I might have some negative thoughts about them because of the experiences I told you about. I might come to grasp that it’s not just the people that play football but this is the way they are so I might not be able to relate well with other South Africans.

With that attitude it may very well be difficult for this student to have any meaningful relationships with South Africans in the future as his bias, prejudice and discrimination is likely to just lead to more bias, prejudice and discrimination being returned and the maintenance of a vicious cycle.

5.7.2 Personality characteristics influencing integration and the way xenophobia is dealt with

Alfa was of the opinion that overall his well-developed conflict resolution and social skills as well as mental strength had protected him from severe negative effects or consequences of xenophobia:

Xenophobia did not affect me too much emotionally. I deal with issues in my way. So personally it did not really affect my feelings or anything of that kind. And the other thing also, I tend to believe actually that I have better relationship with the local people than other foreigners…

It’s a personality issue I think in that case…

It was very, very scary for them (other students) but not really for me as I had faith that nothing was going to happen to me. And if something did I believe I have better conflict resolution skills than most people and that may be why I did not let that overcast my emotions. I analyzed it (the threat of xenophobic violence) and accepted the fact that if it happened I would have to deal with it. Also if I had to look out for others I could not really allow myself to be in that state of mind.”
This research participant seemed to have handled all his experiences of xenophobia in a strong manner but also seemed well aware that others with different personality characteristics may not have been able to cope as well as him.

5.7.3 Personal growth

Interestingly enough, although all research participants certainly seemed like they would have loved to have avoided their brushes with xenophobia, several of them readily provided examples of how their experiences had helped them grow, becoming stronger, or proving their superior, positive social and conflict resolution skills. Possibly, this is testament to the old saying that what does not kill you makes you stronger as most of the research participants in the present study did succeed in turning some negative experiences into personal gain.

Charlie mentioned that her experiences in South Africa have definitely increased her personal strength but she also became more reserved, pragmatic, and assertive in her dealings with South Africans. This is illustrated by the following statements:

I haven’t made friends with people from around here and not learnt their languages be it Xhosa or Afrikaans. I have told myself that I will communicate with those who want to communicate with me in English or I make friends with my fellow Sotho’s and there are a lot of Lesothos here so….. This has made me stronger because I’ve told myself that I know why I came here so I have to do whatever I can to get what I came here for and that is my degree.

“I am not here to make friends or whatsoever. I came here to study and that is how it is going to be. And lucky enough I can communicate with my lecturers in English. If I have to work in a group I make them understand that they do not have to talk another language with me other than English, so I have learnt to put my foot on the ground. It has made me stronger.
Only Bravo did not mention any form of positive outcome or useful lesson learnt as a result of the xenophobia, he felt he had experienced. This research participant also did not mention any innate resilience that had surfaced as a result of his move to South Africa and living in a country where he is a foreigner. Commenting on his overall lived experience of xenophobia in South Africa he stated:

*It has made me sad and disappointed because I believe we are all Africans, we helped South Africans— I am from Tanzania – and they had an ANC-camp in Tanzania, they were training there when they were fighting Apartheid. We helped them getting democracy, so I don’t see any reason for us to hate each other so I am just disappointed to a very large extent.*

If Bravo had read some of the reports, from The Human Rights Watch African Division (1998), mentioning how xenophobia in South Africa is particularly inappropriate, he would probably have been less disappointed and more prepared. As mentioned in Chapter three, much like this research participant is expressing in the above quote, The Human Rights Watch African Division (1998) was shocked to observe the hostility which South Africans directed at immigrants and refugees in need, particularly taking into consideration how many African nations assisted South African refugees and exiles during the struggle against Apartheid and also provided financial assistance to those opposing Apartheid. More than a decade later it seems very little has changed even at an institution that has respect for diversity, integrity and ubuntu as three of its core values, at least, according to Bravo as expressed in the quote above.

Very interestingly, Delta seemed to be the one who had arguably felt the most emotional pain from xenophobia of all the research participants but he was also the one, who seemed the most positive about South Africans and a possible permanent future in South Africa. The
following quotes describe the way in which Delta perceived his lived experiences having affected him and his emotional journey:

Initially, the first year, with the issues with the lecturer, trying to make friends and seeing how people just try to side line you I must confess I started to feel a bit discouraged and I started to rethink it was the wrong decision coming here. I even went to student counseling because I felt so lonely despite being in the midst of so many people. You feel you don’t belong and all that. It was part of the counsel given to me then that led me to join the peer help group. That group helped me a lot and the kind of friendship I’ve been able to make from that group really helped me to start having a think over.

Today I think I don’t have a problem except that I am also trying to learn the language and then when they find me speaking and trying they see the interest, it challenges them more and it kind of gives me the edge that ‘yeah this guy is really trying, he wants to be part of us and he is welcome’.

Personally I believe that since I am here I wouldn’t expect them to become Nigerians to meet me, I should be the one to adapt and mingle. At first I felt so lonely but now I have grown. No matter what anyone does now I just tell myself that he or she is only one person out of 40 million. Now I am friends with white and black, we are very good friends and we talk and chat and I am more relaxed now and I am even considering staying permanently.

So what I am saying in essence is that to me, xenophobic attack is not one way.

Friendship is a two way street, from my own experience, if I am trying to be hostile to you and you try to be friendly it is not going to work. Both have to come forward and since I am the foreigner in this land I feel it is okay that I take the first step towards adapting as the local will always have edge over me here.
The final statement from the interview with Delta is a heart-warming example of a foreigner who was able to overcome xenophobia by South Africans and make a concerted effort to integrate successfully into the South African society. Referring to when people ask him about returning to Nigeria, he replied with the following words: “When they ask me when I am going home, I tell them, I am home!”

It can thus be concluded that most of the research participants have experienced significant personal growth through the adversity they faced which has resulted in them feeling stronger and more confident.

5.8 Conclusion

As is evident from the interview excerpts from the individual interviews conducted by me, the researcher, in the present study, the individual, personal, lived experiences of xenophobia by the research participants resulted in a wide range of descriptions of various forms of psychological concern and pain related to those experiences. It should be noted that the individual, research participants’ perceptions in the specific local context of this study naturally have been affected by their subjective experiences. Others encountering similar incidents and people could very well have different experiences and impressions. Nevertheless, the findings of this research provide an elaborate, phenomenological view into the participants’ lived experiences of xenophobia represented in the main themes extracted from their individual interviews. The conclusions related to the findings presented in this chapter as well as the limitations and recommendations for future research in this field are presented in chapter six.
6.1 Introduction

This chapter will provide a concise summary of the present study and highlight the results and conclusions that can be reached based on the collected data. The implications of this study are also discussed and its limitations are clearly highlighted and recommendations for further studies are made.

6.2 Conclusions

The primary aim of this study was to describe the lived experience of xenophobia by international, African students at a university in the Nelson Mandela Metropole. This was achieved by interviewing three male students and one female student who lived up to a predetermined set of criteria for the research participants in this study. All participants had been living in the Nelson Mandela Metropole and studied at the tertiary institution that this study concerns for a minimum of two years. Individual research interviews were conducted and later transcribed and analysed by using Tesch’s 1990 model of content analysis.

It was evident from the research findings that the research participants, as a combined group, have lived through a wide range of xenophobic experiences ranging from people not being interested in them and ignoring them to outright prejudice and discrimination. It should be noted, though, that none of the students participating in this study experienced any violence related to xenophobia. It can also be concluded that the research participants personal, social skills, attitude and resilience have had a significant influence on not only the xenophobia they are exposed to but also the way they are able to cope with it and their opinion of South Africans and the country as a whole. The research findings supporting this conclusion are Delta’s saddening, emotional experiences and his resilience and attitude that helped him turn his situation around and also the staunch, reserved attitudes of Bravo and
Charlie who have been so disappointed with the way the local South Africans have treated them that they have given up on successfully integrating into South African society and prefer to stick to the company of other foreigners.

6.3 Limitations to the Study

First and foremost the present study is qualitative which prevents any form of generalisation of the findings of this study. Further, the research participants all arrived in South Africa in 2009 or earlier at a time when xenophobia had recently erupted in violent mob attacks and was being covered extensively by the South African and international media. This could have affected their attitude upon arrival as mentioned by some of the research participants as well as that of the local population. The possibility of international, African students having arrived in 2010 or 2011 experiencing a significantly different kind of sentiments from local South Africans cannot be excluded.

Despite its limitations, this study has still managed to produce vital information useful in understanding an international student’s subjective experience of xenophobia at a university in the Nelson Mandela Metropole.

6.4 Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the findings that were achieved in the present study a number of further research ideas and topics can be recommended. First and foremost, the presence of xenophobia in official spheres of the university that was alleged by the research participants could be investigated such as, for example, amongst staff, lecturers and the soccer league officials. Both a qualitative study with focus groups as well as a quantitative study applying a questionnaire could prove useful in this regard.

It could also be researched amongst all university students which initiatives they think could curb and diminish xenophobia on campus and ensure better integration, knowledge
sharing, co-operation and bonding amongst the international, African students, other international students and the local student population.

6.5 Conclusion

This final chapter of the present treatise outlined the findings of the study as well as the conclusions made on basis of said findings. The limitations of the present study were clearly described and recommendations for further research into the xenophobia that threatens the humanity of South African society as well as South Africa’s international reputation and co-operation with especially other African states but also the international community as a whole were made as well.


presented at the South African Sociological Association Conference in Durban, South Africa.


Johannesburg: Lexicon.


University Press.


Appendices

Appendix A: Letter of Recruitment

Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University

SOUTH CAMPUS

FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES / DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

Tel. +27 (0)41 504-2354   Fax. +27 (0)504-2101

s204031230@nmmu.ac.za

Dear Sir or Madam,

Currently I am conducting a study into xenophobia (hate or fear of strangers). This study was developed because of the integration problems experienced in recent years amongst local South Africans and African immigrants. The aims of this study are to understand and describe individual, international, African students’ lived experiences of xenophobia.

I am asking you to participate in an individual interview to discuss your experiences with regards to xenophobia. With your permission, the interview will be audio-recorded. Your responses during the interview will be strictly confidential, and individual responses will not be shared with any outsiders. The audio-recording will also be coded and your name will not be visible. The audio-recording will be stored in a safe place by the researcher.

After the research has been completed the audio-recording will be destroyed and all identifying information relating to your participation will be deleted or disguised in any findings of the research. You will also have the right to withdraw from the research project at any time and your decision to be part of this research study is completely voluntary.

Your help in this research project is greatly appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

Thomas Sorensen         Prof. C. N. Hoelson       Dr. Z. C. Nqweni
Intern Psychologist     Supervisor                  Co-Supervisor
Appendix B: Information and Informed Consent Form

D/497/05
ETHICS CONSENT FORM

NELSON MANDELA METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

| Title of the research project | The lived experience of xenophobia within a South African university. |
| Reference number              | 204031230 (Student number) |
| Principal investigator        | Thomas Sorensen             |
| Contact telephone number      | 041 504 2453               |
|                              | (private numbers not advisable) |

| Initial |  |

A.1 I HEREBY CONFIRM AS FOLLOWS:

1. I, the participant, was invited to participate in the above-mentioned research project study that is being undertaken by Thomas Sorensen of the Department of Psychology in the Faculty of Health Sciences of the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University
2. **The following aspects have been explained to me, the participant:**

2.1 **Aim:** The researcher is studying the lived experiences of xenophobia within a South African university.

The information will be used to compile a treatise, publish an article and if the opportunity arises, it will be presented at a conference.

2.2 **Procedures:** I understand that I will be participating in an individual interview and that it will be audio-recorded.

2.3 **Possible benefits:** As a result of my participation in this study the knowledge of and awareness of the experiences of xenophobia will be expanded.

2.4 **Confidentiality:** My identity will not be revealed in any discussion, description or scientific publications by the researcher.

2.5 **Access to findings:** Any new information/or benefit that develops during the course of the study will be shared with me, by means of a report of the findings, if I so request.

2.6 **Voluntary participation/refusal/discontinuation:**

My participation is voluntary.

3. I was given the opportunity to ask questions and all these questions were answered satisfactorily.

4. No pressure was exerted on me to consent to participation and I understand that I may withdraw at any stage without penalisation.

5. Participation in this study will not result in any additional cost to me.

<p>| A.2 | I HEREBY VOLUNTARILY CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ABOVE-MENTIONED PROJECT |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signed/confirmed at</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>on 20</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signature or right thumb print of participant</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Signature of witness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full name of witness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. STATEMENT BY RESEARCHER
I, Thomas Sorensen declare that

- I have explained the information given in this document to __________________________ and/or his representative

- he was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions;

- this conversation was conducted in __________________________ Afrikaans English X Xhosa Other __________________________ and no translator was used

- I have detached Section D and handed it to the participant YES NO

Signed/confirmed at __________________________ on __________________________ 20 __________________________

Signature of witness

Signature of interviewer

Full name of witness

C. IMPORTANT MESSAGE TO PARTICIPANT

Dear Participant,

Thank you for your participation in this study. Should, at any time during the study:

- an emergency arise as a result of the research, or
- you require any further information with regards to the study

Kindly contact me at telephone number 084 555 9986

Thomas Sorensen
Researcher/Intern Psychologist
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Home Language</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Nationality</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registration status</td>
<td>Full-time, Part-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation</td>
<td>(Do you stay in a university residence or off campus?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic status</td>
<td>year level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How long have you</td>
<td>been living in South Africa?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D: Interview Structure

1. Introduction and welcome.

2. Explanatory Preamble – background and reason for study.
   This study was developed because of the integration problems experienced in recent years amongst local South Africans and African immigrants. This study aims to understand and describe the lived experiences of xenophobia. With your permission, the interview will be audio-recorded. Your responses during the interview will be strictly confidential, and individual responses will not be shared with any outsiders. The tape recording will also be coded and your name will not be visible. The tape will be stored in a locked facility at the university.

   After the research has been completed the audio-recording will be destroyed and all identifying information relating to your participation will be deleted or disguised in any findings of the research. You will also have the right to withdraw from the research project at any time and your decision to be part of this research study is completely voluntary.

3. Interview Questions:
   3.1. Kindly fill out the biographical questionnaire.
   3.2. Can you tell me when you started to think about coming to South Africa – what were the reasons for you moving here and how did your move come about?
   3.3. What was it like for you when you first arrived here?
   3.4. Can you tell me about your xenophobic experiences?
   3.5. Please explain to me, how it affected you and what you felt?

4. Thank you. If you need to discuss anything further or to debrief please let me know.