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“I came to South Africa thinking it is a rainbow nation”: A study of attitudes towards xenophobia at the University of Johannesburg

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June 2018
DECLARATION

I, Musa Emmanuel Ngobeni, declare that the contents of this thesis represent my own unaided work, and that the thesis has not previously been submitted for academic examinations towards any qualification. Furthermore, it represents my own conclusions and not necessarily those of the University of Johannesburg.

_________________________  _______________________
Signed                      Date
DEDICATION

I would like to thank my wife for her constant support and belief in me throughout the course of my study. Without you pestering me to go back to school after completing my Honours degree, I would never have garnered the courage to continue with my studies. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my mother and my four siblings for their constant encouragement and prayers. Many thanks also go to Professor Pier Paolo Frassinelli and Dr. Selina Linda Mudavanhu for their supervision and guidance which kept me going even in the hardest times. Lastly, thank you to my colleagues and friends at the School of Communication’s research community led by the distinguished Professor Keyan Gray Tomaselli. Finally, to the author and the perfecter of my faith, you showed yourself mighty again.
ABSTRACT

South Africa finds itself facing a dilemma: on one hand it is a rainbow nation composed of various racial groups; on the other hand, it faces an upsurge of xenophobia which has attracted public attention in the country and abroad. Xenophobia is described as “the fear or hatred of foreigners or strangers personified in discriminatory attitudes and behaviour that often result in violence, violation of human rights and exhibitions of hatred” (Mogekwu, 2005: 5-6). The literature on xenophobia suggests that the phenomenon is caused by issues that include poverty, unemployment, and scapegoating, as well as relative deprivation or remnants of apartheid. Although outbreaks of xenophobic attacks have been common in the lower end of the income-generation spectrum, the literature shows that in recent years international students in institutions of higher learning have increasingly become victims at the hands of South African citizens.

Within this context, this study explores how local and international students at the University of Johannesburg’s Auckland Park Kingsway Campus articulate their attitudes and perceptions towards xenophobia. The Fanonian theory of national consciousness and critical race theories are used to develop a theoretical framework for the analysis. I argue that the patterns of colonialism and racism are reoccurring and manifesting themselves within South African society. Through xenophobia, previously oppressed black South Africans are espousing the master-slave relationship with the so-called Makwerekwere and the Amandia. Data was gathered from a sample of 30 students at the University of Johannesburg’s Auckland Park Kingsway Campus using interviews. These data were analysed through qualitative research methods.

The findings of the study support the argument that contextual particularities need to be taken into consideration in studying xenophobia. It is concluded that though most students argue that xenophobia does not exist at the University of Johannesburg (UJ), there is still a substantial number of students who believe that it does – although in subtle forms, including language barriers, discrimination, aggression, negative attitudes, and abuse. The findings of this study show that issues of xenophobia are normally experienced by students who are black and are coming from elsewhere on the African continent, as opposed to white international students from Europe, the Americas, and Asia, who are considered favourably. It is recommended that future studies of xenophobia at higher education institutions consider quantitative methods that
look at a wider population of students. It is further recommended that further research interrogates the reason why anti-immigrant attitudes are generally aimed against black international students from Africa. This thesis also recommends that the entire UJ community needs to be educated about the presence of international students and be encouraged to welcome them. Another recommendation is that UJ must strongly condemn and show intolerance for xenophobic practices in both policy and action. Some international students who participated in the research expressed relief in talking about their experiences with xenophobia and said that they were not aware that they could use the University’s counselling services (PsyCaD) available to them. This thesis, therefore, recommends that international students be alerted to the counselling services and be motivated to use them for support. Furthermore, it is recommended that UJ should organise more integrated events where international and South African students can interact and build intercultural bonds.

**Key Words:** xenophobia; Afrophobia; Negrophobia; racism; anti-immigrant attitudes; University of Johannesburg; international students.
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACMS: African Centre for Migration and Society
APK: University of Johannesburg Auckland Park Kingsway Campus
ANC: African National Congress
CBD: Central Business District
CODESRIA: Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa
COSATU: Congress of South African Trade Unions
CorMSA: Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa
MMP: The Media Monitoring Project
DA: Democratic Alliance
DHA: Department of Home Affairs
EFF: Economic Freedom Fighter
HOD: Head of Department
HRW: Human Rights Watch
HSRC: Human Sciences Research Council
IDASA: Institute for Democratic Alternatives in South Africa
IFP: Inkatha Freedom Party
RAU: Rand Afrikaans University
SAMP: South African Migration Programme
SAHRC: South African Human Rights Commission
SAMP: Southern African Migration Project
SAPS: South African Police Service
TWR: Technikon Witwatersrand
PGAP: Pew Global Attitudes Project
SANDAF: South African National Defence Force
UJ: University of Johannesburg
US: United States
WCAR: World Conference against Racism
VU: Vista University
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Chapter One: Introduction and background

1.1 Background

In 1994, South Africa became a new nation borne out of democratic elections. For many people, including those of foreign origin, this was supposed to mark the end of discrimination. Apartheid had functioned as an instrument for defining black South Africans as second-class citizens and “aliens” subjected to the same legislation that governed foreign nationals in the country (Crush and Peberdy, 1998b: 22). However, post-1994 intolerance and aggression continue to mark the “Rainbow Nation”. The political transition to democracy did not end the pervasive level of discrimination. Rather, it “brought about a range of new discriminatory practices and victims, and one such victim is the foreigner” (Harris, 2002: 169). Landau, for example, states that foreigners in South Africa are regarded as “groups to be feared, disdained and occasionally pitied and exploited” (2008b: 105). Concurring with Landau, Matsinhe also observes that since the end of apartheid “the figure of the Amakwerekwere has been constructed and deployed in South Africa to render Africans from outside the borders orderable as the nation’s bogeyman” (2011: 295).

Although the present levels of xenophobia in South Africa may be shocking, the phenomenon is not new. Instead, it is a “worldwide phenomenon that is orchestrated by various factors, mainly associated with social and economic conditions and circumstances, both locally and internationally” (Tshishonga, 2015: 163). In South Africa, xenophobic attacks aimed at foreign nationals have been documented even before South Africa became a new democratic country, thus indicating that instead of being a new phenomenon, xenophobia is an extension of other forms of violence and intolerance. For example, Misago notes that foreigners have been harassed, attacked and even killed for a long time in South Africa – a country known as a recipient state of people from the rest of the continent, as well as other parts of the world (2015: 13).

Discriminatory attitudes against foreign nationals particularly target those coming from other African countries (see De Jager and Hopstock, 2011). Moyo and Adewal capture the manner in which foreign nationals from different countries are treated in South Africa. They write: “White people who come to South Africa are not seen as taking local jobs. Australians, Americans or even white Zimbabweans or white Kenyans are welcomed with open arms,
because they are seen as business people, bringing in investment” (Moyo and Adewal, 1999: 4). Within this context, some authors, such as Evert (2011: 7), Mngxitama (2008: 195), and Gqola (2008: 213) employ the terms “Negrophobia” or “Afrophobia” to refer to the racialised xenophobia aimed at black African foreign nationals, which they view as a more accurate term to describe xenophobia in South Africa.

In the context that xenophobic attitudes are strongly entrenched in South African society, it is not entirely surprising that on 11 May 2008 South Africa was in the international spotlight following a wave of xenophobic violence characterised by an intensity and fierceness reminiscent of apartheid bloodbaths (Gopal, 2013: 128). Over a period of two weeks, “violence spread across townships in Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg and left 62 people dead, hundreds injured, tens of thousands displaced and a lot of foreign-owned property destroyed” (Hassim et al., 2008: 1-2). The most affected groups were foreigners from neighbouring states, such as Mozambique and Zimbabwe, but migrants from as far afield as Nigeria and Somalia were also attacked (Gopal, 2013: 128). Strikingly, some South Africans from smaller ethnic groups (i.e. Tsonga, Venda, and Pedi) were also victims alongside Somalis, Bangladeshis, Pakistanis, Ethiopians, and Eritreans.

Since then, various explanations for the xenophobic attacks have been offered in the literature. For Matsinhe, “loathing of foreign nationals – e.g. blaming them for social ills such as crime and unemployment – is the manifestation of frustration by the poor and unemployed citizens” (2011: 297). Conversely, Ritacco proposes that part of the answer lays in South Africa’s history, contending that hostility towards foreign nationals ensues from the prolonged isolation of South Africans from the rest of the world (2009: 1). The biocultural hypothesis, on the other hand, locates xenophobia at the “level of visible difference or otherness, i.e. in terms of physical-biological factors and cultural differences exhibited by African foreigners in the country” (Harris, 2002: 169-184). For instance, Nigerians and Congolese are identified as the “other” because of their physical features, clothing style and inability to speak indigenous languages (Morris, 1998: 1125). Other authors, locate xenophobia or the fear of “other” within the ambit of South African nationalism propagated by state discourse (see, for instance, Neocosmos, 2010: 5; McKinley, 2008: 22-24). They argue that this nationalism takes a form which is exclusive of “foreigners” who are perceived as a threat to national unity and held liable for all the socio-economic challenges in the country. Added to this, it could be argued that xenophobia could be attributed to the lack of political education on the part of South
Africans with regards to African politics, including the contribution made by other African nations to the liberation of South Africa.

In practice, foreign nationals in South Africa are “generally merged into a single category of illegal aliens and viewed as potential contaminators of the physical and metaphysical metaphorical body of the nation” (Peberdy, 2009: 158). Bosch and Peucker (2008: 90) argue that this arises from the fact that South Africans have “unfounded or unverified fears, and the inclination to stereotype foreigners as the source of socioeconomic problems in their country”. The state, however, has in so many years “denied the existence of xenophobic tendencies” within South African society (African Union, 2007: 377). In addition, Misago argues that besides denial, “the state has allowed a culture of impunity in relation to perpetrators of xenophobic violence to prevail” (2011: 96). This notwithstanding that South Africa has a set of rules that go far in guaranteeing international migrants’ rights and protection (Landau et al., 2010: 222).

Furthermore, those tasked with the responsibility to protect foreign nationals are often culpable for abusing them. For example, in February 2013 a Mozambican citizen, Emidio Macia died in police custody after “being assaulted by the police who then dragged him for meters attached to the back of their police van to Daveyton Police Station, where he was tortured and died a few days later” (Parker, 2013). Musuva also notes that those who qualify for documentation struggle to get it through legal routes because of “bureaucratic inefficiencies” (2015: 3). Consequently, many migrants resort to avoiding the legal framework completely by “purchasing fraudulent documents from Home Affairs officials or going undocumented” (Hoag, 2010: 208).

1.2 “Extreme dislike or fear of foreigners”: Conceptualising xenophobia

The dictionary term “xenophobia” is described as “an extreme dislike or fear of foreigners, their customs, their religions”, and so on (Cambridge Advanced Learners Dictionary, 2005). It has its roots in fear – literally. According to Procter et al. (1978: 1605), the term xenophobia is derived from the Greek words “xeno”, meaning stranger or foreigner, and “phobia” meaning fear. At the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance held in South Africa (Durban), xenophobia was defined as “attitudes, prejudices and behaviour that reject, exclude and often vilify persons, based on the perception
that they are outsiders or foreigners to the community, society or national identity” (United Nations, 2001). Hopstock and de Jager (2011) also refer to the definition of xenophobia used by the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC): the SAHRC (1998) interprets xenophobia as “the deep dislike of non-nationals by nationals of a recipient state”. In line with such views, authors across academic disciplines have understood xenophobia as an unreasonable fear, hatred, dislike, and negative attitudes and perceptions aimed at foreign nationals (McDonald and Jacobs, 2005; Nyamnjoh, 2006; Lesetedi, 2007; Reynolds and Vine, 1987). This definition, however, is limited as it does not acknowledge physical violence as a form of xenophobia (Harris, 2001: 170; Hook and Eagle, 2002: 177). It is more accurate to broaden the scope of the definition of xenophobia by explaining that it is also a violent practice which may result in physical harm. Mokegwu does precisely that in his pivotal study of xenophobia. He defines xenophobia as “the fear or hatred of foreigners or strangers: it is embodied in discriminatory attitudes and behaviour, and often culminates in violence, abuses of all types, and exhibitions of hatred” (2005: 7). The latter definition is much broader and demonstrates that xenophobia in an intricate way is akin to the issues of ethnocentrism, nationalism and racism (Patsika, 2015: 16; Mokegwu, 2005: 7).

1.3 Motivation and significance of the study

The motivation to conduct this study emanates from an encounter that I had in 2013 with a group of five international students at the University of Johannesburg’s Kingsway Campus while filming a documentary on “culture-shock” for an audio-visual project. In a series of interviews, the international students communicated their feelings of anxiety and uncertainty in dealing with an unfamiliar environment where for instance dozens of innocent refugees and asylum seekers have been killed, simply because they were foreigners (Mogekwu, 2005: 10). The students also expressed their clashes with local South African students characterised by racism, xenophobia and other related intolerances. From this point, my interest in the issue of discrimination and how it is experienced, legitimated, and acted upon, gradually developed.

From studying the existing literature on the subject of xenophobia in South Africa, I observed that in general, scholarly attention has been given to xenophobia in South African townships and inner-city areas, where most of the xenophobic incidents are more violent in nature (see, for example, Mamdani 1996; Landau, 2011; Neocosmos, 2011). Moreover, it emerged from the literature review that some scholars and activists who have analysed xenophobia in higher
education contexts have tended to examine the attitudes of both local and international students towards xenophobia separately (see Patsika 2015; Shindondola, 2008; Buthelezi, 2009). Thus, this study contributes to existing literature on xenophobia in higher education by exploring how both local and international students at the University of Johannesburg articulate their attitudes and perceptions towards xenophobia. It further considers the broader context basis that influences these attitudes, which is a gap in existing literature. In addition, this study adds to the current literature on xenophobia in South Africa because it analyses xenophobia within the higher education context, where the phenomenon has been found to manifest in a subtle manner (see Singh, 2013: 90).

Another major contribution that this study makes to existing scholarship on xenophobia is that it moves beyond mainstream theories that have been elaborated by scholars to explain xenophobia in the country and on the continent by paying attention to how the respondent themselves theorise the phenomenon of xenophobia (see Chapter 5).

Migration scholars Berianne and de Hass argue that though many studies have focused on “African migration to the global North, the reality is that most African migration is to other African countries” (2012: 1). By paying attention to African migration to South Africa and xenophobia in South Africa, this study contributes towards filling a gap recognised by other migration scholars (see Musuva, 2015: 4). The value of the current study also lies in its comparison of the views of two different groups of students who are part of a multicultural university which strives for an all-embracing student experience and promotes integration and tolerance of different people regardless of race or nationality (Patsika, 2015: 12). These groups were studied together as an attempt to close the existing gap in the literature and to provide a starting point for future studies on xenophobia in a higher education context.

While the Fanonian theory of the pitfalls of national consciousness and the critical race theories employed to frame this study have been used before to analyse xenophobia, the combination of these seemingly distinct yet related theories is innovative. Their combined use augments our understanding of xenophobia in a post-colonial state like South Africa, where issues such as racism, discrimination, and intolerance remain pervasive. In this study, they are interrogated to learn how they intersect with everyday lived experiences of the selected participants.
This study is undertaken with the understanding that xenophobia is a phenomenon experienced in many countries throughout the world. Therefore, it was important to ensure that though this study focuses mainly on South Africa, the questions that are asked could easily be asked by scholars in other contexts researching how participants articulate their perceptions and attitudes towards xenophobia.

1.3.1 Why the study matters to communication studies

This study belongs to the field of communication studies because it examines how experiences of xenophobia are rationalised, theorised and communicated by local and international students at the University of Johannesburg. In that sense, this study looks at communication as theorised by Robert Craig. According to Craig, “communication is a primary process through which human life is experienced: communication constitutes reality” (2006: 34-35). By using interviews to understand the views of the participants, this study draws on the social constructionist approach which maintains that meaning arises from social interactions that people have with each other (see Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008). In other words, the “meaning is not inherent in objects: it’s not pre-existent in a state of nature, but negotiated through the use of language, signs, and symbols” (Blumer, 1969: 2).

In their uniqueness, humans have the power and freedom to use communication to construct the social worlds they inhabit. The phenomenon of xenophobia in South Africa shows that our constructed worlds lead us to perceive others in a particular way and create categories of people, events or ideas (Stewart and Kowaltzke, 2007). Miller (2006) warns that the social world we create confines us. Making a similar argument, Thomas and Thomas argue that “once people define a situation as real, it is real in its consequences” (1928: 572). For example, if many people in South Africa believe the rumour that “foreigners” are taking jobs from South Africans and it happens that some foreigner nationals have jobs while some South Africans don’t, then this might be seen as the truth even though it might have begun as a rumour. Those who believe in the rumour may be discounting the role played by foreigners in creating jobs and contributing to the country due to the fact that they are confined to a single truth.

On that note, Mogekwu contends that xenophobes “do not have adequate information and/or knowledge about the people they hate, and since they do not know how to deal with such
people, they see them as a threat”. In other words, the fear that constitutes xenophobia emanates from ignorance caused by a lack of information and confinement to a particular reality (2005: 8). To address this predicament, Mogekwu suggests that people must be exposed to intercultural communication in order to understand, appreciate and accommodate members of other nationalities. He adds that the mass media, as one of the sources of this information, must do its part to “increase the amount of information intended to enhance intercultural understanding” (2005: 8). History shows that in the right circumstances humans are of course able to build common conceptual grounds, to work towards common goals and to generally commune with people who are different (Chasi, 2016: 14). This is also captured by Mead (1962), who adds that communication is the most humanizing activity humans engage in.

1.4 Problem statement and focus

Post-apartheid South Africa in recent times has exhibited “high levels of xenophobia towards fellow African citizens, subjecting them to different forms of prejudice and discrimination” (Adjai and Lazaridis, 2013: 192). According to studies conducted by the Human Sciences and Research Council (HSRC) in 2008, South Africa is considered an extremely xenophobic society (HSRC, 2008), and this has been confirmed by other attitudinal research studies utilising methodologies that permits international comparison (see Crush, 2001; Crush et al., 2008; Miller, 2012). For example, the public opinion data from SAMP on South Africa demonstrated that the majority of South Africans believe that “immigrants create unemployment and drain the country’s economic resources” (Crush and Pendleton, 2007: 71-72). Unfortunately, anti-immigrant attitudes as observed in 2008 have morphed into a hysteria of killing, assaulting, raping, looting and destruction of homes.

Xenophobia in South Africa takes on a racial form. It is aimed mainly at black African foreign nationals from neighbouring Southern African countries, such as Zimbabwe and Mozambique, as well as West African migrants from Nigeria, and East African migrants from Somalia. Reports about the looting of Pakistani-owned and Chinese-operated shops, nonetheless, “suggest a more general form of othering” (Hadland, 2008: 17). Meanwhile, the fact that some South Africans have also been attacked because they were thought to be “foreigners” indicates that xenophobia in South Africa carries certain tribal and chauvinistic undertones. As Neocosmos (2010: 137) observes, South Africa has reached a point where “native foreigners” are methodically produced inside their country of birth (Neocosmos, 2010: 137).
According to Harris, foreign nationals leave “their countries to settle in South Africa due to lack of job opportunities in their home countries, the desire to pursue studies in South Africa, and fear of political persecution” (2010: 120). Their presence in South Africa, particularly those of black African descent, is often met with intense intolerance. As Cilliers explains, “the majority of South Africans believe that immigration and migration have a negative impact on the country’s economy and resources” (2008: 65). It is worth noting, however, that anti-immigrant sentiments are not only expressed by the public; they are also echoed by the political elite, even though the latter are not always overt. This elite adopts “political rhetoric that manipulates the citizenry’s insecurities to amass political mileage without careful considerations of the enduring effects on xenophobic societal attitudes and public perceptions” (Tsheola et al., 2015: 238). For example, former Home Affairs Minister and leader of the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), Mangosuthu Buthelezi once stated that “all Nigerian immigrants are criminals and drug traffickers” (Tella and Ogunnubi, 2014: 154). Unsurprisingly, these anti-immigrant attitudes communicated from the corridors of power have spilled over into antipathy towards immigrant communities among public officials such as the police. These officials have been “accused of using rudimentary and crude archaic techniques for identifying and apprehending people they thought are illegal immigrants, such as dark skin colour, hairstyle, clothes, and accent, among other identification methods” (Tsheola et al., 2015: 239).

What is most disturbing about the behaviour of the police, and government authorities more broadly, is how the “old racist ideas have seemingly persevered in the new era” (Gordon, 2015: 505).

The fear of crime, diseases, stealing of jobs and a shortage of resources are some of the popular explanations for anti-immigrant sentiments. Xenophobia seems to be triggered by a fight for “scarce resources and resentment towards immigrants who are supposedly taking jobs, houses and women, spreading diseases and committing crimes” (Monkhe, 2012: 4). This narrative often makes use of the Fanonian logic that the oppressed bereft of other alternatives turn their aggression inwards (see Gibson, 2012). In the most recent African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) report, the authors of the report assert that “socio-economic circumstances precipitate some resentment towards foreigners who in certain sections of the labour market seem to be favoured by employers because they work hard for lower wages” (2014: 112).

Since 2008, more sporadic outbreaks of xenophobic attacks have occurred. According to Els (2014: 4), these attacks are symptomatic of how a country’s history manages to re-enact itself
in an immediate present and future. Richardson and Wodak refer to this phenomenon as “the specific past [that] impinges on the present and on future visions in a huge range of societies” (2009: 232). In that sense, the South African society is not immune to this phenomenon. The vestiges of apartheid continue to serve as reminders of a tumultuous political past (Els, 2014: 4). As already outlined, in South Africa it is not only those who are illegal in the country who get to experience xenophobia but also those who are in the country lawfully like international students (Monkhe, 2012: 2). This thesis, therefore, seeks to advance the theorisation of xenophobia in South Africa by examining how the attitudes of both local and international students with regards to xenophobia are communicated at the University of Johannesburg Kingsway Campus. The justification for focusing on a university context is that although there has been extensive coverage of xenophobic cases including immigrants and local South Africans in general, fewer studies in the academic space have sought to investigate whether the reported forms of xenophobia in the society at large are reproduced in a tertiary education environment. Moreover, while there is a concern in the higher education sector about the safety of foreign students and academics, this is essentially centred on their lives outside campuses instead of universities. It is this void that encouraged me to focus my research in a university. Beyond that, various studies have reported incidences of xenophobia in academic spaces (see De Klerk and Radloff, 2012; Brebner, 2005; Coulby, 1997; Shindondola, 2008) and although their findings are significant, this study sought to continue with the analysis in the same context to discern if the study will produce different findings and offer new insights.

As Patsika notes, matters that give rise to xenophobia should be continuously researched with the objective of finding thorough explanations and reasons that can be applied to the particular period in history as well as to a specific context (2015: 2). The present reality is that migration is an essential part of the process of social change everywhere (Castles, 2017: 16). In 2008, the United Nations estimated that 72% of international migrants to South Africa came from African countries (United Nations, 2008). In 2009, the African Centre for Migration and Society (ACMS) estimated that the total number of migrants ranged between 1.2 million and 1.7 million, or less than 4% of South Africa’s population (Landau, Polzer and Kabwe-Segatti, 2010: 220). This influx of foreign nationals who have left their countries for various reasons, such as religious and ethnic persecution, socioeconomic and political exclusion, or simply out of a desire to spend time, study, work or live in another country, is often met with negative responses from the nationals of the host country (Musuva, 2015: 1).
1.5 Research objectives and purpose of the study

The primary aim of this study is to explore how local and international students at the University of Johannesburg’s Kingsway Campus articulate their attitudes and perceptions towards xenophobia. The secondary goal or aim is to describe the way xenophobia intersects with the everyday lived experience of university students. The research assumes that it is evident that migration is here to stay and is surely part of modern life. In South Africa, though, this phenomenon has not been welcomed with open arms, as it has conjured xenophobic attitudes and practices, and has also led to the construction of some migrants as the “other”. It is within that context that this study has selected both local and international students as primary research participants to interrogate how both groups articulate their views towards xenophobia.

It should be mentioned that the term “local students” is used in this thesis to refer to those registered students who are identified as South Africans. On the other hand, the term “international student” is used in this study to refer to all registered students who are not identified as South African citizens. Of course, it is acknowledged that in practice the definition and understanding of both terms is not simple and can be a source of tension between those identified as local and those perceived as international.

1.6 Research questions

The research objectives were researched through the following research questions:

a) How do local and international students at the University of Johannesburg articulate their attitudes and perceptions towards xenophobia?

b) Why do selected local and international students at the University of Johannesburg communicate the kind of attitudes and perceptions they do about xenophobia?

c) In what way does xenophobia intersect with the everyday lived experience of the selected university students?
1.7 The context: The University of Johannesburg

This study begins by considering the context of the study before embarking on the process of interpreting the meaning embedded in the transcribed interviews and make sense of the manner in which the interviewees articulate their views (Terre Blanche, Kelly and Durrheim, 1999). According to Badat, “the social inequalities in South Africa are embedded and reflected in all spheres of social life, including the higher education system” (2010: 4). In 1994, South Africa’s new democratic government committed itself to “transforming higher education as well as the inherited apartheid social and economic structure and to institutionalising a new social order” (Badat, 2010: 4). This would include, among other things, “the merging of universities and colleges in different regions to increase efficiency and address issues of racial balance” (Patsika, 2015: 10). The University of Johannesburg (UJ) is one of those universities that were created from the merging of white and black institutions into a racially integrated institution. In ways that are consistent with its transformation strategy, in the preamble of its Institutional Transformation Plan the University of Johannesburg declares (2011: 4):

Transformation is woven into the social, intellectual and structural fabric of the University of Johannesburg. [UJ] owes its existence to the agenda of the national government to achieve transformation of Higher Education in South Africa through […] merging and restructuring of existing higher education institutions embedded in the apartheid ideology. Its character and identity reflect the vibrancy and the social, ethnic and class diversity of the Johannesburg metropolis, and its students and employees are as diverse as the society it serves […].

UJ was founded on the 1st of January 2005 after a merger between the Rand Afrikaans University (RAU), Technikon Witwatersrand (TWR), and two campuses of Vista University – East Rand (Daveyton) and Soweto campuses (University of Johannesburg, 2015). According to Binikos and Rugunanan, RAU and TWR were generally white universities while Vista was a black university for urban black people (2015: 50). Prior to the merger, the Daveyton and Soweto campuses of the former Vista University had been incorporated into RAU in January 2004, followed by a merger of RAU and TWR to form UJ on the 1st of January 2005 (Goldman and Tonder, 2006: 149). The merging of these three different institutions gives UJ an opportunity to position itself as an “African university which reflects and accommodates the cultural and linguistic diversity of its clients” (Inggs and Meintjes, 2009: 229). The university has four campuses situated in the city of Johannesburg – namely, Auckland Park Kingsway Campus, Auckland Park Bunting Road Campus, Doornfontein Campus and Soweto Campus.
In the year 2017, the University of Johannesburg enrolled 3395 international students across its four campuses. According to Govender (University of Johannesburg Corporate Governance Officer), the majority of these students came from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries, with Zimbabwe as the major “source” country (2484 students), followed by the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Swaziland, Lesotho, and Namibia. Apart from SADC countries, UJ also receives students from other African countries such as Nigeria which led the charts in that category with 224 students enrolled in 2017 (Govender, 2018). According to Mda, the “factors which have influenced the interest in SA universities by students from the rest of the continent include close geographical proximity, historical connections, language, and perceived high quality of education, accessibility, affordability, and high employability rate of SA graduates in their home countries” (2010: 1).

Outside of the African continent, UJ receives students from Asia, with India as the main source of Asian students at UJ since 2011 followed by Pakistan and China. The significant presence of Indians in South Africa could be traced back to the “two waves of Indian emigration to South Africa; the first being indentured workers brought by the British to work in the sugar cane fields of Natal and the second was in the form of paid passengers, who were mainly Gujarati Muslim and Hindu businessmen travelling to Africa” (Khan, 2017: 1). Currently, Durban is the largest Indian metropolis outside of India and this has often provoked the debate on whether South African Indians should move towards a universal South African identity or retain their Indian identity (Khan, 2017: 1).

In addition, UJ receives students from European countries such as Turkey, which in 2017 had the highest number of students enrolled in this institution (27), followed by Germany (14), and France (7) (Govender, 2018). Meanwhile, UJ is also home to students from the Americas, with the United States of America (USA) leading the region in enrolments (29) in 2017, followed by Canada (5), and Brazil (2) (Govender, 2018). Other regions that enrolled students at UJ in 2017 include Australasia (Govender, 2018). According to Govender (2018), the enrolments of international students are increasing in all the respective regions, but the reasons for the increase remain unknown.
1.7.1 The centre of interest: Auckland Park Kingsway Campus

Auckland Park Kingsway Campus, also known as APK, is the largest and most populated of the four campuses of the University of Johannesburg. It is the headquarters of the administration and governance body of the university. This campus attracts students from different provinces in the country and international students from within and without the African continent. APK has a unique academic profile but shares with the other UJ campuses the objective to offer high-quality education (University of Johannesburg, 2018).

1.8 Structure of the dissertation

This dissertation is composed of six chapters. Chapter one provides the background, rationale, problem statement, research objectives, research questions, and the context of the study. Chapter two offers a review and critique of the literature on xenophobia in South Africa and also in the context of South African institutions of higher learning. Chapter three presents the theoretical framework used to frame the dissertation. The theories include Fanon’s pitfalls of national consciousness and critical race theory. Chapter four outlines the research methodology and design utilised in conducting the research on how local and international students articulate their attitudes towards xenophobia at the University of Johannesburg Kingsway Campus. Chapter five presents the analysis and interpretation of the data. Chapter six provides a summary of the findings, recommendations, and conclusion.
Chapter Two: Literature review

2.1 Introduction

Since the transition to democracy, South Africa has seen a considerable escalation in number of migrant population from other African states. Shindondola (2003: 18) notes that this “increase has been accompanied by a substantial growth of xenophobia and numerous attacks on foreigners”. This seems to indicate that international migration to South Africa is broadly viewed in negative terms (Kinge, 2016: 1; Musuva 2015: 1; Landau, 2008b: 105). The purpose of this chapter is to evaluate existing research related to xenophobia in South African townships and in the South African institutions of higher education. In addition, this chapter discusses the theories that have been developed to explain xenophobia in South Africa.

2.2 Research on xenophobia in South African townships and inner cities

2.2.1 The disciplinary backgrounds of researchers

There are many scholars in South Africa who have researched xenophobia in the context of South African townships and inner-city areas (see Misago, 2009; Morris, 1998; Matsinhe, 2011; McKnight, 2008; Landau, 2008b and 2011; Crush, 2011; Hopstock and de Jager, 2011). Some of these scholars are in migration studies (Misago, 2009; Landau, 2008b and 2011; Pendleton, 2007; Sinclair, 1998), while others are in sociology (Harris, 2002; Morris, 1998; Matsinhe, 2011) and politics (Moagi, 2014; Neocosmos, 2010; Hopstock and de Jager, 2011; Musuva, 2009).

A major focus of South African migration scholarship has been the xenophobic violence that erupted in the country’s townships and informal settlements. Misago (2009) uses the 2008 eruption of xenophobic violence to show that in nearly all the cases where xenophobia occurred, it was organised and led by community leaders “(official and/or self-appointed)” in an attempt to gain authority needed to expand their political and economic benefits. Landau echoes this finding by demonstrating that in South Africa there is an “imperative to protect territory and opportunity driven policies, and where officials are reluctant or unable to respond to this imperative, the citizenry has proven to be up to the task” (2011: 1). Given this desire to
promote the welfare of South Africans on the basis of their citizenship, it is not hard to imagine that some migrants in South Africa are demonised as an adversary within.

Almost all of the sociological research on xenophobia focuses on how the previously oppressed in South Africa have come to imagine black African migrants as the undesirable other. In his milestone study, Matsinhe argues that, in order to make sense of the South Africans’ hostility towards other Africans we need to examine the traces of “colonial established-outsider relations” through which South Africans imagine themselves as “we” and the rest of Africa as “they” (2011: 298). In another study, Morris observes that “when a group has no history of incorporating strangers it may find it difficult to be welcoming” (1998: 1117). This could be partly the reason why some South Africans struggle to relate to other nationalities beyond the borders of their home country.

Most political philosophy scholarship on xenophobia in post-apartheid South Africa explores the underlying reasons for the widespread xenophobia to try to prevent future attacks, and also to ensure that the basic tenets of regional collaboration are sustained (Moagi, 2014; Neocosmos, 2010; Hopstock and de Jager, 2011; Musuva, 2009). This is significant because it represents a major shift from the research disciplines that mainly emphasise the existence of xenophobia in South Africa, but do not say much about the root causes of this phenomenon. Steinberg (2008: 3) and other authors within the discipline of politics tell us that xenophobia is not limited to fear or dislike of foreigners but also extend to a broader dislike of many South African citizens.

Migration scholars add value to our understanding of xenophobia by identifying that it is not just about casting out migrants, but also about local political and economic opportunism rooted in the micro-politics of townships and informal settlement life (see Misago, 2009; Landau, 2011). They make it clear that it is the mobilised discourses of nationality, ethnicity and territorial belonging grounded in this type of politics which escalate into violence and are likely to affect anyone perceived as an outsider. To counter this, they call for political change and development of a mechanism to eradicate the culture of failing to persecute crimes committed by those who enjoy protection under law.

In contrast to a psychological perspective which sees xenophobia as a “rational human feeling of fear in the presence of the unknown” (Soldatova, 2007: 105), scholars from a sociological
perspective provide a broader frame of reference for looking at xenophobia (Harris, 2002; Morris, 1998; Matsinhe, 2011; Marcos, 2010: 34). They argue that xenophobia must be approached by seeing beyond explanations that place people’s attitudes or emotions at the centre of analysis (Marcos, 2010: 34). They add value to the discourse on xenophobia by reminding us of the historical context of xenophobia in order to comprehend how the borders of “inclusion” and “exclusion” are drawn in a particular society. For example, Harris connects the rise in xenophobia to South Africa’s transition from a historical past of “racism” to a “future of nationalism”, and to South Africa’s culture of violence, which she argues has continued to be a dominant means to solving problems (2002: 12).

Political philosophy scholars add value to the discussion of xenophobia by using a broader lens to explore the phenomenon (Moagi, 2014; Neocosmos, 2010; Hopstock and de Jager, 2011; Musuva, 2009). They study xenophobia by looking at the triggers and the underlying causes of the phenomenon, and unlike other scholars put emphasis on the role played by the state and its officials in cultivating a culture of xenophobia (Neocosmos, 2010). In addition, scholars such as Neocosmos make a profound contribution to the discussion of xenophobia by reflecting on the continental history of colonialism that is often disregarded in other South African research and literature on xenophobia.

Migration scholars who have studied xenophobia in South Africa have mostly followed a quantitative path that relies on feedback, surveys, and questionnaires for data collection, and statistical analysis for data interpretation (Crush and Pendleton, 2007; Crush and Williams, 2005). There are however some scholars within this perspective who have studied xenophobia using qualitative research approaches in which data was collected through in-depth interviews and focus groups to access a more descriptive understanding of the participants and of their personal experiences of xenophobia (Misago, 2008; Pillay, 2008; Landau, 2011). These qualitative studies, notwithstanding their significance, are limited as they focus on identifying the immediate triggers of xenophobia in South Africa.

Scholars from both sociological (Harris, 2002; Morris, 1998; Matsinhe, 2011) and political perspectives (Moagi, 2014; Neocosmos, 2010; Hopstock and de Jager, 2011; Musuva, 2009) have typically used qualitative methods to explore the issue of xenophobia in the South African townships and inner-city areas. A study by Morris (1998) is based on twenty in-depth interviews with ten Nigerians and ten Congolese migrants residing mainly in the inner-city
neighbourhoods of Johannesburg. Similarly, Matsinhe’s (2011) qualitative study on the use of the term *Makwerekwere* comprises of participant observation, focus groups, individual interviews, and informal conversations. Similarly, a study of xenophobia by Moagi uses in-depth interviews to generate data from government officials, perpetrators and victims of the 2008 xenophobic attacks within the Tshwane municipality (2014: 10).

These are some of the most significant examples of scholarship on xenophobia in South African townships and inner-city areas. In spite of this literature, very little research has been done on this topic from a communication studies perspective – exceptions to this include Mogekwu (2005), Oyedemi (2015), and Rasila and Musitha (2015). The consequence has been a vague understanding of the communicative elements of xenophobic violence and a lack of focus on finding communication driven solutions to the problem.

This study looks at communication as a “form of expression of human behaviour which is processual in nature and has clearly defined purpose or purposes” (Wilson, 2006: 2). Going by this definition, this study concurs with Oloyede that all that human beings do in life is communication, and thus xenophobia and xenophobic attacks are forms of communication or “expressions of human behaviour” (Oloyede, 2008: 109). Since the outbreaks of the May 2008 xenophobic attacks, researchers have fingered the stiff competition for limited resources between black South Africans and black foreign nationals from other countries, as well as the deteriorating socioeconomic conditions among the majority of black South Africans as the major causes of xenophobia (see Morris, 1998; Tshtekere, 1999; Harris, 2002). Beyond indicating these socioeconomic reasons for the pogroms, these researchers – with the exception of Bernard Rasila and Elias Musitha (2015) and Oyedemi (2015) – have not examined how the lack of effective communication has contributed to the xenophobic outbreaks in South Africa. Also conspicuously missing from the literature on xenophobia is a study of how purposefully focused and effective communication strategies could help with the integration of foreign nationals and local South African citizens.

Given these gaps in xenophobia research, this study is important firstly because it moves away from the conventional approach of exploring xenophobia in the South African townships and inner-city areas. Secondly, this study adds value to the existing literature by examining the attitudes and perceptions of both local and international students at the University of Johannesburg from a communication perspective that recognises the communicative context
and implications of xenophobic violence. In addition, this study is important because it does not only explain the causes of xenophobia but also tries to offer practical communication-centred solutions that will enable the integration of foreign nationals and local South African citizens.

2.2.2 Theoretical approaches adopted in past research on xenophobia

Defining an unambiguous theory to explain the causes of xenophobia is an elusive task forcing one researcher to argue that “xenophobia is a complex phenomenon that cannot be explained by a single theory” (Musuva, 2015: 50). Several explanations have thus been put forward to explain the causes of xenophobia in South Africa. Most of these theories were developed to try to explain the phenomenon in migrant-receiving countries, particularly in the African context. However, where possible this study makes reference to the applicability of such theories to the rise of xenophobia elsewhere in the world. The research theorising the causes of xenophobia in South African townships and inner-city areas involves several academic disciplines resulting in competing explanations and framings of this phenomenon. This review centres on seven causes of xenophobia derived from the scholarships on xenophobia in migration studies, sociology, socio-cultural studies and political philosophy. These theories are not essentially separate but are rather approached from varying theoretical frameworks and offer divergent levels of explanations and by so doing disclose the intricacy of xenophobia (Musuva, 2015: 50). These explanations are grouped in the following manner: micro-politics; relative deprivation and scapegoating; isolation theory; biocultural theory; government denialism and impunity; state discourse on xenophobia, citizenship and nationalism; and gender relations.

2.2.2.1 Micro-politics theory

The literature regarding xenophobia in the South African communities demonstrates that the emergence of violence is rooted in the micro-politics of township and informal settlement life (Misago, 2009; 2011; Landau, 2011). In a study conducted across three South African provinces affected by the xenophobic pogroms, Misago (2009) argues that local politics and local leaders stimulated the violence witnessed in May 2008. This finding has been replicated by Hagensen who studied the causes and nature of xenophobia in De Doorns (Western Cape), where a “political player” was found to have instigated the violence (2014: 66). His aim was
to “gain popularity” and ultimately get “more votes” to preserve his “political position in the local council” (2014: 66). This is in line with micro-politics theory.

The affected areas analysed in Misago’s study share similar traits directly associated with the outbreaks of the violence. These include elevated crime, heightened ethnic tensions, and a history of violence, impunity and ineffective local leadership. The latter is in fact the most distinguishing issue confronting the communities that experienced violence (Misago, 2011: 97). According to Misago (2011), the issue of local leadership is characterised by three related issues. Firstly, the lack of effective conflict resolution mechanisms. Regarding this, Misago explains that where violence occurred there was an absence of institutionalised and reliable leadership that could represent the diversity of the community. This absence gave rise to self-appointed structures which almost assumed power and functioned as an unchallenged parallel leadership. Misago notes that these unauthorised leaders claiming to represent the interest of community members often extorted money for their services. This indicates that the type of politics practiced by these leaders is based on using violence to consolidate power and advance political and economic interests.

Misago’s study resonates with another study conducted by Steinberg (2008) in Johannesburg townships. This study focuses on the victims and the perpetrators of the May 2008 xenophobic violence. Steinberg observes that the “violence was forewarned” and encouraged in public meetings in the days before it began (2008: 5). This study also argues that political parties were involved in the struggle for power in the embroiled communities (Steinberg, 2008: 6). This observation is crucial because it indicates that it is not only the unauthorised leaders or groups discussed in Misago’s micro-political theory who are entangled in a power struggle. Rather, political parties may also use “violence as a means to obtain localised state authority for personal political and economic benefits” (Steinberg, 2008: 6). As Steinberg notes, micro-politics are “the politics of deciding who gets what” (2008: 6).

Fauvelle-Aymar and Segatti criticise Misago’s micro-politics theory for failing to clarify how “micro-politics transform into violence and why this remains at the local level” (2011: 60). It would have been more instructive to show the form that ground-level politics assume once it escalates to the national level. Nieftagodien argues that micro-politics theory coupled with a political discourse of belonging which perceives “outsiders as a threat to insiders is useful in explaining the causes of xenophobia in some areas although not in others” (2011: 131).
2.2.2.2 Scapegoating and relative deprivation theories

Another theory developed to explain xenophobia is scapegoating. This theory comes from sociological scholarship on xenophobia. It locates xenophobia within the context of social transition and change. It argues that South Africa’s transition to democracy has shown the unequal distribution of resources (Harris, 2002: 171). The people’s expectations of an improved life in the new democratic South Africa has been escalated but a realisation that delivery is not happening has meant that discontent and indignation are at their peak (2002: 171). In other words, people are more mindful of their deprivation than ever before and this is a fertile ground for breeding xenophobic violence. In this context, Tshitereke notes that the locals “often creates a scapegoat” for the ongoing deprivation and poverty (1999: 4). Foreigners often provide a convenient scapegoat (Lombard, 2015; Steenkamp, 2009; Harris, 2002; Sichone, 2008). Steinberg notes that in the May 2008 xenophobic attacks foreigners “were merely the unlucky victims of misplaced anger” (2008: 4).

On the whole, scapegoating theory explains xenophobia in “terms of broad social and economic factors” (Harris, 2002: 171). Tshitereke (1999) adds a psychological level of explanation to enhance the sociological interpretation. He analyses xenophobia in relation to the frustration produced by relative deprivation. He notes that the challenging socioeconomic conditions create extreme competition for resources, particularly among the poor who feel that they are getting less than what they are entitled to. Because of this frustration instigated by the locals’ inability to get that which they feel entitled to, foreigners are perceived as a threat and often scapegoated for these deprivations (de Jager and Hopstock, 2011: 125). Xenophobia thus becomes an “expression of disillusionment with the government’s ability to deliver” (Adjai and Laziridus, 2013: 194).

It is evident that there is a close relationship between scapegoating and relative deprivation. Both theories acknowledge the scapegoating and blaming of the out-group. Scapegoating theory has been supported by Sichone’s anthropological research on African migrants in Cape Town. Sichone asserts that as far as South Africans are concerned, African foreign nationals are “stealing jobs from the locals” (2008: 15). Foreign nationals are seen as trampling on the existence of local South African citizens. Consequently, non-nationals are identified by the locals as frustration scapegoats and targets for venting rage in a violent manner.
Scapegoating theory, nonetheless, has been criticised for failing to “explain why foreigners are the group that is burdened with the hatred and abuse of autochthonous groups” (Duncan, 2012: 107). Besides, this theory “does not explain why foreigners of colour in the context of contemporary South Africa invariably bear the brunt of the prejudicial and murderous hatred of the local population” (Duncan, 2012: 107).

### 2.2.2.3 Isolation theory

In response to the identified weaknesses of scapegoating theory, Harris goes a step further by presenting isolation theory which “situates foreignness at the heart of the hostility towards foreigners” (2002: 172). From this perspective, the xenophobia manifested in recent times is a “consequence of apartheid South Africa’s isolation from the international community, and particularly the rest of Africa” (Harris, 2002: 171). Duncan echoes this observation by stating that “during the apartheid era, South Africa’s borders with most of the rest of the world were hermetically sealed largely because the apartheid state viewed most foreign countries as a threat to both its racist policies and to the political stranglehold that it exerted on South African society” (2012: 107). With the political transition to democracy, “South Africa’s borders have been opened and this has brought South Africans into direct contact with the unknown or the foreigners” (Harris, 2002: 172). Awkwardly, this interface between South Africans and unknown foreigners has created a favourable atmosphere for xenophobia to emerge.

Elucidating the possible reasons for the tension between the locals and foreigners, Morris notes that “when a group has no history of integrating strangers it may find it difficult to be welcoming” (1998: 1125). Therefore, the antipathy expressed by South Africans towards other Africans in recent years is understood by the isolation theory as a “lingering effect of the internalised antagonism or hostility engendered by the apartheid state towards the external world” (Duncan, 2012: 107). Isolation theory resonates with the culture of exclusion argument which assigns xenophobia to a historical past of exclusion, general mistrust among citizens and a paranoid national psyche (Musuva, 2015; Everatt, 2011; Hopstock and de Jager, 2011). In that context, isolation theory asserts that xenophobia exists because South Africans feel threatened by the foreignness of foreigners (Morris, 1998).

Hobsbawm elaborates the isolation hypothesis in his explanation of xenophobia in contemporary European societies. He ponders on this phenomenon in terms of something that
works similarly to “rapid social transition” (1996: 246). For him, the ancient ways of life in Europe have transformed since the 1950s and there is “very little of them to defend” (1996: 264). Since the old, conventional ways have deteriorated, Hobsbawm contends that “xenophobia, separatism and fundamentalism are indicators of social disorientation and of the wearing out of the bonds that used to bind people together” (1996: 264). Similar to Harris (2002), Hobsbawm stresses that the “strength of xenophobia is the fear of the unknown” (1996: 264-265).

Though there may be grains of truth to what the isolation hypothesis suggests, Gqola rightly asks that why is it that “this intolerance towards difference is largely expressed in relation to other Africans and people of colour, and not in relation to the Europeans who have migrated to South Africa and are owning businesses and countless acres of property in this country” (2008: 209-224). It could have been better to complement isolation theory with a theory of South African exceptionalism vis-à-vis the rest of the African continent, which provides a better understanding of xenophobia towards African migrants in South Africa (Musuva, 2015: 55).

2.2.2.4 Biocultural theory

The isolation and scapegoating theories provide wide-ranging explanations for the occurrence of xenophobia. Yet, it is important to note that in both theories the “foreigner is treated as a homogeneous category; there is no scope for differentiation between various types of foreigner” (Harris, 2002: 174). This, however, is misleading given that the existing literature indicates that xenophobia in South Africa is not applied equally to all foreigners. African foreigners seem to be particularly vulnerable to violence and hostility (see, for instance, Human Rights Watch, 1998; Human Rights Commission, 1999). The biocultural hypothesis “locates xenophobia at the level of visible difference or otherness, and also provides an explanation for the asymmetrical targeting of African foreigners by South Africans. This include hairstyles, accents, vaccination marks, dress and physical appearance, all of which are used as indexical markers or signifiers” (Harris, 2002: 173-174). According to Morris (1998: 1125) and Harris (2001: 60), these are the illogical determining factors used by the police or immigration officers to determine foreignness. To justify their actions, state officials argue that identity documents can be faked or obtained through illegal means, therefore “they are not reliable as determinants of either South African citizenship or being in South Africa legally” (Gordon, 2010: 16).
Biocultural theory asserts that “xenophobia is not equally applied to all foreigners: some may experience xenophobia with greater intensity than others; and this is based on physical or cultural differences” (Harris, 2002: 173). For example, Morris suggests that “Nigerian and Congolese foreigners are scapegoated as a result of biocultural factors such as physical appearance and the inability to speak one of the native languages” (1998: 1125). For Gqola, this explicit racialisation subjects African migrants to daily abuses and prejudicial practices by state officials. Noticeably, this is done to scrutinise only black African migrants (2008: 218). This notwithstanding the fact that other racial groups may also have different accents, wear distinct cultural dresses and not be able to speak indigenous languages (Musuva, 2015: 57). Although the biocultural theory expressly explains that xenophobia functions “through the level of physical and cultural appearance, it does not explain why certain biological and cultural features come to take on xenophobic significance” (Harris, 2002: 174). In other words, why are black Africans predominantly targeted as victims of xenophobia when their white counterparts who also have unique accents and dress styles appear to be at a lower risk of violence?

2.2.2.5 Denialism and culture of impunity theory

The last set of competing theories for explaining xenophobia falls within the ambit of political philosophy and includes both the triggers and underlying causes of the phenomenon. Musuva notes that “denialism by the state and a culture of impunity” when dealing with those found guilty of xenophobic activities can be argued to have encouraged xenophobia in South Africa (2015: 59). She further notes that both issues indicate an absence of “political leadership” in accepting the existence and extent of xenophobia, and in addressing it. This is despite the fact that widespread xenophobia and its manifestations through violent attacks, killings and lootings have been consistently documented across South Africa since 1994 (Palmary, 2002; Nyamnjoh, 2006; Landau, 2011; Matsinhe, 2011; Crush, 2008).

Crush and Ramachandran note that “denialism is exemplified by the official response of the South African state to the May 2008 attacks on migrants and refugees, which refuted that these attacks were motivated by xenophobia or that xenophobia even existed in the first place” (2014: 8). For example, while commemorating the victims of the attacks, the then President Thabo Mbeki publically asserted that South Africans were not xenophobic and remarked that those who were accusing South Africans of such were themselves guilty of xenophobia (Crush and
Ramachandran, 2014: 8). This argument was echoed in 2010 by the then Minister of Police, Nathi Mthethwa in response to the threats of renewed violence. He argued that there is no such thing called xenophobia in South Africa and declared that such a phenomenon will never occur in this country (Mthethwa cited in Crush et al., 2013:10). He categorised the attacks on migrants and refugees as “crimes of opportunity” carried out by criminal or anti-social elements. Perceptibly, this stance has also been taken up by some academics, such as the Council of Anthropologists of Southern Africa, which asserted after the 2008 xenophobic violence that “contrary to the current South African and international political consensus, the presence of people who are deemed to be ethnically, racially or nationally different is not at the core of the problem” (Sharp, 2008).

The government’s denialism has not gone unchallenged. The African Union’s African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), for example, has underlined “an element of denialism regarding xenophobia by some officials” and stated that the South African government needs to do more to address the issue (APRM, 2006: 24). Similarly, a United Nations Special Rapporteur on Human Rights of Migrants advises the South African government to treat the social integration of all immigrants and the protection of their human rights as a requisite feature of their immigration policy and as priority to make such integration and social cohesion a reality (United Nations, 2011: 1). Domestically, the former Minister of Intelligence, Ronnie Kasrils has noted, contrary to state discourse, that the government knew that something was developing before 2008 yet did not act (Mohamed, 2011: 25). Simply put, the government was alert in advance about brewing xenophobia yet out of negligence opted not to act, only to soon discover that immigrants and refugees had been killed, tortured and displaced as a consequence.

Another worrying issue is the “culture of impunity” that exists in South Africa in relation to perpetrators of xenophobic violence (Misago, 2011: 96). As pointed out by the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) (Monson, 2010: 8), “the major cause of xenophobia in the country is the lack of the rule of law and the supremacy of impunity in the informal settlements and townships across the country”. For Crush, it is this culture of impunity which motivates residents, particularly in South African townships, to “target migrants repeatedly for individual and political gain” (2014: 19). This problem is compounded by the fact that state agents in some instances are guilty of supporting South African citizens accused or guilty of anti-foreigner attacks. As discovered by Misago, some arrest were made at different scenes of violence before, during and after the May 2008 xenophobic attacks, yet most of those arrested
were soon released without being charged for their crimes because of community protests and mobilisation (2011:96).

Although the denial of the existence of xenophobia and the perceived sense of impunity may not explain the appearance of xenophobia in the South African townships and inner-city areas (Musuva, 2015: 61), these explanations are essential in showing that state responses to xenophobia somewhat encourages the “ill-intentioned to attack non-nationals and other outsiders for personal and/or political gain” (Misago et al., 2010: 178).

2.2.2.6 State discourse theory: Xenophobia, citizenship and nationalism

Recognising that other theories of xenophobia fail to expound the role that politicians and state institutions play in creating the culture of xenophobia, Neocosmos argues that xenophobia must be understood as a political discourse. He outlines his theoretical position under four main theses: “xenophobia is a discourse and practice of exclusion from community; this process of exclusion is a political process; xenophobia pertains to the exclusion from citizenship, which denotes a specific political relationship between the state and society; and xenophobia is the outcome of a relationship between different forms of politics” (Neocosmos, 2010: 13-16).

Neocosmos argues that the fundamental causes of the May 2008 pogroms of “foreigners” must be sought in what he calls the “politics of fear”, which he defines as “the widespread fear that foreign nationals would swamp and overwhelm the country in such a way as to make the hard-won gains of the 1990s liberation irrelevant” (2010: 141). The politics of fear described by Neocosmos is comprised of three characteristics: “the hegemonic state discourse and politics of xenophobic exclusion; the discourse of South African exceptionalism; and an ideology of indigeneity and nativism” (2010: 143-147).

The first characteristic of the politics of fear refers to the anti-immigrant discourse made by the state, as well as the mistreatment of foreign nationals by state officials. According to Neocosmos, it is on the premise of this political discourse that being a foreigner is in itself a disadvantage (2010: 143). The second characteristic refers to a feeling of superiority or exceptionalism held by South Africans in relation to other Africans (Neocosmos, 2010: 142). As Matsinhe notes, “this notion of exceptionalism is important in the formation of South Africa’s we-images of citizenship and nationality” (2011: 302). The third characteristic of the
The politics of fear is an ideology of indigeneity and nativism (Neocosmos, 2010: 143). It refers to the notion that “South Africans are not quite Africans” complimented by a prevailing view that “indigeneity is the only way to acquire resources, jobs, and all the other entitlements” reserved for the local inhabitants (Neocosmos, 2010: 143). Nyamnjoh observes this as a narrowly defined citizenship where only the local matter (2006: 40).

Following Fanon (1961), Neocosmos’s theory of state discourse is conscious of how a certain kind of nationalist politics lays at the root of xenophobia in post-apartheid South Africa. South African nationalism has become “exclusive of those living beyond its colonially established boundaries” (2010: 105). For Neocosmos, it is particularly of concern that the South African nationalism has taken such a chauvinistic turn after apartheid. To make sense of this transformation, he suggests that “there has been a shift in nationalist discourse from a popular-emancipatory subjectivity to a state subjectivity, from an inclusive and active conception of citizenship to an exclusive and passive one” (2010: 106). South Africa subscribes to a narrowly defined form of nationalism which encourages South Africans to feel imperilled by the possibility of foreigners becoming part of their country and taking their nation’s resources (Peberdy, 2001: 29).

The explanation based on state discourse on xenophobia, citizenship and nationalism addresses the underlying political causes of xenophobia. This conceptualisation is relevant for the current study because it moves away from the speculative nature of the previous theories (Lombard, 2015: 17). As Neocosmos notes, other theories (i.e. the scapegoating, biocultural, and isolation hypotheses) fail to “tell us something regarding the presence or absence and character of people’s political identities which are influenced not only by transition, but fundamentally formed by state discourse” (2010: 4). Meanwhile, Monson and Arian claim that by underplaying the role of the state or politics, most of the explanations of xenophobia in the country provide a “decontextualized view of events” (2011: 32).

Perhaps what is missing from state discourse theory is the understanding that it is not only politicians who are involved in the polity. Rather, “political activity and the political process also involve people as citizens and voters, people as members of pressure and issue groups, demonstrators and dissidents” (Verba et al., 1993: 303-308). As van Dijk notes, “all these groups and individuals may participate in the political process, and many of them are actively involved in political discourse” (1993a: 13). Relatedly, Marcos contends that though the
political theorisation of xenophobia provides a comprehensive understanding of how to study xenophobia in South Africa, such work tends to “dehomogenize the black African immigrant” (2010: 54). He argues that the black African immigrant should be differentiated along the lines of nationality and class, which may influence the level and form of discrimination that is xenophobic.

2.2.2.7 Gender relations theory

Xenophobia in South Africa has also been linked to masculinist violence (Gqola, 2008; Langa and Kiguwa, 2013; Morris, 1998). Morris notes this from his study of Nigerians and Congolese living in South Africa. He comments that “besides a feeling amongst foreign nationals that South Africans are prejudiced or parochial, a dominant perception is that South Africans, black South African men, in particular, are extremely violent” (1998: 1127-8). Similarly, Gqola argues that xenophobic violence in post-apartheid South Africa has roots in masculinist violence as evidenced from the claims made by South African men that immigrant men take “their” jobs and women (Gqola, 2008; Landau, 2011). A study done by the Human Sciences Research Council found that men in the 26 to 33 age group, in particular, “appear to be the most overtly antagonistic toward foreign nationals, seeing them as competition for accessing South African women and resources such as, housing, water, sanitation and health services together with employment and business opportunities” (HSRC, 2008: 6). The same study also discovered that young South African women are less hostile towards foreign men as they admire them for their art of “creating opportunities for themselves and being prepared to do any available work to make a living” (HSRC, 2008: 7). This is in contrast to South African men who are perceived by some South African women as greedy and complicit in illegal activities and corruption. The findings of this study have been echoed by some scholars (see Comaroff and Comaroff, 2002; Landau, 2011) who argue that male migrants have to live with allegations that they have been a negative influence on South African moral fabric through “corrupting” young girls with money, prostitution, crime and so on. Importantly, the cited examples illustrates the link between the lack of resources, sexism and masculinist violence (Mangezvo, 2015: 41).
2.2.2.8 Strengths and weaknesses of theories of xenophobia

This theoretical section has discussed seven theories on xenophobia. The theories fall within the scholarship in migration studies, sociology, socio-cultural studies and political philosophy. Although these theories offer important insights into xenophobia, I concur with other authors that some of their arguments are insufficient (see Verba et al., 1993; Bekker et al., 2008). For example, the isolation theory is minimalistic and fails to recognise the migration process into South Africa during apartheid. As Marcos explains, during the apartheid era South Africans were exposed to other Africans from the region and so if “xenophobia can be reduced to isolation, at least, people from the region should be excluded” (2010: 47). On the other hand, theories such as the biocultural, scapegoating and relative deprivation hypotheses overlook the role of politicians and state institutions in enforcing a xenophobic climate, despite the fact that the former and the latter often shape the behaviour of citizens. State discourse, denialism, and culture of impunity theories do acknowledge the significance of politics in the explanation of xenophobia. This is essential for the current study, which examines xenophobia in a higher education context using the Fanonian theory read through the lenses of Neocosmos (2010) and Gibson (2011), who see xenophobia a consequence of a nationalist discourse.

I concur with Musuva that “xenophobia in South African context cannot be narrowed down to one explanation” (2015: 64). Notwithstanding their weaknesses, non-political explanations of xenophobia are important for this study as they are able to extract the connection between racism and xenophobia; historical past of exclusion and xenophobia; and social transition and xenophobia. Most of the political theories of xenophobia have been applied in studies conducted in the townships or urban informal settlements. In an attempt to expand the scope of these explanations, this study will examine how such explanations help to theorise and ascertain xenophobia in a higher education context.

2.2.3. Findings from research on xenophobia in South African townships and inner cities

2.2.3.1 Impact of xenophobia on foreign identity

Sinclair’s research work engages with the impact of xenophobia on foreign identity in post-apartheid South Africa (1998, 1999). Drawing on interviews with seventy-seven African migrants conducted in 1996 and 1997, she notes that “foreign migrants are rapidly coming to
be blamed for many of the problems facing South Africans, being linked increasingly – though more through fiction that fact – to crime, unemployment and lack of service provision” (1998: 340). Such growing xenophobia and the government’s denial to recognise it is a jarring contrast to the racial harmony that prevailed during the 1994 elections. Antagonism and abuse by the police, officials from the Department of Home Affairs, employers and neighbours are constantly reported throughout the interviews. Sinclair notes that hostility is the over-riding concern among all the interviewed migrants even outweighing the “issues of legal status, job security and financial difficulties” (1999: 471).

Facing such hostility, it would be expected that foreign migrants would be concerned that their identities would be upset. Yet, in a study that includes in-depth interviews with Congolese and Nigerians in Johannesburg, Morris (1998) notes that akin to the Chinese in the US described by Ogbu (1983), Nigerians and Congolese have developed social networks and support structures. Sinclair (1998, 1999) explains that these social networks and local communities serve as sanctuaries for the migrants and are primarily based on mutual protection rather than integration. This is not surprising given that the majority of migrants interviewed by Morris (1998) noted that their presence in South Africa is temporary. As Sinclair explains, for many migrants “permanence has become untenable, given the realities of the harsh life in South Africa” (1999: 471). Thus, the social networks serve as a direct response to the perceptible xenophobia in post-apartheid South Africa. In that context, Harris notes that “exclusion, alienation and hostility function in an intricate manner along the line of nationality – i.e. between South Africans and foreigners, particularly African foreigners” (2002: 181).

Sinclair (1998) and Morris’s (1998) studies reveal that xenophobia has a direct effect on foreign identity and cannot be exempted from what a foreign individual goes through in South Africa. As Harris notes, “foreigners are made to feel foreign and this in turn alienates and excludes foreigners from South African society” (2002: 181). This further adds to the antagonism and violence that foreign migrants have towards local South African citizens. Consequently, Harris contends that xenophobia in South Africa should not be constructed as a “pathology”. But be observed as a part of the “New South Africa” or the “Rainbow Nation” (2002: 181).

It is however interesting to note that some African nationalities are considered favourable over others. According to Steenkamp (2009: 442) and Crush et al. (2008: 30-31), South Africans “regard migrants from Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland as more desirable than Zimbabweans
and Mozambicans and much more than Africans from further afield.” Among other things, proficiency in a local language appears to be an essential decisive factor for “approval and integration of foreigners into black South African society” (Reitzes, 1997: 41). As Muller notes, the derogatory terms “Makwerekwere, Grigrambas and Kalangas are not applied to those from Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland” (1999: 72). This perhaps could be attributed to the fact that there are linguistic and cultural ties between the people in these countries and many South Africans. For Buthelezi, “derogatory names stem from the fact that foreigners are different. They do not all speak or understand indigenous languages, they speak English with a funny accent, and are not as familiar with the local context as the South Africans” (2009: 15). In this sense, it is evident that in post-apartheid South Africa nationality is used to define “boundaries of inclusion and exclusion” (Marcos, 2010: 16).

2.2.3.2 Xenophobia, an old phenomenon in South African townships and inner cities

The title of Landau’s book, *Exorcising the demons from within*, captures many of the issues that have dominated the debate on xenophobia in South Africa. The shocking events of the May 2008 xenophobic attacks described in this book began in Alexandra Township and spread quickly across the Gauteng province before making their way to informal settlements and townships across the country. The image of Mozambican migrant Ernesto Albafeto Nhamuave being burned alive whilst some bystanders laughed dominated world news and became a symbol for defining the fierceness and coldness of the attacks. For those unaware of the brewing tensions between local South African citizens and foreigners, this may have come as a shock, but the fact of the matter is that it was “hardly the first expression of post-apartheid violence targeting ‘foreigners’” (Hassim et al., 2008: 3).

A Human Rights Watch (HRW) report in 1998 discovered an increase in the level of xenophobia in South African since 1994 (HRW, 1998: 123). The key finding of the report was that official and unofficial discourses had been liable for the production of anti-immigrant sentiments resulting in numerous violent attacks on foreigners. Earlier, the Human Science Research Council (HSRC) noted that there had been a notable growth between 1994 and 1995 in negative sentiments towards foreigners in South Africa (Minnaar and Hough, 1996: 188). The findings were replicated by the 1995 SAMP research project, which unveiled a “surprising amount of latent hostility towards foreign migrants” (Crush, 2001: 11). Meanwhile, the results from national opinion surveys by the SAMP in 1997 indicate significant levels of anti-migrant
sentiment across all sections of the South African population (see Mattes, 1999; Crush et al., 2008). The 2006 SAMP survey indicated strong levels of support for citizen-led actions to rid the nation of non-nationals (Crush, 2008). The explanation for such negative attitudes towards immigrants remains unknown. One thing that can be mentioned with certainty is that xenophobia in South Africa has a fairly long history. Making a similar point, Petkou posits that xenophobia towards African immigrants in South Africa can be traced from when foreigners started to enter the country on a much bigger scale than before (2005: 172). From all indications, such inflows of immigrants could only have been possible after the period of democratisation in the early 1990s, when the doors of South Africa were opened to the rest of the world.

A survey carried out by the SAMP indicates that South Africans strongly support policies that would place a strict limit on or prohibit immigration altogether (Crush, 2001). Already in December 1994 and again in January 1995 “armed youth gangs in Alexandra Township carried out attacks against suspected illegal aliens – destroying homes and property, and marching suspected illegal aliens to a local police station to demand their immediate and forcible removal” (Minaar and Hough, 1996: 172-198). A study by Palmary (2002) that examines the nature of the local government engagement with immigrant communities in South African cities also reports a similar pattern of violence perpetrated against foreign migrants residing in Cape Town informal settlements in Du Noon and Doornbach (2001) and Joe Slovo Parkin (2002). Palmary notes “that refugee communities were forced off land and had their dwellings looted by South Africans” (2002: 18). She further observes that city officials indicated that clashes between South Africans and non-nationals were happening on a regular basis. More recently, violent attacks on Somali residents of Masphumelele (2006) and Motherwell-Port Elizabeth (2007) informal settlements were reported by the New African Magazine (Commey 2007). The story noted “that shops owned by Somalis were burned and looted, and residents killed” (2007: 1). According to the local authorities, these pogroms were caused by business competition (HSRC, 2008: 19).

What is notable from these references is that they seem to follow a similar pattern in terms of where they occur, the victims and the reason for the attack. Firstly, they indicate a track record of violence perpetrated against foreigners living in townships or informal urban settlements (HSRC, 2008). Secondly, these examples indicate that South Africans’ attitudes towards foreigners vary according to whether immigrants come from Southern Africa, West Africa,
Europe or North America, and whether the immigrant is black or white. Some scholars of xenophobia in South Africa have noted that there is a general preference among black and white South Africans for immigrants from Europe and North America (see Crush, 2001: 18; Valji, 2003). Marcos’s (2010) sociological analysis of skilled immigrants in Gauteng also discovered that the aversion towards black African immigrants cuts across age, education level, gender, economic status and race. For this reason, Harris links the South African immigration legislation to the country’s history. He contends that “racism is a key feature of South Africa’s immigration legislation and practice, both historically and currently” (2001: 4).

Finally, these examples of xenophobic incidents provide an understanding of some of the factors that might have incited these conflicts: poverty, competition over access to resources (housing, health care, sanitation), and local economic/trading relations (Nyamnjoh, 2006; Crush, 2008; Hopstock and de Jager, 2011). Neocosmos nonetheless argues that such interpretations are simplistic in that they tend to disguise other important considerations like “state politics” linked to a particular state discourse of citizenship (2010: 9). He argues that the state’s declarations on citizenship and how they are linked with the country’s prospects for sustained socio-economic development are fundamental to an understanding of the origin and manifestation of anti-foreigner attitudes in post-apartheid South Africa (2010: 10).

2.2.3.3 Racialised and gendered xenophobia in South African townships and inner cities

The remarkable feature of xenophobia in South Africa, as witnessed in May 2008, is that it has adopted a racial form; it is aimed at foreigners, and particularly black foreigners, from other parts of the African continent (Solomon and Kosaka, 2013: 8). Carlisle points out that “though racism and xenophobia are distinct phenomena, they are closely interrelated” (2005: 947). He further notes that “racism generally implies value-laden distinctions based on presumed or aggrandized differences in physical characteristics, such as skin colour, hair type, facial features, and body type. Xenophobia, by contrast, refers to the attitudes, prejudices, and behaviour that rejects and often vilify its targets, based on the perception that they are outsiders to a given community” (2005: 948). As a result, it is often “difficult to make a clear distinction between racism and xenophobia because they exhibit similar motivations for exclusive demeaning behaviour and it particular violence” (2005: 948).
While outbursts of xenophobic violence in South Africa tend to target migrants from African countries, there are reported cases of xenophobic attacks against Asian migrants like the Chinese and South African Indians. Enunciating this point, in their study of Asian migrant communities in South Africa, Park and Rugunanan observe that “diverse populations of Asian migrants are becoming increasingly vulnerable and more susceptible to xenophobic attacks” (2009: 1). Using a series of brief interviews based on questionnaires, they note that Asian migrants, particularly those involved in retail sectors, “feel that they are targeted by corrupt officials and criminals alike for extortion and robbery” (2009: 2). In addition to extortion and crime, respondents in the same study reported intra-group tensions between South Asian communities and the Chinese community, the Indian South African community and factions of the Pakistani community (2009: 2). The xenophobic pogroms of May-June 2008 “elicited fear in all of these communities”, leading some respondents to assert that “this time, they were spared” (2009: 2).

However, Warner and Finchilescu (2003) point out that the majority of the xenophobic incidents reported by the media are committed by black South African men against black non-national men from other African countries. Danso and McDonald similarly note that South African xenophobia amounts to violent harassment of immigrants from other Africa countries, wherein “tens, if not thousands of non-citizens have been killed” (2001: 101). In a study of West African nationals living in Johannesburg, a Nigerian national is cited saying that xenophobia is hatred of “blacks against blacks”: white foreigners are seen as tourists and black foreigners as “Amakwerekwere” (Petkou, 2005: 207). Ironically, some research studies imply that black African migrants are perceived unfavourably even though there are indications that very few South Africans have any tangible direct interaction or relationships with them (Danso and McDonald, 2001). Mangezvo shows that the Zimbabwean male migrants interviewed in his study conducted in Cape Town and Stellenbosch also ascertained that they have “little meaningful interaction with South African nationals” (2015: 54).

On the basis of this and similar evidence, several scholars have presented a racial perspective to South African xenophobia against African immigrants. Berker and Carlton (2010: 136), Mngxitama (2008: 195), Evert (2011: 7), and Gqola (2008: 213) describe the phenomenon as “Negrophobia” or “Afrophobia”. Chinweizu (2006) describes “Negrophobia” as the fear and dislike of blacks and contends that this phenomenon has destroyed many black lives. Negrophobia has also been defined, through the Fanonian theories of the psychopathology of
colonization, as the internalised perceptions of white supremacy and hatred of blacks. From this perspective, colonialism and apartheid’s divide and rule system is blamed for turning the former victims of apartheid into victimisers of their “own brothers and sisters who usually bear the brunt of ill-treatment more than foreigners from other regions” (Mngxitama, 2008: 196). Reflecting on the May 2008 pogroms, Gqola observes that they were not just xenophobia, but also negrophobic in appeal as nobody attacked “wealthy German, British or French foreigners in Camps Bay or anywhere else in South Africa”, but black people from the African continent (2008: 213).

By the same token, Tshaka (2015: 1) notes that “xenophobia is the wrong word to describe the antagonism directed towards non-South African blacks in the so-called xenophobic attacks that have occurred since 2008”. For him, the attacks should be ascribed to sentiments of “Afrophobia” – fear of a specific other: the black other from elsewhere in the African continent. He contends that if “foreigners generally were the main target, those who are anti-foreigner would have sought out all foreigners including those of white skin and let them know that they are not welcome in this country” (2015: 1). Peberdy similarly observes that white immigrants, for example European tourists, are not “stereotyped in the way that African migrants are, and the state does not abuse and exploit them in the way it does African migrants” (2001: 20). In this regard, a dislike of African foreigners in South Africa is connected to a broader racism. For Mngxitama, the discrimination of black African migrants is not surprising given that the black-led South African state frequently sends out messages that black African migrants are unacceptable and singles them out for harassment. Drawing from the 2008 xenophobic events, he argues that “the poor were only reflecting the way in which the state treats African migrants” (2008b: 196). Making a similar point, Landau argues that though the official responses of the xenophobic pogroms were rather obscure, the perpetrators of violence and residents where the violence ensued were not. In an interview conducted ten days after a 2007 xenophobic outbursts in Motherwell, a young man explained that:

“The approach for the Somalis to come and just settle in our midst is a wrong one. Somalis should remain in their country. They shouldn’t come here to multiply and increase our population, and in future, we shall suffer. The more they come to South Africa to do business, the more the locals will continue killing them (Landau, 2011: 13).

The opinion expressed by the young male communicates the manner in which some South Africans understand the relation between “citizenship, belonging, place and entitlements”
(Mangezvo, 2015: 55). It equally demonstrates the anger among South African men against foreign nationals who are “seen as a direct threat to the powers and privileges” of the dominant group. Moreover, the fact that the young man is emphatic in saying that the locals will continue killing Somalis demonstrates that the level of anxiety felt by male individuals might also be expressed in terms of violence and anger (Patsika, 2015: 100). In this context, Mangezvo argues that the economically disenfranchised young South African men’s persuasion to enact xenophobic practices is related to their sense of inhabiting threatened masculinities due to their inability to provide financially for their families and to have the material resources to start their own households (2015: 55). But not all foreign nationals are targeted. According to Gqola, it is the African migrant who belong to a category of people in the South African public eye “who do not matter, whose humanity, once successfully misrecognised, renders them safe to violate” (2008: 211). She further notes that what makes attacks on some foreigners possible and on others “unthinkable” is the “sexualised, class marked and racialised narrative about foreign migrants” (2008: 213). This possibly explains why black South African men are opposed to black immigrant men being romantically or sexually linked to black South African women (Morris, 1998). Allegations that immigrants “take our women” are thus not merely rooted in masculinist thinking, but in Negrophobia as well (Gqola, 2008). In view of this, it is evident that the gendered nature of xenophobic exclusion in contemporary South Africa is a consequence of young, black South African men’s sense of threatened masculinities, particularly among the unemployed males (Crush, 2011; Jearey-Graham and Böhmke, 2013).

2.2.3.4 Institutionalised xenophobia and violation of migrants’ rights

There is literature that suggests that some foreign nationals living in South Africa have been exposed to discriminatory behaviour not only by local South African citizens, but also by the state departments (see Gopal, 2013; CorMSA, 2009, 2010; Human Rights Commission, 1999; Handmaker and Parsley, 2001; Landau, 2011; Peberdy, 2001; Lubkemann 2000). The South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC)’s report of the “Open hearings on xenophobia and problems related to it” (2004) also argues that xenophobia in South Africa is institutionalized and entrenched in various government departments. The “anti-immigrationist” character of state discourse is reflected in the manner in which state officials treat foreign nationals (Marcos, 2010).
Lubkemann (2000) has examined transnationality among Mozambican migrants residing in Mozambique and in the South African Vaal Township. Eighty-eight percent of the two hundred men surveyed in the study reported having “paid at least one bribe to a South African police officer questioning their identity, and seventy-four percent reported paying two or more bribes” (2000: 46). The same study further found that even those who had legal South African identities obtained through legal means were still vulnerable to the corrupt South African police (2000: 59). This finding has since been replicated by the Consortium for Refugees and Migrants South Africa’s studies (2009, 2010) that concluded that “even beneficiaries of state-granted rights (refugee permit holders) regularly find it hard to transform their legal standing into meaningful claims to service or protection from the police” (CorMSA, 2009, 2010). Earlier, the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) found that “in many cases immigration-related officials acted as a law unto themselves, exercising their power with total disregard for human rights” (SAHRC, 1999: 4). Landau (2011) also explores this theme in his claim that the quest to divide privileged locals and unholy outsiders is nowhere more apparent than in the post-apartheid migration control. He argues, that while the apartheid state sustained an onslaught on the right of South African citizens, the post-apartheid state is applying similar methods to non-nationals (2011).

Handmaker and Parsley note that state officials do not abuse or exploit white illegal foreigners in the way that they do African migrants. They argue that “white foreigners who have overstayed their visas do not end up in repatriation centres, which indicates that state officials treat migrants differently based on their race” (2001: 42). According to Reitzes, the demonising of black African migrants is cultivated by a discourse which sees them as a problem adding to the difficulties of the country such as: unemployment, undercutting wages, increasing criminal activities, increasing housing shortages, straining social services delivery and spreading health treats like HIV and Aids (1995: 6). The former Minister of Home Affairs, Mangosuthu Buthelezi noted as early as 1994 that: “If South Africans are going to compete for scarce resources with the millions of aliens that are pouring into South Africa, then we can bid goodbye to our Reconstruction and Development Programme” (cited in Palmary, 2002: 4).

Taking this statement into consideration, it is not surprising that Ellies has gone as far as labelling the Department of Home Affairs “a bastion of anti-immigration sentiments” (cited in Marcos, 2010: 22). Beyond that, the statement can be read as part of a long post-colonial history during which South African state officials have often spoken of the nation as a body that could
be infected by outsiders – native or foreign (Klaaren, 2000). This is so regardless of the fact that South Africa abides by two International agreements, the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (UN Refugee Convention) and the 1969 Organisation of African Unity Refugee Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa (OAU Refugee Convention). Domestically, refugees are entitled to protection by the South African Bill of Rights and the Refugee Act of 1998 (McKnight, 2008: 20). Expressly, Section 27 of the Refugees Act states that, “refugees and asylum seekers enjoy full legal protection under the provisions of the Bill of Rights under Chapter 2 of the South African Constitution, which means they too are entitled to the same rights as citizens except the right to vote or to be elected to office” (McKnight, 2008: 20). Among the freedoms granted to refugees in South Africa are the freedoms from random detentions and arrests, unwarranted detentions for more than 30 days, and the right to pursue an identity document and a travel document, to receive basic health services and primary education, and to seek employment and study (McKnight, 2008: 25).

2.3 Research on xenophobia in South African tertiary education contexts

2.3.1 The disciplinary backgrounds of researchers

Some studies have focused on xenophobia in institutions of higher learning (Ramphele, 1999; Shindondola, 2008; Buthelezi, 2009; Mudhovozi, 2011; Singh, 2013; Dominguez-Whitehead and Sing, 2015; Muzumbukilwa, 2007; Lee, 2017; Naidoo and Uys, 2013; Patsika, 2015; Binikos and Rugunanan, 2015). Some of these scholars have been in education (Ramphele, 1999; Dominguez-Whitehead and Sing, 2015; Lee, 2017; Singh, 2013); some have been in sociology (Naidoo and Uys, 2013; Patsika, 2015; Binikos and Rugunanan, 2015; Shindondola, 2002; Muzumbukilwa, 2007); and others in psychology (Buthelezi, 2009; Mudhovozi, 2011).

The major foci of the educational scholarship has been to explore the xenophobic experiences of international students in the South African tertiary education context. To add value to the understanding of xenophobia, these scholars have studied the academic challenges faced by international students (Dominguez-Whitehead and Sing, 2015). These scholars further help us to understand that although xenophobia presents itself in socio-economically deprived communities, it can be found everywhere – even in tertiary institutions where it might manifest in subtle ways (Singh, 2013). This scholarship highlights that international students are an
integral part of any internationally recognised institution. Thus tertiary education institutions must remain havens of tolerance and embrace heterogeneous discourses and cultures (Ramphele, 1999: 3).

Almost all of the sociological research on South African tertiary education institutions probes the relations between local and international students (Naidoo and Uys, 2013; Patsika, 2015) and the xenophobic nature and scale of xenophobia directed at the latter (Shindondola, 2008). In addition, sociological scholarship adds value to the discussion on xenophobia in tertiary education institutions by exploring the extent to which racial integration is occurring in post-1994 (Binikos and Rugunananan, 2015). This scholarship argues that class and racial identity determine a lot in the education system, including the manner in which the local students relate to the non-nationals (Patsika, 2015).

The psychological scholarly interest has been on the international students’ academic experiences away from home and related psychosocial and cultural challenges such as cultural shock, social exclusion and adaptation (Buthelezi, 2009; Mudhovozi, 2011). Conducting research which focuses on the experiences of minorities is one of the ways in which psychology scholars, particularly within the academic context, engage in social justice-centred action (Yakushko and Consoli, 2014). This research provides explanations of xenophobia which were previously unidentified by social scientists. Examples of this are the tendency for males to have higher levels of xenophobic orientation (McDonald et al., 2012), and the human tendency to form in-groups with those most similar to oneself, as described by genetic similarity theory (Rushton, 2005). None of the published studies has examined xenophobia in higher education contexts from a communication studies perspective.

Many of the studies in sociology (Patsika, 2015; Binikos and Rugunananan, 2015) and in education (Dominguez-Whitehead and Sing, 2015; Lee, 2017) have been quantitative. Some in education have followed a qualitative methodological approach (Buthelezi, 2009; Mudhovozi, 2011). Very few studies combine both qualitative and quantitative approaches (Singh, 2013; Naidoo and Uys, 2013). Similar to the quantitative studies on xenophobia in the South African townships and inner-city areas, quantitative studies in tertiary education context employed survey questionnaires for gathering data which was analysed using statistical techniques. On the other hand, qualitative studies in this context rely on qualitative approaches for data collection and analysis to explore the opinions of international students in a South
African university (Buthelezi, 2009; Shindondola, 2008; Mudovhi, 2011). Mudhovozi (2011) used a purposive sample of seven international students to examine their adjustment experiences in a South African university. Shindondola (2008) used selective sample to study the views and opinions of international students at the former Rand Afrikaans University (RAU). In both studies, data was analysed using a content analysis. While these studies were able to make in-depth analysis of the experiences of international students in a South African university, their findings cannot be generalised to other settings. These studies would have been broader in scope if they had compared the attitudes of respondents in different universities (Shindondola, 2008). Also, they would have been richer if they also examined the perceptions of local South African students towards the phenomenon of xenophobia. To fill this gap, the present study examines both sets of students (local and international) at the University of Johannesburg. Regrettably, the limitation of a Masters dissertation made it impossible for the current study to compare the views of students at UJ with those of students in other universities.

2.3.2 Theoretical approaches to xenophobia in tertiary education contexts

Several theories have been used to explain the causes of xenophobia in a South African tertiary education context. They include the Wimmer theory (sociological perspective), realistic group conflict theory (psychological perspective), and economic theory (educational perspective).

2.3.2.1 Wimmer theory

Sociological scholars such as Shindondola (2002) draw upon the Wimmer theory in their explanations of xenophobia in higher education. This theory posits that “xenophobia and racism stem from an intense rivalry between migrants and locals” (Wimmer, 1997: 2). Thus, xenophobic fears of foreign domination do not essentially get worse when wages plummet or when joblessness is on the rise, although both signify intensive competition in the job market. Using Switzerland as an illustration, Wimmer argues that the “first wave of fear about foreign domination occurred at a time of modest, but steady economic growth during the 1880s” (1997: 3). He notes that it is normally around this time that access to housing becomes a challenge which might encourage xenophobia.

Wimmer further discusses cultural differentness. He argues that it is the incapability of foreign nationals to assimilate into the dominant culture of the host nation that leads the majority
population to xenophobic leanings. In addition to cultural incompatibility, low educational attainments and professional expertise are cited as contributing factors to the migrants’ inability to integrate into the class structure of the host nation resulting in the latter being ghettoised and marginalised. Consequently, this “cultural differentness becomes part of the official discourse and is used as a scapegoat for the immigrants’ exclusion and impoverishment” (Wimmer, 1997: 21). Although the Wimmer theory is a fundamental starting point to understanding xenophobia in the higher education context, his theoretical framework is Eurocentric. It may have been more illuminating for South African scholars to widen the scope and explore both racism and xenophobia from a local perspective (Musuva, 2015). Also, Wimmer’s theory does not clearly differentiate between racism and xenophobia.

2.3.2.2 Social conflict theory

Scholars from social psychology perspective link xenophobia to the realist group conflict theory (Buthelezi, 2009; Patsika, 2015). Drawing on social psychology, Sherif et al. (1966) argue that human behaviour in a group setting is not produced by the personal attributes of the individual but by the structure of the situation. Furthermore, Sherif et al. (1961) note that “intergroup conflict is caused by an incompatibility of goals regarding material resources such as land, oil, gold, and labour that is the source of intergroup conflict, not personal characteristics like a prejudiced personality”. Thus, from a group conflict perspective, “xenophobia can be elucidated in terms of the conflict between classes and groups of people in a capitalist system” (Soyombo, 2008: 101). Often, in this type of society, the working class is subjugated by the bourgeoisie and this results in alienation, frustration, and marginalisation (Singh, 2013). The “poor, the unemployed and isolated members of the working class, thus, use xenophobic actions to vent their frustration on the foreigner who is normally an unsuspecting recipient of such deviant behaviour” (Singh, 2013: 93). In line with this perspective, some scholars suggest that xenophobia is an innate instinct of people struggling for scarce material resources required for subsistence (see Patsika, 2015: 31; Arogundade, 2008: 169).

Despite the pertinence of the realistic conflict theory of intergroup behaviour, this theory is criticised for its tendency to suggest that conflict is negative. For example, Valentim notes that “there are situations in which conflict may not necessarily be negative. Especially when we consider disfavoured groups in situations of inequality, injustice or even exploitation, the fact
of facing conflict and struggling, can give impulse to decisive social changes – as History has taught us so many times” (2010: 592). Another problem with this theory is that it is mechanistic. It postulates that life is constrained by physical conditions, overlooking the fact that humans can make sense of a situation based on the information they find.

2.3.2.3 Economic theory

Education scholars like Singh (2013) use economic theory to explain the causes of xenophobia in higher education contexts. Economic theory ascribes “xenophobia to economic factors like poverty and unemployment where poor and unemployed people are more likely to engage in xenophobic practice compared to rich and employed people” (Soyombo, 2008: 85-104). The essence of this theory is that the poor, unemployed or economically disadvantaged are more prone to being xenophobic than the employed and the elite (Fungirai, 2015). This, of course, resonates well with trends of xenophobic attacks in South Africa which have often been perpetrated by unemployed youth and the poverty-stricken disgruntled citizenry (Fungirai, 2015). This theory, however, has been criticised for assuming that “only the poor and unemployed are more likely to engage in xenophobia”, ignoring the fact that the rich and employed can also be xenophobic (Singh, 2013: 92; Mogekwu, 2005: 10).

2.3.3. Xenophobia in higher education contexts

2.3.3.1 Findings from studies of South African universities

At the University of Zululand, Buthelezi (2009) examined the xenophobic experiences of international students in order to find appropriate action to remedy the situation. The study establishes that international students at the University of Zululand experience many challenges that are not physically brutalising but nonetheless xenophobic. The findings show that international students are victims of xenophobic attacks enacted by students and staff members. This occurs in the form of language discrimination, aggression, negative attitudes and abuse.

Singh (2013) examined the xenophobic practices among university students in a rural-based university situated in the Limpopo province. The findings indicate that non-nationals students are confronted by various “xenophobic experiences, which include: name-calling using local African languages; exclusion from class discussions where a local language is used
deliberately; cliques formed that exclude foreigners; difficulty in finding accommodation as international students are not easily accepted in residences; and being blamed whenever violent incidences occur” (Singh, 2013: 88). Strikingly, the majority of students in the same study reported that they “felt safe as foreign students in South Africa because South Africans are generally friendly and open to learning foreign languages” (2013: 103). This study recommends that South African universities develop strategies to protect the enrolled international students.

In a recent study, Lee (2017) examines the experiences of international students across seven South African universities. This study uncovers a preference for whites or those from other countries than fellow Africans, both within academic and non-academic South African communities (Lee, 2017: 882). The research concludes that black Africans generally feel unwelcome, particularly from black South Africans (Lee, 2017: 882). The study also discovered that black Africans are expected to know local black languages because they are black. Failure to meet this expectation is followed by negative consequences, particularly outside of the university (Lee, 2017: 882).

2.3.3.2 Findings from studies at the University of Johannesburg

Shindondola (2008) explored the views, opinions, and experiences of international students at the then Rand Afrikaans University (now University of Johannesburg). This study concludes that being an international student was by no means a protection from abuse and prejudice, particularly if you are of a “darker pigmentation” (Shindondola, 2008: 83). The respondents asserted that they were victims of “emotional and verbal abuse at the hands of South Africans” who often refer to them using derogatory names like “Amakwerekwere” and “Grigambas” (2008: 83). These experiences of abuse led some international students to have negative opinions about South Africans. Most respondents in Shindondola’s study asserted that South Africans looked down on non-nationals; they were really not welcoming; they were intolerant and racist (2008: 51). They further believed that they were “abused by the locals because of their inability to speak local languages; because they are better qualified than the locals and are hardworking and thus accused of stealing jobs” (Shindondola, 2008: 54).

In their 2011 study, Naidoo and Uys (2013) probed the South African students’ sentiments about international “others” and the perceptions of foreign nationals and their place in
democratic South Africa. The study found that undergraduate South African university students were interacting positively with black foreign students; they are strongly opposed to violent acts against foreigners; and admire their counterparts for outstanding academic accomplishments (Naidoo and Uys, 2013: 14). These relations, however, did not extend to deep intimate relations, with local students disapproving of them when asked if they would date a foreign national (Naidoo and Uys, 2013: 7). The study concluded that these fluctuations were indicative of the fact that foreign students are not necessarily assimilated and accepted into social networks within and outside the university (Naidoo and Uys, 2013: 7). Naidoo and Uys (2013) argue that although socialisation is evident between local and foreign students, relations among them are “somewhat superficial” and they do not last long (Naidoo and Uys, 2013: 7). The study further found that damaging public discourses about foreigners and partial intervention by the university on this matter have resulted in students not having enough information and understanding about Africa as well as having no significant attachment to the continent (Naidoo and Uys, 2013: 7). Under such circumstances, local university students find it difficult to build friendships and networks with international students. Consequently, Naidoo and Uys recommend that if xenophobia at the community level is to be addressed, then “the university is a good place to start” (2013: 7).

In another study, Patsika (2015) explored the University of Johannesburg Soweto Campus students’ perceptions towards non-nationals. The results of the study show that the reason or theories seen as the main causes of xenophobia in South Africa do not necessarily apply to the examined students at UJ’s Soweto Campus (2015: 105). The findings reveal that there is no sufficient evidence to define students in this campus as xenophobic in conjunction with the causes of the phenomenon in the overall society (2015: 105). In this regard, the study supports the argument that “contextual particularities of the environment or society ought to be considered in studying the causes of xenophobia and the perceptions towards non-nationals” (Patsika, 2015: 105-106). The study found that local university students in post-apartheid South Africa were more “accepting and tolerant of difference in their country” (Patsika, 2015: 106). The study notes that there might be some level of uneasiness about foreign nationals in particular areas but the respondents appeared not to fit the profile of people who would perpetrate xenophobic violence against non-nationals regardless of their different background (Patsika, 2015: 106).
Also in 2015, Binikos and Rugunanan investigated the level of racial integration at UJ since its inception in 2005. They sought to investigate the extent to which students consider themselves racially integrated and gain knowledge of their attitudes in relation to racial integration. The study discovered that racism is still a major issue in post-apartheid South Africa (Binikos and Rugunanan, 2015: 59). The study also found that the majority of the students socialised and made friends with people from other racial groups (2015: 59). Black students, nonetheless, were the least positive about being friends with people from other racial groups, and it was noted that the more intimate the relationship became, the less comfortable students became (2015: 59). Students generally preferred friendships across races rather than interracial dating. Strikingly, students were more positive towards interracial marriages than they were towards interracial dating (2015: 59). Binikos and Rugunanan argue that mixed-race dating possibly “represents a response to the students’ sense of (dis)comfort in the present tense, compared to marrying someone from another race in the future, something which they may not need to address right now” (2015: 14). The authors conclude that students at UJ appear to be integrating to some extent, but their behaviours are contradictory and must be further investigated.

What sets this study apart is that it was conducted at a time when there was no nationwide spike in xenophobic attacks in South Africa. This, of course, contrasts with previous studies which were conducted in universities during or in the aftermath of widespread xenophobic attacks (see Shindondola, 2008; Buthelezi, 2009; Patsika, 2015). This is fundamental because the context (period and time) in which a study is conducted has the potential to shape or mould the findings. Methodologically, this study offers a refreshing perspective to the study of xenophobia in South Africa by using a broad range of data collection instruments namely, semi-structured interviews, focus group and first-hand phenomenological narratives. This is different given that previous qualitative studies (Singh, 2013; Buthelezi, 2009; Shindondola, 2008) and quantitative studies (Naidoo and Uys, 2013, Patsika, 2015; Binikos and Rugunanan, 2015) in universities have relied heavily on semi-structured interviews and questionnaires respectively and this might have caused them to miss out on deeper first-hand experiences of the respondents. Theoretically, this study is different from previous studies (see Shindondola, 2008) in that it studies xenophobia from an Afrocentric perspective and looks at xenophobia as an outcome of a political state discourse rather than a consequence of economic factors and intergroup conflict (Singh, 2013; Buthelezi, 2009; Patsika, 2015; Naidoo and Uys, 2013).
2.4 Conclusion

This chapter began by reviewing some of the research conducted on xenophobia in the context of South African townships and inner-city areas. These scholars were found to have emerged from the disciplines of migration studies, sociology and political philosophy. Migration scholars focus mostly on the xenophobic pogroms rooted in the informal politics of townships and informal settlements. Sociology scholars, on the other hand, tend to focus on how the former oppressed have come to discriminate against black African migrants in post-apartheid South Africa. Lastly, political philosophy scholarship explores the underlying reasons for the widespread xenophobia to try to avoid future attacks.

While all scholars add value to the body literature on xenophobia in the townships and informal settlements, political philosophy scholars bring the broadest perspective to the study of xenophobia by looking at both the triggers and the underlying causes of the phenomenon. This is in contrast to migration scholars, who often only pay attention to the immediate causes of xenophobia.

This chapter also looked at xenophobia in a tertiary education context wherein several studies have been conducted at universities such as Zululand, Limpopo, Johannesburg, and others. Most of these studies were conducted from educational, sociological and psychological perspectives. All of these studies were found to be contributing to the literature on xenophobia. They help us understand that xenophobia is not only a thing of the poor or the wretched, but a phenomenon that can be found everywhere including in tertiary education institutions. Being an international student does not exempt Africans from discrimination and conflict with the locals. Furthermore, it is apparent that although extreme cases of xenophobia have been reported in low-income areas that are mostly underdeveloped, people in South African tertiary education institutions are not immune to xenophobic attitudes and behaviours. Instead, they are part of the wider South African society and form crucial facets of the country. Hence, it is important to interrogate if universities have not succumbed to the external conditions linked to the wider society, and also to decipher if this poses a challenge for international students or not. The next chapter will present the theoretical framework of the study.
Chapter Three: Theoretical framework

3.1 Introduction

The subject of xenophobia in a higher education context can be interrogated and researched from multiple theoretical backgrounds. In this thesis, I chose to study the phenomenon of xenophobia through a combination of two theoretical perspectives: namely, Fanon’s theorisation of the pitfalls of national consciousness and the Critical Race Theory (CTR). I use both theories because both perspectives are able to connect contemporary xenophobia and racism to the history of colonial/apartheid domination.

3.2 Fanonian theory

3.2.1 Frantz Fanon

Frantz Fanon was a psychiatrist, philosopher, and a revolutionary social theorist. He was born in 1925 in the West Indian French colony of Martinique. Two remarkable black figures were born that same year: Amilcar Cabral and Malcolm X (Strickland, 1979). Fanon’s father was descendent of “African slaves and indentured Indians and worked as a customs agent. His mother was of black Martinician and white Alsatian origin and worked as a shopkeeper” (Gordon and Drucilla, 2015: 26). Fanon grew up in an upper-middle-class family. They could afford to send him to a private high school in Martinique (Gendzier, 1973: 10). By 1943, at the age of 18, Fanon left Martinique to join the Caribbean Free French Movement (Strickland, 1979). A year later, he took active duty in the regular French army to go and fight in Europe, but before getting there he spent several months in Morroco and Algeria, the country he would eventually sacrifice his life for. During this time, Fanon learned how the “virus of racism” had infected the Free French Army and also observed how colonialism had reorganised the world into a racial pecking order that fractured the unity of the oppressed (Strickland, 1979: 68).

In 1947, Fanon’s father died and he travelled back to France to benefit from a scholarship he had won to attend any university in metropolitan France. There he enrolled in medicine in Lyon, became active in the student politics, edited a campus newspaper, and wrote a series of essays which were eventually published in 1952 as Peau noire, masques blanpes (Black skin, white masks) (Strickland, 1979). After completing his studies, Fanon travelled to Algeria where
he attempted to revolutionise the practice of psychiatric medicine, while also becoming involved in the Algerian revolution. This would soon lead to him cutting ties with France, a move that would put him under threat of being arrested (Strickland, 1979). He left Algiers in 1957 for France, and he subsequently worked for the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN) as a representative in Ghana and Mali, recruiting volunteers to go and fight the French colonial regime in Algeria. Fanon returned from this mission exhausted: he had been diagnosed with Leukaemia, but during this time he still began working on the book that was to become *Les damnés de la terre* (*The wretched of the earth*). On 6 December 1961, Fanon fell into a coma and died six months before France would be compelled to give independence to the Algerians.

### 3.2.2 The context in which Fanonian theory was developed

The Fanonian theorisation of the pitfalls of national consciousness is developed from the colonial context. As Chuka and Cyril remark, Fanon “is a child of his time. His time, his world and existence is the colonial world – a Manichean world” (2017: 22). Fanon’s conception of decolonization within the context of anticolonial struggle is shaped by his childhood as a colonial subject in Martinique and his war experiences as an Algerian revolutionary, together with his privileged position as a psychiatrist (Chuka and Cyril, 2017: 24). Fanon dealt with colonialism as a situation of dehumanisation caused by Euro-centricity and its negation of the other (Sharawy, 2011). Even so, Fanon was thinking and writing on what O’Halloran (2015: 2) calls a “historical cusp” – a point of transition between two different states: namely, the colonial and the post-colonial. This is particularly evident in his last book, *The wretched of the earth* (1961), in which he talks about colonisation and then turns towards the future, to what could possibly happen after independence is attained in the anti-colonial struggle (O’Halloran, 2015: 2). He further discusses the potential of regression among newly independent states. This is explored particularly in the chapter titled “The pitfalls of national consciousness”.

Frantz Fanon lives on through his body of work, which remains significant to the thinking and actions of many people across the world even today (Mawere and Nemachina, 2013: 225). On the African continent, Fanon’s thoughts have been “relevant to many revolutions for independence, in countries such as Uganda, Congo, and Mozambique” (Mawere and Nemachina, 2013: 226).
3.2.3 Scholars and philosophers who influenced Fanon

Fanon was greatly influenced by the work of the German philosopher Karl Marx. Smith (1973) argues that akin to Marx, Fanon was not only a great original thinker but also a great system builder, using psycho-social analysis as Marx used socio-economic analysis to marry many threads of thought into a coherent whole. Smith (1973) goes on to suggest that Fanon was a Marxist in methodology, implementing the methods developed by Marx to his particular period and situation. He was also a Marxist because like Marx he was strongly opposed to the exploitation of man by man (Smith, 1973). But their foci varied in the sense that Marx took a European angle in his work, while Fanon was Afrocentric in world view (Smith, 1973).

Fanon was also influenced by the work of philosophers such as Jean-Paul Satre, Karl Jaspers, Soren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche (Chuka and Cyril, 2017: 23). As a black man born in Martinique, he was greatly inspired by the teachings of Aimé Césaire’s Négritude literature, which taught Fanon that it “it is fine and good to be a Negro” (Gendzier, 1973: 22). Among psychiatrists, none was as influential to Fanon as Francois Tosquelles. Tosquelles’ “materialistic psychiatry”, which accentuated work therapy and patient involvement in the treatment of mental illness, provided a springboard for what Fanon would, later on, try to “practice in Algeria when he served as head of the psychiatry department of Blida-Joinville Hospital” (Geismar, 1971: 55).

3.2.4 Key ideas in Fanon’s theory of the pitfalls of national consciousness

Fanon connects the phenomenon of xenophobia to the politics of the dominant group or the national bourgeoisie after independence. He notes that “nationalism, which sets in after independence, often fails to bring liberation across class boundaries because its ambitions are essentially those of the formerly colonised bourgeoisie – a privileged middle class which seeks to defeat the colonial rule only to usurp its place of dominance over the wretched of the earth” (Fanon, 1961: 149). This middle class, however, is inadequately prepared to replace the colonial system because it is under-resourced and lacks intellectual capacity, and thus resort to sending “frenzied appeals for help to the former mother country” (Fanon, 1961: 149). Thus, instead of being independent, the decolonised nation-state remains financially reliant on and indebted to the former coloniser. Fanon also condemns the national bourgeoisie for “creating this dependency by imitating the strategies and behaviour of the traditional bourgeoisie” (1961: 149). Indeed, Fanon asserts that this middle class which imposes control over big foreign
companies soon becomes content with being the Western bourgeoisie’s “business agent” (1961: 152).

Fanon further explains that on the “morrow of independence” the national bourgeoisie which takes over power is not hesitant to use its class aggressiveness to take that which once belonged to foreigners (1961: 155). In fact, “it will fight to the bitter end against these people “who insult our dignity as a nation” (Fanon, 1961: 155). It will brandish the notion of nationalisation and Africanisation to pursue the interests of the ruling classes. The poor unemployed masses will then model themselves on this “nationalist attitude” and pick fights with other African nationalities (Fanon, 1961: 103). African foreigners are thus called on “to leave, their shops are burned, their market booth are torn down and some are lynched” (1961: 103). Fanon argues that “since the slogan of the national bourgeoisie is to replace the foreigner,” the “small people of the nation” in low paying menial jobs “will be equally quick to insist that foreigners go back to their country” (1961: 158).

Furthermore, Fanon explains that after independence, nationals who reside in affluent regions refuse to share resources with other nationals and this evokes “old precolonial rivalries” and causes the old “intertribal hatreds” to re-emerge (1961: 159). Fanon makes a telling observation in this regard:

African unity, a vague term, but nevertheless one to which the men and women of Africa were passionately attached and whose operative function was to put incredible pressure on colonialism, reveals its true face and crumbles into regionalisms within the same national reality. The national front that drove back colonialism falls apart and licks its wounds (1961: 159).

In this context, Fanon argues that it is shocking to hear racist remarks in a country which calls “itself African and to observe the existence of paternalist behaviour which gives one the bitter impression that you are in Paris, Brussels, or London” (1961: 162). The national bourgeoisie is keen on hindering the unity achieved through a concerted effort. Thus Fanon contends that “African unity can only be realised through the upwards thrust of the people, and under the leadership of the people” (1961: 164): in other words, in insubordination of the national bourgeoisie. But since the national bourgeoisie has no “economic power to sustain its domination, and can only throw a few crumbs to the rest of the country because of its obsession to enrich itself, the country sinks deeper and deeper into “stagnation” (1961: 165). The national
bourgeoisie party’s prime minister reaches out to the former coloniser for economic relief, to which the colonial power responds by making “increased demands” and tightening the grip it already had on the former colony (1961: 167). Hungry and demoralised, the masses begin to “sulk and turn away from this nation to which they have been given no place” (1961: 169). Opposition against the national bourgeoisie becomes manifest, but the young bourgeoisie ignores the warning (1961: 172). The political party of the national bourgeoisie denounces expressions of popular discontent and threatens to send people “back to their caves” (1961: 183). In this regard, Fanon warns that a party that seeks to develop not only its cities but also the thinking of its residents must be a “trustworthy political party” (1961: 185). This political party must serve as a tool in the hands of the masses. In order to arrive at this conception of the party, the Fanonian theory argues that “we must free ourselves of the Western, very bourgeois and contemptuous attitude that the masses are incapable of governing themselves” (1961: 188).

3.2.5 Criticism of Fanon’s theory

One of the criticisms levelled against Fanon’s theory lies in the personality of the author. Since his demise, Fanon has been painted by some as a “draconian monster” (Isaacs, 1965: 67). Zolberg, in particular, has dismissed Fanon’s views as an attempt to justify violence by the colonised people against the foreign coloniser and thus give rise to barbarism and terrorism (1966: 62). Zolberg writes the following about Fanon: “He has not freed himself from the white mask and still believes that blacks are less than men [and] terrorism and murder are necessary because unless European institutions are totally destroyed they will prevail and corrupt the new world” (1966: 62).

Defending Fanon’s views, Cabe writes that The wretched of the earth “provides a critical analysis of an overwhelming number of issues drawing from racial formation identity, colonialism/decolonization, narratives of the liberation struggle, language, nationalism and violence and the various ways in which it shapes and it alters the relationship between colonizer and the colonized” (2014: 3). Cabe further explains that the text “is not necessarily for the colonised, as Jean-Paul Sartre suggests in the preface of the book, but it is an intensive study about the reality of both the colonial and the post-post-colonial world”. Furthermore, contrary to the “monster” picture of Fanon painted by some authors, Martin notes that Fanon was a “very sensitive individual” who was able to “empathize with the abject suffering which he
observed being apportioned to his fellow black people around the world” (2011: 382). But his “abhorrence of suffering was not limited to the plight of black people, it embraced all mankind (Martin, 1970: 382). In that context, Smith (1973) contends that the charges of barbarism and terrorism aimed at Fanon are based on the failure to comprehend where he originates from.

3.2.6 Relevance of Fanon’s theory to the current study

Although coming from a different geographical space and having physically lived in a different time frame, Fanon’s analysis of colonial and post-colonial African states applies with spectacular precision to post-apartheid South Africa (More, 2011: 173). This is primarily because South Africa, the last state to be liberated from apartheid colonialism, has failed to take heed of the warning of Fanon and negate the pitfalls of the national bourgeoisie post-independence. This, however, should not be surprising because Fanon (1961) before his demise observed that the colonized bourgeoisie is unable to learn its lessons and could end up denying the people their deserved freedom. Besides, Parsley and Everatt note that “one of the predominant reasons cited for xenophobia, reflecting a perception that is prevalent among economically deprived black communities of South Africa, is the fact that social and economic inequality has not yet been attained even after liberation in 1994 (2010: 3). This quite explicitly points to the problematic and incomplete decolonisation that Fanon envisaged in his work on decolonisation. He predicted that the political dispensation in formerly colonised and racially oppressed countries such as South Africa would struggle to move entirely beyond the politics of colonialism. In other words, Fanon realised that the newly independent states would struggle to achieve complete liberation, which he summed up in the well-known words: “The last shall be first and the first last” (Fanon, 1961: 37). Regrettably, as Fanon envisioned for post-colonial African states (1961: 145), post-apartheid South African is dominated by a nationalist politics that posits that foreign nationals are here to exploit the wealth of the country and not to contribute. This conjures anger and in turn violence which is kept inward. Deflected from the real sources of suffering and in need of expression, the anger is unleashed onto foreign nationals. In this sense, xenophobia repeats the psychological economy of violence and poverty theorised in Fanon’s analysis of colonial and post-colonial repression (1961).

Fanonian theory thus adds value to the current study because it provides a doorway to understanding xenophobia as it pays attention to philosophical and political dynamics which
are not commonly examined in the available literature on xenophobia in South Africa. It helps us to understand the stark contrast between South Africa being “extremely happy about the number of African students” in the country as mooted by the Minister of Home Affairs Malusi Gigaba, and the “discrimination against unwelcomed immigrants, particularly from neighbouring countries” (Lee, 2017: 873). In addition, Fanonian thinking is useful to this study because it provides a critical analysis and a prognosis of decolonisation which forms a “relevant theory to employ in the analysis and understanding of the challenges faced by most African countries” (Hwami, 2016: 19-20).

3.2.7 Fanon’s theory and xenophobia in South Africa

Neocosmos has used Fanon’s theorisation of the pitfalls of national consciousness to explain xenophobia in post-apartheid South Africa. His book From “foreign natives” to “native foreigners” attempts to provide a comprehensive and rigorous explanation of the horrific events of May 2008 in South Africa. The core of this book argues that “xenophobia should be understood as a political discourse. Its historical development, as well as the conditions of its existence, must be explained in terms of the practices and prescriptions which structure the field of politics” (Neocosmos, 2010: 11). Neocosmos argues that in “South Africa the history of xenophobia is linked to the manner in which citizenship has been conceived and fought over during modern South African history” (2010: 11). Xenophobia in South Africa is a problem of post-coloniality: a phenomenon that Fanon squarely connects to the politics of the dominant groups in the period following independence (2010: 9). Thus, the “prevalence of xenophobia in post-apartheid South Africa is an effect of the hegemony of a particular form of state politics; a politics which reduces citizenship to indigeneity and to a politically passive conception of citizenship” (Neocosmos, 2010: 17). “It is as a consequence of such politics (a particular kind of nationalism of the bourgeoisie) that for Fanon chauvinism and xenophobia grip the masses, which feel entitled to claim national resources as their own” (2010: 11). Within the context of such politics, what provides you with the “power to claim these resources is indigeneity” (2010: 11), hence xenophobia in post-apartheid South Africa, is very much like the xenophobia noted by Fanon’s theory of the pitfalls of national consciousness. In both cases, xenophobia is “directed against those foreigners in positions of political weakness” (2010: 11). The hegemony of this mode of politics was secured because of a “failure to sustain an alternative popular-democratic political discourse which had stressed a different understanding of citizenship and
the nation” (2010: 18). Such liberal state politics has remained largely unchallenged. Following Fanon’s theory, Neocosmos proposes that alternative conceptions of politics and citizenship be sought beyond state forms of politics. Like Fanon, he is pessimistic about the role of political leaders in combating xenophobia. Such pessimism is eloquently elucidated in Neocosmos’ statement he makes that “Despite proffering their abhorrence at xenophobic violence, few politicians are likely to take the risk of leading a vigorous anti-xenophobic campaign, given their need for re-election by a xenophobic populace […] xenophobia must [therefore] be understood as very much embedded in the politics of interest which govern local politics” (2010: 18). Fanon’s theory is central here as it asserts that post-colonial leaders have a tendency to grab power for their own selfish interests at the expense of the masses of the people, who are then left impoverished or even worse off than they were pre-independence (1961).

Nigel Gibson is another scholar who has applied the Fanonian perspective to understand the rise of xenophobic violence as a symptom of the degeneration of the idea of South Africa as a “promised land”. He argues that we “cannot talk about ethnic or xenophobic violence in South Africa without thinking about the geographical layout of post-apartheid society as an expression of what Fanon calls incomplete liberation” (2011: 5). One symptom of this incompleteness is the exclusion of people from full citizenship. This gives rise to “ethnic chauvinism and nativism, which are legitimized via claims of indigeneity while simultaneously reproducing a politics of political, social and spatial exclusion rooted in apartheid racial classifications” (2011: 6). In this context, Gibson argues that “South Africa’s incomplete liberation is evident in the xenophobic violence of May 2008, which quickly spread across the country’s urban shack lands” (2011: 6). He observes that though the specific grievances that led up to the “anti-foreigner attacks might have been unemployment, lack of housing, as well as frustration with failed government policies, the fact of the matter is that frustration and discourses of ethnic and national chauvinism did not arrive out of the blue” (2011: 6). Instead, they emerged from the politics endorsed or at least channelled by factions of local and also government elites, as well as civil servants (2011: 7). Thus, the violence of the lived experiences of the poor who are continually told that African “aliens” are to be blamed for their situation finds expression in the restricted urban spaces where “natives” are permitted to live in the form of black on black violence (Fanon, 1961). For Gibson, although the spread of violence across shack lands in May 2008 was publicly decried by politicians, this “kind of violence was still contained and held acceptable by the elites” (2011: 8).
In sum, Gibson argues that the xenophobic violence of 2008 is a “product of pauperization but it is also a consequence of the state and non-governmental organisations’ silencing of alternative voices – what Fanon would consider a suppression of politics and oppositional discourses that allow the poor to organize and make their own demands” (2011: 12).

In addition to Fanon, I also rely on the work of Neocosmos (2010) and Gibson (2011). Both scholars have applied the Fanonian theorisation of the pitfalls of national consciousness in their analysis of xenophobia in post-apartheid South Africa. Moreover, these scholars study xenophobia specifically within the South African context in an era where one of the worst outbreaks of xenophobic violence in the history of this country has occurred.

3.3 Critical Race Theory (CRT)

3.3.1 CRT

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a theoretical framework in the social sciences that employs a critical methodology to examine society and culture as they relate to the classification of race, law, and power (Delgado, 2002). It is possibly one of the fastest growing and controversial movements in recent legal scholarship, provoking debate similar to that provoked by Critical Legal Studies (CLS) over thirty years ago (Lilowitz, 1999). Although partly inspired by CLS’s failure to adequately make sense of racial issues, CRT remains indebted to CLS in approach and substance (Lilowitz, 1999). It also draws on a variety of scholarships and movements: namely, continental philosophy (especially postmodernism and poststructuralism), radical feminism, Marxism, cultural studies, and the Black Power movement (Lilowitz, 1999). The theory has been postulated by a great number of authors, Derrick Bell, Richard Delgado, Patricia Williams, Regina Austin, Mari Matsuda, Charles Lawrence, and Kimberle Crenshaw.

3.3.2 The context in which CRT was developed

CRT emerged as a theoretical movement within the American law schools in the 1970s (Cole, 2008). Within a few years, it had attracted not only black, also Latino and Asian writers (Delgado, 2002). It equally grew out of frustration among scholars from historically oppressed racial minority groups regarding an inattention to racial power in critical theory and critical legal studies in the US (Walker, 2005; Crenshaw et al., 1995). The dominant propensity in
these disciplines was to perceive “race or identity consciousness as a form of essentialism or particularization that threatened solidarity of critical movements” (Salter and Adams, 2013: 782). In response, early critical race theorists began to question the role of law in sustaining and further creating racially grounded social and economic oppression (Lynn and Adams, 2002). In addition to focusing on the delayed expansion of civil rights legislation, these researchers aimed to challenge the prevalent racial injustices while committing themselves to examining the unabated racism in the US’s legal system (Yosso, 2002). As Subotnik asserts, “CRT is a movement whose objective has been nothing short of shaking the existing epistemological and ontological orders” (1998: 690)

3.3.3 Key tenets of CRT

Firstly, critical race theorists concede to the fact that racism is “endemic to American life” (Matsuda et al., 1993: 6). They contend that race is “encoded” not only in the legislature, but also in the American culture (Delgado, 1982). They further believe that “common sense assumptions” about people of colour are biased and thus “we [Americans] are all racist” (Delgado, 1982). Secondly, Professor Derrick Bell (1980) presents the “interest convergence theory”, which is rooted in the premise that the minority’s interest in realising racial equality advances only when those interests “converge” with the larger interest of whites. Thus, every movement aimed at change is a struggle against the white dominant culture, and that movement will not prevail unless it upsets the status quo (Bell, 1980).

Thirdly, CRT argues that “liberalism has failed to bring about equality among races, for the mere reason that formal equality cannot eradicate deeply entrenched types of racism which are experienced by black people and minorities (in our case African immigrants in South Africa) on a daily basis” (Matsuda et al., 1993: 6-7). From this standpoint, CRT criticises liberalism for its colour-blindness – a mechanism allowing people to ignore racist policies that perpetuate social inequity (Ladson-Billings, 1998). As Bonilla-Silva explains, colour blind racism “otherises softly” but it “otherises nonetheless” (2003: 3).

Fourthly, counter-storytelling is a central feature of CRT discourse. This is captured in the words of critical race theorists Delgado and Stefancic:
Stories, parables, chronicles, and narratives are powerful means for destroying mindset – the bundle of presuppositions, received wisdoms, and shared understandings [in our] legal and political discourse takes place. These matters are rarely focused on. They are like eyeglasses we have won a long time…They can show that what we believe is ridiculous, self-serving or cruel (2000: 61).

In this sense, CRT makes a “call to context which discards the formal perspective taken by white male scholars who subscribe to the dominant narrative which perceives law as flawless and impartial” (Delgado, 1990). It seeks to bring out the “nuances of life as experienced by historically oppressed” people using techniques such as storytelling, science fiction and sarcasm (Delgado, 1990).

3.3.4 Criticism of CRT

Despite its contributions to our understanding of race, racism and anti-racism, CRT is not without its detractors (see Subotnik, 1998; Bonilla-Silva, 2015; Bock and Hunt, 2015). Litowitz contends that researchers operating within the critical race framework fall into the trap of being narcissistic. He argues that they end up “writing about themselves on the ground that their personal experience is unique and that there is something special that they can contribute because they are black, Latino, Asian, and so on” (Litowitz, 1997: 516). In South Africa, Bock and Hunt have dismissed the CRT model as being stuck in the past (2015: 14). They argue that “people desire to move on, but what is holding them back is the absence of an alternative discourse to imagine themselves outside racial categories” (2015: 14). Earlier research by other South African scholars Conradie and Brokensha (2014), Matthews (2011) and Vincent (2008) reach similar conclusions. In addition, CRT has been accused of being obsessed with the “outsider view” that it totally disregard any vantage viewpoints of the insider and thus failing to create a balanced view between insiders (white liberal authors) and outsiders (black writers/commentators) (Litowitz, 1997: 527). Richard Posner (1997: 40), for instance, describes CRT as a “lunatic fringe”.

Although there are detractors of CRT, it has also supporters. For example, Mills writes that “In a racially structured polity, the only people who can find it psychologically possible to deny the centrality of race are those who are racially privileged, for whom race is invisible precisely because the world is structured around them” (1997: 75). Modiri argues that a CRT is important because of its ability to problematise “race-neutral and colour-blind approaches” (2012: 407).
For Erasmus (2010: 397), CRT provides a valuable approach to working with race “as a social construct in the South African context, while at the same time constructing knowledge and promoting practice aimed at the demise of racial categorizations”. This deduction echoes research by Mhlauli, Salani, and Mokotedi, who posit that “for South Africa to transform it has to understand the modus operandi of racism from a CRT perspective in order to unearth the subtle nature of its manifestation in the post-apartheid era” (2015: 203).

3.3.5 Relevance of CRT to the current study

CRT was developed in the context of the US. But the South African case bears resemblance to the issues addressed by CRT given the history of apartheid characterised by racial and ethnic discrimination to which the majority of the black population were subjected (Walker, 2005). Besides, the current study is aimed at exploring the personal narratives of a group of students at one historically white and Afrikaans medium university now undergoing transformation. In this context, it doesn’t appear far-fetched to employ a critical race approach which asserts that “the attraction of narrative and story lies in the descriptive, communicative and potentially transformative power of diverse stories and counter-stories” (Delgado, 1989: 2349). In addition, ample literature on xenophobia (Shindondola, 2003; Singh, 2013; Binikos and Rugunanan, 2015) demonstrates that perceived differences between local and foreign are rooted in culture but also in race. Hence, in contrast to Appiah (1992), who denies the existence of race, this study concurs with critical race theorists like Walker (2005: 132) that discrimination through racism does occur, manifesting itself through hate speech, exploitation, and so on.

For this study, CRT “is an important tool with which to try to unravel the continued hold race has on our lives” (Erasmus, 2010: 397). By critical race theory, I refer loosely to the work of scholars such as, Gqola (2008), Nyamnjoh (2006), and Mngxitama (2008) and Matsinhe (2011) who have critically emphasised the dimension of xenophobia in South Africa. These authors contribute to the CRT framework by emphasising that what is termed “xenophobia” is in fact, a form of racism – black on black racism – practiced by people of the same population group (Tafira, 2011: 114). Consequently, Tafira argues that the definitions of Negrophobia, Afrophobia, and xenophobia are “compatible with the salient, implicit, explicit or hidden racist practices that black people apply towards one another” (2011: 15). In that context, the current
thesis applies an intricate analysis of the race problem which includes discovering and reviewing the paradox of a non-racist, multi-cultural democracy with white racial privilege, anti-black racism, and inequality (Modiri, 2012). It does so to add to the existing analysis which questions the normality of racism and draws on race-sensitive and race-critical approaches to life in the context of the long and tragic history of racial discrimination and repression (Modiri, 2012).

3.3.6 Contemporary critical work on race

This study also relies on the ideas shared by critical race thinkers and activists such as Andile Mngxitama, Pumla Dineo Gqola, Francis Nyamnjoh and David Matsinhe among others. These scholars offer powerful critiques of the present conversations on race and xenophobia in South Africa under the umbrella term of critical race theory. Mngxitama (2008) questions the argument that the violence meted out against African migrants in May 2008 was xenophobic. He argues that the 2008 pogroms should be thought of as black lashing on black caused by what can be termed “Negrophobia” – the fear and dislike of blacks (2008: 197). According to Mngxitama, this violence has now been externalised to the Kwerekweres, because the “psychology of violence operates on the basis of the weakest link” (2008: 197). Xenophobia, he argues, is the “hatred of foreigners, but in South Africa there are no white foreigners, just tourists, investors and professionals who live in quite different spaces to the mass of people” (2008: 197-198). They unlike black Africans do not experience xenophobia; they do not go down to the squatter camps where the illegals or those excluded from South African democracy live (2008: 197-198). Mngxitama notes that white settlers make up to 10% of the South African population and own more than 80% of the country’s wealth, but are never perceived as foreigners. Instead it is the black that is hated and attacked (2008). For Mngxitama this “is an indication that xenophobia is hatred of the self among black people” (2008: 198). Therefore Negrophobia rather than xenophobia is the right term to explain the attacks of May 2008. Drawing from this body of thought, I am able to understand that black African migrants in South Africa are the racialised others.

Gqola similarly argues that the terms Afrophobia and “Negrophobic xenophobia” appear to be more descriptive of the May 2008 attacks since “citizens from neighbouring Southern African countries, such as Zimbabwe and Mozambique, as well as West African migrants from Somalia and Nigeria, were most severely affected” (2008: 210). She notes that these people are safe to
brutalise as they are (assumed to be) from Third world countries, and are residentially integrated into marginal black South African communities (2008: 211). Similar to black South African citizens during the apartheid era, these so-called “thrown away” people are considered “foreign” and rendered visible because their bodies can be identified as such through phenotype (2008: 211). Gqola suggests that it is the “reading of identity as clearly personified, through pigmentation, that allows for the categorisation of who belongs to South Africa and who doesn’t” (2008: 211). Thus, those attacked in the May 2008 events were neither the wealthy, property-owning European, nor North American passport holders who settle in the affluent suburbs of Johannesburg (Gqola, 2016: 72). They were those Gqola calls “intimate foreigners”, who are specifically located within South Africa and are often stereotyped as criminals and parasites (2016: 72).

Nyamnjoh (2006: 20) augments Mngxitama’s (2008) and Gqola’s (2008) theorisation of xenophobia in South Africa by indicating that the phenomenon is not only racialised but also Africanised as Afrophobia with black foreigners the typical target for assault. He argues that “black foreigners are the most likely to be considered illegal immigrants or aliens even before they get inside the South African borders” (2006: 14). This is partly ascribed to the fact that the South African masses are manipulated by their leaders’ rhetoric that abundance and success are under threat from unregulated immigration or what Nyamnjoh calls the politics of “purity of belonging” (2006: 15). This notwithstanding the fact that “most black South Africans are themselves yet to graduate from subjection into citizenship in real terms” (2006: 15). As a result of this anti-foreigner discourse, “black African immigrants are denied a name of their choice in South Africa, particularly by South African blacks who refer to them as Makwerekwere” (2006: 14). By so doing, “South African blacks ensure a continuity of the apartheid logic based on affirming reluctance to share a common humanity with those considered strange creatures from beyond the borders of civilisation” (2006: 14). The irony is that “South Africans are considerably less concerned with ridding the country of the fairer skinned migrants” who are treated as an exception, and thus the only “true global citizens” (2006: 15).

Nyamnjoh’s analysis also draws from history: he is conscious that “the transition from apartheid to democracy did not mark a revolutionary rupture with the absence of justice and restitution” (2006: 56). He notes that the polarisation and tensions observed in the so-called xenophobic attacks are “exacerbated by the racial lexicon of the apartheid era that has fed into
the new South Africa” (2006: 14). Nyamnjoh is baffled by the politics of amnesia practiced by South African black leadership. He finds it strange that the majority of Africans who currently face the exclusionary rhetoric of xenophobia in South Africa “hails from the same nations that harboured and nurtured the South African liberation struggle” (2006: 56). He attributes this to the fact that South Africans suffer from an inferiority complex caused by the fact that, “unlike Whites, Indians and Makwerekwere, South African blacks have no first or second home elsewhere, or at least so they think, having been immobilised and insulated by apartheid and subjection since 1652. This qualifies them in particular as landlords in the new South Africa, who must decide who stays where, how and for what rent” (2006: 62)

Matsinhe also presents a convincing critique of the present conversations about xenophobia in South Africa. He develops and deploys the ideology of Makwerekwere to explain the phenomenon of Afrophobia expressed in the May 2008 “blacks against blacks” violence (2011). He argues that the “ideology of Makwerekwere in South Africa is a fantasy of the foreign body which has its origin in the socio-emotional dynamics of colonial group relations, and today informs the relations between South Africans and African foreign nationals” (2011: 302). Matsinhe notes that in South Africa’s imagination, the word “foreigner is an emotionally charged signifier of African foreign nationals or Makwerekwere, whereby African bodies become literal texts on which some of the most graphic and scrutable messages of aversion are written” (2011: 302). Physical features, movements, sounds, and smells are in this context readable as evidence of imagined citizenship and foreignness (2011: 302-303). In this way, nonconformity to “bodily ideals of citizenship or conformity to fantasies of strangeness warrant strip search, arrest, detention, deportation, humiliation, torture, rape, mugging and killing of the so-called African foreigner” (2011: 303). Quite rightly, Matsinhe argues that this is a “manifestation of the narcissism of minor differences caused by the colonial/apartheid creation of the South African social unconscious and of the social habitus that goes along with it” (2011: 306). This underlies the anti-African orientation of South Africans (2011: 306). Matsinhe further observes that in the “context of South Africa and Afrophobia, the dynamics of colonial and apartheid group relations have altered the social consciousness and unconsciousness of blacks, creating in them a colonized self” (2011: 299). In the “social unconscious”, “South African” and “whiteness” have become synonymous, whereas blackness symbolizes “evil, sin, wretchedness, death, war, famine” (2011: 301). According to Matsinhe, “such social unconscious has enabled the colonised to idealise themselves in the image of the
coloniser – a fantasy that finds expression in South African exceptionalism, out of which comes the odd idea that South Africans have “lighter skin complexions” in contrast to Africans from elsewhere in the continent (2011: 301). Therefore, Matsinhe theorises that, “to a greater or lesser extent, the ex-oppressed in South Africa have adopted the character of their former oppressor as they now oppress the African other who is imagined as different and inferior to the South African us” (2011: 302). Matsinhe thus concludes that rather than rushing to characterise the aversion towards African foreign nationals as xenophobia, “we should factor in the history of colonial groupings and the extent to which the post-apartheid ideology of Makwekwere and South Africa’s exceptionalism may bear imprints of this history” (2011: 295).

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter began with a brief background on Frantz Fanon, the psychiatrist, philosopher and a revolutionary social theorist from Martinique who coined the theory of the pitfalls of national consciousness. It then went on to describe the colonial context in which the Fanonian theory was developed, as well as Fanon’s influences and some of his key ideas and criticism aimed at this theory. I argue that Fanon was able to predict what could happen after independence. Fanon warned that the national bourgeoisie that takes over power after independence would eventually fail to represent the ideals and aspiration of the masses because of its lack of financial and intellectual insight, and also its obsession to gain as much wealth as it can. Though Fanon wrote in a different time and space, his analysis of colonial and post-colonial African states and state elites was spot on. In addition to Fanon’s original work, I also refer to two South African scholars who have applied the Fanonian theorisation of the pitfalls of national consciousness to explain xenophobia in post-apartheid South Africa (see Neocosmos, 2010; Gibson 2011). Neocosmos’ central argument is that xenophobia is a state-driven project of exclusive citizenship based on indigeneity. Gibson, on the other hand, views the emergence of xenophobic violence as a consequence of incomplete liberation.

In the second part of this chapter, CRT is identified as one of the most provocative theories within the legal scholarship shaped by other academic fields such as radical feminism, Marxism and cultural studies among others. CRT emerged as a theoretical movement in the 1970s out of bitterness among academics from historically oppressed racial minority groups regarding an absentmindedness to racial power in critical theory and critical legal scholarships in the US. In
my study, CRT serves as a genealogy of contemporary critical work on race. Thus by critical race theory, I refer more generally to the work of scholars who have critically stressed the racial dimension of xenophobia in the South African context (see Nyamnjoh, 2006; Mngxitama, 2008; Matsinhe, 2011; Gqola, 2008).
Chapter Four: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the theoretical framework which provides the lenses with which to examine the topic of the study. In this chapter, attention will be shifted to the research methodology and design used in carrying out the research. The discussion is organised around the selected methodology and the research methods which were used to sample the participants, and collect and analyse the data (Monkhe, 2012: 40). The chapter concludes by looking at the ethical considerations and the limitations of the study.

4.2 Research methodology

4.2.1 Qualitative research

My choice of a qualitative study was encouraged by the need to generate a complex, detailed understanding of how local and international students articulate their attitudes and perceptions towards xenophobia at the University of Johannesburg Kingsway Campus. This detail could only be achieved by talking to the students directly and allowing them to “tell their stories unencumbered” by what the researcher expected to find or what he had read in the literature (Creswell, 2007: 40). Giacomini and Cook (2000) state that qualitative research is an in-depth analysis aimed at “understanding the how, what and why of a social phenomenon”. Qualitative research findings depend on the direct experiences of human beings as sense makers in their everyday lives (Klenke, 2008: 6).

Whereas positivists assume that knowledge is objective and quantifiable (Thomas, 2010: 294), the point of departure of this study is the admission of the subjective stance towards the reality I was studying. I made subjective decisions. For example, I chose to focus on the University of Johannesburg (APK Campus); I selected specific groups of students (international fee-paying students and local South African students), which comprise of both undergraduates and post-graduates; and I also decided which information to analyse and what method to use in doing so. I knew beforehand that participants would present “multiple realities” and perceive the same phenomena “differently” from each other (Krefting, 1991: 3). This is due to the fact that as people we have varying opinions and live lives that are filled with paradoxes and this will
be observed later on in Chapter 5, which presents the analysis of what the participants said and some of their life narratives.

Seeking to study xenophobia in the tertiary education context rather than townships and inner-city areas, the choice of a qualitative approach was straightforward. I needed a research methodology that would help me understand the context in which the participants address an issue because one cannot separate what people say from the setting in which they say it (Creswell, 2007: 40). A qualitative research was also useful in enabling me to theorise some of the causes of xenophobia in South Africa in order to challenge some of the theories (such as scapegoating theory and biocultural theory) that fail to adequately capture the complexity of a phenomenon like xenophobia.

While quantitative research presents statistical results represented by numerical or statistical data, this study presents data as a “descriptive narration with words and attempts to understand or interpret phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008: 4). This is in the form of personal stories and experiences which some students have had in relation to xenophobia at the University of Johannesburg Kingsway Campus. While not discrediting the effectiveness of quantitative research, I note that a quantitative methodology may not thoroughly capture the emotional responses or the feelings of the respondents, and may not be sensitive to the uniqueness of the individuals (Creswell, 2007: 40). In contrast, a qualitative research approach accepts that people are complex and their experiences and perceptions can be understood by communicating with them directly (Krefting, 1991). Moreover, the interest I find in applying a qualitative methodology to the current topic is in the ability of this methodology to be “emergent”. This means that the preliminary plan for research is not necessarily fixed as all stages of the process may “change or shift” once the researcher enter the “field and begin to collect data” (Creswell, 2007: 39).

A qualitative research methodology allows the researcher to gain rich and valuable data, which could not be obtained effectively by other methods (Domegan and Fleming, 2007). Qualitative research also assists the researcher to simplify and manage the data generated from interviews without tempering with the complexity of the phenomena and the context (Atieno, 2009: 17). A qualitative methodology is useful in exploring a phenomenon like xenophobia (Hjerm, 1998: 337). It is also useful to explore a rarely explored topic like how both local and international students articulate their views in relation to xenophobia. Since human perceptual processes
such as emotions, motivations and attitudes are difficult to quantify, qualitative research appears to be a “more effective method of investigating emotional responses than quantitative research” (Burns and Grove, 2003: 374-374). Thus, the forte of a qualitative research is that it sets out to describe the completeness of an experience in a comprehensive and eloquent manner (Polkinghorne, 1989: 45).

4.3 Gaining entry into the research field and finding study participants

Kondowe (2014: 146) notes that “listening to lecturers and studying text books, students may imagine that organising a research project, gaining access to the research field and finding willing participants is an uncomplicated task”. On the ground, however, we soon discover that we are confronted by a situation “with many potential pitfalls” (Johl and Renganathan, 2010). This perhaps has to do with the fact that the “success of data collection” rest essentially on “how easy or difficult it is to access the site and how well one can build and maintain relationships with the participants” (De Vos, Strydom, Schulze and Patel, 2011: 473-490). Failure to access the study site can destroy the whole project (Kondowe, 2014).

I found my fieldwork more challenging and exciting than expected. The study was conducted at the University of Johannesburg Kingsway Campus. To enter this campus and recruit 30 respondents who met the criteria and were willing to take part in the study, I needed a comprehensive understanding of qualitative research procedures. According to Kondowe, this includes “knowing how to build human relationships, how to ensure that the research is ethical, how to apply the study plan, and how to communicate” in order to prevail over some of the obstacles I would encounter (2014: 146). I chose Kingsway Campus because I believed that I would be able to generate useful data there since the campus enrolls both local and international students of different ethnic and racial backgrounds. In addition, I was persuaded to conduct the study in this campus because of my familiarity with the setting. I had spent three years there prior to this study as an undergraduate student.

Kondowe (2014: 148) argues that “explaining sampling in a research proposal is one thing; actually connecting to the people in the sample to negotiate their voluntary participation is quite another”. I found this observation to be true. After identifying the targeted population, specifying the selection criteria, and gaining entry to the location, I was confronted with the challenge of finding not only participants who met the criteria, but also enough of them to make
up the required sample for the study (Okumus, Altinay and Roper, 2007). Securing respondents for this study proved to be a complicated task. It was only through the help of lecturers and classmates that I began to receive emails from interested participants. Soon, I noticed that few respondents were willing to meet after committing to an interview, with many showing their reluctance to discuss what they deemed a “sensitive topic” that could “get them in trouble with the authorities” (Field notes: May 2017). In light of this, I contacted the office of the International Students at UJ, which was able to provide me with a database of international students at Kingsway Campus. In the meantime, I went about recruiting students in and around campus by talking to them and explaining the purpose of the study. These methods proved effective as more students gradually volunteered to participate in the study. To maintain contact with each participant, I adopted an “open channel of communication” through emailing and regular phone calls (Kondowe, 2014). This happened from the first contact with the participants’ right up to the interviews and was aimed at building trust and encouraging “them to see themselves as partners in the research” (Kondowe, 2014: 149). I assumed that the respondents would be more comfortable to convey their views in relation to xenophobia at UJ to someone they were accustomed to and in whom they had a level of trust.

4.4 Qualitative data collection

4.4.1 Semi-structured interviews

To enhance the results of the study, qualitative data was collected by means of semi-structured interviews – as suggested by Greeff (2011: 151-152). In total, twenty semi-structured interviews (ten South African students and ten international students) were conducted. Semi-structured interviews were used to clarify vague statements; permit exploration; and gather deeply experiential accounts (Vosloo, 2014: 332). Semi-structured interviews are adaptable and flexible (Verma and Mallick, 1999: 128). Thus, even though I had developed a set of nine open-ended questions to guide me during the interviews, I was able to deviate from the sequence of those questions and “allow participants to describe what is meaningful to them, using their own words” (see Flick, 2011: 112). In some interviews, I used probing questions for clarification of concepts and ideas (see Veal, 1997). Furthermore, other questions, particularly those asked in the later interviews, were restructured based on the experiences of earlier interviews (see Mudavanhu, 2014: 81-82). I preferred semi-structured interviews
because they “allow participants the freedom to express their views in their own terms” (Berg, 2007: 96).

4.4.2 Focus group interviews

I also used a focus group to collect data. The focus group comprised of six interviewees (three local South African students and three international students). It was semi-structured and involved brainstorming (Dörnyei, 2007: 144). A focus group was included because it allows interviewees to “challenge, argue and debate with each other, and this technique usually leads to the emergence of in-depth and rich data” (Alsaawi, 2014: 151). Although focus groups are said to be difficult to transcribe, particularly when overlapping occurs (Dörnyei, 2007), and are rarely used as a single method of data collection due to their small sample (McClelland, 1994), in my own experience, this research technique yielded valuable results.

4.4.3 Narrative interviews

In addition to semi-structured interviews and focus group, the study also uses four narrative interviews (two international students and two South African students) to collect data. According to Jovchelovich and Bauer, narrative interviews aim to encourage and stimulate the participant to say something about an important event of his/her life and its social context (2002: 90-113). The strength of a narrative interview is that narration requires more than just answering: the participant has to tell all sorts of relevant things in order to produce a story (2002: 90-113).

Although I was granted permission to conduct the different types of interviews cited above with the students by the university, consent was also sought from the respondents at the beginning of each interview. The objective of the study was clearly explained to each participant and each participant was informed of their right to stop the interview at any given time should they feel uncomfortable. All interviews were conducted at a location where each participant felt comfortable and were all recorded through a digital audio recorder. No personal identifying information was gathered during the interviews. Participants’ names are not mentioned in this thesis and the same approach will be followed in subsequent publications.
deriving from the interviews (see Mudavanhu, 2014: 91). The interviews lasted between 45 and 80 minutes.

### 4.4.4 Field notes

In addition to conducting interviews, I kept a notebook in which I recorded the facial expression, behaviour, location and other notable things that I could pick up during the interviews (Emerson et al., 2011). In more than one occasion, some international students were emotional to the point that they were nearly crying. I captured this non-verbal communication in my notebook to complement the participants’ verbal communication at the analysis phase. According to Mack et al. (2005), field notes are attractive because they are simple to keep and can be taken down by the researcher without the help of an outsider. I found this to be true because working alone on this project I was able to take field notes while conducting the interview. Note taking also helped me to identify important themes or ideas that kept on coming out from the interviews i.e. exceptionalism, sense of entitlement, poverty and inequality and so forth (see Gall et al., 1996). The following are some of the extracts from my field notes:

A. It was just after lunch when I met with one international student from Cameroon. I was quite impressed by his punctuality after he mentioned that he was actually at our meeting place 30 minutes before. I then asked him if he was staying on campus. He mentioned that he was residing off-campus and had taken a bus to come and meet me because of the importance of the research topic. I smiled at him with admiration and respect, for the student had shown so much desire to participate in the study. I then introduced myself and gave a background of the study. He mentioned that he is an MA student and though he is more into science he is very much fascinated by studies in Humanities. As the interview progressed, I observed that the topic of the study evoked feelings of sadness on the student as the tone of his voice became shaky and at times he seemed to be almost crying as he narrated his experience with xenophobia in South Africa [Field notes: 29 June 2017].

B. The intensity in which some students presented their views demanded that the facilitator be as neutral as possible, enforce a respectful tone and ensure that the discussion does not turn into a dialogue between two respondents. It was important that the researcher/facilitator cool things off from time to time. For example, one international student, in particular, was very emotional after her observation that “black people are born hating on other blacks” was opposed by several other students (both local and international students). Upon observing this, the researcher stepped in and made it clear to all respondents that every response is valid and there are no right or wrong answers and therefore none should feel like their contribution to the discussion is less important. This action by the researcher was very fruitful as it succeeded in getting the discussion back on track [Field notes: 25 August 2017].

C. It was a sunny day and I was to meet a South African student who had asked to meet at a place where she would feel safe given that she had not met the researcher prior to the interview. To address her safety concern, the researcher travelled to Bunting Road Campus where she resides
and conducted the interview in the cafeteria there. In the few moments of meeting her, the/respondent appeared to a bit uncomfortable and guarded. She wanted to know if indeed the
interviewer was really a student at UJ and whether this would not “get her into trouble”. The
researcher then reassured the respondent that her identity would not be compromised and
provided and identity student card to confirm that he is indeed a UJ student. Strikingly, though,
the researcher could pick up from the accent that the respondent might be a Venda speaking
person. The researcher then informed the respondent that he is a Tsonga speaking born and
bred in the same province as the respondent (Limpopo) and can understand and speak
TshiVenda. In response to this, respondent said: “Wow, habe nne na ini ribva fhethu huthi. Why
ritshi tea u amba tshikhuwa” (“Wow, me and you come from the same place, why are we e
ven communicating in English”). We both found it amusing and continued with the interview. This,
though, was good enough to break the ice [Field notes: 28 August 2017].

4.4.5 Secondary research methods for data collection

This study also includes secondary research (also known as desk research) which involves the
summary, ordering and blend of existing research (see Veal, 1997). Secondary research
methods in the current study include the analysis of internal data such as databases, books and
articles, newspaper and magazine articles, government publications, conference proceedings,
reports, unpublished manuscripts, and material from the Internet. This method was used in this
study because it is effective in aligning the focus of primary research and can also “help to
identify the answer and rule out potentially irrelevant parts of the project” (Collins, 2010: 120).

4.5 Sampling method: Purposive and Convenience

A sample of thirty students was drawn using a purposive sampling method which enabled me
to use my own discretion in choosing the individuals to participate in the study (see Dudovskiy,
2018). This sampling method was preferred because of its ability to save time and cost less
(Dudovskiy, 2018). It is worth noting, nonetheless, that a convenience sampling method was
equally used particularly in the selection of the university and the students from
Communication and media studies. The sample comprised of fifteen international students and
fifteen South African students. The International students’ population consisted of eight
females and seven males. Five of these students are from Zimbabwe, four from Congo, and the
rest from Cameroon (one), Nigeria (one), Swaziland (one), Kenya (one), Tanzania (one) and
Germany (one). Their disciplinary composition is as follows: seven from Communication and
media studies, two from Engineering, three from Business studies, one from Education, one
from Health sciences, and one from Information technology. The South African students’
population on the other hand comprised of nine females and six males. Six of the fifteen
students are in Communication and media studies, two from Politics, two from Engineering, two from Information technology, one from Business studies, one from Human resource and one from Mathematical science. More than 60% of the sample was under the age of 25. To be eligible to participate, students had to be registered at the University of Johannesburg Kingsway Campus; they had to be either a South African or an international student; they could be of any gender, religion, and race; and could either be an undergraduate or post-graduate student within any field of study. All participants complied with all these prerequisites.

4.6 Data analysis: Content analysis and theoretical analysis

Data collected from the sample was analysed using a content analysis and a theoretical analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006: 79) observe that a content analysis is a systematic examination of “communicative material for the purpose of identifying patterns, themes, or biases within data”. Content analysis was chosen in this study because it can be performed on forms of human communication, as well as books and journals (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005: 142). It was also preferred because of its potential to process fairly large quantities of data, such as those generated from my interviews and the focus group I conducted with six students (three international students and three South African students). Moreover, content analysis was also useful to me as it enabled me to interpret data with the purpose of providing knowledge, new insights and facts about xenophobia in a higher education context (see Krippendorff, 1980).

While content analysis was used as the main method for analysing data, this study also employed a theoretical analysis approach. The use of these two qualitative methods was aimed at getting a rich data analysis. Using a theoretical analysis, I critically assessed the existing theories of xenophobia, identifying flaws or arguing for the superiority of one theory over another by examining a theory’s internal consistency and evaluating the level of empirical support for the theory. This was done to introduce new ideas that could lead to the theorisation or the development of a theory that can be used to explain xenophobia in South Africa. Akin to other qualitative research efforts, this study has a significant overlap between data collection and analysis stages (Neergaard and Ulhoi, 2007). As mentioned earlier, interview questions asked in later interviews were restructured on the basis of the experiences of earlier interviews and my preliminary analysis of the data as I collected them.
4.7 Ethical considerations

Every researcher is compelled to consider ethical issues that may arise during the research process (Sithomola, 2010). This research complies with all the ethical considerations stipulated in the Code of Academic and Research Ethics Document of the University of Johannesburg. Research participants were given full knowledge about the nature of the research, the objectives, the duration, the risks and benefits, the nature of interventions throughout the study, and details of the ethical review process in order for them to decide whether to participate in the research or not (Bryman, 2004: 511). This was done through the use of informed consent forms. Consent is imperative because it considers human dignity and also means that individuals have chosen to participate in the study based on their own values, preferences, and wishes. In addition, the personal identity of all participants in my study is anonymous and will be kept in the strictest confidentiality (Bryman, 2004: 510).

Apart from South African university students, I interviewed international students, who according to Karram often “experience numerous manifestations of stress in their transition to a new academic and cultural environment” (2013: 9). The modality for the inclusion of international students in this research was to try to reconcile the need to protect international students from exploitation and ensure them freedom and liberty in their participation. Both local and international students were important for this study which sought to understand how attitudes toward xenophobia are articulated by students at the UJ. Moreover, it is worth mentioning that participants in this study were not selected based on their prior experiences with xenophobia.

4.8 Limitations of the current study

Given the sensitivity of the topic, it is possible that some respondents may have lied in order to give socially desirable responses (Courage and Baxter, 2005: 251). Even though respondents were given anonymity, it remains difficult for the researcher to tell whether the participants’ accounts were the absolute truth, fiction or somewhere in between (Patsika, 2015). Another limitation observed in the study was access to information. For example, my request for information on the international student composition was answered after more than ten months, and this somewhat affected the progress of the research.
Chapter Five: How attitudes towards xenophobia are communicated at UJ

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses some of the major findings from both local and international students’ interviews on how attitudes and perceptions towards xenophobia are articulated at the University of Johannesburg Kingsway Campus. A number of matters were covered by the answered research interview questions. These matters include how respondents describe the meaning of xenophobia; perceptions on whether South Africa is xenophobic or not; challenges facing international students at the University of Johannesburg Kingsway Campus; origins and causes of xenophobia; factors motivating migration; and the impact of xenophobia on both local and international students.

5.2 “Fear of something foreign”: The meaning of xenophobia

Most of the international students interviewed in this study categorised xenophobia as hatred for people who come from other countries. Asked to elaborate what they meant by this, most international students mentioned that in South Africa there is a deep-rooted yet senseless hatred of foreign nationals who are deemed deficient because of their difference in culture, language and ethnicity among other things. Elucidating what xenophobia is, one international student said the following:

Xenophobia is a negative feeling towards people who are from another country. It is hatred and dislike towards someone who doesn’t come from where you come from… it is just the dislike towards a person who is different from you in terms of what you share, such as language, community, and beliefs (Respondent 23, interviews).

But hatred of foreigners is not only confined to a university context. According to the respondents, forms of hatred are embedded in South African society and this is evidenced in government policies which one international student bitterly noted are designed to “affect foreigners more” (Respondent 8, interviews). These findings are consistent with Buthelezi’s (2009) findings that negative attitudes experienced by non-South African students are not only limited to students, but also to the officials of the University and people from other walks of life. Neocosmos’s argument (2010) that xenophobia is a practice of more or less open discrimination and oppression that is not restricted to those living in informal settlements is relevant here. However, while respondents could clearly articulate xenophobia as hatred of
foreign nationals, it is worth noting that they overlooked the fact that not all foreigners are targeted for xenophobia in South Africa. As Shindondola argues (2002), in South African universities black African students are subjected to greater discrimination than white European or Chinese students. This, of course, reiterates the observation found in the existing literature (see Matsinhe, 2011; Gqola 2008; and Mngxitama, 2008) that xenophobia in South Africa is Africanised as Afrophobia with black African foreigners being the exclusive target for the hatred that the respondents reported.

Both local and international students also categorised xenophobia as fear of something that is foreign. Similar to the point made by Hunyadi and Csaba Molnar (2016: 2), they argued that the “main driving force behind xenophobia is fear of certain groups of people that are seen as different or foreign from the group that perceives itself as us”. According to one local South African student:

I think xenophobia indeed is a fear of someone who is a stranger, someone I do not know… I think we are afraid of something that is different… But I believe that we are just hating people who have the same skin, people who speak the same languages and the only crime that they have committed is that they do not come from South Africa (Respondent 16, interviews).

Similar sentiments were expressed by one international student who explained that xenophobia is the fear of something that is foreign: it can be a person or a culture (Respondent 10, interviews). All these excerpts are consistent with Buthelezi’s (2009) and Patsika’s (2015) studies which argue that xenophobia is an irrational fear or anxiety that South Africans have of foreign nationals. What is evident once more is that in categorising xenophobia as fear of foreigners, both local and international students, fail to specify that it is not just a “foreigner” who is feared by the local South Africans, but a black African foreigner. Therefore, my interviews show that though xenophobia reflects the general fear of foreigners, in South Africa there exists a kind of Afrophobia equivalent to that of the Antillean Negro person who does not only fear and dislike black, but rather the black that is African (Fanon, 1967 and 2008). This is because black South Africans often feel that they are more “civilised” than other black Africans and they are “closer” to the white man (Fanon, 2008: 15). It is also interesting to note how the narratives of the participants accounted for this strange kind of phobia. One local South African student said: “Xenophobia is caused by the fear of foreign people taking over things which people think belong to them, like land… It is not like a physically paralysing fear… it’s sort of this is a bad thing… Let’s stop it type of fear” (Respondent 19, interviews). One
international student, on the other hand, said: “it stems from ignorance because people do not know a particular culture” (Respondent 2, focus group discussion). From this, it can be argued that, as Fanon remarked, the black African immigrant is a “phobogenic object” (1967: 151) – a stimulus to anxiety caused by the perceived threat to one’s prosperity.

Asked what they knew about xenophobia in South Africa, both local and international students made a link between violence and xenophobia. A local South African student said that the first thing that comes to his mind when he hears the word xenophobia is “violent attacks, killings and people looting shops” (Respondent 4, focus group discussion). Asked the same question, one international student paused and then said with a strained voice: “What I know is that there is violence which affects a lot of people. There is a lot of trauma and lot of discrimination… I think it is something that plays on people’s minds because you can’t really forget about it” (Respondent 5, focus group discussion). These findings coincide with Shindondola (2002) and Gumbo’s (2014) studies, which show that xenophobia is a fear of foreigners that can be expressed through violence by local residents towards migrants. In this context, some scholars (see Tshitekere, 1999; Harris, 2002) have argued that the dictionary meaning of xenophobia as “an extreme dislike, fear or hatred of foreigners” (Cambridge Advanced Learners Dictionary, 2005) may be misleading when applied to South Africa because in this country xenophobia is not restricted to “fear” or “dislike” of foreigners. Rather, as the following interview extract reveals, in South Africa xenophobia results in intense tension and violence towards non-nationals:

Two years ago, I lost someone very close through physical violence…I had a friend who was a bouncer when xenophobia started in Durban… They burned him down… He died leaving his family behind. So, what I am saying is that the physical and attitude element in xenophobia goes hand in hand, they both influence each other (Respondent 9, interviews).

What it is worth noting is that “foreigners are not uniformly victimised. Black foreigners, particularly those from Africa, comprise the majority of the victims” (Hooks and Eagle, 2002: 170). This is confirmed by one German international student who explained that African immigrants are regularly victims of physical violence in xenophobic events. He said:

I find that xenophobia in South Africa is predominantly South Africans versus other Africans. But I have experienced it myself as a German citizen but not in a violent way as such…but in a form of negative attitudes towards a person. So, it is probably more violent and stringent for Africans (Respondent 7, interviews).
Physically brutalising those who are different from the self is not peculiar to South Africa. For instance, a genocidal mass slaughter of Tutsi in Rwanda by members of the Hutu led to the deaths of approximately 500,000–1,000,000 Rwandans, constituting as many as 70% of the Tutsi population (Prunier, 1999: 389). Similarly, the Nazis, who came to power in Germany in 1933, pursued a policy that dispossessed the Jews of their rights and their property, followed by the displacement and the massacres of nearly six million Jews by 1945 in what was called the “Holocaust” (see Fischel and Susan, 1998). Additionally, there has also been the Bosnian genocide that led to the “massacre of 8,000 Muslims in a Bosnian town in July 1995” (Temoney, 2017: 19). These examples demonstrate that “xenophobic violence, like other forms of bias-motivated violence, can often serve as a message crime, in that an act of violence can be intended to send a signal to refugees or migrants that they are not welcome in an area or country” (Nkosi, 2015: 1)

5.3 “Foreigners are called Amakwerekwere”: Are South Africans xenophobic?

Both local and international students reported that foreign nationals in South Africa are targets of maltreatment. One form of maltreatment recorded by respondents is “name-calling” which they linked to the issue of language and attributed to the international status of foreign nationals. The word “Amakwerekwere” – a moniker for “foreigner” in indigenous South African languages such as Zulu and Sotho, emerged as the most used to label African foreign nationals. Other studies (see Singh, 2013; Muthuki, 2013; Tsai, 2006) have similarly concluded that name-calling can be a xenophobic act. These studies also cite the word “Amakwerekwere” as the name frequently used to refer to black African foreign-nationals. It appears to be a derogatory term used to demean and render the foreign nationals emotionally vulnerable. One international student reported:

Sometimes it’s demotivating and you get scared of being attacked… You know, little fears of being humiliated just because you don’t belong to South Africa… people do not realise that by just calling someone a kwerekwere you are taking away their dignity. I feel detached and if someone was to ask me if I love South Africa… I would say I love some South African people not South Africa based on what I have gone through (Respondent 9, interviews).

Her face filled with disappointment, one local South African student added: “Verbally foreigners are called names like Amakwerekwere as a way of telling them that they are not from here and they do not belong to this country… It is insulting because foreigners find the name Amakwerekwere offensive.” Notably, name-calling is a common phenomenon off campus as
explained by one local South African student who pointedly said: “Xenophobia does exist in South Africa. You see it at Bree Taxi Rank...you hear name-calling all the time...Amakwerekwere...but how could you name a fellow African who is as black as you?” Conversely, local and international students further indicated that they had witnessed this form of verbal abuse in the one place where foreign nationals should feel safe and protected – the campus. A local South African student shared his personal experience with name-calling as follows:

I have a female friend here on campus from Congo, and since I have started hanging out with her, many local South African students who I usually interacted with before are now saying go back to your Congolese woman, referring to my friend...so you sort of see that hatred in the naming of people from outside South Africa (Respondent 14, interviews).

A close look at the manner in which the participants construct their views on this form of abuse reveals a clear disapproval of this phenomenon which is pervading South African society. The views expressed further demonstrate that, as Muthuki’s study found, name calling is “dehumanizing to the international students as it makes them feel like unwanted outsiders who have intruded space that they were not supposed to intrude and it makes their university experience unbearable” (2013: 114). Name calling, however, is not a recent phenomenon unique to South Africa. In the apartheid era, the most obvious was the denigrating word “kaffir”, which was used to address black people. Similarly, the word “Amashangaan” has been generally used in Southern Africa to refer to “foreigner”. A student from Swaziland actually acknowledged using the word “shangaan” to refer to non-nationals. She said: “Back at home we refer to foreigners as Amashangaan. By naming them we are actually taunting them because they don’t even know what the term means” (Respondent 5, interviews). Internationally, the term “Untermensch” has been used in Germany to describe non-Aryan or “inferior people” such as Jews, Romans and Slavs (Rathkolb, 2004: 97).

While both local and international students managed to articulate this form of maltreatment, they did not go further to deconstruct the fundamental causes of this phenomenon or explain why it only applies to black African immigrants. Nyamnjoh explains that we tend to name what we are familiar and interact with on a regular basis. To put it bluntly, the so called black African immigrants are given the label of Amakwerekwere because, unlike white foreign nationals, they work and live in the townships where they find themselves competing with local black South Africans for resources (Nyamnjoh, 2016: 117). Since the xenophobic pogroms are a cocktail
of anger, frustration and opportunism, black African immigrants become “easy targets” (Landau and Misago, 2016). With this in mind, it appears that Fanon’s analysis of post-colonial states was spot on as Fanon predicted that the “poor unemployed masses” after independence would adopt a nationalistic attitude and wage war against African and other nationalities (Fanon, 1961: 103).

Some international students further observed that although violence is a key component of xenophobia in the African continent, anti-immigrant sentiments are also an important element in the definition of xenophobia. Exemplifying anti-immigrant sentiments by locals South Africans towards African foreign nationals, two international students said:

I once observed a group of students comprising of both South Africans and Zimbabweans having a discussion at the library. It appeared that the Zimbabwean guys were leading the conversation. Then all of a sudden everybody presumably South African started to say…but you Zimbabweans, you come here, you get distinctions and flex on us…how come you guys did not study at universities in your country. Why choose to come here? (Respondent 2, interviews).

I was checking my marks on Ulink [UJ student portal]…out of excitement I said wow I got four distinctions, it’s going to be easy for me to get a job here in South Africa. So this other student was like, “so that is why you work hard hey, you want to take jobs from us who do not have distinctions?” Yes, he was saying it in a teasing manner, but there is more to it because if the same person can in five years from now not have a job…he can harm you as the foreigner who now has a job (Respondent 8, interviews).

These findings are in line with Naidoo and Uys’s (2013) study of xenophobia the University of Johannesburg. The study found that whilst there is a belief among local students that foreigners “who could make a contribution” should participate in the South African society, this is weakened and contradicted by a perception that “too many foreigners were being allowed into South Africa” (Naidoo and Uys, 2013: 8). These findings, nonetheless, are not shocking given that many attitudinal studies have shown that anti-immigration attitudes are fairly widespread in South Africa and can be found among the country’s different socio-demographic groups (see Gordon, 2015; Everatt, 2010). One South African student, however, argued that it is not all South Africans who hold anti-immigrant perceptions but a marginal group that is misrepresenting the majority. She said:

Not all South Africans are xenophobic. It is just a minority group that is making all of us look like we are xenophobic…it is just that most times, the whole population is judged based on the minority (Respondent 17, interviews).
This extract dovetails precisely with Naidoo and Uys’s (2013) study, which found that the majority of students at the University of Johannesburg strongly condemn attacks against foreigners (78.8%). Even the neutral group in the study agreed that violence against foreign national was “unacceptable” (Naidoo and Uys, 2013: 8). This is in line with the findings of Misago et al. (2009: 44-45) which show that during the 2008 xenophobic violence some local South African communities actually averted violence against foreign nationals.

5.4 “I cannot wait to finish my degree and leave”: Challenges on campus

Six out of ten international students interviewed indicated that they had had no experience of xenophobia at UJ. They further mentioned that UJ was very welcoming to international students. This observation contradicts similar studies at other South African universities, which found that black African foreign students experience the same level of discrimination and hatred in South African institutions of higher learning as they do in South African communities (see Shindondola, 2002; Monkhe, 2012; Singh 2013). Emphasising the congenial atmosphere found at UJ, one Zimbabwean student said that he had opted to study at UJ because of its hospitable approach to international students. He explained: “Compared to other universities UJ is more accommodating to foreign nationals...that is probably why I ended up studying here” (Respondent 1, interviews). Another international student highlighted UJ’s hospitality to international students. She said: “I have not heard anyone say go back to your country...there is every kind of nationality at UJ” (Respondent 10, interviews). All these extracts are consistent with Patsika’s (2015) findings that there is no sufficient evidence to define local university students at the University of Johannesburg as “xenophobic”. Patsika further found that local university students in post-apartheid South Africa are “accepting” of difference and do not fit the profile of people who would commit xenophobic acts against foreign nationals (2015: 106).

Based on these findings and observations, as a cosmopolitan university UJ appears to have done relatively well to create a friendly environment for international students and give them a home away from home experience. That said, it should not be assumed that xenophobia does not exist at UJ because based on the views expressed by some international students,
xenophobia in South Africa is not only directed at refugees and asylum seekers but it is also found even in institutions of higher learning where one expects an advanced level of thinking. For this group of students, the majority of whom are international, xenophobia at UJ is hardly visible because in a university environment people are expected to have a civilised attitude, so in trying to conform to this idea most local students pretend to be welcoming to all international students (Respondents 6 and 7, interviews). This is confirmed by De Klerk and Radloff’s (2012) results that in most cases it is difficult to identify cases of xenophobia in a tertiary education context because the cases remain subtle. In addition, Patsika asserts that most universities are competing to reach a “high global excellence status”, thus, being linked to discriminative scandals from the students would damage the university’s reputation (2015: 34).

Even so, some international students did assert that xenophobia manifests itself within the higher education context. They further articulated their unhappiness with being in South Africa, and indicated their desire to go back to their country of birth. One international student said: “I cannot wait to finish my degree and leave… I will probably go and do my Honours somewhere else… There is no place where you can actually say you are safe from xenophobia here in South Africa” (Respondent 3, interviews). Another student also said, “Sometimes I feel like I should just get my degree and go back home because after a while you lose a lot of yourself… I just feel like I need to go home where I will not feel subhuman or second class” (Respondent 2, interviews). These remarks concur with Shindondola’s findings that not all international students “desire to stay in South Africa after completing their studies” (2002: 69). Instead, they want to return to their home countries, which they see more positively than South Africa.

Asked to spell out examples of xenophobic practices they had encountered at UJ, some international students spoke of social exclusion or alienation as an insidious form of xenophobia found at UJ. They argued that social exclusion or alienation ensued from the fact that some local South African students perceive students from the rest of the African continent as outsiders. A student from Zimbabwe expressed how her fear of being excluded resulted in the diminishing of her identity. She said:

If someone in class needs information maybe about my country and asks who is from Zim…I just sit there and just act like I don’t hear them… I’m scared that people will isolate themselves from me just because I am Zimbabwean (Respondent 4, interviews).

Interviewer: But what does that do to your sense of identity?
It takes away your authenticity or your nature of being genuine…you can no longer be yourself (Respondent 4, interviews).

Another international student noted that social exclusion at UJ creates cliques. He said: “Xenophobia is there at UJ. You can see it, and you can feel it…and it is so bad that you find foreign students interacting among themselves and local South Africans doing same…so there are those pockets. You feel safe with your own” (Respondent 6, interviews). From these statements, it is apparent that the fear of foreigners is common in an academic space where some students might perceive it as an “exclusively” South African space. In such an environment, international students are reduced to what Landau (2011: 234) calls “demons from within”. This is consistent with Binikos and Rugunanan’s study, which found that students of different races at UJ were more “comfortable” within their homogenous groups (2015: 15).

Some international students spoke about academic exclusion, and particularly discrimination in relation to lack of funding and other forms of economic discrimination, as a form of xenophobia. They observed that international students are not considered for merit bursaries and this is a serious challenge for those international students who do not have bursaries from their countries of origin. As one international student explained: “Xenophobia exists at an institutional level at UJ…you can’t even get a bursary even if you got the results to qualify for one. I have had to take a part-time job to try and cover for my fees since I do not have a bursary” (Respondent 8, interviews). Another international student also complained about the UJ policy which stipulates that students from foreign countries have to pay all fees in advance. She said: “I almost did not register this year because of not having the full amount. This was sad because my South African friend was easily given a leeway to pay her fees in instalments. As a foreigner, I feel like I am not given an equal opportunity to get my degree” (Respondent 1, focus group discussion). These findings are consistent with Shindondola’s (2002) and Gumbo’s (2014) studies which found that financial problems were the apex of the challenges experienced by the majority of international students in South African universities.

Even so, it may be argued that by prioritising South African citizens, South African universities are trying to ensure that local students particularly those historically disadvantaged are not compromised by the enrolment of international students. Yet, this does not mean that black South African students are now completely liberated from the exclusion brought upon them by
the apartheid order through institutionalized racism (see Dominguez-Whitehead, 2015). For if there is one thing that can be gathered from the #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall movements is that the education system in post-apartheid South Africa is still based upon exclusion on grounds of race, class, gender and sexual differences. In other words, a complete liberation or decolonisation, which according to Fanon demands that the “the last” be “the first” (1961: 2), remains elusive in South Africa.

5.5 “I have learned not to let it get to me”: Adapting to life in a foreign land

While international students may feel homelessness as a consequence of some form of xenophobia in South Africa, this does not imply that they are not motivated to complete their studies and secure jobs in South Africa, or even make South Africa their permanent home. There is evidence to suggest that international students at UJ – like those in other studies (see Jakubowics, 2012; Sonn, 2002) – are able to adapt and adjust, although the process is always challenging. For one international student, the challenges that come with being in a foreign country represent a series of ever-increasing challenges:

“I have learned not to let it get to me…as a black African foreigner you have to take it in and keep moving. You start off poor, you are vulnerable and you have to go through so many things, so for me, I just feel like it’s a challenge that you have to look at and find ways to adapt (Respondent 9, interviews).

Articulating her open-minded attitude to learning the South African way of life, one Kenyan student said: “I am in a foreign country. I have to learn the local language and the culture, it is for my own good. If the locals say speak in Zulu I cannot say they are wrong…it is their country” (Respondent 11, interviews). Another international student similarly explained that:

UJ has done its part in accommodating foreign students. We also need to try and get in there, make friends rather than focusing on the fact that South Africans are like this or that towards foreigners. Because I am not just here to learn and get a degree, but I want to leave this country with a lot of contacts and friends, so do I miss out on those opportunities because of xenophobia? (Respondent 2, interviews).

All these excerpts are in line with Mudhovozi’s (2011: 295) study, which reveals that “international students use diverse strategies to cope with new life at a university in a foreign country”. Some of those strategies include building friendships/peer networks to help with some of the challenges faced at the institution. These friendships can either be formed with
students from their countries or with the local students in the host country. Another coping strategy used by international students was learning the local languages (Mudhovozi, 2011: 295). Chimucheka’s (2013) study also found that being an international student in a diverse country like South Africa can enhance international students’ understanding of cultural differences which leads to personal growth and development. The idea of international students adjusting to their new environment is meaningful and interesting since in the previous section some of the respondents mentioned that they could not wait to complete their studies and return home. This contrast demonstrates that as people we hold different opinions and we live lives filled with contradictions. In support of this line of thinking, Fanon writes that “Dignity is about being oneself with all the multiplicities, systems and contradictions of one’s own ways of being, doing and knowing. It is about being true to one’s self” (2008: 7).

5.6 Origins and causes of xenophobia

5.6.1 “Many South Africans are too privileged”: Sense of entitlement

The objective of asking respondents about the origins of xenophobia in South Africa was to try to capture their thoughts about the reasons for xenophobic behaviours among South Africans. Both local and international students interviewed stated that the root cause of xenophobia in South Africa is the sense of entitlement among local citizens. They argued that there is a subjective feeling of discontent among South Africans who feel that they are getting less than they are entitled to because of the presence of foreign nationals in their communities. Expounding the sense of entitlement observed among some South Africans, an international student said:

South Africans have this huge cancerous sense of entitlement by virtue of this being their land. I mean even in a simple colloquial discussion it is very difficult for a South African to say, can I please have this, they will come and say, you must give me that, and it’s not like they are being forceful, that is their normal way of being polite. They don’t know what please is (Respondent 1, interviews).

A South African student, on the other hand, argued that the sense of entitlement among South Africans is justified by the long history of black domination by whites in this country. She explained:
I believe that there is a feeling of entitlement amongst the locals. White people have taken away from us for so long and now the foreigners that are coming here are doing the same…So as a South African you don’t have a job and now feel deprived of that which belongs to you (Respondent 3, focus group discussion).

These findings coincides with Buthelezi’s (2009: 26) study, which reveals that international students often have to deal with prejudice from the local South Africans who “feel deprived and invoke their citizenship in the face of competition from international students who compete for local resources to survive”. They clarify that for some South Africans the wounds of apartheid and colonization are still fresh, and might take much longer to heal. As Fanon puts it in The wretched of the earth, many black people in post-colonial states feel “hemmed in and besieged from all sides” by a number of pressures that are depriving them of what they believe is due to them (1961: 78). Consequently, they feel obligated to police their borders and defend the little available resources which they feel entitled to (see Nyamnjoh, 2006). It could be the desolation of these people that has given rise to negative attitudes towards foreign nationals whom it must be stressed, are not responsible for the incomplete liberation in South Africa (Gibson, 2011: 191). Compounding this predicament is the fact that in South Africa there is no politics or a leadership which seeks to unite the people around a clear identification of their real enemy (Neocosmos, 2010: 128). Rather, there exists a culture of scapegoating that seeks to shift attention away from those who are really responsible for the accumulating socioeconomic problems. In that vein, it is not shocking that self-entitlement in South Africa is intertwined with competition over economic resources whereby some locals perceive foreign nationals as a threat to economic resources. One South African student provided an example of how competition for scarce resources may give rise to xenophobia. She said:

I come from a small farm in KwaZulu Natal, and there are Somalians who own shops there. I think the community is just not happy about this because there are locals who are owning their own spaza shops there but are no longer earning an income because the Somalians have come in with their lower prices and so many bargains…so that has really created an animosity between the local people in that small village and them (Respondent 13, interviews).

The above-cited remark confirms the findings by De Jager and Hopstock (2011: 125) that socioeconomic issues can create intense competition for resources, especially among the poor who because of the frustration produced their inability to acquire that which they feel they are entitled to receive, lashes out at foreign nationals who are perceived as a threat and scapegoated for these deprivations. Shindondola (2002) also confirms these findings in her study, which found that black South Africans have learned from apartheid that anyone threatening their
opportunities is their nemesis.

Furthermore, most international students linked the origin of xenophobia to “laziness” on the part of South Africans. They mentioned that locals are averse to hard work and therefore seek scapegoats for their laziness. They further stated that South Africans refuse to take whatever work is available because of their sense of entitlement and overdependence on government. For one international student, local South Africans are too lazy and spoiled to look for ways to create a better life for themselves. She said: “I don’t want to sound rude, but I believe that many South Africans are too privileged and they feel like they have a right to certain things, as opposed to someone like me who is willing to do any job to support my family at home (Respondent 12, interviews). Another international student similarly asserted: “South Africans are so entitled…even those who have the capacity to work they just expect grants from the government…that is total laziness” (Respondent 10, interviews). These findings are consistent with the findings of Tafira’s (2018) study, which explores the stereotypes associated with immigrants and South Africans in Alexandra Township. The study found that immigrants perceive South Africans as being “lazy”, “dumb” and not interested in “work”. Tafira further found that immigrants think that South Africans are “unskilled” and that all they know is “ukubamb’ inkuzi” (robbing and mugging) (2018: 78).

One international student, nonetheless, argued that it is a misconception to describe South Africans as lazy since there are many hard working South Africans. He further explained that this misconception has contributed to the “anger” that South Africans have towards foreigners (Respondent 1, interviews). This is worth observing since, as Biko explains, the “black equals lazy and incompetent stereotype was the backbone of the apartheid government’s endeavour to support a body of discriminatory laws” (2017: 1). Also, just after the discovery of gold and diamonds, the “British colonialists declared black South Africans lazy in an attempt to justify depriving them of their land and to force them to work underground in the mines” (Dixon and Levine, 2012: 311). Stereotypes are “verbal expressions of a certain conviction or belief directed towards a social group or an individual member of that social group” (Quasthoff, 1987d: 786). But those convictions or beliefs may not be necessarily true.
5.6.2 “South Africans feel like South Africa is not in Africa”: Exceptionalism

Some local and international students mentioned that the root cause of xenophobia in South Africa is exceptionalism. Similar to the point made by Dlakavu (2013), both local and international students argued that there is a continued othering of fellow African states and an attitude of South African exceptionalism which pronounces that even though South Africa is an African country, it is peculiar to other African countries. For Moagi this discourse constructs Africans as the other (2014: 33). Given this kind of narcissistic national exceptionalism, it is not surprising to hear one South African student comment that “A lot of South Africans feel like South Africa is not in Africa, so when they talk to other Africans, they don’t really feel like they are our African brothers, they just see them as foreigners from elsewhere. They almost think of South Africa as almost separate from Africa” (Respondent 20, interviews). Making a similar observation, another international student added: “There is a thing in South Africa where people suffer from a superiority complex. They think that they are better than everybody on the African continent” (Respondent 3, focus group discussion).

These observations underscore the point made by Gibson (2012: 504) that South Africa perceives itself in relation to the continent as exceptional, entitled and superior. Given this, it is not surprising that South African companies are conquering the markets of their neighbouring countries, and South Africa is now among the biggest arms exporter in the African continent. In that respect, Neocosmos argues that the “slogan of an African Renaissance has morphed into a vehicle for South African hegemony” (2010: 107). Similarly, Fanon in his earlier diagnosis of this phenomenon in post-colonial states observed that the “demand for Africanisation by the national bourgeoisie is not rooted in a genuine search for African unity, but merely in substituting the coloniser” (1961: 104). On the other hand, Czada contends that he is not convinced that a society in transformation like South Africa can be understood in categories of the unique and exceptional. He argues that the notion of exceptionalism has always meant that a country is characterized by an inescapable historic fate, and South Africa in comparison to countries with enduring discourses on exceptionalism like the U.S has not reached that balance in history that allows for it to be treated as an exceptional country (2002: 3-4).
5.6.3 “We are taught that light skin is better”: Racially selective xenophobia

The majority of local and international students claimed that race could not be omitted from the discussion on the origin of xenophobia in South Africa. They agreed unanimously that a “remarkable feature of xenophobia in South Africa is that it appears to have taken on a primarily racial form; it is directed at immigrants, and especially black immigrants from elsewhere in the African continent, as opposed to Europeans or Americans, who are generally welcomed” (see Solomon and Kosaka, 2013: 8). Speaking about this racially particularising prejudice, a local and an international student respectively said:

I believe we are raised in a society where we are taught that light skin person is better. You never find these attacks on Chinese because the attackers believe that these people are light skinned and therefore they are better than them (Respondent 3, focus group discussion).

This phenomenon is like racism because both xenophobia and racism share the same discriminatory discourse and connotation. I would agree with calling it neo-racism because what the white did to us we cannot do to them now that we live in a post-colonial society so we look for the nearest guy who happens to be vulnerable in a foreign land and attack him instead (Respondent 2, focus group discussion).

The findings in these extracts are consistent with Walker’s (2005) study, which argues that racism is a continued feature in the everyday lives of South African university students, in new and subtle forms. In addition, it is perceptible, particularly from the first extract, that the victims of xenophobia in South Africa are predominately “black and are targeted for their blackness in a society where race has always served as justification for catalogues of discriminatory policies and practices” (2010: 67). It appears that the dominant preference operates in favour of light-skinned tones and that the lighter skinned you are the less foreign you become and above all the less threatening you are to the locals. It should be noted, however, that while local blacks in South Africa do not seem to have disputes with white people from abroad, they nonetheless have issues with white South Africans. For example, the Economic Freedom Fighters’ leader, Julius Malema, recently referred to white farmers in South Africa as “Dutch gangsters” and accused them of annexing South African land by force (quoted in Chothia, 2017).

The point, however, remains that black African foreigners are the main target for the xenophobic violence. As a result, one international student openly questioned the appropriateness of using the term xenophobia to describe the pogroms in South Africa. Similar
to Gqola (2008) and Mngxitama (2008), the respondent argued that what is termed xenophobia is in fact Afrophobia. Asked to explain what he meant by Afrophobia the respondent said:

Xenophobia is an international thing whereas Afrophobia we are of the same continent…so we dislike and fight each other as African brothers and sisters. The term xenophobia is just to lighten the situation [in order to conceal] that you are doing this to your own people because at the end of the day we all come from the same place…we all just moved to different borders of which there were no borders before colonisation (Respondent 1, interviews).

Consistent with this observation, a South African student said:

Xenophobia in my own understanding is hatred or prejudice towards foreigner nationals. But in South Africa it seems to be the hatred of black African people because they are the only ones who are singled out for attacks. So it is black people attacking other black people (Respondent 24, interviews).

Although valid, these remarks seems to neglect the fact that Pakistanis and Somalians shop owners have also been attacked or murdered (see Buthelezi, 2009; Tromp, 2006). They further undermine the fact that some South Africans from smaller ethnic groups or those that Neocosmos (2010: 9) refers to as “native foreigners” have also been victims of the organised massacres. Equally, these findings fail to account for the fact that not all black African foreigners suffer at the hands of the locals since those who can afford to stay in the suburbs face very little problems in terms of physical harm, as noted by a South African student who said: “I think there is an inferiority complex that exists among some South Africans. For example, they will not go to Sandton and rob or kill a Nigerian prince…why? Because they feel maybe intimidated by them” (Respondent 15, interviews). In that context, it is questionable if indeed Afrophobia as a term is adequate to capture the reality in South Africa.

5.6.4 “Leaders are the ones who are inciting violence”: Public state discourse

A significant number of local and international students observed that xenophobia and its related violence is caused by public state discourse. They pointed out that there is a hegemonic state discourse which considers being a foreigner, particularly a poor black foreigner a crime (see Neocosmos, 2010) – very much like being a Ndebele during the Zimbabwean government’s operation Gukurahundi – a chiShona word that means “the rain that washes away the chaff (from the last harvest), before the spring rains” (see Cameron, 2017). Among other things, this public state discourse manifests through xenophobic statements made by political
leaders that carry a potential to induce locals’ rage. Explaining the relationship between xenophobic state discourse and the anti-immigrants inclinations among the locals, a Congolese student said:

When you hear the Minister of police going on television to say most crimes are committed by foreigners…this causes the locals to [think that it is acceptable] to kill a foreigner because they are protecting the state. So it becomes a sign of nationalism to attack foreigners…like I’m protecting my kids from drugs by burning that Nigerian (Respondent 4, interviews).

In line with the sentiments expressed above, a South African student said:

I feel like our leaders are the ones who are inciting this violence, because before the recent xenophobic violence occurred, it’s this King from KwaZulu-Natal who said that foreigners should leave and people then acted on that (Respondent 6, focus group discussion).

It is evident that the rage of the masses observed in the xenophobic violence in South Africa has not emerge out of nowhere. Rather, since the birth of post-apartheid South Africa, politicians or leaders have continued to denounce black foreign nationals for the country’s problems. In *The wretched of the earth*, Fanon predicted this occurrence when he pointed out that “at the dawn of independence the people are taught to be aware of their surroundings and how to identify a bad seed that is upon them” (1961: 145). Thus, the abhorrence at xenophobic violence proffered by some politicians is unlikely to be followed by vigorous anti-xenophobic campaigns as the main objective is to gratify the xenophobic populace in pursuit of re-election (see Neocosmos 2010). In this context, the xenophobic outbreaks in South Africa, like the expulsion of Asians from Uganda by Idi Amin, are a political act instituted on what Neocosmos calls “politics of fear” – the fear of being swamped by foreigners perceived as stealing one’s entitlements (2010:125). One international student actually explained why this type of politics had found root in South Africa:

The ANC has lost significant votes with the advent of the DA and EFF so they are probably saying that this is a serious issue [xenophobia] but if we deal with it and we blunder we are going to lose more ground. That is why maybe the ANC would never talk about the issue of xenophobia seriously. They have bigger problems. So, they rather keep people guessing and only react to it only when it happens because they don’t want to be the ones flagging the issue (Respondent 8, interviews).

Another international student indicated that “though the laymen are responsible for killing someone in a xenophobic attack, it is the politicians who give people the license to do so by what they say” (Respondent 1, focus group interviews). These findings are consistent with what
has been reported in the literature (Muchiri, 2016; Kinge, 2016). For example, as early as 1997, the National Party spokesperson on Home Affairs, Frik van Deventer, connected the issues of “immigration and crime”, alleging that “Nigerians had entered the country in droves since 1994 and that “eighty percent of all suspects appearing in court in Johannesburg in connection with drugs are Nigerians” (SAPA, 1997). He further blamed the rise in undocumented migration in South Africa to the ANC’s accommodation of old solidarity friends and called for a stringent approach to the challenge of undocumented migration (SAPA, 1997). Such discourse, though, has not remained static. While in 1997 politicians could link Nigerians to crime and drugs, and call for a hard-line approach to the issue of undocumented migration, the Mayor of the City of Johannesburg (COJ) Herman Mashaba now talks specifically about “illegal” migrants from whom he wants to reclaim the city (see Chaskalson, 2017). This is not far off from the US President Donald Trump’s racist comments about Mexicans being criminals, rapists and drug dealers, followed by his bigoted remarks about putting an end to Muslim immigration (Bolt, 2016). A question that can be posed to these politicians, however, is that when has the legality of a migrant been a determining factor for whether they are attacked or not? In other words, most people who engage in xenophobic violence do not care whether the migrants are legal or not; anyone can be attacked simply “because of what is deemed to be in the specific context, their foreign status” (Neocosmos, 2010: 1).

5.6.5 “South African lives have not improved since 1994”: Poverty and inequality

The majority of local South African students revealed that poverty and inequality were the major causes of xenophobia in South Africa. They painted a bleak picture of a country that has failed to transform its society in more than two decades of democracy, thus enabling incidents such as xenophobia to take root. According to one local South African student, many South Africans at the dawn of democracy hoped that their lives would be transformed and that they too would have their share of the national cake, but instead of experiencing redistribution many South Africans continue to live on the margins of the economy (Respondent 21, interviews). This is confirmed by Mathole, who asserts that although social improvements are visible in South African society, the vast majority of South African citizens’ lives have persisted in poverty (2005: 22).

Making a connection between poverty and xenophobia, numerous South African students and
a few from abroad reiterated the findings in Patsika’s (2015) study that people living in poverty in South Africa are held liable for the xenophobic attacks in the country. The respondents argued that the poor are blamed because they are the most active in driving out foreigners with most of these activities occurring in low-income areas marked by poverty and inequality. One international student lamented that “Xenophobia is about poverty and inequality. We are really in the most divided nation. You can see it Musa when you look at Sandton and Alexandra…you cannot say that you are in the same country. So a solution to xenophobia should be linked to a solution towards dealing with poverty and inequality, because when people are poor they can be influenced to do anything” (Respondent 1, interviews). This excerpt corresponds with Sichone’s (2008) study which discovered that there are so many internal divisions and high levels of inequality in the South African society, hence it is difficult to create a sense of belonging. The excerpt further confirms the findings of statistics SA’s poverty trends report which shows that one in two South Africans live under the poverty line, amounting to approximately 30 million people living in poverty. In such an environment, mobilising against foreign nationals in a struggle for living space and employment prospects in the townships situated on the margins of more prosperous communities seems almost inevitable (see Sichone, 2008: 256-258; Landau, 2011: 12). On the other hand, while the interviews underscored the prevalence of xenophobia in the townships or informal settlements, they were still unable to account for the attacks that occurred in the Johannesburg’s Southern suburbs in a dispute over hijacked buildings or those in the affluent city centre of Cape Town in 2008. This then makes me question some studies that have categorised xenophobia as a conflict of the poor against the poor (see Hagensen, 2014; Chinomona and Maziriri, 2015; Palmary, 2002).

5.6.6 “The only thing I know since birth is civil war”: Factors motivating migration

Both local and international students agreed that there are push factors that drive most foreign nationals to South Africa. Akin to Rasool et al. (2012: 13), they defined push factors as negative factors that “push a person out of his/her home country”. They further mentioned that push factors cover a broad range of issues, including crime, violence, economic instability, and political events among others. Indicating how push factors had led him to migrate to South Africa, one international student said:

I am from the DRC, the only thing that I know since birth is civil war…I don’t know peace. So, it is important for people to understand the reasons why we are here, then maybe they can be
able to understand us and understand the fact that we are not here by choice, but because we do not have any other option. I rather be here and be a victim of xenophobia than going home where there is a civil war with the risk of being killed some day and not going to school (Respondent 4, interviews).

A local South African student similarly noted with despondency in her voice that:

If you look at most of the foreigners who are here...they are coming from a very scary dark place where there are wars. They come to South Africa with the hope they can still make something of their lives (Respondent 22, interviews).

Moreover, one international student spoke of pull factors that are attracting most foreign nationals to migrate to South Africa with the hope that they can secure a better life in this country. By her own admission, the international student said that she is “better off” being here in South Africa than being in her own country (Respondent 6, interviews). Asked to clarify what she meant by “better off”, she said that South Africa juxtaposed to her home country is economically advanced and therefore her chances of making it in life are better in this country. Another student indicated that she came to South Africa because she finds the country “interesting” and believes that her future is more “secure” in it. These conclusions resonates with the conclusions in Shindondola’s study, which shows that some students “had migrated to South Africa in search of a better life in an economically prospering country” (2002: 48). Shindondola (2008), however, also found that for some students the decision to come to South Africa was “hardly voluntary”: for example, fleeing from civil wars. In that vein, it is conceivable that for some foreign nationals South Africa represents a land of prospects.

That said, the interviews also revealed that there are two sides of South Africa. On the one hand South Africa is a rainbow nation which embraces diversity and peace; but on the other hand South Africa is a country which treats African “foreigners” with contempt. As one international student laments:

I came to South Africa thinking it is a rainbow nation. But it is far from it…it is really bad. I don’t think I want anyone I know to come here and experience what I have…It is always at the back of my mind that I need to watch myself as I am not a South African (Respondent 3, interviews).

This discovery is consistent with the study by Naidoo and Uys (2013). The study reveals that while undergraduate students at the University of Johannesburg are interacting regularly with students across racial and national boundaries, and acknowledge that foreigners do not affect
South Africa in a negative manner, there is still “anxiety and “uneasiness about the presence of foreigners in South Africa” (Naidoo and Uys, 2013: 12). This observation might seem surprising given that during decades of oppression under the apartheid government thousands of South Africans were welcomed as foreigners in other African states and abroad. It is arguable that South Africa has possibly turned against those it fought along for its liberation and previously shared a long history of intra-regional migration. This is paradoxical for a country which since democracy has portrayed itself as a “bridge” between the North, the global South, and Africa, and also perceives itself as a gateway and a mouthpiece for the African continent.

5.7 “Our brother is dying in hospital and there is no one to assist him”: Life stories

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<th>Life story 1: International student</th>
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<td>I went to Helen Joseph hospital with a lump or a tumour, they told me that they need to remove it, but kept delaying. I had to stay for like a month before I went back. This other day I went back to the hospital to check for my operation date, and this white doctor saw me and was like we can do the operation now if you like, we don’t have to wait for the scheduled date. I agreed and he did the operation and removed the lump and then after discharged me.</td>
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<td>Two days later, the wound started to swell up. I then rushed back to the hospital and when I got there they said they are going to take me to the emergency room, and there everyone was just not paying attention to me. I had to stay and wait at the reception in a wheelchair because I could not walk. The nurses were asking me that what happened, and I told them that I had been operated there a few days ago, but no one believed me.</td>
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<td>Eventually, they decided to take me to the emergency room and there I still had to wait for hours before being attended. Then somebody finally came to my rescue, and the reason they did is that I have a family friend who knows this Ugandan doctor who works here in South Africa. He called him and told him that our brother is dying in hospital, blood is oozing out of his body and there is no one assisting him, can you help? Then the Ugandan guy sent his female colleague, she came and operated on me, she was really amazing and did a good job.</td>
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<td>So, I only received medical attention because I knew someone who knew someone, not because I am a human being who even though being a foreigner has right to healthcare. This caused me to almost commit suicide. I had an option to sue the doctor and also the nurses for negligence, but I didn’t. Not because I was very generous, but because as a foreigner you feel weak. You know that no one is going to assist you. So, it’s a feeling of being violated knowing you cannot do anything about it.</td>
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<th>Life story 2: South African student</th>
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<td>I have had one experience with the SAPS as a foreign national from Swaziland. This other day it was me, my friend and her father (both from Nigeria), we were going to Emperors</td>
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92
Palace. My friend’s father was driving a Hummer SUV and out of nowhere, a blue light was flashed and we were pulled over.

I was thinking it was a regular search, but as soon as my friend’s father rolled down the window to speak to the police officers, they rudely demanded that he gets out of the car. Then they pulled him to the side and started to interrogate him. From the car, I could overhear the conversation. I then went to the police to tell them that the man they were harassing is innocent and that he had not abducted us and neither was he a criminal. But they just ignored me and said I should shut up because I am a citizen of this country… They demanded to know where the man was coming from and to see his identity documents. While all this was going on, the other policeman was searching the car frantically saying I think he has drugs.

Although we were eventually allowed to pass, this experience made me realise that it is not only the poor or uneducated people who are xenophobic but also those who are responsible for protecting foreigners. I was left off the hook and thought of as being good just because I am a South African, but my father’s friend was automatically deemed illegal and seen as a criminal because he is a Nigerian.

Life story 3: International student

The other day I wanted to take a taxi to the airport in Johannesburg (CBD) but I had no idea where I could find one. So, I approached this guy who was in a queue and asked him if the taxi he was waiting for would be going to the airport, he said yes. We then got into the taxi and drove off. As I was in the taxi it dawned on me that I should maybe ask the driver if indeed I am commuting in the right taxi. But he just ignored me and kept driving. I then got frantic and insisted that the driver tells me if he was going to the airport or not so that I can get off if he is not going where I am going. He replied and said I must speak to him in IsiZulu. I replied saying I am Shona I don’t understand IsiZulu. He said speak Shona then, but I couldn’t because I knew he was simply mocking me and wouldn’t understand.

So, I proceeded to go on that taxi, although he could have dropped me somewhere. He refused completely and some of the people who were in the taxi started laughing. No one really helped me. It was later on when almost everyone had gotten off that I was left with this Zimbabwean lady and then she said to me “don’t mind them, they are cruel”… So, I learned that language in South Africa can be used to discriminate against foreign nationals and this can happen anywhere, whether on campus, in a taxi and so on.

Life story 4: South African student

I remember this other day both myself and my school friend from Nigeria were traveling to town [Joburg CBD] in a taxi. On our way there we were just having a random discussion as we normally do. Then we got to town and said our farewells as he got off. Few minutes after he left the taxi, a lot of people inside the taxi [presumably South Africans] started to make some prejudicial remarks about foreigners which I could see were aimed at my friend who had just got off.

As if that was not worrying enough, this one man actually looked at me with his face filled with rage and said: “So you leaving South African men for these Kwerekweres? You are
allowing foreigners to come into our country and take what belongs to us. Are we South African men not good enough for you?” This really made me scared and uncomfortable as I felt that they could actually do something bad to me, just because they assume I am dating a Nigerian guy. This made realise that in South Africa, men believe that they have full entitlement to women and that is really sad.

Also, I feel like I am not xenophobic, my father is not xenophobic, but my brother could be xenophobic, my sister could be xenophobic, so like it is widespread. I feel like each and every group in South African has that one person who is xenophobic. We might say that we are not xenophobic, but if I go like “my boyfriend is from Nigeria”, they are going to be like “what? You are not going to bring that guy here”. So, it is widespread.

From these narratives, it is evident that people from different backgrounds can be equally xenophobic in South Africa. This point corroborates the observation made by some scholars (see Neocosmos 2010; Gordon, 2015) that xenophobia as a form of intolerance and oppression in South Africa is not confined to those living in informal settlements but is as prevalent among the middle class and civil servants (i.e. police officers, nurses, and doctors). If this assessment is valid, then it is reasonable to argue that anti-xenophobia discourse and scholarship in South Africa seemingly absolve some actors of accountability in labelling xenophobia a poverty phenomenon. And by so doing, it becomes impossible to establish that locked inside the echo chambers of the minds of the so-called “enlightened people” lay anti-immigrant attitudes which are expressed differently but are no less xenophobic. Also, as Neocosmos remarks: “It has been precisely the doing nothing of the middle classes until it was too late, which has enabled the rise to power of historically various forms of nativism from Nazism in inter-war Germany to Hindu fundamentalism in present-day India” (2010: 145).

Moreover, it is evident from the narratives that foreign nationals are also subjected to xenophobic experiences in South Africa because of the stereotypes that are attached to them by the locals which in turn make them feel unwanted and unsafe. This revelation coincides with Danso and McDonald’s study, which found that some media houses in South Africa promote certain stereotypes about foreign nationals (2001: 126-127). For example, “Zimbabwean and Mozambican women are labelled as prostitutes, Mozambicans are associated with car hijacking, while Nigerians and Moroccans are negatively represented by the media as drug peddlers” (Danso and McDonald, 2001: 126-127). Oyedemi rightly stresses that in the “criminal narrative of Nigerian identity, the image of Nigerian medical professionals present in South African’s private and public health facilities, and of the many Nigerian academics in South African universities is missing” (2015: 3). This is instigated by the
compelling need to feed the narrative that Nigerians are “criminals”. In that sense, stereotyping neglects the positive contribution that some foreign nationals make to the South African society.

Language discrimination as a form of psychological violence also emerged from the interviews. It appears that African foreign nationals, in particular, were most likely to experience discrimination once it was evident that they did not speak one of the South African indigenous languages. Similarly, Dzansi and Monnapula-Mapasela’s (2012) study of international students also shows that language is a major problem confronting international students in a foreign university. Moreover, Singh’s (2013) study at the University of Venda shows that language is used to “discriminate” international students by the local students and staff. In support of Life story 3, Muthuki’s (2013: 109-124) study reveal that the “inability” of international students to speak the local isiZulu language creates “a gap between them and the black South African students, and they have to contend with being called names such as Makwerekwere”. This was found to be dehumanising by the international students as it made them feel like “intruders” (Muthuki, 2013: 109-124). Also, a study by Lee (2017) found that there is an “unreasonable” expectations among the locals for black foreign nationals to know local languages simply because they are black. Most Portuguese from Portugal, Jewish from Israel, or Chinese from China cannot speak or understand a single indigenous language but they are never interrogated, stereotyped or ridiculed for this inability.

Lastly, it also emerged from the interviews that xenophobic attitudes are not only aimed at foreign nationals but also at people affiliated with foreigners, i.e. South African women married to foreign national men. Similar to what is shown by Oyedemi, the last of the four narratives demonstrates that local South African women are condemned by their compatriots for having relations with foreign nationals (2015: 69). Although at first sight this might appear to be about trying to protect women from any exploitation at the hands of foreign men, some of whom have been found to be involved in criminal acts such as drug trafficking and prostitution, a deeper examination illustrates that the condemnation of these women emanates from a lingering sense of entitlement held by some South African men towards South African women. This, of course, is evident from the part where the participant mentions that she was accused by a South African male of “allowing” foreigners to get inside the country and claim what “belongs” to South African men. This comment confirms the observation made by Gqola that “black South African women and jobs are the entitlements of black South African men and thus the loss of both is a
threat to patriarchal and heteronormative masculinities” (Gqola, 2008: 218).

5.8 “I just walk around angry all the time”: Impact of xenophobia

Although the term “xenophobia” may conjure up images of violent attacks against foreign nationals and their impact, international students interviewed in this study mention that they have experienced more subtle and insidious forms of xenophobia on a daily basis for as long as they have been in the country. According to them, this occurred in the form of verbal and psychological abuse; structural and institutional abuse; as well as cultural and ethnic discrimination. The majority of these international students reported that xenophobic experiences had resulted in traumatic stress disorder. Asked to elaborate on what they meant by this, they indicated that they feel uncomfortable wherever they are. This point is supported by Mudhovozi’s psychological study, which found that most international students experience culture shock which can be expressed through “homesickness, irritability, sadness, fear and frustration”. These challenges coupled with other challenges related to studying in a foreign university, unintentionally lead to high levels of stress (Mudhovozi, 2011: 293).

One international student indicated that he walks around with a “sense of distress in taxis, malls or in the streets” and this feeling “does not really go away” (Respondent 3, interviews). Another international student noted that xenophobia had in a way altered her personality in that she now “walks around angry all the time” because of the “undignified comments and stereotypes that some South Africans have towards foreigners” (Respondent 1, focus group discussion). Meanwhile, another international student indicated that xenophobia had made her more careful of her surroundings. She said:

It made me more careful of my surroundings like when I want to go out now I go to places that are more populated with white people than black people. If I want to visit people I know in the townships...I get my helper to go with me because I am afraid of being killed. So, now it makes me feel like a kid because I must have someone to walk me around. I cannot go out alone because I am scared that I might not come back home (Respondent 10, interviews).

These comments are consistent with Mothibi et al.’s statement that traumatising experiences of xenophobia “cast a long shadow over people’s lives” (2015: 156). Perhaps, then, there are distinct parallels between the life lived by a black African foreign national in post-apartheid South Africa and the one lived during apartheid by a black South African who according to Biko was “constantly alert, uncertain of when he/she would be the victim of physical violence”
by the apartheid regime (1978: 81). Immediately after the demise of apartheid, Gordon made the point that the “violence in South Africa against black immigrants is a projection of the hate blacks endured under apartheid” (1995: 79). Black South Africans in post-apartheid South Africa have constructed the foreign African as the oppositional other, proving that racism is one demon that refuses to be exorcised in South Africa (Mapokgole, 2014: 27). This makes it important to challenge liberal scholars who endeavour to discount race-critical approaches to life in South Africa. Strangely, though, xenophobia also impacts on the perpetrators as noted by some local South African students. One South African student in particular said: “It also affects us economically as South Africans because our country does need to go out there and do business in other countries, but might get rejected by other countries who feel that their people are being victimized in South Africa” (Respondent 18, interviews). Mkhondo, (2015) confirms these findings in his observation that xenophobia is hurting the South African brand.

5.9 Conclusion

Foreign nationals are regularly subjected to forms of xenophobia ranging from street-level abuse to discrimination and harassment by government officials – i.e. South African Police Service. But this discrimination also extends to institutions of higher learning where xenophobia may take an insidious form but is no less problematic. Based on the findings of this study, the meaning of xenophobia entails hatred, fear of the unknown, discrimination, mistreatment and anti-immigrant sentiments and comments. Most of the literature reviewed agrees with this definition of xenophobia provided by participants. However, the dictionary meaning of the word seems to exclude some crucial aspects of xenophobia, which the participants were able to identify, such as violence.

Both local and international students argued that the causes of xenophobia include sense of entitlement, racism, competition for resources or relative deprivation, exceptionalism, poverty and inequality. Participants also identified xenophobia as a consequence of public state discourse in South Africa that promotes a politics of fear (see Neocosmos, 2010: 142). They argued that this discourse is the reason being a black African foreigner in South Africa is a crime and why government though advocating against xenophobia remains reluctant to treat the phenomenon as a crime against humanity, fearing that effectively reacting to it would upset the xenophobic populace. It should also be mentioned that participants were sketchy in
explaining how South African society could deal with this systematic discrimination that creates conditions for other black Africans to be oppressed.

The majority of international students observed that xenophobia in South Africa is, in fact, Afrophobia – the fear and/or dislike of Africans and their culture. Their reason for citing this was that immigrants from Europe, who are normally light skinned, are never targeted for xenophobia, in contrast to black Africans whose daily life is marred by discrimination and exclusion. While this point may be valid, it is not unproblematic in that it overlooks the fact that Bangladeshis for instance are also attacked in the pogroms, showing that perhaps this is not necessarily a phobia of black Africans but also of foreign nationals from elsewhere in the world and thus the term “xenophobia” in lieu of “Afrophobia” is still apposite.

Most international students mentioned that they had not experienced xenophobia at UJ and argued that the institution is very welcoming to foreign nationals. Such views, however, proved not to be universal as a considerable number of international students indicated that xenophobia does exist at UJ but is underreported because many international students feel that nothing would be done to resolve such cases. These divergent views are interesting and do highlight the contradictions surrounding xenophobia in South Africa.
Chapter Six: Conclusion

6.1 Summary of findings

Xenophobia and its varying manifestations (including, amongst others, stereotyping, anti-immigrant sentiments, harassments, and random arrests, political scapegoating, denied access to services and of course public violence) are a serious threat to the lives and livelihoods of those considered as “outsiders” in South Africa (Misago, 2015: 2). It is thus by no coincidence that many scholars have sought to establish the causes of this phenomenon. It is worth noting, however, that most of the causes provided for xenophobia in South Africa are commonly found in literature that focuses on the broader society. This study shifts the focus from society at large to the higher education context. It seeks to explore how local and international students at the University of Johannesburg communicate their attitudes and perceptions towards xenophobia.

The rainbow nation, for all its colours, does not always welcome diversity or embrace those not born here. As a result, xenophobia is very much alive and well in South Africa. Foreign nationals in South Africa are often subjected to various forms of xenophobia: from ground “level abuse, discrimination, and harassment by government officials to being perceived as deportable criminals even by the Minister of Home Affairs and the forces of law and order” (see Landau, 2011: 1-22). The interviews I conducted, particularly those of international students, illustrate the nuances and insidious forms which xenophobia may take in an institution of higher learning.

The many forms of xenophobia that target African students in South Africa were highlighted by an incident that took place as I was completing this thesis. A Tanzanian PhD student at the University of Johannesburg, Baraka Leonard Nafari, was deliberately struck and murdered by a taxi outside the university’s Sophiatown residence in Auckland Park on the 3rd February 2018 (Mabuza, 2018). A statement issued by the African Diaspora Forum (2018) reveals that Baraka and fellow UJ students are seen in the UJ’s CCTV footage running for their lives with two men in a taxi pursuing them. The taxi then intentionally hits Baraka against a fence and kills him. According to the police, the taxi driver claimed that Baraka and his colleague were “Makwerekwere” who “were armed” and trying to “hijack them” (African Diaspora Forum, 2018). On the surface, the reason provided by the taxi men might seem plausible given that the South African Police Service in March 2017 reported that one car is hijacked in every 32
minutes in South Africa (*Daily Sun*, 2017). A closer inspection, however, reveals that this is yet another xenophobic case in which Baraka and his colleague were attacked because of their foreignness.

My findings demonstrate that some international students at the University of Johannesburg have experienced verbal and emotional abuse at the hands of local South African students. They have been called belittling names such as “*Makwerekwere*” and “*Grigrambas*”. Some of these students have been mistreated because they cannot communicate in South African indigenous languages. This also occurs off-campus, for instance in taxis. This type of treatment has made some international students to conceal their actual identity as they fear that the locals might gather that they are foreigners and thus discriminate against them. Meanwhile, some international students have resorted to keeping company with fellow foreign students around whom they feel safe.

Many international students also lamented that besides social exclusion, they also experience academic exclusion based on the denial of funding for their studies and deemed this act to be xenophobic. They also felt that the University of Johannesburg was unfair to them through its policy which demands that they pay all their fees in advance, while the locals are allowed to pay in instalments. These findings resonate with Shindondola’s (2002) and Gumbo’s (2014) studies, which found that financial problems were the zenith of the problems confronting the majority of international students in the South African higher education context. Even so, it is also important to consider that South African universities are faced with a dilemma to create a balance between national responsiveness and also responding to the demands of globalisation – which, among other things, encourages the enrolment of international students.

Importantly, the findings do not claim generalizability nor can predict situations in which xenophobia will occur. There are many exceptions, such as black African students at UJ asserting no ill-treatment and avowing that UJ is very welcoming to international students. These findings corroborate those by Patsika (2015: 34) who found that universities like UJ are seeking to reach a “high global excellence status”, and thus seek to avoid being associated with discriminatory behaviours and scandals that could damage their reputation. In 2017, the former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Johannesburg, Professor Ihron Van Rensburg condemned the threats of xenophobic attacks doing the rounds in Gauteng and Johannesburg. He said, “I would like to make it clear that UJ has no tolerance for xenophobia, violence and/or incitement.
The University assures students and staff that xenophobic attacks will be treated with the seriousness it requires” (University of Johannesburg, 2017).

Views of UJ being a home for students across the globe, however, proved not to be uncontroversial as xenophobia at UJ remains a phenomenon that is true for many international students, and therefore should not be ignored. The most undesirable incidents of xenophobia occur outside campus, as illustrated by the report of the Tanzanian PhD student who was murdered by a taxi man. This nonetheless does not exempt university settings of xenophobic behaviours.

Both local and international students were able to explain some of the causes of xenophobia. Among those causes are South Africa’s sense of entitlement and sense of exceptionalism. According to the respondents, there is a subjective feeling of discontent among most South Africans who feel that they are getting less than what they deserve because of foreign nationals who have infiltrated their communities. This affirms the theoretical analysis offered by Fanon (1961): namely, that in post-colonial states the formerly oppressed feel hemmed by a whole number of pressures that are depriving them of what they believe they are entitled to. In response, they perceive the so-called Makwerekwere as a threat that “should be kept out of South Africa” (Peberdy, 2002: 24). Regarding, exceptionalism, the findings suggest that South Africa perceives itself as an African country that is different from other African countries. This sustains Fanon’s prediction that nationalism and Africanism – (the terms the former colony flaunted before independence) would after independence degenerate into ultranationalism, chauvinism, and racism (1961).

In addition, both local and international students argued that xenophobia is also caused by racism, competition for resources, relative deprivation, poverty, and inequality. The findings show that in elucidating racism as a cause of xenophobia, both local and international students were in agreement that what is termed xenophobia in South Africa is actually “Afrophobia” – the fear of a specific other – the black other from elsewhere in the African continent (see Matsinhe, 2011; Mngxitama, 2008). Moreover, both local and international students were able to identify xenophobia as consequence of public state discourse in South Africa.

The findings further show that international students have been subjected to xenophobia in South Africa and at UJ in particular, and this has resulted in them experiencing high levels of
stress. Despite such challenges, some international students indicated that they have developed ways to adapt or adjust to life in a foreign country, although the process is not always easy. As one international student noted, the challenges that come with being in a foreign country represent a continuum of ever-increasing challenges that must be overcome.

6.2 Contribution of the study to current knowledge

In my study I sought to add to the previous knowledge provided by studies of xenophobia in the South African higher education context. I depart from Shindondola’s (2008) theorisation of xenophobia as a phenomenon caused by competition between locals and outsiders by looking at xenophobia as a consequence of political discourse fundamentally based on the exclusion of non-nationals from citizenship rights. This type of theorisation helps us understand xenophobia as a political construct and enables us to be mindful of such discourses and to develop ways on how to monitor them.

Unlike other studies on xenophobia in the higher education context (such as Shindondola, 2002, Patsika, 2015; Naidoo and Uys, 2013; Binikos and Rugunan, 2015), the current study sought to study xenophobia from a communication perspective. What is gained from this is an understanding that xenophobic attacks are not only a result of political discourse but also a consequence of the lack of effective communication aimed at integrating immigrants and local South Africans. Xenophobic attacks should themselves be seen as forms of communication or expressions (Oloyede, 2008).

Similar to Naidoo and Uys’s (2013) previous study, this study examines the perceptions and attitudes of both local and international students in relation to xenophobia. This decision was taken because many authors in the higher education context (Shindondola, 2002; Patsika, 2015; Buthelezi, 2009; Gumbo, 2014; Mudhovozi, 2011, Singh, 2013) have mostly studied the two groups of students (local and international students) separately. For the current study, it was important to examine the two groups in a single focus in order to get a sense of how the views of these groups compare.

The current study is unique because although it is centred in the higher education context, it draws references from research that has focused on xenophobia in South African townships.
and inner-city areas. This was done to emphasize the need to consider different parts of the society as a way of understanding the perceptions and attitudes that people have towards xenophobia in South Africa.

6.3 Recommendations to the University of Johannesburg and the South African Government

South Africa needs the human capital, the knowledge, and the diversity that foreign citizens bring, especially those determined to contribute to, work and live in the country (Kinge, 2016: 59). Given this, I urge the institutions of higher learning and government of South Africa to consider the following recommendations to fight against xenophobia and create a welcoming environment for international students and migrants in general.

First, the University of Johannesburg needs to assess the needs of international students by conducting surveys and questionnaires and also by organising informal meetings and forums to discuss matters relating to international students. The university should also develop programmes that encourage both local and international students to participate and by so doing bridge the perceptible gap between the two groups. There should be a general course that teaches about African history in an effort to educate the locals about the long history of migration within the African continent. The university should consider exchanging students with other African universities to counter the exceptionalism that has led to South Africa seeing itself as being closer to the West than to the rest of the African continent. In addition, the university should re-examine its policy which excludes international students from merit bursaries and stresses that they pay their fees upfront.

The government of South Africa should look at introducing educational campaigns that will raise awareness about the quandary faced by black African foreigners in South Africa. The government should train the South African law enforcers and immigration officers on the rights of foreign nationals and demand that those rights be respected. The government should also make sure that everybody is documented rather than deported, for it is the absence of documentation which criminalises people’s attempts to earn a living and to survive in South Africa. There is also a need for a quick judicial response to stop the culture of impunity that makes perpetrators believe that they can get away with xenophobic violence, scapegoating and
forms of discrimination. Above all, the government must educate South Africans about the positive contribution that some foreign nationals make to the country.

6.4 Suggestions for future study

This study is primarily qualitative and thus only focuses on a small number of students. Therefore, there is a need for more qualitative and quantitative studies that look at a wider population of students at the University of Johannesburg with regards to how attitudes towards xenophobia are communicated. Further research should also interrogate why some local students espouse negative views of particular groups of internationals. A thorough investigation is also needed to establish why anti-immigrant attitudes are generally aimed at black international students from Africa. In addition, future research should examine whether international students are the sole targets of xenophobia in higher education contexts.

6.5 Epilogue

In summary, it can be concluded that, in general, xenophobia in South Africa has an anti-black sentiment, and does not only affect those who are in the country illegally but also those who have proper documentation to be in the country. Foreign nationals are scapegoated for most of the social ills in South Africa and categorised as the “other” whose human rights only exist on paper and not in practice. However, diversities in opinions emerged from the participants. For instance, some international students argued that xenophobia is non-existent in South Africa, while others said it is alive and well and were able to see it as more than a “fear and dislike of strangers”. Black foreign students are mainly at risk of being discriminated against in contrast to white foreign students who are generally welcomed. It is, therefore, difficult to deny that xenophobia is a new form of racism in South Africa with the black foreigner as the primary victim. Given that some respondents suggested that xenophobia exists at UJ, albeit in a subtle manner when juxtaposed to townships where it has been more violent, this and other South African universities need to treat this phenomenon seriously and do all they can to eradicate it.
7. References


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8. Appendices

8.1 Appendix 1: Interview questions

1. What is xenophobia, in your opinion? (I.e. how would you define it)?
2. What do you know about it?
3. What do you think of it?
4. Do you think xenophobia exists in South Africa? If yes, how does it manifest itself? Where?
5. What are its origins, in your opinion?
6. Do you think that xenophobia is more widespread among certain social groups or a specific sector of the South Africa population? If yes, please specify and explain why do you think this is the cause?
7. Has the experience of xenophobia had any impact on you?
8. Do you think xenophobia exists at UJ? If yes, have you witnessed manifestations of it? If not, why do you think UJ has managed to avoid it?
9. Is there anything that UJ can do to further protect students from the experience of xenophobia?
8.2 Appendix 2: Interviews cited or quoted in text

8.2.1 Semi-structured and narrative interviews

Interview 1, male, Zimbabwe, black, communication/media studies, May 12, 2017.
Interview 2, Female, Zimbabwe, black, communication/media studies, May 19, 2017.
Interview 3, male, Zimbabwe, black, engineering studies, June 5, 2017.
Interview 4, male, DR Congo (DRC), black, Information technology, June 6, 2017.
Interview 5, female, Swaziland, black, business studies, June 6, 2017.
Interview 6, female, DR Congo (DRC), black, communication/media studies, June 7, 2017.
Interview 7, male, Germany, white, engineering studies, June 7, 2017.
Interview 8, male, Zimbabwe, black, business studies, June 10, 2017.
Interview 9, male, DR Congo (DRC), black, business studies, June 12, 2017.
Interview 10, female, Nigeria, black, communication/media studies, June 15, 2017.
Interview 11, female, Kenya, black, education, June 20, 2017.
Interview 12, female, Zimbabwe, black, communication/media studies, June 20, 2017.
Interviews 13, female, South Africa, black, politics, June 29, 2017.
Interview 14, male, South Africa, black, communication/media studies, June 29, 2017.
Interview 15, female, South Africa, black communication/media studies, July 19, 2017.
Interview 16, male, South Africa, black, politics, July 20, 2017.
Interview 17, female, South Africa, black, communication/media studies, July 22, 2017.
Interview 18, male, South Africa, black, engineering, July 22, 2017.
Interview 19, female, South Africa, black, information technology, July 25, 2017.
Interview 21, male, South Africa, black, engineering, July, 26, 2017.
Interview 22, female, South Africa, black, communication/media studies, July 28, 2017.
Interview 24, male, South Africa, black, mathematical science, July 29, 2017.

8.2.2 Focus group participants

Interview 1, female, DR Congo, black, communication/media studies, August 25, 2017.
Interview 2, male, Cameroon, black, health sciences, August 25, 2017.
Interview 4, male, South African, black, information technology, August 25, 2017.
Interview 5, female, Tanzania, black, communication/media studies, August 25, 2017.
Interview 6, female, South African, black, communication/media studies, August 25, 2017.