On Being a “Foreigner”: How African International Students at UWC Make Sense of Xenophobia

A mini thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts in Development Studies at the Institute for Social Development, University of the Western Cape.

By: Odette Murara

Supervisor: Prof. Heike Becker

November 2011
KEY WORDS

Xenophobia
South Africa
University of the Western Cape
Campus
Exclusion
Otherness
Migrants
International students
Foreigner
Experiences
This thesis is an exploratory study of how African international students at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) in South Africa experience xenophobic attitudes and behaviours, and how they make sense of it. In post-apartheid South Africa, the xenophobia phenomenon has become an intensely debated issue. While numerous researchers have attempted to investigate the forms of xenophobia and the underlying reasons of aggressive behaviour towards foreign migrants in South Africa, very few studies have been done thus far on xenophobia at South African Higher learning institutions. In this research I am interested in finding out whether international students particularly African international students at UWC, encounter xenophobia on campus and outside the academic environment.

An Ethnographic study was conducted on and off the UWC campus, which involved participant observation, in-depth one on one interviews, focus group and diaries which were kept by key informants to record their daily experiences. The research participants were ten UWC African international students, who stay on and off campus, from different levels and field of study. The strategy to analyse the data was framed on basis of inductive approach. Moreover, informal discussions were used as a source of data to this study and I also made use of my own experiences as of one of African international students at UWC.

The findings pinpoint that xenophobic experiences of African international students inside and outside the university include exclusion, discrimination, verbal abuse, blames and harassments, as well as stereotypes. The findings also show that xenophobic violence is experienced off campus. Although the violence experience was reported by one student out of the research participants, this issue is still pertinent enough to be considered.

The central argument of the thesis is that while no violence against foreign African students has been reported from UWC, this does not mean that there would be no instances of xenophobia there. Instead, this research shows that because at higher learning institutions we find mostly people of the social middle classes, xenophobia is expressed in subtle ways through negative attitudes and behaviours towards foreign students.
I hereby declare that On Being a “Foreigner”: How African International Students at UWC Make Sense of Xenophobia is my own work, that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university, and that all sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.

Odette Murara

November 2011

Signed...........................

Prof Heike Becker

Signed.............................
DEDICATION

The fruit of this study is cordially dedicated to:

The Lord Almighty who has always kept the ear to my prayer, whose eye has protected me throughout my being and whose hand has guided me.

My beloved parents Evariste Murara and Cecile Mukandamage for their love, guidance, care and precious support in all times. They have always kept me in their daily prayers.

To my beloved husband, Gerald Sinzayivaho for his sleepless nights making sure that everything is well with me in this foreign land where he wished to be by my side at this specific time. He has been the real source of my moral, financial and academic support through his endless LOVE, care and comfort.

My dear sisters and brothers (Muraras), who have been my source of hope and energy in all they did to keep me strong and courageous throughout my studies and stay in South Africa.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This thesis is a result of various efforts from invaluable individuals. First and Foremost I would like to extend my appreciation to the UWC participants in this study, for their time, their trust in me disclosing their sensitive experiences, and their willingness to be part of this study whenever I needed further information from them. They have been of much contribution to this study, if it was not them, then this study was not to happen. All those who shared their experiences with me through our informal discussions, I cherish the results of our conversations. I acknowledge the UWC SRC deputy president’s effort and his time in making this study successful by providing me with invaluable information. I am grateful to the GBGM and my husband for their financial support to bring this study to the existence. To my uncle Raphael Hakizimana, I did not forget your endless care and support in various ways throughout my stay in South Africa and before.

My sincere gratitude goes to my supervisor Professor Heike Becker for her immeasurable commitment, advice and guidance throughout the completion of this thesis. You have always been there to guide me; I acknowledge all your efforts, guidance and the spirit in which these were rendered. You made this work a precious one that I deserve to cherish. My appreciation goes to my relatives in Durban and those in Pretoria for keeping in touch with me, calling me every weekend to find out how I was doing with my school work. To my family, aunts, uncles, and friends, thank you for your moral support to make sure that I finish these studies in full peace of mind. To all those who contributed to this work in whichever way, I thank you. Beatrice Mironko, I cannot forget the time we used to spend together debating on and discussing research; I acknowledge all the ideas emerged as they have been useful to this study. I appreciate.
# CONTENTS

KEY WORDS .................................................................................................................................................... i
ABSTRACT .................................................................................................................................................. ii
DECLARATION .......................................................................................................................................... iii
DEDICATION .............................................................................................................................................. iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT ........................................................................................................................... v

**CHAPTER ONE: Introduction** .................................................................................................................. 1
  1.1. Objectives of the study ......................................................................................................................... 3
  1.2. Research questions ............................................................................................................................... 3
  1.3. Xenophobia in the eye of foreign students at a South African university ........................................... 3
  1.4. Outline of the thesis ............................................................................................................................. 6

**CHAPTER TWO: “Them” and “Us”: Making sense of xenophobia** .......................................................... 8
  2.1. Being a “foreigner”, does it matter? Migration today ............................................................................... 9
  2.2. Understanding xenophobia: No single explanation .......................................................................... 12
  2.2.1. Forms of xenophobia .................................................................................................................... 14
  2.2.2. Perceived root causes for South African xenophobia .................................................................... 17
  2.3. Strategies for coping with xenophobia ............................................................................................... 24
  2.4. Institutional knowledge on the presence of foreign students and xenophobia .................................. 26
  2.5. Conclusion ........................................................................................................................................ 28

**CHAPTER THREE: Research methods and the Fieldwork Experience** .................................................. 30
  3.1. A brief background of UWC: the research site .................................................................................. 30
  3.2. Coming to UWC: a place to grow? ..................................................................................................... 36
  3.3. Ethnographic records: fieldwork account .......................................................................................... 40
  3.4. Introducing key research informants .................................................................................................. 47
  3.5. Reflexivity by the Researcher ............................................................................................................ 50
  3.6. “In the field” experience: Research as a therapy ............................................................................... 51
  3.7. Limitations to the study .................................................................................................................... 52
  3.8. Ethical considerations ....................................................................................................................... 53
  3.9. Conclusion ....................................................................................................................................... 54

**CHAPTER FOUR: On campus xenophobic experiences with the Institution** ....................................... 55
  4.1. Lack of Value attached to African international students ................................................................. 56
  4.2. Fear of the “other”: Competition for resources ............................................................................... 72
  4.3. “Mark my work and not my surname” ............................................................................................. 76
  4.4. You have to cope “you know”? ......................................................................................................... 79
  4.5. Conclusion ....................................................................................................................................... 81

**CHAPTER FIVE: Interactions in question: Xenophobic experiences with national students** .............. 82
  5.1. Lack of interaction: Grades of social exclusion, hatred and superiority ........................................... 83
  5.2. “So you have come here to be better than us”: material blames .................................................... 90
  5.3. Coping strategies ............................................................................................................................... 91
  5.4. Conclusion ...................................................................................................................................... 92
CHAPTER SIX: African international students and xenophobia: off campus experiences... 94

6.1. Judging the body ........................................................................................................................ 94
6.2. Public space and xenophobia ..................................................................................................... 95
6.3. Use of “Makwerekwere”: a xenophobic slogan/terminology ................................................. 97
6.4. Off-campus institutional xenophobia: Home Affairs experience ........................................... 103
6.5. Know your space: coping with xenophobic experiences in public ............................................. 105
6.6. Conclusion ................................................................................................................................ 109

CHAPTER SEVEN: Conclusion ............................................................................................................. 111
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Images of the xenophobic experiences in South Africa- May 2008. ...............................................................16

Figure 2: A map illustrating the location and direction to UWC.................................................................30

Figure 3: UWC campus map ..........................................................................................................................30

Figure 4: The academic support for students by students: Peer Mentoring Programme (PMP) ..................33

Figure 5: Number of international students at UWC by faculties & degree programmes 2010 ............35

Figure 6: The Unibell train station, the UWC entrance (South Campus). ..................................................42

Figure 7: Modderdam road UWC entrance where taxis pick up & drop off students (West Campus). ....42

Figure 8: Inside the UWC student centre: the general space for different activities...............................44

Figure 9: The UWC barn, where students go for drinking and dancing.....................................................45

Figure 10: A table of research participants profile .......................................................................................47

Figure 11: A map of Africa viewed by the South African xenophobic perspective ..................97

Figure 12: A map illustrating the observation area at KFC in the V&A Waterfront .................................101

Figure 13: Train from Bellville to Cape Town via Unibell, dropping off UWC students............................107

Figure 14: Number of international students at UWC by country of citizenship 2010 .........................124
CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

Xenophobia in South Africa has become a problem in local communities, at work places, on the street, in shopping malls, mini-bus taxis, commuter trains, and in about any other place. This thesis argues that the country’s institutions of higher learning are no exception to this phenomenon. It shows that international students at South African higher learning institutions have to contend with xenophobia like any other African migrants in the republic. Such xenophobic tendencies manifest in the common beliefs among many South Africans that all immigrants are the same, and that they are always suspected to be illegal, undocumented “aliens”. Foreign African students are not exempted from these prejudices, irrespective of whether they are refugees or students resident in South Africa on a study visa. This results in experiences of ill treatment, name calling (ma kwerekwere), verbal abuse, discrimination and exclusion on and off university campuses, even physical assaults, usually outside the campus environment.

The incidence of xenophobia at academic institutions is little known in South African public discourse. This is perhaps so because, as this thesis shows, firstly, international African students experience xenophobic attitudes and behaviours by university staff and fellow students in a range of different forms, including exclusion, discrimination, and even verbal abuse but it does not extend to physical violence, which seems to have become synonymous with “xenophobia” in popular understanding. Secondly, xenophobia has also become associated only with poor communities; institutions peopled by the middle-classes (or those aspiring to become members of the middle and upper classes) are therefore considered to not be affected by it. This thesis demonstrates that this is a misconception.

This study also demonstrates that there is no single explanation of the phenomenon. In post-apartheid South Africa, the xenophobia phenomenon has become an intensely debated issue among researchers and scholars. Authors have perceived the origins of xenophobia in various ways. However, the South African version of xenophobia is often said to originate in a lack of knowledge by South African society about immigrants from other parts of Africa (Misago et al., 2009:35). This premise holds that the legacy of apartheid did not only barred the majority of South Africans from rights to full citizenship and access to resources, such as quality education, comprehensive health care, and – through job reservation policies – good
employment opportunities; it also prevented them from getting to know the world outside their own country. As a result, this theory propounds that South African xenophobic behaviours and attitudes towards foreign nationals originate from fear because South Africans would not know where these foreigners are coming from and why they have come to South Africa (Ibid). However, this theory alone does not explain why xenophobia in South Africa is so prevalent even at higher education institutions where people work and study, are generally assumed to be knowledgeable and educated.

When I arrived from Rwanda in South Africa in September 2008 in order to enrol for a Masters degree in Development Studies at the University of the Western Cape (UWC), I was very curious to find out about what xenophobia is all about. What actually happened during the May 2008 xenophobic violence outbreak because when I heard for the first time that there was xenophobia in South Africa in May 2008 and that some people were being killed, I felt worried and hopeless because at that time I had already made plans to go to South Africa to study for my Masters degree. I asked myself what xenophobia might be meaning and I had no answer. I then came to South Africa in September 2008 for the 2009 in-take (i.e., that was some months after the xenophobic riots) and I decided to conduct my thesis research on a topic which looks at xenophobia.

My initial intention was to look at the experiences of migrants outside the university life. At the time, my interest in the study of xenophobia revolved around curiosity to understand what xenophobia is, and how it manifests, through the thorough reading of the literature under the topic of xenophobia. In my search of a supervisor in mid-2010, I met my supervisor Professor Heike Becker, from the Department of Anthropology and Sociology, who I requested to supervise me; she was keen to know what research area I was interested in. I told her it was xenophobia; then she accepted to be my supervisor and asked me to bring her my draft proposal, which I had already begun to prepare, so she could advise me from there. The second time we met we had a discussion on how to approach the topic. Professor Heike suggested that I may look into “xenophobia” focusing on “international students” at UWC. I then left to go and think about it. To be honest, initially I was not much convinced by her suggestion because I had this question within me: “Do we also have xenophobic experiences at higher learning Institutions? If so what is the nature of such xenophobia and what is the students’ understanding of this phenomenon”? Interestingly, these initial doubts actually became my research questions. Because I realised that I knew little about the phenomenon at
institutions of higher learning and that there was very little written about it, I then agreed with my supervisor to conduct research on the topic of xenophobia with regard to foreign students at UWC.

I took heed of my supervisor’s advice and I came to realise that while numerous researchers have attempted to investigate the underlying reasons of aggressive behaviour towards foreign migrants in South Africa, very few studies have been done on xenophobia at South African higher learning institutions and how it affects international students as part of the international migrant population in the country. It was in that spirit that I got convinced of looking at the xenophobia, with a particular focus on how it is experienced by African international students at a higher learning institution, and how such students make sense of it. I chose my own place of study, UWC, as the site of my field research. Motivated by the understanding that xenophobia has been manifested in so many forms not only in local communities but also at higher learning institution, I carried out this research guided by the following study objectives.

1.1. Objectives of the study

The main objective of this research is to explore African international students ‘experiences of xenophobia and how they make sense of it. The study aims to investigate the nature of xenophobic encounters of foreign African students with UWC administration and academic staff, fellow students at the university, and their experiences with xenophobic attitudes and behaviours outside the campus. Furthermore, this thesis analyses strategies that African international students utilise to cope with xenophobic experiences.

1.2. Research questions

In view of the above research objectives, this thesis is guided by the following questions: In what ways do UWC African foreign students experience xenophobia? What strategies do foreign students use in coping with xenophobic experience? How does the UWC executive management take the issue of xenophobic experiences of foreign students into consideration in its internationalisation policy?

1.3. Xenophobia in the eye of foreign students at a South African university

The UWC is located on the outskirts of Cape Town, in the area known as the “Cape Flats”, and surrounded mostly by townships and smaller pockets of middle-class suburban
residential environments. When the university was established in 1960, it was to be a “coloured” university, only accepting South African students of mixed-race origins. It now hosts students from all South African racial groups and beyond that, about 10% of its current student population come from outside South Africa, mostly these are international students from the rest of the African continent.

An international student is referred to as “anyone who is not a South African citizen, not a permanent resident or does not have diplomatic exemption, who studies at an educational institution in South Africa” (Ramphele 1999:1). Sichone (2006:38) defines universities as “institutions rooted in a universal cultural experience, although overtime, they have developed individual and national characteristics and traditions which are preserved and marketed extensively”. Students therefore choose the universities where to pursue their tertiary studies based on their expectations and what specific universities offer. In the case of South Africa, the International Education Association of South Africa (IEASA), a nongovernmental, non-profit professional Association, has endeavoured to position South African higher education, which resulted in the growth of the number of international students who enrol at South African universities. Since the South African transition to democracy for instance, the number of African international students enrolled at South African higher learning institutions have substantially increased. According to Kishun (2007), between the year 1995 to 2005, the number of the African international students at South African institutions of higher learning stood at 40 200.

About two thirds of the international students at South African universities are from the African continent (Rouhani, 2002:11). African International students face xenophobia expressed through the use of local languages such as isiZulu or isiXhosa by local students and sometimes staff, who are speaking to non-national African students in local languages, which they expect any black African person to speak (Ibid). In a master’s thesis done in Sociology at the former Rand Afrikans Universiteit (RAU), a Namibian postgraduate researcher Shindondola (2002) also noted that African foreign students at her university experienced xenophobia through verbal or physical abuse such as the use of local languages in addressing them, which were used by university staff or fellow students. Shindondola (2002) maintains that African international students experience xenophobic attitudes at the host higher learning institutions within academic departments, with fellow students and even from other service providers such as financial institutions.
A higher learning institution is a multicultural community in today’s life due to the globalisation, where the movement of students has become easy and as demand of skilled labour increases (Appadurai, 1998). Countries around the world therefore become more culturally diverse and demographics begin to shift, where host nationals start paying attention to intergroup relations and multicultural attitudes towards minority groups such as international students (Ward & Rana-Deuba, 2000; Harrison, 2011). In this spirit, the social dilemmas about university life are inevitable and mainly derived from the history of the host country or institution. In most countries including South Africa, issues associated with racial prejudice and cultural division continue to plague the post-secondary institutions (Womack, 2001). At American campuses for instance, the international students find it difficult to establish friendships with American students (Williams & Johnson, 2011). The latter is the same case at South African higher learning institutions.

One of the reasons for this may be that both local students and staff see foreigners in higher education as a competition for scarce resources because, on the one hand, South African nationals expect to be the primary beneficiaries of the new government’s equity focus, while, on the other hand, the previous inferior “Bantu education” really puts them at a comparative disadvantage, as Mamphela Ramphele (1999) who was then the Vice Chancellor of the University of Cape Town (UCT) argued.

African international students are also accused of coming to take locals’ jobs and bursaries among other resources. They are even sometimes accused of receiving preferential treatment from lecturers. But as Rouhani (2002) argues, this perception is due to the fact that the majority of international students have to perform well if they want to keep their bursaries. It is a fact also that many African international students are outstanding students and that is why they qualified for financial assistance, or have even been admitted to South African universities(Ibid)

Finally, African international students are also victims of stereotypes where they are sometimes called “Makwerekwere”, indicating stumbling language use, a term with definite negative connotations (Danso & McDonald, 2000; Nyamnjoh, 2006).
1.4. Outline of the thesis

This thesis focuses on the xenophobic experiences of the African international students at UWC.

Chapter one gives the introduction of the whole thesis, highlighting the aim and the motivation of the study, as well as the raison d’être for the study and the structure of the whole study.

Chapter two explores the existing literature on the xenophobia as a question under discussion. It is a review of what other authors documented as forms of xenophobic attitudes and practices directed to the foreign nationals in South Africa. In addition, the chapter goes on to discuss what have been perceived as reasons behind xenophobia in South Africa. Since the aim of this study is to answer the question of how African international students experience xenophobia at higher learning institution, this chapter looks at possible coping strategies in such xenophobic incidences.

Chapter three gives an account of the research methods and the field work experiences. This includes the sampling method used, the data collection methods and design. The whole profile of the research participants is provided under this chapter, as well as the introduction of the key research informants. In this chapter, I give an account of what I experienced in the field, the limitations to the study, my reflexivity as a researcher and the ethical considerations as employed during the field work.

Chapter four provides the discussion of findings from the field. It looks at the on campus xenophobic experiences of the African international students with the institution, that is, the administrative and academic staff. Although the main aim here was to document the nature of xenophobia that students experience at UWC, this chapter also gives a short detail of how these students cope with the negative attitudes that they face with the institution.

Chapter five presents the on campus xenophobic experiences that African international students face specifically with fellow national students, in classrooms, at the students ‘residence halls, at the student centre among other spaces where the university students are expected to mix. Their daily forms of exclusions are discussed under this chapter, as well as the adopted strategies to cope with daily negative attitudes.
Chapter six looks at the xenophobic experiences of international students but outside the university, where students reported to experience xenophobic attitudes on the taxis, trains, in shopping malls and at any other service providing agencies such as the Home Affairs department. Coping strategies while out there are not limited to this chapter.

Chapter seven draws together the general conclusion of the whole study, giving a summary of what has been discussed under every chapter as a way of responding to the study research question.
“How many of ‘them’ are there now among ‘us’? Uncertainties create intolerable anxieties” (Appadurai, 1998: 229)

Introduction

While there is no single explanation as to why xenophobia is so prevalent in contemporary South Africa, the issue of “us” and “them” is on the increase in the country’s communities. Such discourse and behaviour have their roots in the history of social exclusion (Coplan, 2009), and an apartheid legacy and the new nationalism era (Kersting, 2009). During the apartheid era, South Africans were racially segregated and such racial division resulted in politics of social and political exclusion where the majority population, who are black South Africans, had no access to social-economic services such as proper education, employment, health treatment and houses (Peberdy, 2001; Posel, 1987). When South Africa became democratic in 1994, there came a new government which promised a number of state-provided services to the poor, who form the previously excluded majority, who were denied opportunities for many years (Kersting, 2009). When from 1994 South Africa was welcomed back into the international community, the country also became host to people who originated from other countries, mostly on the African continent.

With the arrival of these newcomers of diverse cultural backgrounds, the basis of social exclusion began to shift from local racial patterns to what is known as xenophobia. This embraces what Kersting (2009: 10) refers to as a “new nationalism era” with the emphasis that during the phase of nationalism where South Africans were fighting against apartheid, their attitude was directed against those in power, but after the country gained democracy, their attitude changed towards hostility towards African migrants within the country; this issue had not been raised before. The increasing presence of people perceived as “different” created anxieties among the South Africans. As researchers view it, rapidly increasing immigration as well as people’s mobility in general brings about much worry among the host communities’ members, who tend to see a foreigner as a threat to their state provided goods and services (Appadurai, 1998: 229).
This chapter starts by giving an overview of migration today. It then looks at xenophobia as an issue in contemporary South Africa, its forms and perceived reasons behind such a phenomenon. As the aim of this study is to document the xenophobic experiences and recording strategies of African international students at UWC, this chapter gives account of what other researchers have documented as xenophobic experiences of African migrants in general and African international students in particular. I finally draw some conclusions on these matters, based on the literature reviewed, before presenting my own research from Chapter Three.

2.1. Being a “foreigner”, does it matter? Migration today

“Today, one in every 50 human beings is a migrant worker, a refugee or asylum seeker, or an immigrant living in a foreign country” (ILO, IOM & OHCHR, 2001:1).

As stated in the United Nations’ Development Programme (UNDP) report, human mobility has globally become a critical issue due to the lack of basic needs to respond to the human development (UNDP, 2009). Following this perspective, people decide where to migrate to, with an intention of searching for better opportunities such as the hope to be able to increase a person’s income, health, security and education (UNDP, 2009; Rouhani, 2002 &2007).

With the dawn of democracy in 1994, a new beginning was made in the history of South Africa’s social economic and political landscape. At the time, South Africa became a signatory to the 1951 United Nations (UN) convention on the protection of humanity across cultures and the 1969 Organisation of African Unity (OAU) convention governing the aspects of refugee problems in Africa (AU, 2008). The post-1994 period was marked by a significant number of African immigrants, also including students that came into the country. In the early 1990s South Africa signed the Southern African Development Community (SADC) protocol for free movements of persons in the Southern African region, which opened doors for students from SADC member states to study at universities in the country (Crush & Oucho, 2001). In this spirit, South Africa also revised its policy on the admission of international students from other African countries outside SADC - into her tertiary institutions (Ramphele, 1999:11).

---

The increase in migrants worldwide is a result of the globalisation era where flow of goods, people, ideas and technology has made it easier for individuals or group of people to migrate outside their countries of origin (Appaduari, 1998:228). Balbo & Marconi (2006) assert that the growth of transnational migration is clearly linked to globalisation, with the related declining costs of transportation and the rising awareness of differences in living conditions due to the universal reach of the media. While globalization encourages people to migrate, there are other main factors that entice people to migrate to a foreign land either. Poverty, land scarcity, ethnic disputes, political manipulation, illiteracy among others, remain the main reasons why people leave their homes and decide on where to go and settle” (Kane, 1995; Kanth, 2009). The latter factors create all kinds of migrants, including refugees/asylum seekers, seasonal workers; and international students who normally move for very different reasons (Kau & Sirmans 1976).

Migrants include legal as well as illegal migrants, all of whom live within communities in the host country. Researchers such as Sichone (2008), who has conducted long-term research on immigrants and xenophobia in South Africa, reports that immigrants often do not feel welcome in host communities due to the daily treatment that they experience from local nationals, which manifests the xenophobic behaviour. However, their experiences of xenophobia vary much along the lines of class difference. Xenophobic violence is experienced mostly in poor communities, especially where resources are scarce, such as housing, employment, poverty or education. While violence is usually not much of an issue in middle class communities, other forms of xenophobia are prevalent there, where immigrants tend to get socially excluded, blamed for social ills, even though not physically attacked. In other words, increase in immigration creates ambiguity and anxiety among host community members who fear that immigrants will claim to have a share in the state provided goods and services (Appadurai, 1998; Sichone, 2008).

Different cultural norms and practices within host communities have sometimes been found to create worries among the long-established population since local nationals find that migrants are ‘different’ and are therefore considered as people who do not ‘belong’. But these fears and consequent actions also differ in degrees and depend on local histories and circumstances. I argue that the levels of ambiguity and resentment towards foreigners in a host country depend on the history of that country, and on the global moment.
The South African society is exclusionary by history (Coplan, 2009). Numerous researchers report that such an attitude is in the minds of many, being in the residential areas, on the streets, workplaces, shopping malls and in schools and institutions of higher learning (e.g., Sichone, 2006; Rouhani, 2002). In other words: what is going on in one’s life today may be influenced by various social factors, resulting from the historical forces that created that society (Mills, 1959). Therefore, in view of the above, the history of social exclusion in South Africa has had and still has an impact on people’s daily life experiences and how they relate to others. During the apartheid era South Africans were divided into racial groups, socially and legally naturalised as white, coloured, Asian (Indian), and Bantu. Such groups were not to share social resources, amenities, facilities, employment categories, or even physical spaces, which became the driving principle not only of public administration but of social morality (Coplan, 2009: 68).

Sichone (2008) writes that in such a context, local nationals fear foreigners whom they perceive as a threat to their social economic well being. To many local nationals, one foreigner in the country equals one job taken away, one government-sponsored house being ‘stolen’ from its rightful owners. Foreigners are stereotyped, based on phenotypical differences, such as skin colour, as well as cultural practices, including dress and hair styles, or accent (Coplan, 2009; Harris, 2002). The argument made strongly by Coplan (2009) that South African xenophobic behaviour feeds on the culture of exclusion is quite convincing, where the majority develop a form of hatred even in the absence of interaction with foreigners but by relying on the rumours and how the media portrays of foreigners. During research for the Southern African Migration Project (Crush, 2001), some local nationals mentioned that they did not even interact with foreign nationals, while others stated that they did not even have any contact with foreigners, nor had they met them. At the same time every foreigner is perceived as an illegal migrant, a job stealer, or a competitor to scarce state-provided goods and services (Kersting, 2009; Peberdy, 2001).

The Southern African Migration Policy (SAMP) study by Mattes, Crush and Richmond (2002), points out, again, that there is a tendency in the country to think that every position occupied by a non-South African is one job less for a South African citizen. The same sentiments are echoed in the draft white paper on international migration, which was presented by the African National Congress (ANC) government in 1997. The paper suggests
the country had to be wary of immigration because it already has too high a population density to sustain. In other words, immigrants were viewed as a burden to the state and the economy.

However, the authors of the SAMP study argue that it is apparent that the country does not realise the important contributions made by immigrants; the majority of whom are willing to do any kind of job and hence are contributing to the economy of the country. Skilled immigrants in particular contribute a lot to the state’s economic development since they are likely to add energy, innovation and jobs rather than stealing them from locals (Mattes, Crush & Richmond, 2002).

While one can say that, to some extent, xenophobia in South Africa today has apartheid roots of exclusionary migration policy, it is also crucial to acknowledge that even before 1994, there were large numbers of foreign Africans who stayed in South Africa for several decades without overt xenophobia (Peberdy, 2001). These included mostly labour migrants who were working in the mines. My argument is that these people did not experience overt xenophobia but they suffered from the same harsh exclusionary treatment which the majority of South Africans experienced then. Therefore, many South Africans at the time perceived these foreigners as their brothers, with whom they shared the struggle against poor treatment. However, after the country became democratic, now local nationals got promises from the new government and started distinguishing as to who deserved which resources within their communities (Pauly, 1996 as quoted by Simberloff, 2003). South Africans who had no access to a number of social services became hostile of those who might need a share from the state-provided goods (Kersting, 2009).

2.2. Understanding xenophobia: No single explanation

Scholars have defined and understood xenophobia in various ways. In one attempt at defining it, xenophobia is said to be characterised by a negative attitude towards foreigners, dislike, fear, or hatred (Harris, 2002: 2). In the same vein, Nyamnjoh (2006: 5) characterises xenophobia as the intense dislike, hatred or fear of others perceived to be strangers. Similarly, Crush (2001) refers to xenophobia as the deeper dislike of non-nationals by nationals of a recipient state. The same phenomenon is defined by to Boaduo (2009: 2) as the absolute fear
of loss of something that drives nations, organisations and individuals or groups to act abnormally to achieve their selfish goal.

Sichone (2008) places xenophobia at individual/psychological and collective scopes. Xenophobia is firstly observed as an individual/psychological dimension, because it is “an irrational and deliberating anxiety induced by fear of strangers, foreign things and places” (Sichone, 2008: 255). Secondly, xenophobia has a collective (social and political) dimension. It is a “Racist or nationalist sentiment, which is expressed more as hatred of, or contempt for, rather than fear of foreigners and foreign things. More often than not it results in violence against foreigners or war against neighbours.” (Ibid: 255). The other argument is from Kleg (1993), who writes that xenophobia is related to a fundamental fear of difference that can result in cultural shock, which results from feelings of being uncomfortable among individuals of other cultures. This embraces what Ramphele (1999) and Rouhani (2002) have stated in writings on foreign African students and xenophobia, namely that xenophobic sentiments feed on perceived differences and dig out on feelings of deprivation, theoretically deprivation caused by the other, the foreigner who does not belong.

Ramphele (1999); Rouhani (2002); and Tshitereke (1999; as quoted by Harris, 2002: 3) have viewed xenophobic attitudes as a result of relative deprivation, whereby local communities think that they are not getting what they are entitled to due to the presence of foreign migrants. This anxiety results in the xenophobic attitude towards foreign nationals, which manifests in various forms. Although it bursts somewhat into public view only during the attacks of May and June 2008, xenophobia in South Africa is not a new phenomenon. According to Crush (2001:11), the aggressiveness of South Africans towards foreign citizens began to surface already in the mid 1990s. Xenophobic attitudes have resulted in various forms of violent behaviour, such as assaults and attacks, as well as verbal and physical abuse (Shindondola, 2002).
2.2.1. Forms of xenophobia

“Xenophobia is not a natural response by native populations to the presence of foreigners. Like racism and nationalism, it is a social and political phenomenon that contributes to the marginalization and/or exclusion of migrant groups in social and national setting” (Crush & Ramachandran 2009).

As indicated above, xenophobia takes different forms. The xenophobia phenomenon manifests itself through exclusion by the nation-state and other societal institutions in everyday life; stereotypical prejudice; blames for social ills such as housing, unemployment, poverty, crime among others; and violence against foreigners (Coplan, 2009; Perberdy, 2001; Kersting, 2009; Harris, 2001). Nevertheless, the wide spread of xenophobia in South Africa made people realise and study the concept of xenophobia in a broad context. Drawing on the research conducted by Crush & Ramachandran (2009) in developing and developed countries, it is argued that migrants experience xenophobia through mistreatment, exclusion and discrimination in social, political and national settings by their host countries. I discuss each of these dimensions in the following sections.

Exclusion

In the South African context, social exclusion towards non-nationals has been a remarkable form of xenophobia since 1994. Such exclusion is a daily life experience, which foreign nationals suffer at the hands of local community members and officials. An example is the Alien Control Act that was amended in 1995 and 1996 to be more restrictive almost like it was in the years before democracy. The former Deputy Minister of Home Affairs suggested that skilled foreigners were only welcome temporarily, saying that government policy should only allow “South Africa to import skills in the short term” (Perberdy, 2001). In the general labour market, non-citizen Africans were excluded from employment because the new government attached the highest importance to stimulating employment among South Africans with a particular concern to reverse the historical discrimination against black South Africans. However as pointed out by Wa Kabwe-Segatti and Landau(2008), the government had clarified that the country needs to encourage immigration by skilled workers in sectors that are crucial to the economy such as engineering and Information technology.

In South Africa, the history of social exclusion and the culture of racism have contributed to the attitude of excluding “others”, those who are perceived as being different (Coplan, 2009). Foreign nationals are excluded in their daily life in South Africa where they are perceived
different and excluded on the basis of their skin colour (racism), language, and other cultural factors such as dress or hair styles and ethnicity (Coplan, 2009; Harris, 2002). During the xenophobic mob attacks of May 2008 in South Africa, some locals also lost their lives due to their skin colour that looked darker than what is expected of a South African (Coplan, 2009). South African officials such as police and even civilians hold a belief that all those who have darker skin, are not local nationals but foreigners. Consider the following statement, from a migrant who experienced xenophobia due to his skin colour:

I was arrested by a policeman and he asked me my ID, and he removed the photo and took me to the police claiming that I am so dark to qualify for the South African ID (Crush, 1999:7).

From the above statement, it is evident that local nationals consider skin colour as a determinant of a person’s foreignness; hence the basis of exclusion from access to the state provided services. Sichone (2008) argues that being too black, having a foreign name (language matter), among other factors, one is subjected to any kind of xenophobic treatment even if one is a citizen. In addition to the above, Coplan (2009: 72) points out that in South Africa, one does not have to be foreign or even seen to be foreign to be socially excluded. South Africans are just as eager to exclude one another whenever the opportunity to do so arises. However, he adds, such exclusion is based on class where the majority of dark citizens who have been mistreated are from poor and marginalised areas such as Limpopo (Ibid). These are black South Africans who suffer from illiteracy or can’t speak English, because among other reasons, they were denied the access to education due to the historical racist culture.

**Blame for social ills**

In South Africa, foreign nationals have been stereotyped as “makwerekwere”; according to Peberdy (2001) this stereotypical language not only brings about fear and hatred by demonising migrants as the ‘Other’. It also excuses the poor treatment of migrants, creating divisions between citizens and migrant groups as ‘Us’ and ‘Them’. Being blamed for social ills has been experienced by many foreigners in South Africa where they are being blamed for “stealing jobs and houses” from locals, bringing diseases and committing crimes. Immigrants are blamed for social ills such as housing, unemployment, poverty, disease and crime within the host countries (Harris, 2002; Danso & McDonald, 2000). Such blame
mainly results in violence against foreigners, especially in poor settlements, which is another form of xenophobia that migrants experience in the host countries (Harris, 2001).

**Xenophobic violence**

“Xenophobia is a form of violence and violence is the norm in South Africa” (Harris, 2002: 12). In South Africa, it is generally argued that violent xenophobic attacks mostly take place in poor communities where levels of unemployment are high, housing standards are poor (shacks), and only poor education is provided (HSRC, 2008). In 1994 and 1995, for instance, in Alexandra Township (Johannesburg), armed youth gangs attacked foreigners and destroyed their properties and homes and asked them to leave the space immediately (HSRC, 2008). Similarly, in 2001, in an informal settlement in Cape Town called Du Noon, migrants were forced to leave the area and their dwellings were looted by local nationals (Palmary, 2002 as quoted by HSRC, 2008: 19). While xenophobic incidents in South Africa are therefore nothing new, in May and June 2008 attacks by local residents and leaders in townships and informal settlements took a particularly violent form; 62 people (most of them African migrants) lost their lives, thousands of others were displaced, properties were looted and women were raped (Misago et al 2009:2).


The sad figure above reflects the xenophobic attack on migrants that took place in May, 2008 in Alexandra Township, Johannesburg. This phenomenon happened not only in Johannesburg but across the country including Cape Town townships.

This intensity of negative sentiments towards non-citizens has drawn attention of various scholars and researchers in studying the reasons behind xenophobia in South Africa. Valji (2003) notes that, increasing xenophobia in South Africa is a result of the racist attitudes of the past coupled with increasing economic disparities. This may help us to further our understanding of why there was xenophobic violence in townships, where the poor reside. I
however consider this as a contributing factor but there is no one single reason or explanation to xenophobia in South Africa. Therefore, there may be more to what is mentioned above.

For instance, researchers Crush (2001 and 2008); Harris (2002); Misago et al., (2009), HSRC (2008); Coplan (2009); Kersting (2009); Sichone (2006) and Nyamnjoh (2006) among others, argue that xenophobia in South Africa is coupled with so many factors like poor service delivery, fear of others which result in blaming foreigners for social ills, culture of social exclusion, the era of nationalism which came with so much promises to the poor, lack of understanding other cultures, media portrayals of foreigners to mention a few. If we combine the arguments of these authors, we may get closer to what may be the underlying causes of the violent attacks of 2008 and xenophobic attitudes directed to foreign nationals in their daily life.

2.2.2. Perceived root causes for South African xenophobia

 **Competition for scarce resources**

According to a study by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC, 2008), it is perceived that competition for scarce resources, mainly housing and jobs, contributed to the anti-immigration sentiment. Crush (2008) reported that xenophobia in South Africa has historical, material, political and managerial derivatives. The latter means the massive income gap, poverty, and inequality resulted from the apartheid policies and also from the government’s failure to redistribute the post-apartheid economic boom to the poor. These developments have caused frustration, which has resulted in xenophobic attitudes towards the so called “others” (Ibid).

Nevertheless, xenophobia in South Africa manifests itself in various forms; therefore I find that not in every case the phenomenon is caused by economic deprivation. Only in the informal settlements, where we find xenophobic attacks due to the competition of resources and high rate of poverty and these are the same areas where crime is high due to the lack of necessities such as houses, employment among others (Harris,, 2001; Yakushko, 2009). Unfortunately, the latter authors and other studies like that by the HSRC (2008) fail to point out the reason why we still find xenophobic attitude at higher learning institutions and off-campus work places, and yet these are middle class people, employed and well financially equipped; yet, still they show hostility towards non-nationals.
Culture of impunity and limited knowledge

Other documented reasons behind the xenophobic attitudes towards non-nationals, according to Misago et al. (2009), include the South African nationals’ lack of trust in their local leadership, a culture of impunity, and limited knowledge among communities and leaders about the immigration laws and practices. Drawing on their five months study in Gauteng and the Western Cape, Misago et al (2009) maintain that South African citizens reported to have lost trust in their government and local leadership where they see as their leaders as so relaxed about the presence of foreigners. “If the government does not do something people will see what to do to solve the problem because it means it’s not the government problem, it is our problem” said the South African research participant (Ibid: 29). The culture of impunity gives the majority the right to do what they feel they can do because there is no fixed punishment to their offences.

As Misago et al (2009) argue, foreign nationals have been attacked in South Africa for many years but no one has been held responsible, those who are found guilty of the crime are not arrested, even those arrested they get released without charges. The authors also detected that most respondents to their study hold little knowledge about migrants and migration laws, where they perceive every migrant as “illegal”, a “threat” to their well-being (Misago et al., 2009; Harris, 2001). In this spirit still, the authors’ argument does not provide sufficient explanation why we still find xenophobia even at higher learning institutions where we find people who are educated and knowledgeable.

Media portrayals of foreigners

Crush (2008) and Danso & McDonald (2000) state that the media, especially the South African print media, also contribute to the anti-foreigner sentiment. For instance, many South Africans become extremely xenophobic by relying on what was referred to by Crush (2008: 36) as “second hand information”, that is the news papers and other print media representations of non-nationals. Stereotyping “makwerekwere” (the derogatory term commonly used to refer to international African immigrants in South Africa, based on their accent and language) found in the South African print media has been argued to increase the locals’ hostility (Harris, 2002:7) where the non-locals are referred to as job stealers, criminals and illegal migrants (Danso & McDonald, 2000:20). Terminologies like migrants as “illegal, alien, and an influx of people” have been referenced in the news papers and lead to negative
and xenophobic attitudes towards foreigners (Harris, 2002:7). Such terminologies are mainly found in media, and citizens build on such terms to hate the non-citizens (Danso & MacDonald, 2000). The terminologies used by media such as “flood of illegal aliens”, “foreign influx”, “Xenophobia rife as Africans flood SA”, “Africa floods into Cape Town” among others increase the uncertainties among citizens and perception of all migrants as illegal, aliens which contribute to the degree of otherness (Kersting, 2009:16; Harris, 2002: 10; McDonald & Danso, 2001: 129).

**Scapegoating, the isolation and biocultural hypothesis**

Similarly, in his view Harris (2002: 2) has grouped the xenophobia explanations into three hypotheses namely scapegoating, isolation, and biocultural hypotheses. The scapegoating theory locates xenophobia within the social transition and change context (social and economic factors). Xenophobia is therefore explained in relation to limited resources such as housing, education, employment, and health care, coupled with high expectation during transition. Foreigners who are perceived as a threat to jobs, housing and education, become scapegoats once nationals become frustrated due to ongoing deprivation and poverty (Tshitereke, 1999). According to Tshitereke (1999; as quoted by Harris 2002:3), xenophobia is conceived in terms of frustration and relative deprivation. This theory suggests that a key psychological factor in generating social unrest is a sense of relative deprivation. This arises from a subjective feeling of discontent based on the belief that one is getting less than one feels entitled to. This embraces what De la Rey (1991) notes when he states that when there is a gap between ambitions and reality, social discontent is likely to result.

The isolation hypothesis explains xenophobia as a result of apartheid in South Africa. It claims that under this regime, black South Africans were isolated from international community (Harris, 2002). Due to this international isolation, then nationals become hostile and unwelcoming to non-nationals. This isolation from the international community and local community affected the majority; it caused them to be ignorant about other countries and their neighbours, causing the fear and hostility towards them, regarding them to be total strangers and “unknown”. According to Hook & Harris (2002) when a group has no history of incorporating strangers it may find it difficult to be welcoming.

The last hypothesis is biocultural that traces the phenomenon of xenophobia at the level of visible differences and otherness (Harris, 2002). Thus the physical appearance, dress and
even accent can be the identifying factors of the otherness. Sichone as quoted by Nyamnjoh (2010), argues that African migrants are targeted based on their skin colour, where locals believe that those darker than locals are from outside South Africa. This reminds me of a certain day in 2009, when I was moving around in Wynberg (Cape Town suburb) with a fellow non-national who was dark in complexion. An old white woman approached us and asked “Which country do you come from?” From South Africa, we replied. And she immediately said no, saying that looking at my fellow’s skin, she had already concluded we are foreigners because in South Africa they don’t have people with such dark skin.

It is therefore on the same basis of these biocultural factors that African non-national students get negatively stereotyped, because both local students and university staff, and people with whom they interact off campus, can easily tell the other due to the physical appearance such as skin colour and even the accent or failure to speak one of their native languages. In other words, the racial exclusions that existed in the old South Africa have become reshaped into exclusions of non-nationals based on the basis of biocultural identifications (Nyamnjoh, 2010). It is so amazing however that in South Africa, one does not have to be a foreigner to become a victim of xenophobia; this is mainly due to that wrong perception that all dark skinned people are foreigners, a belief that just feeds on the past racial segregation and history of social exclusion (Coplan, 2009). In some cities of the country if a citizen looks dark and cannot produce the green ID even if he/she can speak the native language, if not lucky enough, he or she will be treated in a xenophobic manner by deportation, assaults or physical abuse (Ibid).

**History of social exclusion**

“Post-apartheid South Africa is characterised by high economic inequality and levels of poverty as a result of the social exclusion history during apartheid era where the majority black South Africans were excluded from having access to social services such as education, employment, and land” (Coplan, 2009: 68).

While before the advent of democracy in the 1990s, the majority of South Africans were denied social, political and economic opportunities, the white minority were enjoying the benefits of the then government, leaving no room for interaction and integration with their
black compatriots (Coplan, 2009; Posel, 1987). Having no access to education and employment, to that matter, the most of the nationals, who belong to the majority population, are still starving to make a living. Due to the lack of qualifications to work in scarce skills fields, they can only work in meagre jobs such as cleaning, security etc where the money is not enough to provide for their families. This results in higher unemployment rate, higher poverty, crime, drug abuse among other social troubles (Nyamnjoh, 2008). Therefore, it is clear that if poverty and unemployment can trigger xenophobia, it is due to the root of social exclusion.

**Nationalism as a xenophobia trigger**

It has been argued by some, e.g. Hjerm (2001), that nationalistic and xenophobic values are prevalent in all societies. The issue of who belongs to the nation and who does not is common in many societies. Anderson (1991) defines a nation as an imagined (political) community. "It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion. It is imagined as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship” (Ibid).

Various researchers have hence demonstrated how nationalism can trigger xenophobia due to the state of belonging. Nationalism is an ideology which may simply promote one’s own identity against others. In any given society, an issue of identity is present and it draws the attention of difference and power among social groups. Becker (2010) asserts that during South Africa’s long era of segregation and apartheid, the notion of social difference was inevitably one of ethnoracial division and inequality.

According to one attempt at defining it, nationalism is a doctrine where people believe that their culture, history, institutions, religions, religion or principles are distinct and aspire to self-rule under a political system that expresses and protects those distinct characteristics (Snyder, 2000 as quoted by Kersting, 2009: 8). Nationalism seeks to identify a behavioural entity (the nation) and thereafter to pursue certain political and cultural goals on behalf of it. It is a sentiment of loyalty toward the nation which is shared by people (Hauss, 2003). Nationalism as an ideology asserts that nations or groups of people who share a common history and destiny have the right to have a territory or state of their own (Kriesberg, 2003).
However given the level of globalisation where the mobility of people has increased, and the changing political systems and technology, such right to everyone is not attainable (Ibid).

In South Africa, an inclusive form of nationalism only became official with the transition of 1994. Unlike during the apartheid era where the state was favouring one racial group, the minority white, the new nation-state had a different ambition towards its citizens (McKinley).

Upon the advent of democracy, the South African government promised black South Africans that they would be enjoying the fruits of the new nation by ensuring the provision of those opportunities and equality that most people did not receive under apartheid era. This included government-sponsored built houses under the Reconstruction Development Programme (RDP) project, access to education, employment and health care services. It is in this context that the South African state helped create and feed xenophobia. This is where South Africans believe that South Africa belongs not to foreigners; the liberation that the country got must be enjoyed by nationals alone. A foreigner is someone who threatens the local nationals’ expected enjoyment of the (material) fruits of democracy.

The same spirit is found at South African higher learning institutions, where local national students, administrative and even academic staff “welcome and embrace” non African students as they consider them as ‘international’ students, and “take” those from other parts of Africa as ‘foreign’ students. To them a fellow black African is an opportunist, not welcome in the new South Africa (Peberdy, 2001). This argument is explained more in chapter three under the section titled “African international students at UWC: the statistics”.

Nationalism thus is based on the fear and the need to find sanctuary in conventionality and consistency (Nenad, 2010). When the tribe is threatened by strangers who are perceived to be hostile, the tribe demands conformity and loyalty to a common bond whether it is ethnic, religious, cultural, linguistic or racial (Ibid). This is where the xenophobic attitudes towards foreigners come in, the xenophobia that Sichone (2008) refers to as “an irrational and debilitating anxiety induced by fear of strangers, foreign things and places. Allow me, to remind us again: In a socio-political perspective, xenophobia is a “Racist or nationalist sentiment, [which] is expressed more as hatred of, or contempt for, rather than fear of

---

2 This author’s argument is accessed from http://links.org.au/node/628.
foreigners and foreign things. More often than not it results in violence against foreigners or war against neighbours (Ibid).”

We have to remember that this nationalism era is the same era that the country experienced a flow of migrant students from all over Africa mainly from SADC. This increase of migration therefore caused anxieties among host nationals and institutions, whose expectations were not yet satisfied. Their worry was about who belongs to where, and who is entitled to what if these new identities were becoming uncountable around them as Appadurai (1998) has argued in global perspective.

**Migration and Globalisation**

In his discussion of the possible reasons behind xenophobia in South Africa, Sichone (2008) maintains that the increasing migration and globalisation crisis are crucial contributing factors to consider in answering the question why xenophobia has become so prevalent in the contemporary South Africa.

In South Africa, as a result of globalisation, local communities together with their frustration which was there already (because the government failed to redistribute services to the poor), started seeing the in-flux of people whose language they could not understand; they could not understand why these people were in the country and where they were coming from. This resulted in an identity crisis, and therefore translated into the negative attitude which is directed against non-nationals in everyday life. Local nationals felt deprived when they started seeing that some of these non-citizens were enjoying better life and were even getting jobs since these foreigners would accept any kind of job for little pay. These foreigners then became the scapegoats and blamed for stealing locals’ jobs, committing crime, ‘stealing’ ‘our’ women, and houses (Harris, 2002; HSRC, 2008). Looking at the South African May 2008 violence towards non-nationals, such violence drew on discourses of the nation and the related right to space where space is seen as belonging to a group or subgroup (Misago et al., 2009).
2.3. Strategies for coping with xenophobia

African migrants in South Africa are mostly identified as “other” by just relying on their visible differences thus their dress styles, hair styles and even their physical appearance (Hehenkamp, 2010; Harris, 2002). According to Harris (2002), xenophobia is located in the difference of physical features and at the level of cultural difference. But what should one do to respond to these differences? Becker (2010) asserts that there is a curious tendency in contemporary South Africa (as elsewhere), that people emphasise their ethnoracial differences, and even ethnicity. This however leads to exclusion among various groups based on the differences in the cultural identification (Ibid).

This thinking from the above authors is true; for instance, some African international students, mainly those from West Africa\(^3\), like wearing their African-style attire, especially on Sundays or for any other special occasions. They also like to gather, and they even have their own churches, with their own pastors. They believe keeping their own cultural identity through things like keeping the dress code, which ‘really makes them who they are’, and distinguishes them from the rest. In short these people are very proud of their ‘culture’ and distinctiveness.

Coupled with their remarkable accents, which differ considerably from those of people from the rest of Africa, particularly Southern Africa, West African students can easily be identified as “foreigners”. Hence, locals may become hostile to the so-called “others” and may express xenophobic attitudes through harassment, stereotyping, and even verbal abuse. In response to this, African migrants including students have come up with strategies employed to cope with such incidents.

Based on several months of research in Alexandra (Johannesburg), Hehenkamp (2010) states that African migrants in South Africa use stigma management and strategies of performance to become “invisible” within the communities, among whom they live. Since they are aware of the signifiers, some prefer to keep silent whenever they are in public places because they know that failure to speak a native language and even their accent can cause harassment and other xenophobic attitudes. Others prefer not to be in contact with those with whom they share the same signifiers; yet, some even decide to modify their physical appearance. Some also change their places of shopping, and walk sides (Ibid).

---

\(^3\) These are mainly African International students who come from Cameroun, Nigeria and Ghana.
Such techniques of making one’s otherness invisible are also adopted by international students in order to cope with possible xenophobia incidents on and off campus. In her dissertation based on research at the former Rand Afrikasna Universiteit (RAU), now known as the University of Johannesburg (UJ), Shindondola (2002) noted that African foreign students experienced xenophobia through verbal or physical abuse such as the use of local languages in addressing them, which were used by university staff or fellow students. Therefore, she found that African international students in some cases decided not to socialise or interact with local students, instead they preferred to make friends and socialise among themselves; others preferred to talk to non-African students rather than interacting with locals.

Likewise McClellan (2009) notes that many African international students at South African institutions have changed their ways of living as a way of coping with xenophobia on and off campus. The majority have perceived black South Africans as xenophobic in general, and preferred to remain by themselves in terms of socialisation. There were threats and worries among students during the 2010 Fifa World Cup period, where rumours were spread that xenophobia would wreak havoc soon after the world cup (Linden, 2010). As a way of responding to that fear, some students developed strategies of wearing T-shirts or cap written South Africa. This was a way of making themselves (their otherness) invisible in the eyes of citizens.

Coping strategies among students however differ from individual to individual, partly diverse cultural backgrounds. Looking at students from West Africa (Cameroonian and Nigerians for instance), like cooking food from their home bought from stores in South Africa that import such products as a way of avoiding to go to public shops, where through their accent and dress code, might not be well treated or served. They therefore prefer to encounter higher costs of buying food and clothing from their own home, which are expensive due to the transportation costs from West Africa compared to those produced locally.

Nevertheless, though it is possible to cover the visible signifiers of otherness, language remains a problem through which locals identify “foreigners” and demonstrate xenophobic feelings towards them (Harris, 2002; Rouhani; 2002). Therefore at the South African higher learning institution, students need to respond to the other xenophobic forms, such as verbal abuse since the language abuse remains a mirror of xenophobic attitudes at South African higher learning institutions.
The studies by Hehenkamp (2010) and McLellan (2009) on how African international migrants in South Africa make use of strategies of “invisibility” and stigma management are particularly important for the framework of this study on how UWC “foreign” students make sense of and cope with the threats of xenophobia. These sense-making and coping strategies work similarly in the higher education environment. Although this study aims at experiences of students, the author finds it crucial to also examine some of the UWC management staff daily experiences with foreign students in order to explore how knowledgeable or minding the institution is about its clients (foreign students). This way the institutional role in responding to xenophobia is explored.

2.4. Institutional knowledge on the presence of foreign students and xenophobia

At a South African university, foreign African students experience xenophobia in different dimensions, right from the class room, their academic departments, the student administration, student residences, and other services offered. Researchers, such as Rouhani (2007) and Kishun (2007) argue that the absence of an internationalisation policy at some South African institutions of higher learning aggravate xenophobic attitudes in these institutions. Yet, as suggested by Sichone (2006: 6) in his study specifically on universities, the only way for South African Universities to reduce the extent to which this incidence reaches and affect the non-nationals students lays in ensuring adequate internationalisation and institutional policy. Even so, one has to understand that this policy cannot be achieved in isolation of various stakeholders such as government departments, international agencies, institutions themselves and body of students (Rouhani, 2007).

However, my central argument is that looking at policies alone is not enough, since the main issue behind xenophobia is the history of social exclusion, ignorance and the lack of knowledge about the migrants; either the policy is in place or not. Some South African universities are better informed about international students and the importance of internationalisation than others. Rouhani (2002) distinguishes the different

---

According to Altback & Knight (2007), internationalisation of higher education includes the policies and practices undertaken by academic systems and institutions and even individuals to cope with the global academic environment. It is “a process of integrating an international dimension into the research, teaching, and service functions of an institution of higher education” (Louw & Mayer, 2008). Likewise McLellan (2009) defines internationalisation of higher education at the system, institutional, and individual levels, as “the process of more intensively and/or strategically engaging in international activities, in preparation for an increasingly
internationalisation strategies of South African universities as following either a pro-active, reactive, passive or ‘unable-tocope’ approach, as responses to the presence of international students and their adjustments. The universities, which have adopted a proactive approach, are those that see international students as a positive development. These universities recognise that through hosting international students, South Africa and institutions acquire research and cultural benefits on top of economic benefits (IEASA, 2006 as quoted by Dzansi, 2006). Such universities in South Africa according to Rouhani include UCT, and the universities of Stellenbosch, Natal, Wits and Rhodes, i.e., comparatively wealthy, previously white institutions.

The reactive institutions, on the other hand according to Rouhani (2002), appear to have no long term plans in place. They do not have a concerted plan or a vision of how they want to benefit from internationalisation. Their responses are usually arrived at in reaction to a situation such as the arrival of a group of students or delegation of faculty from universities abroad. A third group are those who have adopted a passive or laissez-faire approach. For them, internationalisation is a distant reality, one which they would rather not be a part of.

The last group of institutions are those which see internationalisation as an added burden. These are mainly the Historically Black Universities (HBUs) (of which UWC is part) who went through a tough and demanding transition to ensure equality and low fees to all South African students. Due to UWC history for instance, the university holds a number of staff who have been in positions for years but who are not really the professionals that the university needs.

Consider the response that the UWC SRC deputy President got from the university registrar, during their informal discussion with regard to the treatment of the international students on campus. The registrar said that “With top management the university has got people who are educated up to a certain point, then it goes down as you go to frontline offices, the problem might be the certificate and the stereotype, where they have people who have been staff at the university since 1970s so, they call them the “old guard”, they have their way of thinking but it is different from what is required in new South Africa. At the same time the university cannot dismiss them because there is an issue of poverty and unemployment coupled with global society”. Countries therefore seek to attract foreign students to their universities for many reasons such as improving the quality and cultural composition of the student body, gaining prestige, and earning income (Altback & Knight, 2007:6).
issues of organisational change that are coming to place, so the registrar acknowledged that and said they were going to have staff retreats where they will address some of these” (Interview with the SRC Deputy President, 2011).

Consequently their attitude when serving students is questionable and can be perceived as very xenophobic in the eye of a foreign student. It is at however very true that UWC ensures low fees for its students, where students from any country on the African continent pay the same fees as those paid by SADC students and local nationals. Nevertheless, as I show in this study, as a black university that ensures the education access to the marginalised, you find that there is much discriminatory practices towards foreign students when it comes to payment of fees where foreign students are requested to pay the upfront fee on the registration day, whereas arrangements of paying in instalments are made for local students.

2.5. Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to bring together an understanding of South African immigration and that of xenophobia which resurged mainly after 1994. The chapter has demonstrated that the treatment of immigrants in general within South African communities has been discriminatory, based on the fact that one is a foreigner therefore deserving no share of the sliced bread for locals. At the same time, this chapter discussed how African International students as part of migrants in South Africa experience xenophobia, through various ways hence coming up with various strategies to cope with the phenomenon. The reasons of such fear of foreigners are said to originate from the lack of knowledge by locals about other people’s culture, a legacy of apartheid regime which isolated the entire country from the international community.

The other reasons according to various studies also include the poor managerial policy by the government which failed to redistribute resources to the poor who suffered from racial exclusion before independence who now perceive foreigners as a threat to scarce resources such as jobs, housing etc. Media, increased migration resulted from globalisation, and South African history of social exclusion were also discussed as triggers of xenophobia. The chapter has also documented, drawing on the works by various scholars, with regard to the kind of xenophobia that African International students face, their ways of coping with the incidence
as well as some responses to xenophobia that are in place at those well financially established South African universities.

All in all, exclusion, stereotypes, blames and violence that are directed towards migrants cannot be separated from the history of social exclusion, culture of violence and racist sentiments that locals still hold. As shown, nationalism is another concept which is considered as a source of xenophobia. In actual fact, xenophobia has been shown to be fuelled by the quest of belonging and entitlement that citizens hold, that of wanting none to enjoy the same benefits of the new democratic South Africa. This chapter also revealed that African International students experience xenophobia through the language abuse by local students and staff, discrimination, exclusion, mistreatment and assaults. The next chapter introduces the research site (UWC) and gives an account of my field research.
CHAPTER THREE: Research Methods and the Fieldwork Experience

“One does not have to choose between participant observation, a necessarily fictitious immersion in a foreign milieu and the objectivism of the ‘gaze from afar’ of an observer who remains as remote from himself as from his object” (Bourdieu, 2003: 282).

Introduction

The research for this thesis was conducted at the UWC. In this chapter I give an overview of the research site (UWC), the university’s background, thus its location, history and academic profile, followed by an account of personal experience as a researcher and a student at UWC. I provide the profile of my research participants and introduce them with a brief overview of their living experiences. I later discuss the research design of this study and methods employed to answer to the main research question. The field experiences, study limitations as well as ethical reflections are described under this chapter.

3.1. A brief background of UWC: The research site

Figure 2: A map illustrating the location and direction to UWC
Source: Munuo N. University of the Western Cape 2011
An "Intellectual home of the left" (Professor Gerwel, former UWC Rector's declaration, 1987)

Figure 3: UWC campus map
Source:  http://www.uwc.ac.za/asrfiles/users/8114090811/Campus_layout1_June_2009.JPG
The UWC is a national University situated in an urban environment on the Cape Flats on the outskirts of Cape Town. It was established in 1959 as a “bush” college for coloured people, largely shaped to share the features applicable to all apartheid-era Historically Black universities (HBUs), which was to provide education and training in restricted fields and in preparation for occupations for coloured middle class people (Wolpe, 1995:10). It opened in 1960 in a vacant primary school situated in Bellville South 5 with 170 students. The college initially fell under the patronage of the University of South Africa (UNISA) in Pretoria, and its student body was drawn from pupils coming from poorly resourced coloured schools (Sass, 2005). The college was run like a high school and students were allowed no actual representation on a student body. It was only by 1970 that the college gained the status of a full university and was able to award its own degrees and diplomas. During the 1980s, UWC changed its social positioning when the University explicitly opposed apartheid and opened its doors to students from all South African racial categories. By 1990, the UWC awarded postgraduate degrees to only 5% of its graduates, the rest (95%) were undergraduate degrees and diplomas. Today, 10% of the university students pursue postgraduate degrees.

The UWC moved most dynamically in relation to student access, by attempting to counter the conditions which limited the access of black South African students to the universities. These conditions included the ever rising entry qualifications demanded by HBUs in the face of the increasing number of African students attaining the matriculation exemption, perhaps to maintain standards but, whether intended or not, having the effect of restricting entry; the restrictions, enforced by all universities, on the numbers of first-year entrants (Wolpe, 2005). It was indeed a challenge and commitment by UWC because the black students were educated under the Bantu education, which were ill-equipped to cope with university education. In response to this situation, the university introduced an ‘open-door’ admissions policy, accepting on a first-come-first serve basis, all applicants with the basic minimum, legally required qualifications (Ibid).

This policy was based on the conception that universities owed a duty to the excluded black majority to redress racial inequality in access by dramatically expanding intakes especially as the HBUs at this very time were raising admission standards. This approach, however, demanded of the university that it rethink accepted notions of admissions criteria, standards of quality and of the teaching functions of the university in conditions where the majority of

---

5 Bellville South is a coloured area close to the university.
the population, more especially, but not only, black people, were the recipients of extremely inadequate schooling (Wolpe, 1995)

UWC claimed to live by its commitment to responding in critical and creative ways to the needs of a society in transition by keeping fees low to enable poor black students to enroll (Wolpe, 1995; Sass, 2005). The university had therefore a challenge of restructuring itself to fight the social phenomenon of the past racial segregation, since it received poor black students who lacked the financial means and who suffered from the poor schooling system under apartheid era.

In 1982, UWC published a Mission Statement which rejected the political ideological grounds upon which UWC was established by the National Party government and turned its sights on the development of the Third World communities in opposition to apartheid (Wolpe, 1995). Thus, UWC rejected the racially based ideology of separate education for different ethnic/racial groups. By so doing, the university also recognised the dual First and Third World structure of the South African society and the obligation of the university to serve the latter although this did not include a specification of functions in terms of science and technology versus human sciences, basic and applied research, undergraduate versus graduate teaching, etc. The university had therefore to redefine its identity and conceptions of its teaching role. In his inaugural lecture, in 1987, Professor Gerwel who took the office of the UWC Rector by then declared that the university should be redefined as “an intellectual home of the left” (Wolpe, 2005; UWC website).

**UWC Academic profile**

Today, UWC has seven faculties – Arts, Community and Health Sciences, Dentistry, Economic and Management Sciences, Education, Law, Natural Sciences (UWC’s calendar, 2009). Apart from its main campus in Bellville, the University has two other campuses: one for Dentistry faculty at Tygerberg Hospital, and an Oral Health Centre in the large township of Mitchell’s Plain (UWC’s prospectus, 2011).

UWC offers a range of academic qualifications and student support services through its numerous faculties’ departments, schools and units, as well as institutes and centres. The UWC centre for student support services (CSSS) for instance has various divisions that offer support to students. Among these support services, I mention the Peer Mentoring Programme,
which is located under the Academic support from the CSSS; I know this programme well because I have served as a member (mentor). This programme is designed to provide academic and social support to first year undergraduate students that are viewed as vulnerable in the new higher learning environment; the idea is to provide them with a home away from their homes. It follows that students have to register for this programme in order for them to become mentees and to be allocated mentors, who support them academically and socially throughout their first year.

![Images of the UWC peer mentors (on the left) and mentees registration (on the right) 2011](image)

**Figure 4:** The academic support for students by students: Peer Mentoring Programme (PMP)

During their registration time these students need to be guided and told where to go for their services. Although as a mentor my duty was mainly to create awareness of the PMP, I also found myself moving around campus with students to go to the respective offices, which they may have to consult for support, such as the student administration and residence administration offices.

While officially, these support services are for all students, one can easily understand the unfair treatment that non-nationals students perceive, by moving or sitting with them, where they wait for assistance at the Student Credit management office and waiting for long periods on the benches in the residence administration offices. At the Department of student administration, for instance, I met Kuda from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), who was desperate to complete his registration. Kuda and I had met before in Bellville, near the university’s main campus, where he runs a little business to sustain himself; we had also met on campus many times in the library. I asked Kuda what the problem was because he looked frustrated; he asked me to speak in French to avoid being overheard by staff members or other students. We then set up a date on which we could meet for a further discussion about
the matter, affecting refugee foreign students like him, and the treatment they receive at UWC. I knew from him I would learn a lot because he has been in South Africa for years. Kuda became one of my research informants, whose answers during interview were crucial to my study.

It was during this stressful time for non-South African students that I got involved with most of those who became my key informants. Also during the registration period, on my way from the offices of the residence administration, I ran into a female student; we both board in the Hector Peterson Residence (HPR), one of UWC’s prime residence halls for postgraduate students. We informally discussed the main challenges that foreign students face especially at the beginning of the academic year. She told me that some of the international African students have faced even worse discrimination than I had previously assumed, adding that if I want to learn more about the severe mistreatment and discriminatory practices that some foreign students face, I would have to go and meet a particular postgraduate student in the Economic and Management Sciences (EMS) faculty. She referred me to Mrs Tumani from Kenya, who is a postgraduate student and a lecturer at the same time in the EMS faculty; Mrs Tumani, a mature student, also became a key informant, and her experiences are reflected in various chapters in this thesis.

Another problem faced by international African students concerns access to the on-campus job opportunities, offered by UWC work-study programme. Each academic department offers part-time work-study opportunities to its students as administrative assistants, research assistants, and tutors, among others. While local national students are found many in work study positions, impressionistic evidence suggests that most of the more sophisticated kind of work study jobs, such as tutoring, writing coaching and research assistance, is done by foreign postgraduate students. At least, the number of foreign students in these positions is disproportionate, in comparison to their numbers. This is because postgraduate students are the most knowledgeable in research areas, and are preferred when it comes to research support. At UWC, like at other South African black universities, in many cases non-national students might be better prepared for academic studies and work than black South African students, and they are also known to overall perform better academically than black local students (Ramphele, 1999).

---

6 Work-study refers to the part-time kind of job that a student undertakes within the university with a maximum of 20 hours per week.
African international students at UWC: the statistics

Since 2000, UWC has steeply increased its intake of international students, most of whom come from the African continent. Based on the 2010 statistics, UWC had a total of 2036 international students of which 1920 were from Africa mainly from the SADC region. Most of UWC’s international African students come from the countries of SADC, Zimbabwe counting for a large number of 332 students, followed by Namibia (175 students), Botswana (128 students) and so on. From the other region of the continent, West Africa region comes second after SADC region, where Nigerian students count to 115 and 100 Cameroonian students (UWC institutional planning unit, 2010).

As apparent from table 1 (see the appendix 1), at UWC, there is still confusion as to who international students are and who are not. They consider the international students as those who come from abroad (out of Africa), calling the rest “Africans”. This fact is drawn from figure 6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Under Graduate</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Post Graduate</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>International</td>
<td>SADC</td>
<td>Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community &amp; Health Sciences</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dentistry</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic &amp; Management sciences</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>821</td>
<td></td>
<td>1206</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5: Number of international students at UWC by faculties & degree programmes 2010
Source: UWC Institutional Planning Unit

7. These figures are sourced from the UWC institutional planning unit.
8. See table 1 in the appendices
9. This figure does not include seventy-seven (77) UWC students who are the affiliated and post doctorate students.
The above data has been drawn from the UWC records supplied by the university’s institutional planning office. What is clear from the above data, is that the number of African international students that enrol for postgraduate degrees is higher than that of the undergraduate students. However, the grand total figure of postgraduate students above does not include the UWC Seventy-seven (77) affiliated and post-doctorate students. This omission seems surprising because those senior research students benefit the university most strongly in its research endeavours, and it can be safely assumed that many of them are African international students too.

3.2. Coming to UWC: A place to grow?

The UWC has declared itself, in its official mission statement, as “a place of quality, a place to grow”, and prides itself in providing for its students a home away from home. Following these declarations, this is what one expects to see upon deciding to enroll at UWC; sadly, what is found on the ground is often quite the opposite, as I experienced myself when I arrived at UWC in February 2009 to take up my studies towards a master’s degree in Development Studies. I knew no one from the institution, except two Rwandan men from my home country, whom I knew from our undergraduate studies outside South Africa. Unfortunately for me, these fellow Rwandans were not studying in my department and to make matters worse, they resided in private accommodation off campus. I actually only realised that they were students at UWC when I met them at the train station on my way from Belhar to campus.

One of my first problematic experiences concerned residence accommodation. When I first arrived at UWC, I had to board in private accommodation in Belhar, where I shared a room with a Kenyan woman student at UWC, while I was waiting to hear from the University residence administration about the outcome of my application for a place in one of the student residence halls. As has become the norm to the majority of newly-arrived foreign students, I was not considered for a room in a university residence, despite coming from far away from South Africa, and having no relatives here. I still remember that this situation created a lot of pressure; I had to write numerous letters to the Director of the Residence and Catering Services, for appeal.

---

10 Belhar is a suburb for coloureds which is closer to the university
I cannot recall how many times I called and appeared on that office’s doorstep to make them respond to my problem, before I was finally told that I was at least put on the waiting list. Later in March 2009 I finally got a room in the Hector Peterson Residence, one of the off-campus university residences, situated in Belhar (a short distance walk to campus) which hosts mainly postgraduate students. This was after I struggled for most of my early days at UWC; I still recall this as my first experience with the institution as a foreign student.

This however was not the end but the beginning of my experiences as an African International student. I had arrived in South Africa as a self-funding student, so I desperately needed to find part-time employment. I was hoping to get this on campus. During the same month of March I was called from the ISD (Institute for Social Development), the department where I had enrolled, that there was some administrative work study opportunity for me. What a miracle, I thought! Finally. It appeared miraculous to me because while we new students had been asked to submit our curriculum vitae with applications for work study openings, I had not heard anything more about this for a whole month. Nevertheless, I signed a one year contract, but as it turned out I only got to work for one month in the position. What happened then, indicated that there was a game played around ISD, which seemed to prove to me that discrimination is rife at UWC. Wherein the event, after I had worked in the position for some weeks, I was excluded suddenly with no justification except being told that someone else was to occupy the position. I thought of this as a form of subtle xenophobia.

One afternoon, I was called in just to be told by two female staff members from the department that they were going to tell me something which might not be ‘interesting’, so I should not cry. I was already sensing what it was because of the atmosphere in the office. My colleagues treated me every day as if I did not exist, speaking their local language (Afrikaans) to me, knowing full well that I did not understand the language. These same two women now informed me that I had to leave the position because the former occupant of that position was coming back. I just left without making a fuss, but closely followed up to know who was going to be appointed to the position. I later found that it was given to a coloured South African student who had never worked in that office before even. Later, when I shared my experience with fellow foreign students they laughed’ I was asked, if I haven’t known that there is no single foreign student who works in that office for more than a month, because that section offers sought-after opportunities, such as scholarships, and chances to attend
conferences; therefore, they would place a foreigner there while they were still searching for a ‘better’ local national candidate. This was my second xenophobic experience in the first few months of my masters’ study. I felt truly awful, after losing out so badly what I cherished as my way of growth at UWC, which I had entered as a self sponsored student.

I continued completing my modules, taking my CVs up and down campus to apply for any advertised work study job\textsuperscript{11}, but could not find work. At the time, I did not think much about it, but considered myself a personal failure. Later in 2010, I met a fellow Rwandan student who told me that there were vacancies at the university library in the computer lab section. Again, I submitted my CV, and waited for a call from that section. Nothing. After a long waiting period I decided to go and enquire about the outcome of my application in person. During a break I rushed to the library, where I met three other foreign students, all of who also wanted to check up on their applications. What transpired was that my CV and those of the two other foreign students were already in the rejection file, while one other student was even told that they could not find his CV and yet he had submitted it. On every CV in the rejection file there were comments written, why that student was not considered. Since there was nothing written on my CV, however, the library employee advised me to come back a week later. When I returned, I was finally told that international students were no longer appointed at ‘Level 6’, and as the computer lab section, is known to be well paying compared to other sections of the library that offer work study jobs. I was very disappointed and began to run from pillar to post trying to find out where this decision came from; everyone denied that they were responsible for such a discriminatory decision.

After my disappointing experiences with the student residence administration offices and my futile attempts to get access to student assistant jobs, my other institutional experience was the lack of academic supervision, provided by my department, the Institute for Social Development (ISD). I started my MA degree course in February 2009, expecting to complete it in two years or even less time if possible in order to cut the costs I incurred as a self sponsored student. But, as I came to realise, no one cared about my presence or my plan of completing my studies in good time. The ISD person who was responsible for allocating academic supervisors for postgraduate students seemed to be willing to help; however, the department lacked sufficient professional academics to carry out research supervision. With

\textsuperscript{11} Many work study opportunities are advertised on the Thetha University notice board.
only two potential supervisors available in ISD, the Institute had more than 10 masters students registered for 2009, of whom more than half were foreign students. The department never discussed this problem with me, or the delays this caused to our studies. In mid2010, 18 months into my degree, I finally took initiative and started looking for a supervisor myself in other departments in the Arts Faculty. This is how I found Professor Heike in the Anthropology and Sociology department, by literally walking into her office one day and asking whether she could perhaps assist me. I thus started working on my proposal with more than a year’s delay, and because of this it took me three years to complete the degree. I had to suffer a full year waste due to the fact that no value was attached to my presence by the institution, and particularly my academic department. I consider this another xenophobic experience; nobody seems to care about the academic progress of foreign students, who are admitted by a Department without the guarantee of proper academic support.

I am aware, of course, that those responsible for the actions that caused me problems, are not necessarily consciously xenophobic. The poor treatment international African students receive is due to many reasons, including a lack of professionalism within the institution’s departments, as well as a lack of institutional monitoring and evaluation. Another problem is that UWC has no International office in place which would look particularly after international students and their issues. I realised that I had to stand up for myself. This has however helped many of my fellow students from the African continent; several of them learnt from my experience and now have supervisors from outside our department, whom they searched for on their own or to whom they were referred by the department, which started this initiative this year. Thus, xenophobic experiences can also be caused by neglect, which in turn may result from a lack of professionalism.

I have presented my own experience in such detail because, on the one hand, this sets out the field of my research. On the other hand, as I really lived by experience, my stories, which I related freely during the research, also helped me to engage in more informal discussions with numerous foreign students from various field of study, with whom I discussed their experiences on and off campus. Starting from this kind of everyday interaction, I was finally able to draw my research informants.
3.3. Ethnographic records: Fieldwork account

Based on the nature of this study, qualitative research methods were appropriate for data collection. According to Mason (2002), qualitative research is *a process of inquiry with the goal of understanding a social or human problem from multiple perspectives; conducted in a natural setting with a goal of building a complex and holistic picture of the phenomenon of interest*. The methods adopted in this ethnographic study include participant observation, one on one in-depth interviews, diary records from students and focus group discussions. Each method had a crucial role to play in attempt to reach the objectives of this study and answering to the main question of the study.

As pointed out by Hall & Hall (1996), ethnographic approach provides chances to the researcher’s reflexivity, leaving a room for the researcher to reflect on his/her role in research when dealing with how people’s behaviour is affected by their awareness of being observed or by the researcher’s characteristics. Ethnography also allows inductive reasoning through the participant observation (Ibid). In other words like ethnographers do, rather than relying on the theories of other researchers, I relied on the primary data from the field to develop a more general hypothesis around the question under study (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997). The aim of any observational study is to gather firsthand information about social processes in a “naturally occurring” context (Silverman, 2006:21). In the observational study, I considered what Silverman (2006) states that the focus is upon what the participants actually do in the research field / site rather than upon what they think about what they do (Ibid).

The consideration of interviews derived from understanding that this study comprises sensitive issues therefore, while people would like to share their experiences, they still need privacy to express themselves rather than to speak in chaos. Open-ended questions were posed during interviews, being one on one interview or focus group interviews. One on one interviews were beneficial to this study for the participants were free to express themselves giving very crucial information and could even request for more dialogue with regard to their xenophobic experiences. Despite the formal interviews, I also had informal discussions with students either on the way to campus or even during co-curricular activities like when doing our laundry, walking around residences, off campus etc.
After individual interviews with students, participants were grouped together for a group discussion. Focus group discussion is a qualitative technique of collecting data, designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive non-threatening environment (Krueger, 1994). This technique allowed me to probe for more information or answer to the question, whenever the participant could not provide enough information, the chance that I could not get if I was using a closed-ended question approach. By grouping the participants together for the discussion, I also got a chance to explore the depth and degree of opinions regarding the issue understudy, through different perspectives and learnt about participants by observing their interactions.

Diaries were distributed among my research participants and the aim was to get their daily experiences on the paper, since some events could be forgotten about and yet they were important to my study. A digital voice recorder was used during my field interviews, mainly to ensure that I would not miss any single word from my participants. In addition, a digital camera was also used as a means of photographic representation of students’ intergroup contact spaces on and around campus, where observation took place from. Therefore audio recording as a method of collecting qualitative data, to understand the organisation of talk and gaze (Silverman, 2006:19).was crucial to this study.

The questions I discussed with my informants were open-ended which included their age range, their duration in South Africa, their duration at UWC, the kind of resident permit held in South Africa, their field of study, and their experiences (how they see themselves) in the country and at UWC in particular.

**Meeting research participants**

The participants in this research were selected from UWC using the purposive sampling technique, where subjects were selected on the basis of the expertise or experiences that they held. This was facilitated by the observations and informal discussions that I had with African international students in my daily conversations, either on campus, in residences and off campus, on our way to church, shopping malls, and other public spaces. Ever since I decided to do research on the topic, I started engaging in what Cira and Core (2005) referred to as building blocks of ethnographic research through unstructured data collection. Since I had an idea of what I really aimed to research on and that I lived in the field, it was easy to
engage in unstructured conversation, observation and social mapping as well as participant observation of fellow international students.

In December 2010, I began to engage in many activities of foreign students, participating in whatever they were doing, on and off campus. It was suitable month to start my research, taking into cognisance the fact that it is during this month that many foreign students remain behind on campus when the university closes for the summer holiday, in order to finalise their studies and research. This was, especially true for those living in my own place of accommodation, Hector Peterson Residence (HPR), which hosts mainly postgraduate students.

The research participants were non-South African national students from Africa. I opted to restrict my research to African international students, who are more likely to become victims of xenophobia than non-African international students (Rouhani, 2002: 15). In order to get a variety of and rich information on experiences of xenophobia and how international students cope with its negativity, the population sample included both students who reside on campus and those who live off campus. Students, who live outside the campus residences, were considered in the sample mainly because they are more exposed to xenophobia in public transport, in particular trains and mini-bus taxis, which they use frequently, in their journeys to and from campus. However even those students who stay in the university residences use such mode of transport when going for their off campus activities such as shopping, going to church among others.

![Figure 6: The Unibell train station, the UWC entrance (South Campus).](image1)

![Figure 7: Modderdam road UWC entrance where taxis pick up & drop off students (West Campus).](image2)
Other factors were considered in sampling the participants, in order to learn more about their experiences while in South Africa particularly at UWC. These factors included their age range, the length of their stay in the country, their residence status in the republic, and also their field of study. This was mainly due to the understanding from the informal conversations with students coupled with observations that the younger the students, the more likely they were to receive bad treatment from staff members in university administration or departmental services. I also considered their field of study, because informal explorations supported that students experience xenophobia in different ways depending on the academic departments, in which they pursue their degrees. Some departments have a reputation of exhibiting more xenophobic attitudes than others. At the same time, their length of stay in the country and at UWC as well as their type of residence permit was considered as another factor to understand their experiences. The majority of those I interviewed have been in South Africa for more than 5 years and at UWC for at least 3 years.

Nevertheless, the participant observation continued throughout the field work period and beyond. The January-February period was crucial for observations on campus to understand the kind of treatment that African international students get from the institution respective offices. This period involves the registration of new comers and re-registration of existing students, which encompasses many issues that pertain to international students such as the payment of tuition and residence fees, the issues surrounding the mandatory medical insurance, and concerns about study permit validity. Through informal discussions, and observations, I met key informants for my study with whom I later set up formal interviews. All that I observed in the field and informal discussion and interactions, were recorded in my field notebook. Recorder and camera were other tools that I used during the field work. The participant observation on how students interact to each other was considered in my research. This involved spending time at the well-known places on campus where students gather mostly during break time, the lunch hour, during evenings, or during the weekend.

Significant informal discussions that I had with students include prominently the one I had with Marian, a Zimbabwean, who I met during the Peer Mentoring Programme (PMP) training. Our discussions opened up my mind on what to observe and from where. It was after my supervisor had highlighted also some places that her students have reported to have
experienced xenophobia from that I extended my observations to mini-bus taxis (where I went with students for shopping and even to the beach); during church services; in shopping malls; in classrooms; at the office of the student credit management; and at those of the residence administration. I also included the ‘Barn’ (the beer and food outlet, student pub on campus), where students engage in conversations, dancing and enjoying their beer and some food. The participant observation, continued even during the period when I conducted my formal interviews and focus group discussion, as well as during my data analysis phase. I observed students as they engaged in their activities, and I also participated in some of their activities so as to understand their perspective, and also not to call their attention to me as a researcher-outsider, but to be ‘a fly on the wall’, as the ethnographers say.

Depending on the setting and activity at the observation site, I used to go to the student centre and sit there for a period of 30 to 45 minutes, during the lunch hour, mainly seated on the benches inside the centre or under the shade opposite the centre entrance where many students could sit and have their quick lunch or snacks. The UWC student centre at the university’s main square, hosts more activities that many students find it a place to meet, relax, having their food, fruits and snacks from within the centre, watching some shows within the centre or even playing some games on their free time. This is therefore a suitable space to observe the extent of social mixing and interacting among the UWC students.

![Figure 8: Inside the UWC student centre: the general space for different activities](image)

The setting and activities in the observation site determined my time of observation. While I could engage during the day in observations in class rooms, the student centre and other
spaces where in-group activities take place around campus, the observations at the UWC Barn took place generally in the evening on Fridays and Saturdays.

Figure 9: The UWC barn, where students go for drinking and dancing.

At the Barn, my aim was to observe how students interact and socialise. Students mostly go there to socialise, and to dance while having a drink or two especially over the week end. I pretended I was also a client there but because in normal life I am not a barn goer, I concealed myself in a very big coat and hat, in order to not be ‘seen’. I sat together with other women and observed how students were sitting in groups of people they identified with, South Africans on their own and foreigners together with other foreigners. After 30 minutes I pretended buying one pie at the counter; then I greeted my fellow international students who I generally told that I was just passing by to buy dinner. I sat with a group of six foreign students, taking my pie and soft drink. I started engaging in a conversation regarding our kind of social networking in public spaces like the Barn. One man said that given the level of violence and hatred that many local South African students hold against ‘us’ foreigners, he would not like to engage in any contact with them; this was especially the case at the Barn where everyone is always half or fully drunk. While local students were busy dancing and making noise, that group of foreign students was sitting outside the drinking area, where we were enjoying our own kind of chat.
I engaged in participant observation partly to confirm what I already knew from conversations with students, but I also wanted to discover unanticipated truths. Formal interviews were the main other tool of my discovery of what African international students’ experiences are on and off campus. Off campus participant observation was a different scenario; my observation took as many hours as possible, depending on where I went to with my research participants and for what purpose such trips were made. I made sure that I would go with my fellow and spend time with them, socialise and even engage in kind of activities they involved in.

Formal interviews took place at different times, dates and spaces decided upon by the research participants. In addition to the main research participants, I also conducted semi-structured interviews with one of the key university managerial staff, the International Relations Officer. I also conducted in-depth interview with a UWC Student Representative Council (SRC) deputy president, who provided me solid and rich information to base on. The SRC deputy president, himself a ‘foreigner’, became one of my key informants due to his invaluable information provided. I also had informal discussions with some library staff, from whom the interview was set for the Director of the library services. The institution’s administration staff members were included in order to find out their daily experiences on the matter under study, whether the institution receives reports on xenophobic cases from African international students and the way UWC responds to such issues.

Ten African international students were interviewed; male and females from different countries, faculties and levels of study, the sample from which five (5) key research informants were selected. The research participants were asked whether they wanted me to use their names and pseudonyms were chosen where the participant could give a pseudonym of his/her choice.
My research participants are from various backgrounds and have different reasons of leaving their countries of origin to South Africa. These students also differ in the age range though some did not want to mention their age, but just used phrases like “early 30s or late 40s”.

### 3.4. Introducing key research informants

My key informants were invaluable and disclosed information to me that I could not get from anyone else.

**Kofi** from Burundi is 30 years old. He arrived in South Africa in 2005 as an asylum seeker, but now holds a refugee status. Kofi enrolled at UWC in 2009, where he registered for his undergraduate degree in Nursing, in the Faculty of Community and Health Science. Between 2005 and the time Kofi joined the university, he was working as a car guard, the kind of work

---

12. UG stands for Undergraduate
13. PG stands for post graduate (in this case both masters and PhD students).
14. Pvt accom is used to refer to those students who do not stay on campus, and not even in off-campus university residences, rather they stay in private accommodations.
that many asylum seekers and refugees are involved in, as a means of life as reported by my informants. I met Kofi the first time at the Unibel train station on my way to campus from Hector Peterson Residence. I was speaking on the phone; when he heard me speaking in my mother tongue Kinyarwanda which is similar to his mother tongue Kirundi, and he smiled. After ending my phone call he approached me and said “amakuru” (meaning “how are you?”), and I replied. I realised he knew that I speak his language when he heard me talking it over the phone. We had a long conversation on our way to campus, and I asked him if he could be a research participant in my study and he agreed. The second time I met him was in Parow at the Sanlam Centre where Kofi continues to work as a car guard on weekends.

Kofi sees himself struggling to make ends meet in South Africa. He expresses this:

As a refugee in South Africa, I am useless in the eyes of locals especially at school and even at the hospitals where we do our practicals. Registering at UWC with the Refugee papers is like a sin, I always register after a struggle after missing more than 5 classes. I have no source of money; I do the car guard over the weekend to be able to finance my studies. I could not even apply for accommodation on campus even if I know that they could not consider me because of my refugee papers, I cannot afford it I rather remain where I stay, we are 3 guys in the room so we share the monthly rental fee.

Marian is another key research participant I had, a wonderful young woman from Zimbabwe. Marian is 25 years old. She came to South Africa in 2008, for the purpose of study, and enrolled at UWC in the same year and she is now in her fourth year of a Social Work degree, in the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences. Marian came to South Africa knowing no one in the country and at UWC. She really wanted to pursue her studies and be able to battle the socio-economic challenges that her country Zimbabwe is facing. As a mentor at the University for the Academic Year 2011, I knew this young woman from the Peer Mentoring Programme (PMP) where she served as a senior student coordinator, although she recently told me that she now quitted that programme. In January 2011, we both participated in the PMP training session that ran for two weeks. So I had a daily contact and conversations with Marian.

15 Hector Peterson Residence (HPR) is a University off campus residence located in Belhar, an approximate of 15 minutes walk to the campus, via Unibel station.
16 Parow is a suburb around which has a mall (Sanlam center) where most of the HPR residents go for shopping.
I enjoyed her way of addressing issues during our daily conversations either with me or with groups of other people. She seemed so informed about the university and its managerial system though she had been here for just three years by then. Marian had been a Mentor in her second year, a head mentor in her third year and her current position mentioned above in her fourth year that she started in January 2011. During our informal discussion she told me more about the international students’ experiences, probably because she engaged more with mentoring fellow students and representing students in any case.

During our interviews and conversations, Marian told me that she finds life in South Africa in terms of economic matters better than in her country, but at the level of socialising, she finds South Africans so unsociable. For all her past three years she has not made a single South African friend. I observed Marian closely, especially during the workshops organised by the UWC peer mentoring programme, and noted that she always greeted me with a smile and she introduced me to a number of Zimbabwean students, who all wished to have a conversation on their living experiences in South Africa particularly at UWC. She is a very friendly person who is admired by many people because of her kindness. She involves herself in various activities on campus. However she thinks she will be leaving the country as soon as she completes her studies because she does not like the treatment that she gets from the people around her (local national students and staff, and even by officials off campus).

**Tumani** is another one of my key informants whose inputs contributed a lot to my research. She is a 45 year old woman, married Kenyan, a mother of three (one girl and two boys), and lives with her husband in Mowbray, in the Southern suburbs of Cape Town. Her husband came to South Africa before her and she joined him later in 2000. Tumani registered at UWC in 2003, for her undergraduate studies in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences (EMS). She is now pursuing her Masters course while also lecturing (part-time) in the Department of Information Systems. In her view, both the studying and working environments have never been friendly ever since she came to UWC. In her department, she experiences tension from both students and staff and she has none to tell her story, except her husband when she comes home in the evenings. Soon after my final interview with her, she thanked me and frankly told me that the interviews and further conversation we had were a psychological therapy to her. She then invited me for regular visits and conversations in her office especially at lunch hour. I was able to have more discussions with her on campus; I
even attended her huge class twice, observing her as a lecturer, to get a sense of what really happens on the ground.

Julius is one of the inspiring participants in this study. He is from Uganda and is in his early 40s. He came to South Africa in 2000 as a political refugee. He then enrolled at UWC, where he started his undergraduate, honours, masters and he is now doing his PhD in Geography. Julius works with the Unity of Tertiary Refugee Students (UTRS) South Africa as an advisor. He also works for the Agency for Refugee Education; Skills Training & Advocacy (ARESTA) based in Athlone, Cape Town as an Advocacy officer. He is very familiar with refugee issues and xenophobia in South Africa. Most of the time I had deep discussions with him; he always gave me more insights on the xenophobic experiences of migrants in the country. He personally saw various cases where xenophobic violence took place, and in 2008 he was one of those who went to the mountain to just pray for the xenophobia to cease, which was an organised activity by the university, he told me.

The UWC Student Representative Council (SRC) was another crucial source of the information that I needed especially from the institution managerial side. The idea of approaching the SRC (Deputy President) derived from understanding that, as a body that represents students from diverse backgrounds, I would be in a position to obtain complaints from students and non-South African students in particular and the response thereof. This information compliments to my analysis and it is reflected in chapter four.

The SRC Deputy President I spoke to is an African international student himself. He comes from Zimbabwe, and is a student in the Law Faculty, and he joined the SRC in September, 2010. By the time of our interview he was already familiar with what is happening in the system, and he even kept on updating me about some of the issues that arose after our interview.

3.5. Reflexivity by the Researcher

When preparing for field work, I had to develop some ways of reflecting upon my research for the topic under study because it has some very sensitive parts, such as painful experiences due to xenophobia of different forms. In this case, I introduced informal discussions and conversations with fellow African foreign students in order to share the insights about
xenophobic experiences on and off campus. At the same time, for I live in the research field, an ethnographic study was considered for this study, which involved intense participants’ observation.

For I involved accompanying fellow foreign students and research participants to their various activities off campus, the aim was to find out how these students behave in public spaces, the kind of treatment they get from services rendered and also to learn from their coping strategies in case of xenophobic incidence. This embraces the argument made by Hehenkamp (2010) and Harris (2002) that non-nationals are easily signified because of their way of dressing, hair styles, accents and even failure to speak local language, therefore developing strategies of making themselves invisible in the eyes of locals.

Informal discussions were crucial in helping me to understand what these students understand by the concept of xenophobia, and in what forms or circumstances they experience xenophobic attitudes. What do they think are the sources of xenophobia, and what do they consider as factors that contribute to the easy visibility of non-national students as the “other”? For I live in the field, it was easy for these students to freely exchange their experiences with me. Moreover, I used to start the conversation by telling my own xenophobic experiences and this could galvanise the other students into speaking up.

3.6. “In the field” experience: Research as a therapy

During one on one interviews, I realised how important this technique was, for it allowed an individual respondent to pour out what was in his/her mind, and at the same time this kind of interview gave “a psychological therapy” to many. This reminds me what one of my participant said when I told her that my interview would last for 30 minutes; she asked me if it was possible to have an interview for even longer than the agreed-upon time because she had a lot to tell. By the end of interview, she thanked me saying that she feels relieved for she had so much unhealed wounds from xenophobic experiences and she had no one to share them with.

One day, on my way from the Hector Peterson Residence to campus (a 15 minute walk distance), I met a Nigerian male student, who is doing his PhD in Sciences. When I
introduced the informal discussion on the treatment that foreign students get throughout their course of study, he became very interested and requested if we could meet again and talk about those xenophobic experiences. He had a lot to tell, and this shows how much these students lack the chances to express themselves because they think nobody can listen to them, or even if one listens it will not pay any dividends. I feel that through this study, some students have regained their dignity, having hope in mind that the documentation of this study results will contribute to the positive solution to the xenophobia problem at higher learning institutions in South Africa.

3.7. Limitations to the study

This study initially aimed that, in addition to the main research with African international students, members of the UWC management staff should also be interviewed, on the basis of these staff members in the managerial structure. As mentioned earlier on, I was planning to do this as to explore their daily experiences with students. I aimed to speak to the UWC Rector, the UWC registrar, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Student Development & Support Services, the International Relations Office (IRO) Director and the Library Director.

Some staff members such as the Library Director were chosen after hearing from some international students about particular experiences. It was in this case upon hearing about how international students have suddenly been removed from their work study positions in the library with no tangible reason or explanation given. However, my aim here was to find out the reason behind this discrimination, after I had consulted the Vice-Director, the work study office and other related staff who all said that they had been unaware of such an act. But unfortunately, when I sent an email to the Director seeking an interview appointment with her; she declined, citing that her diary was fully booked for a couple of weeks. She however stated in the email response that her job does not deal with students and she advised me to meet her frontline librarians who would be the best people to interview. She wrote: “If I may ask, are you aware that in my portfolio I don't deal directly with students, my job evolves around getting stats for enrolment allocate resources, budget, staff, services and spaces, I don't even have to know who the students are, where are they coming from I don't think my office will be relevant for the study interview, Sorry. Ms Matshaya”.

I could not then manage to get hold of the Director for an interview.
Among all above mentioned senior executive staff, I only managed to interview the Head of the IRO, after having sent the emails and even appearing in person in the respective offices for requesting interview appointments. The UWC Rector however copied me the email he wrote to the International Relations Officer, in response to my request, referring me to have an interview with the IR Officer. Otherwise the rest were just asking me to send them my topic, but did not communicate any further afterwards. I kept on reminding them till it became impossible to have that interview due to their excuses that I always received from their secretaries. I could not figure out whether this was due to the sensitive topic which talks on xenophobia or, it was xenophobia which manifested itself because of who I am – a ‘foreigner’, who was perhaps regarded as just a waste of time.

3.8. Ethical considerations

Collecting data in one’s home or own society might be a problem because of being familiar with the place and the people who are the “subjects” of one’s research. This is because in my case for instance, I had something in common shared with my participants so this could affect the neutrality when dealing with people who took me as a native at the same time as a researcher. In her argument for instance, Van Dongen, 1998 as quoted by Sass (2005:31) stated that when conducting research in one’s own society, issues like making “other” and being a “native” among natives are very important to reflect on. In this case, the researcher acted like the “other” in her own community (UWC) as to understand the participants’ own experiences.

Research on xenophobia can raise sensitive issues, which research participants might not want to have recorded, heard or referenced by their own names. In this regard pseudonyms were used as given names to protect the respondents’ identity. The informed consent and introduction from participants was considered in this research. Respondents were informed earlier about the purpose for the study and areas to be covered in the research process. They were informed that participation was voluntary and assured of their right to withdraw at any time of the research would they feel unwilling to participate any further.
As I wrote above, in most cases my research participants actually appreciated the experience of being able to speak about the issues they have faced, and even regarded their participation in the research as therapeutic.

3.9. Conclusion

This chapter has mainly looked at the research area’s brief background, and the research participants. The research methods adopted were discussed, giving account of the importance of choosing those methods. It was highlighted that when carrying a research on sensitive issues, one has to consider reflexivity thus the strategies that a researcher has to adopt in order to influence the results.

As a researcher during my field work, I realised that sharing my own experience led to ease access to the research participants as well as quality data. In additions, learning people’s behaviours and experiences need no other techniques than those found in the qualitative design, allowing people to express as much as possible through the use of open-ended questions. Such techniques that included participant observations, one on one interviews, focus group discussions and diaries, provided me with data that I could not have sourced if closed-ended questions were used. The flexibility, experiences and limitations I faced during my field work were discussed under this chapter. In the following chapter, I present some of the key findings of my research, as I start with documentation of international African students’ experiences on campus particularly with the institution.
CHAPTER FOUR: On campus xenophobic experiences with the Institution

“As international students we may not be attacked physically but there is subtle discrimination not only from other students but also in the way management deals with us as students”. (Marian, Zimbabwe).

Introduction

In their daily life at UWC, African international students have to face xenophobic attitudes, behaviours, and discriminatory practices from the institution’s staff, which come in various forms and from a range of sources. According to my informants, administrative departments, such as the student credit management office, the Financial Aid Office and the residence administration are involved, as well as academic faculties and departments.

Students reported xenophobic experiences at various levels of the institution; however, in many instances it appears that the most challenging time for them is the registration period at the beginning of the academic year, which involves the issue of credit management. This is particularly stressful because they are required to pay their tuition fees in full upfront, unlike the South African students, who can register with paying only a fraction of the amount. In addition, there is the issue of medical aid, which is compulsory for international students, and finally the study visa requirement, which are all needed to be finalised at registration time. For many international students, the challenges of securing accommodation can also be daunting. Thus, following my research, I show in this chapter that the xenophobic experiences of African international students at UWC mainly include institutional discrimination, exclusion, and competition over resources, such work study opportunities and in certain faculties also around marking and merit awards. Students also told me about instances of verbal abuse by university staff members.

In my analysis, I argue, further, that such kind of treatment and negative attitude derives from a lack of value attached to international students, a culture of social exclusion, a lack of professionalism among frontline staff, a lack of Institutional management, a lack of employee development activities such as staff training or retreats, and also power and identity issues within the UWC community.
This chapter aims to show how these things are happening on the ground. It gives an overview of the strategies that these students employ to cope with the situation. The chapter starts by looking at the experiences with administrative staff.

4.1. Lack of Value attached to African international students

“We are all Africans, we all have problems” (Marian, Zimbabwe)

While the UWC students count themselves as one community, and are addressed so in speeches by the Rector and other executive members of the university, in reality, they are treated differently when it comes to the quality and provision of services from the institution’s administration offices, academic faculties and departments. Consequently, African international students are often made to feel that the institution does not attach value to them.

Discriminatory practices with Student Credit Management

None of the informants was comfortable with the distinction that is drawn by the university between the local and non-local students, when it comes to the arrangements regarding the payments of fees, and the general daily treatment by the university staff. According to the university’s rules, while South African students are required only to have a student account balance of not more than R 10 000 when re-registering for the new academic year, foreign students are asked to be fully paid-up from the date of registration. They find this a discriminatory act, because, like many South Africans, they also have financial problems. “We are all Africans; we all have problems”, said Marian from Zimbabwe. She was upset of how the management discriminates between the university students.

While arrangements can be made eventually between the student credit management of the university and the student, of how students can pay their fees in instalments, Marian has learnt that this is a simple process when it comes to local students but with international students, such arrangement is made only “after being given a lot of hell”. She said to me, “For me coming from Zimbabwe, I feel it is really not fair and I think the whole world knows about the crisis that is in Zimbabwe right now, but they really don’t try to think that these are academically achieving students who are trying their best to make a difference not only in
their home country but in Africa as a whole. So for me it is like they are not sensitive to the things [issues] that students come with” (Marian, Zimbabwe).

These daily experiences are in contrast to the university’s fees structure. At UWC African international students pay the same amount of tuition fees as that paid by local national students, while at other South African universities such as the two other universities in the Western Cape province, the University of Cape Town (UCT) and Stellenbosch University, only students from SADC countries are charged ‘local’, whereas students from the rest of the African continent must pay the much higher ‘international’ fees. (UWC’s Schedule of fees 2010: 4).

It is noteworthy that while UWC thus expresses its commitment to the equal treatment of all its students, in reality, the institution’s actions are much more favourable for local students during the academic year and its daily life services. As already mentioned above, during the registration period in January of each year, foreign students find it ‘hectic’ (as some expressed this in conversations), where the university registration-fee policy requires them to pay their fees in full upfront (UWC’s Schedule of fees handbook, 2010).

Tumani also finds the registration period particularly stressful. She explains that this is due to the experience with the student credit management, which was similar to the one Marian described.

But what happens here is that they expect the foreigners to have all the money, and when you don’t have money it means you should not be here, you should be somewhere else in your country or elsewhere in the world. The institution does not consider that there are some students who come to study but with little support in terms of finance. This had been my challenge at every year of registration (Tumani, Kenya).

While international students who are in South Africa on study visa experience discrimination during registration, for those foreign students who hold refugee status in the country, it was

---

17 At UWC, the ‘international’ fees, which students from outside Africa are being charged are almost three times as high as those South African and other African students have to pay. For instance at UWC, African International students pay R 15 730 per annum, as paid by local students for a Bachelor’s Degree of commerce (B Com) while non-Africans pay R34 122 per annum for the same degree. At UCT, Non SADC students pay the international fee of R34 000 (paid by locals and SADC students) plus R 27 500 per annum for B Com degree. At post graduate level, an average fee paid by South African and other African students for PhD degree at UWC is R 17 490 per programme, while non-African students pay R44 847 for the same degree per programme (UWC fees schedule, 2010: 3-4). At UCT, the fee for PhD degree is R11 180 (paid by national and SADC students) plus R 22 500, for each year of registration (UCT fees handbook, 2011).
no less difficult although they are according to the rules of the university regarded as local students. Although a refugee student is supposedly to be permitted to register under the same conditions as those of a local student, in many instances she or he is not being considered because she or he owes more than R10 000, but unlike a South African student cannot fall back on university bursary support or a loan to reduce their balance. Kofi from Burundi holds a refugee permit in South Africa and is a student in the nursing programme at UWC finds it unfair the way he is treated during the registration period.

At the beginning of the year they ask for full payment of fees from us forgetting that we are not sent by our countries but we are refugees trying to make a difference in our lives. The institution does not recognise us as people in need, they say that UNHCR (United Nations High Commission for Refugees) is our support and yet we do not get any single financial aid from UNHCR. They complicate our lives, like this year I reported at credit management every now and then, they could not register me only when they got tired of my presence they made an arrangement to say I will be paying a bit by bit let us say R1000 per month but also they need you to show how you will be able to pay that money. I was only allowed to register after missing more than 5 classes, assignments and test because I could not attend classes unless I am registered.

This rule of having to pay the tuition and residence fees upfront is only applied at UWC; but not at the other universities in the Western Cape Province. Julius from Uganda who is a student at UWC and works as an advisor to the Unity of Tertiary refugee students (UTRS) based in Cape Town, has been involved in the process of assisting refugee foreign students to register. He and his team have managed to influence UCT, Stellenbosch University and the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) to develop a bursary scheme for foreign students, from which students are benefiting. Therefore, according to Julius, foreign students at these other universities, unlike their UWC colleagues, have no problems when it comes to registration. He informed me of what happens with such universities when it comes to the fee payment arrangements. “Foreign students at those universities they do not face many hassles during registration because we always go there to negotiate with them. We negotiate with the university, we sign agreements and they study while they are paying their money in instalments”.

One could argue, perhaps, that what makes UCT or Stellenbosch University more accepting of such arrangements is perhaps due to the fact that they charge much higher fees for both tuition and accommodation; where for instance a Bachelor’s degree of Arts at UWC costs
R15 730 per annum, for all South Africans and other African students, whereas at UCT the same degree programme costs R 31 000 for local and SADC students plus R27 500 for non-SADC and the rest of the world students (UCT fee Handbook, 2011: 22). Therefore they have these payment arrangements where the initial payment is due on or before 4 February and final payment must be made by 30 June every year (UCT Fees Handbook, 2011:2). UWC has similar terms of fees payment as it appears in the university schedule of fees handbook (2010: 6) where short-term payment is due on or before 30 April (50% of total account) and final payment due on or before 31 July every year. Nevertheless, at UWC, those terms of payments are not considered as a normal option in the case of international students; for them such arrangements are made only after much debate and many appeals, and after a foreign student will have produced some proof of how she or he will be paying the outstanding amount.

Because of this discriminatory treatment at UWC, the value attached to African international students is generally questioned by foreign students, including refugee students. According to Kuda, the toughest and frustrating period in South Africa to him was the period when he had to apply for the extension of his study permit, but now this experience of much stress has been replaced by the problems he has to face during the registration period at UWC.

You see, this is the third week of the academic year, other students are already in classes, writing notes and test; how should I go about this? I asked him if he has gone to see the Registrar or any of the executive management team, he told me: I have gone there several times, requesting to meet Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Student Development & Support Services Director but they keep on referring me to the student credit management who want me to be zero balance for me to be registered. When it comes to other opportunities we are not regarded as international students but refugees, and how come now they want us to be zero balance at the registration day like international students? These people really hate us! (Kuda, DRC).

Kuda now holds a South African refugee document; thus he no longer needs to appear in the Home affairs offices every three months for a permit extension, which was the case when he was still an asylum seeker. While there are rights that govern refugees in the country, at UWC there is no special treatment for this category of students. The university’s discriminatory policies of fees payment are therefore experienced by all foreign students, no matter what their visa status might be. Diana from Cameroon pointed out that the demands of upfront payment are especially difficult to fulfil at the beginning of the academic year: “my experience range from financial issues where you are expected to pay upfront school fees, and yet this is the time everyone does not have money, it was after Christmas and New
Year so everyone is broke at that time and they expect students to pay upfront fees, that is really unfair”.

These are not simply subjective statements; consider the extract below from the emails that international students received from their residence management with respect to fee payment and such a decision always originates from the UWC residence and catering services admin. The extract concentrates on the email sent to the Hector Peterson residence (one of the off-campus residences of UWC) and one which has more international students because it is a hostel of post graduate students and the majority of international student at UWC are post graduate students (see table 2).

Dear HPR Residents,

Welcome back from your short break [those fortunate ones who had a break]. I trust that you enjoyed it and that you are re-vitalized for the challenges and realities that lie ahead in the last quarter of 2011.

One such reality is the fact that you will NOT be re-admitted to residence in 2012 UNLESS you, amongst other criteria meet the re-admission financial criteria. I will be failing in my responsibility if I do not continuously remind you of your obligation in this regard. The financial criterion is quoted below for your convenience.

- **South African Students** [including refugees]: Must have account balances less than R10 000 by not later than 30 October 2011.
- **Non-South African Students (International Students)**: Must have zero balances from the time of their current registration in 2011.

**VERY IMPORTANT**

1. You only have until 30 October 2011 if you are South African/Refugee student or your full outstanding fees should already be settled if you are a Non-South African/International student to meet the above financial criteria for re-admission.

2. Your room will be re-allocated on 1 November 2011 when provisional allocations are done in respect of 2012 if you do not meet the deadline mentioned above dependant on your categorisation, viz South African or Non-South African. This will mean that you will have to secure alternative accommodation at the end of the 2011 academic year which is 25 November 2011.

3. Students who do not meet the financial criteria by the relevant deadlines above will NOT be considered for vacation accommodation during both December 2011 and January 2012.
This message was sent to all residents within the UWC student residences in September 2011. When it comes to the decision of who will qualify for readmission in the following academic year, the question is therefore to where these foreign students can go if they are not readmitted in the university residence. Foreign students are also discriminated at UWC by the same university fees policy, where discounts are calculated on tuition and accommodation fees for students whose accounts have been settled in full before the due date. This is only applicable to South African students (UWC Fees Handbook, 2011: 6)\(^\text{18}\). There is no justification as to why such arrangements and discounts are made for local national students only, because there are foreign students also who have no bursaries neither from their home countries nor from the university but who manage to settle their accounts in full before due dates, due to the fact that they are expected to have a zero balance already by the date of registration. This is why they are not included in the provisions of discount.

Another analysis of this discriminatory provision is that the university seems to associate foreign students with having money and does not seem to take into consideration that they might financially struggle. This impression was given to me when I spoke to the Head of UWC International Relations Office (IRO). The institution seems to consider all international students as a homogenous group, based on the assumption that they all come with bursaries from their home countries; therefore they would have no problems to settle their account on the registration date. During the interview I had with the UWC International Relations Officer I asked him about how his office assists African international students to get funding for their studies. Apart from telling me that his office is not responsible for African international students on campus, but only deals with the exchange programme students (who mostly hail from Europe or North America), he added:

> Non-national students have money; they come with bursaries from their home countries. We expect to get funds from them to fund our poor South African students, we then do not expect any foreign student to come and seek bursaries and funds from the university. We also believe that before a student decides to come and study in South Africa, s (he) plans for his or her financial means, not when s (he) is already here (Interview with UWC International relations Officer).

Apart from the discriminatory policies around terms of fee payments and related issues, foreign students feel unconsidered in terms of not only on the kind of services they get but

\(^{18}\) The discounts vary however, and are not calculated on accounts settled by bursary organisations. Payment made on or before 28 February are given a 5% discount; paid on or before 31 March, 3% discount and accounts paid on or before 30 April are discounted at 2% (UWC Fees schedule, 2010: 6).
also the manner through which they get them, or rather often not get them in a timeous manner:

Registration process is also poor with regard to international students. They only have one person to deal with international students who only comes at 10 am when yet there are about five or six more people who deal with South African students. And that again, is like saying you have to wait because you want a favour from us as management or something which just didn’t feel right for me. The offices open at 8 am, but she only comes at 10 am especially this year, and when she comes she does not only deal with international students but also South African students. So you find yourself in a situation like I have been waiting the whole day for this person to deal with me and yet she does not just attend to the international students but also South Africans students. So, I mean that alone shows you that they do not regard you as important as a South African student, because you are an international student; you need a favour from us anyway (Marian, Zimbabwe)

While there is lack of value attached to the students from the rest of continent at UWC, the above experience can also have “lack of professionalism” as a reason, which can be the cause of the perceived mistreatment of international students on campus. I can relate Marian’s story to what I observed myself in academic departments and especially the student administration offices. I observed, for instance, that when a student went to bring a query or enquiry to the staff, a staff member may make numerous movements within the same office, trying to assist you, which often took much more of your time more than expected and you often ended up leaving unassisted. I also observed rude behaviour, once administration staff members are not convinced of the problem about which you are telling them, they tend to not admitting the problem or talking to you politely; often, staff members tend to become nervous and may start shouting at you, or just ignore you while you are standing there in their office waiting to be attended to. This has been my own experience several times. So you end up being mistreated, not necessarily because this person is consciously xenophobic but, as we can easily observe, because he or she does not understand his/her duty.

Discrimination is at the same time experienced in daily interactions with various service providers at UWC. The fact that once you are perceived as being “different”, then the kind of service you get will be late after others have been attended to, namely those considered to be “same”. Tumani told me about her experience of a rude attitude from a staff member who discriminated in terms of who to serve first and last.
There was one day I went to the library I was looking for a specific article, there were so many people on the line, waiting to get served, but I remember this woman, when I asked her to assist me she said she was busy and I could see whom she was busy with, the people who were behind me because they are, you know, South Africans. That really hurt me because I remember we even exchanged words, and she said she does not care (Tumani, Kenya).

Tumani was discriminated on the basis of being perceived as different, by speaking English and yet her skin is black so there might have been that conclusion of “she is not from here”; in addition, she was judged on the basis of her accent which is different from the locals’ accent. As researchers have found in many contexts, xenophobia is not simply an attitudinal orientation, the negative attitudes and hostile perceptions of migrant groups generally go hand in hand with discriminatory practices and poor treatment of such groups (Crush & Ramachanddan, 2009). Xenophobia is associated with negative perceptions and practices that discriminate against non-citizen groups on the basis of their origin and nationality (Ibid). This affects the daily lives of foreign national students at UWC.

Besides the experiences of discrimination with financial issues at Student Credit Management, discriminatory practices are also experienced in the residence administration of the university. Within the residence administration as well, foreign students are not given the first priority as students who come from far, beyond the 60 kms from UWC, as declared as the University residence rule/ policy.

Allocation of Residence rooms

“You sometimes talk to someone who was given an accommodation and yet his or her family stays in Cape Town then you wonder if coming from Cameroon is closer than coming from Cape Town” (Diana, Cameroon).

Diana’s statement is a reflection of what the majority of African international students have reported as experiences upon their arrival for their first time in South Africa particularly at UWC. Such experiences are opposed to what the university residence rule states. According to the UWC residence rules, students who live far more than 60 kms from the campus have first priority in the allocation of residence places (UWC, 2001). However, as Marian remembers what happened upon her arrival at UWC.

I remember when I came for my first year, I told the lady at the residence administration that I am an international student, new here I don’t know any one, so I
needed accommodation, she said to me the policy of the university is that we do not recognise your race, your colour, where you come from and everything, which would have been ok if it was based just on any other aspect but based on the fact that I am new you need to be considerate because the university itself says that you can get residence if you stay within a 60km radius from the campus, and you can imagine how many thousands of kilometres I stay away from this place and they tell me that you are the same towards any South African student who is applying for residence. (Marian, Zimbabwe).

This kind of response derives from the lack of professionalism from the staff as well as lack of proper institutional management. When prospective students apply at UWC as a first time applicant there is a section on the application form where they are asked to state whether they need to be in the university residences or not; meaning they apply for tuition and residence, and when they get admitted they arrive in South Africa, assuming there is a place of residence provided because of the admission letter. From my own experience, there is no clause in the admission letter that says that no accommodation may be available therefore you may have been prepared to arrange for your own accommodation. Only when a student arrives at the university, he or she may learn that the admission was for tuition only, but not for residence.

A number of my informants, who went through this experience, view this as an unfeeling and disgusting act. Given the nature of xenophobia and crime in the country, students told me: ‘they tell you they have no place for you, you are new in the place you don’t know anyone, you don’t know anything, and they expect you to go out there to find an alternative place which you had not planned for, which again being a foreign student is more costly and you have not budgeted for it, all this exposes foreign students to so much kind of danger’. Those students who have been on campus for more than one year, have a better chance of getting accommodation in the university residences because, unlike new comers, they have learnt how the system works and how to go about getting a room; some may have stayed long enough to know whom to talk to. In his experience, Bongani found accommodation a major challenge by the time he reached UWC. “Things like getting a place where to sleep was tough by the time I was a first year student”, he said. He added that things have improved over time at least probably because he now knows the system better, so he knows how to push or whom to speak to, to have things done (Bongani, Kenya).
Another foreign student told me that he went to his home country for data collection and when he came back in January, 2011 for the thesis writing phase, he found he was not considered for accommodation although he had all the requirements that are needed for him to be eligible. He had to squat (illegally live in a friend’s room) in one of the on campus residences (Dos Santos residence), where entering and exiting the residence was a struggle. He told me that he would make sure that he got in as late as possible and got out of the residence by 5 am, before the security guards change shifts. He also had to bribe some of the guards in case he might be caught without the card which allowed legal residents to enter and leave the residence. He always had to ask the security guard to open for him, until he felt tired of that. This was a very bad situation for him since he had to finish writing his thesis under such circumstances, which prevented him from concentrating. The next time I met him in March, he was excited because he was then considered for accommodation place in the UWC residences, but he said that was only after he had reported to the residence administration office more than five times, had written appeal letters, and so on. He then had to work with no rest, he said, since he had to finish writing up his thesis in less than two months for the May 15, 2011 submission.

Based on my observations during the orientation and registration period, securing university residence is a major challenge for many foreign students, who join queues at the residence administration from their day of arrival for the next two weeks. Students are given token numbers on the first come first serve basis, without any consideration of whether or not they come from afar or from places close to UWC. There is no office that would assist foreign students in this situation. Under these circumstance, some students use a strategy of crying because once they cry, especially women, they get assisted either by being put on the waiting list or given a room on the spot.

**Absence of an inclusive international relations office**

The UWC international relations office, however, does not deal with African international students but only with the students, who come to the university through international exchange programmes. These are normally students from universities in the Global North, such as Europe and North America. As the International relations Director, Professor Jan Persens, told me “we therefore do not know how these African international students come, and they have to find their own means of living once they arrive.”
This shows me that the discriminatory practices non-national students face in their daily interactions with unhelpful administrative staff, have their roots in the failure of the university’s executive management to recognise the presence of students from elsewhere on the continent, and the value they give to their South African fellow students. As was found, for instance, in the research carried out by my supervisor and her students (Becker; pers. Comm.), at UWC the phrase “international student” is unclear in many people’s minds, who consider non-national students from the rest of Africa as “Africans” or “foreigners” and refer to “international students” only when meaning those who come from outside Africa. Ramphele (1999:8) too argues, basing on her experience at UCT that while non-nationals students from the rest of the world are referred to as “international” students, African non-nationals are always blamed and referred to as “foreigners”. She added that the term “foreignness” is mostly used in order to focus attention on the competition of scarce resources (Ibid).

Notwithstanding Ramphele’s argument (she was at the time of publishing this article the Vice Chancellor of UCT), it appears that nowadays some universities in the Western Cape have a dedicated internationalisation policy, which is still lacking at UWC. Julius, who has regular contact with foreign students from different universities in Cape Town as a UTRS advisor, gave me an insight into what other International offices offer the students at their institutions; by comparison UWC has little to offer.

Unlike at UCT and CPUT where the International office is fully responsible for international students for whatever service or assistance they need. As a best practice, Stellenbosch University has appointed someone whom they call “immigration officer” from within the university who handles the issues of permits of international students. When a student’s visa is about to expire s (he) informs the International office and takes the passport there. Now this person comes at each time the permits have expired, she collects them and take them for extension. The university has made arrangement with the home affairs therefore students’ visas don’t take time to come out. So they never have any problems so we would expect UWC to do the same (Julius, Uganda).

At UWC, the IRO has nothing to offer in order to assist international African students. Consequently the UWC African students, especially the existing students who need to renew their study visas often find that their visa renewal is delayed, which also affects their registration process. This has been Baptist’s experience, for instance, who faced problems to
register due to the delayed student visa. Baptist is from Zimbabwe, pursuing his PhD in Education. He was keen to share his experience of the year as a foreign student. “I applied for study visa extension, till now I have not got it yet. By the end of March it will then be six months since I applied. To register was a challenge in the absence of the visa and my case had to go as far as up to the Registrar and I think eventually there were more people raising this issue” (Baptist, Zimbabwe).

Students see the lack of addressing international students and their issues as a problem and factor that contributes to xenophobic practices. The majority of my research participants were eager to say that ever since they have been at UWC, they have never seen the Rector or anyone from the management addressing international students, which is quite strange because students believe that addressing them would make the rest of the university community aware of these foreign students’ background and the challenges they are facing in their daily lives, which could reduce xenophobic attitudes among staff and students. As Sichone (2006:6) maintains there is a need to ensure adequate internationalisation and institutional policy for South African universities to reduce the extent to which xenophobic incidences affect foreign students.

Foreign students have also constructed a culture of being curious about how things are done at other South African universities in Cape Town, due to the xenophobic experiences they face in their daily lives at UWC. As I continued to have a long conversation with Tumani, in her office at UWC, she started telling me how she perceives the UWC daily exclusions and other experiences as unique, and compared them to what happens at other universities. Tumani’s daughter is pursuing her first degree in medicine at UCT. She said that from discussions with her daughter, she realises how UCT has a good practice to make international students feel at home and integrated in the higher learning community.

This is what is done at UCT, top management has done something to show that they are accommodative to foreigners; they have shown that foreigners have something special to offer, and if only everyone else can have that open mind, to accept all what they offer, it is precious, it is precious for our country, for our children and for the society at large, but what are they doing here, none is opening that gap, I mean no one is opening a gap in order to let those things happen.

Based on students’ comments, UWC’s management structures and the university’s institutional policies are to be blamed for the discriminatory practices and poor treatment on
campus. “I blame the whole university body” said Marian. Because, she argued, the staffs are not doing what they are supposed to be doing, and management is not checking to see whether the staff is doing their job properly. The management seems to assign tasks to the staff but, “they do not control and evaluate what is happening on the ground”. Marian blames the whole university body, including both the frontline staff as well as the university executive management. I argue that, xenophobic attitude and practices at UWC, feed also on the lack of institutional policy that focuses on Monitoring and Evaluation of the work done at the low level of the university hierarchy.

**Exclusion in bursaries**

Exclusion from the university’s bursary and scholarship schemes is another xenophobic experience. UWC has a Financial Aid Office which functions as a unit of the university Student Development and Support (SDS). The Financial Aid office is responsible for the administration of funds to students such as bursaries, loans and scholarships (UWC website). That office is therefore liable to inform all university community members with respect to funds available and applications procedures such as eligibility, deadlines etc. Importantly, while the university administers a number of funds which make bursary awards to full time students, some bursaries come with mandates from South African government bodies or other funders, according to which most bursaries are directed to only local national students. For instance, the university administers bursary loans from the National Students Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) which are for South Africans citizens only (Ibid).

Other bursaries that come with a South African citizenship requirement are National and Provincial bursaries, which are made available by national and provincial governments to promising students whom they would like to have working for them after graduation. Other bursaries are available at UWC, such as loans from Banks, and bursaries from companies and organisations where companies pay for a student’s studies provided that they have first call on his/her services when (he) qualifies.

Most if not all the above bursaries are for South African citizens only due to the mandate that they come with from the providers. Consequently, such eligibility criteria are a hotly questioned issue among foreign students who find out that 95 % of the emails they get from the Financial Aid office regarding the bursaries have an excluding criteria of saying “for
South African Citizens only” or “For South African citizens and permanent residents only”. Foreign students view this as unfair because they believe that the university is taking advantage of those bursaries that come with a mandate from the donors, by applying the same criteria even to those local funds within the university.

“So I questioned”, said a UWC foreign student, an SRC executive member for 2011 during my interview with him. I understood, he said, how they could differentiate when it comes to managed funds, funds that come with a mandate like the NSAFs (National student financial Aid scheme). ”We understand this for South Africans and other scholarships that come with a mandate”, he said, but with institutional funds there is no justification to distinguish between a South African and a foreigner because “every student gets subsidised by the government that is one, so the question is what you do with subsidy of international student you see? These foreign students contribute to the research; in fact most of the income comes from research that is after the government subsidy. Research is done largely by foreign students because, post graduates especially those who graduate at PhD level are largely foreigners and there is no support for foreigners” (UWC SRC, 2011).

Non-monitory awards for top academic achievers, however, are open to every student who is an achiever of the academic year, issued by the university Student Development Support (SDS) and such awards are also somewhat competitive. This year 2011, I received an invitation to attend the ceremony of issuing achievement awards of the year, which are issued by Professor Lulu Tshiwula, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Student Development & Support Services. During that big event, I noticed that such awards are given to best achievers of the year, from all units of the SDS that included sports administration and the center for Student Support Services (CSSS) departments namely: Office for student development, Student Academic support unit, Leadership and Social responsibility and therapeutic services department. Nominees included foreign students and the procedure was that three nominees in each section get certificates and the best of those three nominees takes the “Trophy Award”.

International students claim that they have always been considered in the achievers’ awards that do not involve money in, but they still find it unfair because bursaries, especially those based on academic merit, are still not open to them. Marian says “I have given up looking at the scholarships to see whether I qualify for one because I may look at criteria number one to
say, and see it wants higher academic achiever and wants someone who is excelling in these areas and you find that you actually excel in those areas and then it says that only South African citizens, or with some scholarships they have even gone to an extent of saying southern Africa countries, except Zimbabwe”. This to her is really ridiculous: “I don’t want to be punished because of what happening in my country, I mean I have as much right as anyone else especially if I meet the criteria of a certain service but I am being discriminated on the mere basis of where I come from and the mere basis of the political unrest and what people perceive to be happening in my country which is just so unfair. Because it is like you attain academic achievement and yet they want to stop you from going any further, because why? I really don’t know”. (Marian, Zimbabwe)

Foreign students believe that if the university wants to foster an international space, it should have support systems in place for foreign students. Baptist, from Zimbabwe too, also states that there are fellowships at UWC, but that these are limited to the local students. He found that even those funding opportunities that are being offered by some European organisations sometimes are restricted to local nationals, because there is a clause that says “only South African citizens can apply”. He feels that foreign students are left to their own Devices. Beside the discrimination and exclusion, foreign students also experience other forms of xenophobia. The following section describes verbal and language abuse from the administrative staff.

**Verbal abuse**

It seems almost having become a norm among administrative staff at UWC to express a negative attitude when having to deal with foreign African students. This affects some students so much that, as several of my participants told me, some students prefer to face the “hard” discriminatory policies (such as the request for upfront payment) rather than to face an approach, which they perceive to be abusive, whenever they seek a service from an office or department at the university (Rouhani, 2002). In support to what this author argues, Marian from Zimbabwe states “For me it wasn’t really much bad in demanding that upfront payment but the manner in which they dealt with it. Because they have this “you people” attitude towards international students like “you people” you know you must pay your school fees, or you people...eehh”. Apart from this language issue, which as I heard on many occasions is
rife at UWC; foreign students at UWC face verbal abuse from the institution staff which really does not make them feel at home.

Tumani, for instance, experienced verbal abuse from a female student administration employee, who was responsible for international students’ registration, when she was trying to explain her case because her study visa was delayed and she could not register. She explains: “Every day I would come and ask her how to go about it whether I could start attending classes at the same time waiting for my study permit. And one time she called the faculty administrator and said” There is a foreigner here, no an alien; she said there is an alien here, I don’t think I can take it anymore she is giving me a lot of problems, she is making her problems my problems” (Tumani, Kenya).

Tumani is not the only non-South African student who had to face such a dismissive and rude attitude. Other non-national students reported similar incidents; this has also been my personal experience. I remember one day I went to the cashiers at the student administration offices, where I wanted to make some payments. One of the women, who work there, watched me as I was walking towards her and she said to me “you foreigners look at the time you are coming to make your payments”. That attitude really put me off, after all it was not late because the offices close at 16:30 hours and it was only around 16:00 hours, then why shouting at me that way. At the same time, I was alone and she said “you foreigners” which reflects that she holds a negative attitude to all foreigners where once she sees one foreigner, who conducts herself in a way she does not approve of (like disturbing her pre-knock off time) she extends abusive language to all foreign students, treating them as a homogenous group.

In another instance, Marian was also not comfortable with the manner in which a friend of hers was treated by an employee of the student credit management office during the 2011 registration process. That UWC employee told Marian’s friend: “you are now irritating me” whereas, as Marian added: “it is just a struggling student who is trying to pay his school fees as best as he can the same way that they make arrangements with South African students” (Marian, Zimbabwe).

Conclusively from the above experiences, my argument is that ‘verbal abuse’ as a negative attitude is inevitable on campus especially with the institution staff for students need to be in
contact or interactions either directly or indirectly to get their services accomplished in any case. While foreign students might choose to be silent and make no local students as friends as I discuss it in the chapter five as a way of avoiding facing the xenophobic attitude, the same students will have to talk to the staff whenever they need a service, either with their lecturers, department staff, and administrations staff. In some academic departments, students even face xenophobic attitude from Academic staff.

4.2. Fear of the “other”: Competition for resources

Based on the informants’ experiences, there is also discrimination, and even abusive behaviour, from fellow students and staff at work-study and job places within the departments and issue of departmental monetary awards. Xenophobia in South Africa is often explained in relation to limited resources such as housing, education, employment, and health care, coupled with high expectations during transition (Harris, 2002).

**Competition for resources: jobs (work study)**

Many of my research participants reported that local students and staff members hold a fear of losing their positions if they continue having foreign students as students’ assistants or staff. When a student gets a work study position in a decent work area, such as administrative work, they have fear and sort of jealousy that this student will have access to so many life opportunities. This seems to be the academic version of the well-reported observation that in South Africa foreigners are blamed and stereotyped to be “job stealers” from the nationals (Harris, 2002; HCSR, 2008). Whereas foreigners often have become victims of xenophobic violence in poor communities, at higher learning institutions like UWC, the blame and stereotype are done in a more subtle way. Foreign students are socially excluded, mistreated and verbally abused during their work study as a way of making them uncomfortable and leave. Marian, for instance, lost her work study position in her department due to conspiracy between local national students and staff, who feared that this “foreigner” was to take over their position.

I worked in one department in one faculty office on campus and unfortunately, I was the only African International student who worked as a student assistant in that department, the rest of them were coloured and one black South African. By then even with the black person herself, she treated me like I was outcast but I would have
thought as being black would have maybe created a bond or something but that was not the worst because it really got to a point where that black South African to some point she thought I was there to take over her position and yet I was just there as a student assistant because she had a temporary position in the department at that time. She then went to the extent of telling the person who employed me that I was not doing my job and she made all sorts of ridiculous stories about my conduct at that place. The truth only came out when we sat down every one and I asked everyone to prove the evidence in what areas did I really not do my job and no one could come up with anything. And it was only then that the person who was in charge realised that it was just a plan to take me out of the position (Marian, Zimbabwe)

As Rouhani (2002) and Ramphele (1999) observed, at South African higher learning institutions, national students may feel insecure probably because of the fear that African international students might compete with them about the scarce socio-economic resources. Both local students and staff see foreigners in higher education as competitors for scarce resources because the South African nationals expect to be the primary beneficiaries of the new government’s equity focus (Ramphele, 1999). Locals hold a tendency to think that every position occupied by anon-South African is one job less for a South African (Mattes, Crush & Richmond, 2002). Consequently, international students may be excluded from the university’s service, which has also been reported for UWC.

Apparently, the country and its higher learning institutions do not realise the importance of having migrants; the majority of whom are willing to do any kind of job and hence are contributing to the economy of the country. Skilled migrants, students in particular contribute a lot to the state’s and institution’s economic development since they are likely to add energy, innovation and jobs rather than stealing them from locals (Mattes, Crush & Richmond, 2002).

At the institution like UWC while the institution might take it as of little contribution African international students since they pay as same fees as locals’, the institution has to consider that such foreign students need to be welcomed and encouraged as they contribute to the social cultural and economic development through enhanced research and knowledge capacity (Altbach & Knight, 2007). The same students once valued, will contribute to the increase in cultural understanding for the better of the university community as a whole (Ibid).

In her argument Marian states that she does not steal a job but fills a gap. At the same time Marian points out that comparing to where she comes from, South Africa does try to provide
opportunities to its people but they rather choose to blame other people than they make use of such opportunities. “I think people have to make use of these opportunities making them the best they have and avoid the complaining game of blaming someone else” (Marian, Zimbabwe). Following the above, I argue that at UWC, like any other employment agency, African international students are considered for some kind of job because of the skills they possess. Most of work study and job positions are occupied by international students who have enough skills to contribute to the employing agency. These positions include lecturing, tutoring, post graduate writing coach, research assistance among others. But still these students are often not recognised as a potential asset to the development of the university.

In some areas of work study, non-national students are excluded and discriminated with no justification. I refer to my experience of January 2011 when I applied for a work study position in the university library, as discussed in chapter 3 of this thesis. One other foreign student was told that she was rejected for library work study position because as a Masters student she might have a lot of work to do and would not be able to cope with work study in addition. This is in contradiction to UWC’s policy which allows all undergraduate and postgraduate students to work study; it is also against the government policy that an international student on a study visa is allowed to work for a maximum of 20 hours per week, and work full time during the academic vacations (IRO, UWC).

Not only new foreign applicants were excluded for these work study positions at “Level 6” in the UWC Library. The same happened even to foreigners, who were previously working there, who in fact had been asked to reapply and assured to be considered first before they take new applicants, as one of those affected, Jacob from Rwanda, confirmed. I asked Jacob if he might know where the decision to exclude non-nationals from these rather well-paying positions came from; he said that he was not told the reason behind excluding foreign students. I communicated this incident to my supervisor who then advised to carry on investigations on this as a researcher.

When I went to present the issue to the Library Assistant Director, she seemed shocked about the news and said that she did not know about this at all. I was wondering: Was this really possible that someone so senior in the library would not know about what was going on? She seemed rather uncomfortable that a foreign student would come and complain. She made
some calls to people in the library while I was in her office but told me that there was no answer. Again, I was wondering whether she was really seriously following this up. I also went to the UWC work-study office following up the incidence, where I was told that the office has no idea of such decision and that their office does not discriminate among students.

Tumani from Kenya had a particular saddening experience when she was appointed as a part-time lecturer in her department in 2010. She soon realised that other lecturers in the department were gossiping that her work was not up to scratch. They would even encourage students during their own lectures to comment about Tumani’s lecturing and would record their comments, where they were critical. Then they would start sitting in on her lectures without asking her permission or even telling her in advance. This was allegedly done in order to investigate what some students have been saying about her. From there, they compiled a report and forwarded it to the head of department. This report claimed, for instance, that students complained about Tumani’s accent, and that she allegedly would not make herself available for consultation with the students. Tumani feels that this was very unfair. She says, “No one has complained about my accent in my classes before. I have consultation times all the time. If nobody comes, I cannot force them to come. I am always in the office. It was all these issues that they put in the report. I think these people wanted to get me out of the job by telling the Head of Department (HOD) that I am not doing the job right and to get someone else for that position”.

My interview with Tumani was a “psychological therapy”, I was observing her, paying attention to her body gestures, and realised that she was really carrying a very huge sorrow in her, and our discussion after interview proved how important such kind of interview was for her. She thanked me and she asked me if I may be passing by her office sometimes at lunch hours for some conversations about our daily experiences on and off campus. She was so relieved and openly told me that when the above experience happened to her she kept it by herself.

**Material claims: departmental merit awards**

At UWC, not only are most bursaries reserved for local nationals, but also departmental merit awards in some departments are not open to every student, due to the fear that if these opportunities are open to everyone then, they will only go to foreign students who on average
perform far much better than local students. In some departments it was rather preferred to have no more departmental merit awards due to the same fear.

In our department, we no longer have merit awards to those students who excel well. You see I am a lecturer here and I am a foreigner, and I tell you in this entire faculty not only in our department, international students are always excelling and they work hard. I have some foreign students in my classes their mark has ever been at the top there. Now when we are asked to forward the names of few who excelled well you will find out that there are only African international students. So I was one of those who have been blamed for favouring foreign students. Then the department decided not to issue such awards any more (Tumani, student and lecturer).

Highly academic achievements by foreign students are not considered for some of the department merit awards even though these students contribute to the university’s high performance. Consider this experience below as complain received and registered at the SRC as follows.

There is this student from Rwanda, is a refugee. This guy is excellent student, in his first year he had 80% average, last year he had 76% average. I met him during the credit management SRC clearance process, he owed R40 000. He is a UWC’s best athlete, and now sports department gives sports bursaries and they could not give him a bursary (Interview with the SRC 2011).

The SRC as “it deals directly with institution executives and heads of departments whenever the complaint is lodged” (SRC deputy president 2011) addressed the above complain by discussing it with the head of that department. The conclusion was not favourable for the particular student. It can therefore be concluded that the main issue was that the student was a foreigner and therefore does not deserve the award despite the achievements.

4.3. “Mark my work and not my surname”

“Mark my work and not my surname” was a succinct statement by Hamida from Uganda, who was frustrated of the way foreign students are treated in her department. The first time I heard allegations of xenophobic discrimination even during academic assessments was during my daily informal discussions with foreign students which I engaged in everyday moves on and off campus. A student from the EMS faculty was keen to tell me that he is not convinced of the marks he gets from a particular lecturer in his department, who has an attitude of
giving low marks to non-national students even if the student knows that he has done well all he is excelling in other modules.

The character of determining who belongs to where and who deserves what is not a new phenomenon in contemporary South Africa and at its higher learning institutions where foreigners are socially excluded on the mere basis of their nature and personality. South Africans also are abusive due to their long history of discrimination where they treat and characterise people in a sense of one’s imagined sameness or of a social group at all times and in all circumstances (Bennett et al, 2005). Individuals who compose a given social system are differentially ranked and treated as superior or inferior in terms of their membership in a kinship unit, personal qualities, achievements, possessions, authority and power (Parsons, 1940).

At UWC the social stratification among the community members is analysed in terms of membership in kinship unit, achievements and power, where foreign students are treated inferior because of being perceived as others who do not belong, where their achievements are perceived as a treat to the socio-economic wellbeing of locals.

On campus, being in the departments, classrooms, administration, and even in residences, foreign students are signified and excluded based on their surnames. Hamida from Uganda is doing Bcom (Law) in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences

In my department I am a second year by now, but what I observed and what I know is that our assignments and tests are always marked according to our surname, you see. For example, I am a foreigner and my surname of cause is in my mother tongue from East Africa, even for my lecturers to pronounce it is hard. Now you realise that they use that surname to say “ah she is not from here”, then we get punished like that. I know how I read, I know how I pass with other modules but with this other particular lecturer, it is a story and I am not the only one who complains about that (Hamida, Uganda).

As experienced by Hamida, and similarly by Kofi from Burundi who is a nursing student, it is notable that once your surname sounds foreign you are then identified with that group of students who perform high, so the easy way to pulling you down is to give you low marks so that you do not excel to become a threat to locals. Such incidences are experienced from different departments and faculties. Not all academic departments ‘staff are xenophobic but
such incidences have been reflected even in the emails that students send to the whole UWC community. Consider the extract from the email that was sent to HPR students on 26 September, 2011 by a foreign student who is the Chairperson of House Committee, Hector Peterson residence (HPR) who was campaigning for UWC SRC elections that took place in October, 2011 for the 2012 academic year leadership.

“Dear HPR residents,

I wish to thank you for your patience during the time of trials in the regard with inefficient service from our management. However, I do believe that the onus is on us to question things and demand justice whenever we are treated unfairly by the university leadership. Given many problems problem that students face, I wish in inform you that I have decided to run for the SRC elections under The South African student Congress SASCO as we seek to deliver the following: Complete admin overhaul (faculties, student administration) while Intensifying and implementing program against racism, xenophobia, corruption and prejudice and strengthen link between Home Affairs and University given the current ineffective International Relations Office; Broadening access to Higher Education: No Academic Exclusions, abolishment of up-front payments for students from African countries, Consolidation of the Free Education Campaign through free registration. Unfair/discriminatory marking of scripts – “mark my work, not my surname” (SASCO campaign for 2012 SRC).

Although during campaigns the candidates have to market themselves by promising the majority that they will do the extraordinary work, I also recognise that such promises build on the problems that are already there, experienced and reported by many students. I draw my concern on the last pint of the above email where it states “Mark my work, not my surname”. When I read this email I easily captured this phrase because I met it during my fieldwork interview, six months before this email was sent, and from different students, of different gender and so on. So to me this carries much information on how foreign students make sense of xenophobia on UWC campus and that the xenophobic experiences with the institution are not unique. A surname becomes an additional signifier to those of accent, hair styles and dressing code that locals usually use to identify the non-locals (Harris, 2002). A lecturer might not really remember the accent of the student who answered a certain question in class, therefore they rely on surnames.

Again the above experiences partially contradicts what Misago et al (2009) argue that the xenophobia in South Africa derives from the lack of knowledge by locals who do not understand where foreigners come from and why there are here. While such cause of
xenophobia can be found in people from poor communities/low class communities, it is a different case at middle class community such as higher learning institutions and work places. Rather, at UWC, I analyse the xenophobic attitude that some staff direct to foreign students to derive from their culture of social exclusion, about who belongs and who is not, “us” and “them” and not that they do not know the world around them because some hold degrees from outside South Africa.

During March 2010 and September 2011, I observed two incidents which were a reflection of subtle xenophobic behaviour directed at two foreign Masters’ students. In March 2010 graduation, a foreign student from East Africa whose surname was long and hard to pronounce was addressed by his faculty dean, but the dean did not mention the “cum laude” and the student remained standing and asked the Dean to say the “cum laude”. I was really in favour of that student who refused to proceed till his cum laude was pronounced because it was in the booklet of the graduation ceremony that we had in our hands, I saw his name and “cum laude” in front of it myself. A similar incident happened again during the September 2011 graduation, perpetrated by the same Dean. I do not conclude on one incident but if something happens more than once with only one class of people then I find it as a fact that this had to do with one’s character of excluding “others”, that Dean did not forget to mention the cum laude when presenting the local students in the same graduation ceremonies.

As they need to accomplish their mission of being here, African international students have developed their own strategies to cope with xenophobic attitude that they experience on campus

**4.4. You have to cope “you know”?**

The interest in searching for the strategies that these students employ while on campus came from an understanding that their daily life experiences while at UWC might have a negative impact on their studies and stay but they still excel and some do inform their friends and siblings to join them here at UWC. So this indicated that there is a way in which these students manage their daily experiences of negative attitude. One of my participants told me that you have to cope if you want to finish your studies (Hamida, Uganda). Some students reported to cope with internal xenophobia by being silent about it pretending as if nothing is
happening around, having no or few friends and also learning basics in the local languages so as to avoid the language abuse, and mistreatment especially from the staff.

In terms of work study, following the discrimination and mistreatment that foreign students face with fellow staff and on work study students, they strategise by considering the gender issue at the work place. Marian finds it easier to work in an environment that has more male than female staff. She says: “I think the other problem was that the place was dominated by female South Africans but male South Africans were more forthcoming and they did not really see me as a threat”. In the presence of xenophobic attitude from other institutional service providers, Marian copes by not paying much attention to whatever is happening around her.

But in terms of campus experience, I think I have just resorted to an attitude of closing my ears to everything that goes on around me. I close myself and realize that I am not in my country and in as much as I wanted to be treated fairly sometimes I just have to understand and accept that it is just not going to happen. So I cope by just not paying attention to it, by understanding that I am not in my country and so on.

This student decided to pretend as if she has no problem at all. Tumani also finds it helpful to use silence as a cure to the problems around her inside the university. “When you are working in such environment you have to be a reserved person, people will talk people will make comments that are not pleasing, but what happens is that I keep things to myself as long as I am doing my work the right way the rest I leave it to the bosses”.

Bongani uses a different strategy; he decided to learn basic local language words in order to be able to communicate things like greetings. He says: “The strategy that I employ to avoid the negative attitude from the service providers is to greet them and say thanks in their local language. I had to learn simple words such as how to say hi in Xhosa and Afrikaans, and also how to say thanks in those local languages that are mainly applied in Cape Town and at UWC. When you greet them in their local language, they still hear from your accent that you are a foreigner but it makes them happy that you are making effort to learn their languages so they give you a better treatment” (Bongani, Kenya).
4.5. Conclusion

At UWC, foreign students experience subtle xenophobia manifested through discrimination within the institution administration services, exclusion in bursaries from the university, mistreatment from the academic departments, and verbal abuse from the institution staff members.

Due to discriminatory practices and exclusions in university provided bursaries, these students find it hard to sustain themselves financially since they are excluded from those who are eligible for the university bursaries and awards. This study shows that the departmental merit awards that are offered to academic achievers have been suspended from some of the academic departments due to the fear that if they keep them open they will all go to the foreigners who are known to on average perform better in their studies than locals. The only way of earning an income is by doing work study jobs which are also competitive, especially in those fields where more local students are also qualified. Foreign students therefore end up being discriminated and excluded, even sometimes abused, with no justification but on the basis that one is different, a “foreigner” who does not belong.

While these students contribute much to the learning community, the institution does not do much to show to the rest of the university community that these students do contribute to the social and academic transformation of the institution and its students. Foreign students anticipate that the lack of proper and inclusive institutional policy affects their being at the university campus where they have to strategise and reconstruct the way of living due to the fact that they have to cope with the daily institutional negative attitude.
CHAPTER FIVE: Interactions in question: Xenophobic experiences with national students

“Explanations of Anti-foreign intolerance commonly focus on ‘interactive’ factor which would include the amount and character of personal exposure to people of different origin” (Crush & Pendleton, 2004: 24).

Introduction

Lack of interaction among South African society members has been remarkable not only in local communities but also at the higher learning institutions where students are categorised not only as “racially” different but also as “foreigners” who do not belong and who are perceived as “a threat” to the well being of the South Africans students. As a result, there is a big gap in the social contact among the categories of students. On campus, we find a group of “coloured” students by their own, “black South Africans” by their own and “non-national” students forming groups of their own. Although post-apartheid South Africa seems to still be characterised by the social exclusion among the country members, the matter is worsened when it comes to exclude foreigners who are perceived not only culturally different but also as competitors for scarce resources such as jobs and bursaries since foreign students stand well in terms of academic excellence and hence qualify for part-time jobs, bursaries and merit awards. As the latter authors state, given the intolerance level towards foreigners in the country, the amount of contact that the nationals have with foreigners is not far to be imagined (Crush & Pendleton, 2004).

A decade ago Shindondola (2002) studied how international students at the Rand Afrikaans University (RAU), now the University of Johannesburg (UJ), experienced xenophobic attitudes at this higher learning institution within academic departments, as shown by fellow students. Other authors, too, argue that at South African higher learning institutions, local national students often feel insecure; this they argue is probably the case because of the fear, especially by South African students from disadvantaged backgrounds that African international students might compete with them for scarce socio-economic resources available (Ramphele, 1999; Rouhani, 2002).

The method used much in collecting data on how UWC students interact was based mainly on observations. This chapter looks at the xenophobic experiences of foreign students with
fellow local students, which lies on the little or no contact with a view to enhance interaction to improve and reduce prejudice on campus.

5.1. Lack of interaction: Grades of social exclusion, hatred and superiority

“You are firstly isolated from the environment; you would like to feel integrated in the diversity, now that is not happening at UWC” (Julius, Uganda).

Intergroup relations among UWC students are far to be present and foreign students view it as a challenge throughout their stay at the university. Julius who has been in South Africa and at UWC for more than eight years argues that making friends and interacting with locals is not something regarded as normal. Throughout his long stay he had realised that local students are not friendly and do not like mixing with other students from outside South Africa. He says, “they only come to you when there is specific thing that they want from you maybe they have got an assignment, or they have something to share with you or they have been thinking that if they went to so and so from Nigeria or from elsewhere would help them with their work because they know that students from elsewhere are hardworking academically, they know that” (Julius, Uganda).

Julius views such an experience as a result of the ignorance that most South Africans hold, where they think that Africans are coming here because they have no universities in their countries or it is because of economy plus so many things so that puts people in the rim light of hating or not liking to mix themselves with international students. “The perceptions that South Africa is not part of Africa (superiority feeling) that also make them behave as if relating to someone from elsewhere you know maybe something bad would happen to them”. (Julius, Uganda).

The above argument embraces what I learnt from local students in my tutorial class this year. A coloured student asked me where I come from and I said from South Africa and she refuted my response on the basis of my accent. I later told her that I am from Rwanda, then her next question was “Do we have any other Rwandan student at UWC”? And when I answered yes, she asked if we have no universities in Rwanda. When explaining this to her everyone paid much attention, which proved me that many students still need to be taught about the world around them. In other words the University still has a big role to play, because this shows the
lack of a student to understand people’s mobility and its benefits simply because foreign students are rarely or not at all addressed to create awareness about them within the university community.

Lack of cultural events such as celebrating diversity might also be another cause that hinders locals to respond to their ignorance and the like. Local students do not come into contact with foreign students who are perceived as “different” and therefore they isolate themselves (Lazaridis, 1999; Laher, 2008), which might increase the hostility towards foreign students. In their study on the students attitudes and friendships, researchers Williams and Johnson (2011: 46) maintain that those national students who have international students as friends, have higher levels of open-mindedness than those without friendships. If people are brought together under optimal conditions, the result is the reduction in prejudice and improved intergroup relations (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000). Those with no clue about migrants particularly who do not have any contact with foreign students might be the ones who then behave in a xenophobic way, avoiding interaction with foreign students whom they perceive as space invaders.

Poor social interaction among UWC students is experienced by a number of foreign students even in those spaces where social mixing and close interactions are expected to be met such as in classrooms, student residence halls, and other spaces. While foreign students would like to feel at home, my observations during the field work and in everyday life, confirmed that UWC national students stay isolated from foreign students where they sit or socialise in groups formed on the basis of racial, ethnic, or national belonging. You find foreign students by themselves, and locals by themselves in those places where social activities take place from being as at student centre where students seat and relax, play some games, or take something small to eat, and also from the barn where students go and drink and dance over the week end (see figure 8 and 9).

During my observations at the Barn, the UWC student pub, I was able to sense the kind of activities that UWC students engage in mostly, and with whom. Although the majority go there for drinking, some other students come there to buy food, like fish and chips, Gatsby (a South African fast food dish) and other types of fast food. On Fridays and Saturdays, especially the Barn place is very warm in terms of music, shouts and laughter. Around 7 or 8 h00 in the evening, the music is played at loud volume, calling attention of many students
especially those who stay in student residences on the campus. While local students might come one by one expecting to meet others when they reach the Barn, foreign students do not come at the Barn as single individuals, rather they come in a group of three or more. From what I observed I learnt that these students do not mix in a way that you find them sitting together in groups, mostly you find foreigners by their own and local students by their own.

On the other hand, I however realised that not all foreigners stay that isolated from local students in the Barn. Their isolation has also to do with the age, where you find out that the younger foreign students mix more easily with locals especially in the dancing phase (the warm up time in the Barn between 19h00 and 21h00) where they go in and dance, when it comes to music being played that all the younger students enjoy, while the mature foreign students like to sit among themselves, discussing their own issues. Such dancing contact however does not necessarily mean a social interaction. A South African student might stand and dance with a foreigner because she or he wants a bottle of beer and it ends there. As I engaged in a conversation with a group of foreign students at the Barn, one student mentioned that he would not like to mix with local students and to make matter worse it is a week end where everyone is half or fully drunk.

On the one hand, many foreign students do not want to mix with South Africans at the Barn due to the fear that locals are xenophobic and violent, and on the other, I argue that these students sit on their own and in their desired groups mainly due to who they identify with. For instance, while foreign students in general sit in groups on their own, you still find them divided further into groups on the basis of nationality, where we have Zimbabweans sitting by their own, Rwandans in their own small group, Namibians sitting with other Namibians, and so on. So it is also more of whom these students identify with, since the Barn is a place for fun, discussion of issues as well as relaxing, where those who share the same mother tongue will find themselves in a group of discussion.

Apart from finding themselves congregating in such small groups (I can call them ethnic groups, where those who share the mother tongue find themselves together) foreign students come along with other students from across the continent, including everyone, except South Africans. South African students form groups on the basis of their race; we can see that coloured students keep with their own and Africans with their own. Such exclusion builds on the culture of social exclusion that is based on racial segregation of the apartheid era (Coplan, 2009). Racial groups, which socially and legally were naturalised as white, coloured, Asian
(Indian), and Bantu, did not share social, resources, amenities, facilities, employment categories, or indeed where possible even physical spaces (Coplan, 2009: 68 and Posel, 1987:125). Such categorizing is then still naturalised in today’s being, within South Africa’s communities which include universities. While the local and non local students form a single group of UWC students with a common purpose of studying, foreign students are put in their own social category, which according to Boonzaier & Sharp (1988: 13) implies classifying people into category on the basis of having one or more characteristics in common, which many South Africans under apartheid considered self-evident, and many still do so today.

On the basis of what they perceive a foreign student to be like, local students choose not to interact with those whom they regard as different, because of their biocultural characteristics (they do not speak our language, they are too dark) and also because they are perceived as a threat to their social economic well being (they steal our jobs) (Harris, 2002), they excel so they take all our bursaries and awards (Rouhani, 2002 & Ramphele, 1999) and a range of other perceptions. Apart from exclusion that foreign students face in the Barn, a place expected for fun, gathering and change of ideas (as some do during the beer taking), international African students feel often socially excluded throughout the environment of UWC. As Harris (2002:13) puts it “Through xenophobia, foreigners feel foreign, which in turn, isolates and excludes foreigners further from South African society”.

The UWC student centre at the university’s main square, for instance, hosts some of the activities that were supposed to bring students into mix without exclusion. For instance, at lunch hours especially on Fridays there are a number of shows and kind of adverts from various companies who want to recruit students and you find out that students are spending some time there paying attention to what is taking place there. Apart from that, the student centre is close to the student administration offices and the library, when students want to relax from those spaces, or even buying food, airtime, fruits, they find them at the student centre and sit either on benches inside the centre or right on the sitting area outside the centre refer to figure 8). Students are in groups still, having their own conversations, discussing their issues and so on.

The classroom experience of exclusion amongst UWC students is also considerable. I found out that in lecture halls coloured students sit with others they consider “their own”, black students sit with other black students, and often even according to ethnic group and foreign students also keep to their own. In a class that I observed, it was a very big class of more than
300 students and I only saw these two women students whom I identified as foreigners because of their dress code. I approached them soon after the lecture and I asked how they relate with local students, Hamida who then became my research participant told me that she does not need to force people to talk to her because even when she arrived still new she used to greet them but some would not respond.

In the tutorial classrooms it is the same case, I used to have two foreign students in my tutorial class of first year students, these students would always sit by their own, and I never saw them talking to local students around them. Not only in classrooms that these students stay isolated but also in the public lecture or workshops, students do not come together as people who have one aim. For instance, I attended one public lecture, which was held on campus on the 02 August, 2011, by the staff from the UN Organisation - Pretoria and their discussion of the day was on “UN Graduate recruitment” which was organised by the office of the UWC Career development programme.

The lecture took place at lunch hour and both local and foreign students were present, but amazingly I realised that there too students were sitting according to their nationality, to say South Africans by their own, those from elsewhere by their own even those who came in late, would take their time, standing at the door for a minute to figure out where to go and sit, which was clearly based on “who am I sitting next to” is he or she “my own” according to my observations. Whenever it happened that a local student was sitting next to a foreign student, you could see the silence among them even where the opportunity arose for the in-group discussion or the discussion to the next person, these two students would not talk to each other.

A number of foreign students judge the in-group isolation differently. Julius from Uganda views that “local students do not mix with foreign students because of the feeling that they are superior than foreigners or because of jealousy and hatred”. Marian in her diary that I issued her after our interview recorded her xenophobic experiences at UWC that raise in her everyday life. Marian finds daily negative attitude such as exclusion and verbal abuse from fellow classmates from South Africa, as a big issue in her daily life. She wrote:

Yesterday I had a conversation with one of my classmates. And in my class there are about four Zimbabweans, and so they are all girls and just one male and the male just gets along and he seats any where again he seats with male black South Africans, he
doesn’t seat with coloured guys. But this classmate of mine came to where I was seating with my three Zimbabwean friends and she was like “oh so this is where you Zimbabweans seat”. To me this was so rude and I always seat with people that I identify with (Marian).

In the student residence halls, it appears, foreign students also experience xenophobic attitude expressed through social exclusion and verbal abuse. Marian also shares her insult experience by a local student while at the residence hall. She recalled this incidence and recorded it in the dairy. Marian states that during the Xenophobia upsurge days in 2008, while she stayed in Disa (one of the off Campus University’s residences, located at the Tygerberg hospital) she was going to the bathroom and they shared bathrooms males and females (like it is in other UWC student residences, except to those who are in double rooms which are fully equipped). Consequently a male South African student came up to her and was hitting on her and when Marian told him to leave her alone, he was drunk, he shouted oh “get away you stupid Zimbabwean, I can touch you anytime I want”. Marian found that really harsh, but at that time she chose to forgive him because he was drunk (Marian, Zimbabwe).

It is apparent from the above that local students do not mix because they really feel they do not want to mix but because of the hatred that some of them hold in their minds which they express any time whenever the opportunity rises. Bongani from Kenya says, “The other experience is in residences, where local students don’t relate with you; people stay without even knowing their neighbours. Probably the main challenge is of making friends on campus”, he added.

The lack of interaction makes foreign students feel more unwelcome, excluded and do not feel at home and on the other hand this affect the mind development of locals in terms of knowing and appreciating other people’s cultures. In his view, Julius maintains that local students fail to appreciate and take opportunity of the presence of other countries’ students from whom they could benefit socio-culturally and academically. He says, “Instead of using that opportunity to be friends with foreign students, work with them so that they can also improve on their academic status, they only come to you when they want specific question. So that has made foreign students feel really isolated or feel they are excluded against and for me that is xenophobia”.
While a lack of knowledge may not be considered as an absolute cause of xenophobia at the higher learning institutions, still locals need broader change of their minds and their perceptions. This I draw from the literature on how other South Africans in the impoverished local communities react, the majority of the UWC students still have a limited knowledge about the foreigners in the country (Misago et al, 2009) and benefits they contribute to the country’s economy (Dzansi, 2006). Some of my research participants also hold this to be true. Tumani elaborated:

Here in South Africa, people are confined in their own small boxes, they do not travel, they only want to see what is in their mind what they want to see, not what others are telling them they should do, or what the education is telling them that they should be. Because if they are educated people they should have some kind of broadened mind, but they just want to stay in that small confinement, what do you expect from them? There is no growth, there is no exposure, there is no acceptance, no tolerance, so what do you expect of such a human being? They really treat other people with what they have, because that is all what they know. And even when they are given education to make them better, they don’t want to; actually they have not opened themselves to accept these things (Tumani, Kenya).

Another view to why locals keep away from foreign students and behave in a xenophobic way comes from Baptist who finds education as a best tool that anyone can use to change the negative minds. “I don’t blame South Africans in general, he said, because their history is a very sad one, he argued, the apartheid system was very psychological, it was a psychology of division at large and no other system in Africa was used that had as the same punch line. So South Africa is a very young country and the issues that are in it stem from the history it comes from”. Baptist believes that the only way you can change this is to educate people because people had been taught that “if we speak differently you are not my brother” so there is always this division within the people of South Africa, Zulus don’t fasten with Xhosas, Xhosas don’t speak to Sothos like that. In a university coloureds will be there, Africans will be there, so it is the issue of education, the proper education, the brain consciousness (Baptist, Zimbabwe).

South Africans are exclusive due to the country’s history and the strong and historically enforced notion of separate “groups” according to Boonzaier & Sharp (1988) is viewed as problematic in South Africa. In the authors’ argument, South Africans form groups depending on how they regard or identify themselves, hence on the basis of race or ethnicity such as Afrikaners or Zulus. This was like this in the days of apartheid, and I find that it still very often the case. I therefore argue that the fact that South Africans identify themselves as
different in their characteristics, and then they tend to count themselves in categories therefore foreign students cannot be exceptional from that social exclusion.

5.2. “So you have come here to be better than us”: Material blames

The quotation, with which I opened this chapter, encapsulates the issue of blames, accusations, hatred and fear that local students hold for non-national students. It comes from one of my participants who had an unpleasant encounter with her classmate. High academic performance of foreign students has been perceived as a threat to local students, therefore these foreign students are blamed of having preferential treatment from the lecturers or having access to the test and examination questions in advance. This notion I heard from several of my research participants Marian, for instance, expresses her experience of such accusations by her classmates with respect to marks. In her strong facial expression, Marian maintains that at the university system, “xenophobia is not apparent in terms of “it is out there” but she views it as subtle in things that people say and do”. She recalled her experience:

I remember again in my second year, I had this, it was not really a very huge incident but it was the reflective of the xenophobia that goes underground. Unfortunately, I told you I have three Zimbabwean friends and in our Psychology class it seemed we were always top of the class. And the local students started a rumour to say these people always have the test before hand, they buy the test and the lecturer just marks the assignments and give them higher marks, which was very ridiculous because the lecturer was coloured and then I wouldn’t expect him to be favouring us if xenophobia was at high peak (Marian, Zimbabwe).

From her experience, it shows that in the academic arena, while people may not out likely come to you and say I don’t like the success that you are making, they still have this feeling of so “you have come here to be better than us” type of thinking. Marian even decided to use the word “unfortunately” as if being several Zimbabweans studying together at a foreign university is not a good thing to be happy of; it really shows how she considers being at a South African university where one does not feel comfortable might be by no other choice.

However such a blame for being favoured by lecturers or having tests before hand is totally contrary from what is on the ground. Rouhani (2002) argues that the majority of international students have to perform well if they want to keep their bursaries. It is a fact also that many
African international students are outstanding students and that is why they qualified for financial assistance, or have even been admitted to South African universities.

I would also argue that another contributing factor to the fact that many international students are excelling in their course work might be that the majority of foreign students take school work more seriously than most local students do. Drawing on my own experience as a tutor at the university, I always observe the attendance of students in my tutorial classes. A tutorial group of 15 students where 3 are foreign students will have a constant attendance of 7 to 8 students in every tutorial. Now my realisation is that out of those 8 who are regular attendants, consist those 3 foreigners who have never been absent.

So this might be an indication that these foreigners take their work more seriously compared to local students. Apart from taking their work seriously, students from the rest of Africa stand more chance for merit and excellence in education and even employment opportunities compared to black South Africans, since in many cases non-nationals might be better prepared than nationals who were victims of Bantu education Ramphele (1999). As Leong and Ward (2006) argue that in multicultural settings one has to cope with cultural differences, foreign students at UWC have their strategies adopted to cope with their cultural differences such as language and also management of their daily experiences.

5.3. Coping strategies

Foreign students coping strategies vary from individual to individual and areas of concern. Participants mentioned that they cope by not minding other people’s business and by doing their school work as it should be and ignore whatever that is happening around them. Having no or few local students as friends is another strategy that the students use to stay away from hatred and potential abuse. Kofi from Burundi says “I have no South Africans friends, these people they see us as a very different story, so I choose to be by myself and all my friends are those that come from elsewhere and not in South Africa”. Bongani copes in a different way where he believes that he has to deal with the differences that locals border on.

The only way I used to get what I want in peace especially in terms of daily services from here, I created a culture of not running away from locals. I engage with them not fully but I try to show them that I am part of them.
Apart from keeping closer to locals, Bongani decided to learn a few local language words in order to be able to communicate things like greetings.

Another strategy that I employ to avoid the negative attitude from the service providers is to greet them and say thanks in their local language. I had to learn simple words such as how to say hi in isiXhosa and Africans, and also how to say thanks in those local languages that are mainly applied in Cape Town and at UWC”. When you greet them in their local language, they still hear from your accent that you are a foreigner but it makes them happy that you are making effort to learn their languages so they give you a better treatment (Bongani, Kenya).

As argued by Rouhani (2002) that in South Africa international students experience xenophobia through the language abuse from stuff and students, who speak “isiZulu” and “isiXhosa” to them, it is in any case possible that being able to respond or make use of some local language words, will have a different impact to the student in terms of the attitude and kind of services s (he) will receive from national. What is on the ground in South African communities is the contrast of what is in the country’s premises. While the South African constitution preamble, states that “South Africa belongs to all whom live in it” the segregation and exclusion in South Africa will not allow such theory to apply, people are not united (South African constitution. 1996:1). Issues of who belongs to where are also found among South African citizens where according to black south African students are not given a proper treatment from those universities which are meant for whites such as UCT (Koen & Libhaber, 2006).

5.4 Conclusion

Foreign students are perceived by fellow students as a threat to their well beings. This study has shown that most of the foreign students excel well and this becomes a threat to the locals who in turn blame students to have preferential treatment from the lecturers. Since foreign students excel, local students perceive them as a problem within the UWC community where they fear that these non-local students will take all those opportunities that were meant for nationals with the mere fact that some of the opportunities are academic achieving-based.

Conclusively, on campus xenophobic experiences of African international students with local students manifest in their daily social exclusion where the level of interaction amongst students is scaled as low, being in their student residence halls, class rooms, and at other open spaces where these students are expected to mix. However foreign students have come up with strategies as to cope with the incidence of xenophobia and such strategies ensure that
they pass their studies. Such strategies include but not limited to, having no or few local students as friends, learning basic vocabulary in local languages so as to try and fit in the community, and also keeping silence and pretend as if nothing is happening around them, as to reduce the hurt that one might get if s (he) keeps this xenophobic behaviours in mind.
"Xenophobia is in what they say and do" (UWC foreign student, 2011).

Introduction

Coupled with informal discussions and interviews with students, the participant observation during fieldwork was an invaluable tool used to discover unanticipated truths about the xenophobic experiences of foreign students, when they ventured off campus. While the students are going for shopping and other activities in various parts of Cape Town, they experience xenophobic attitudes, in the mini-bus taxis, on the train, in shopping malls, clinics and hospitals, even when attending church services. This chapter discusses the experiences of the UWC African international students with xenophobic attitudes and behaviours off campus, it also considers some of the strategies that these students employ so as to respond to their daily social exclusions and other xenophobic experiences. It is important therefore to start by considering the factors that make South Africans distinguishing between them and non-South Africans as a point of departure.

6.1. Judging the body

African international students like any other African migrant in South Africa are identified as “other” or different based on physical biological factors and cultural differences (Harris, 2002: 5). These factors include the inability to speak any of the native languages of the country, as well as hair styles, clothing, and physical appearance, which mark them as “different” (Ibid).

Starting with the issues associated with the phenotypes: South Africans may be socially exclusive based on the skin complexion to identify the other, by assuming that those with darker skins are from the rest of Africa and not from South Africa (Coplan, 2009:72). Drawing on my personal experience, in order to open this discussion: I was once walking in Wynberg (one of the suburbs of Cape Town) with a friend from Burundi, who happens to be dark in complexion. As we were walking, an old white South African woman approached us and asked us of where we come from. “South Africa”, we responded. She did not believe
that, however, and immediately told my friend that, she is too dark to be a South African. So this alone informs of how many South Africans, quite irrespective of their own past and present categorisations, exclude others on the basis of phenotypical appearance, no matter what the situation is. This I suggest can be regarded as a form of racism.

However Coplan (2009:72) also notes that South Africans tend to exclude “others” whenever they get the opportunity to do so, because they even exclude fellow local nationals based on the fact that if people are dark in complexion (for instance, citizens from Limpopo province), they can therefore be treated as foreigners. One third of the 62 people who were killed during the May/June 2008 attacks, for instance, were in fact South African citizens, mostly from such marginal regions of the country. Let us consider the extract below from Coplan (2009:73) who demonstrates how citizens of South Africa are excluded simply on the basis of social class (they are poor) and/or skin colour (too dark):

A young XiTsonga-speaking man from rural Limpopo Province drifts to Johannesburg looking for employment. His family of illiterate peasants has never had the means or the confidence to travel to the far-off provincial capital of Pietersburg (now Polokwane) to attempt to obtain a birth certificate or ID book. Accosted by police on the ‘probable cause’ of his dark colour, the lad is found to speak only XiTsonga, a language also widely spoken in neighbouring Mozambique. With no money or documents to ‘prove’ his nationality, he is taken straight to Lindela, the notorious detention center for ‘illegal’ (undocumented) immigrants outside Johannesburg. In short order he is put on a train and deported to Mozambique, a place he has never seen. Less fortunate than other ‘Mozambicans’ who have enough cash to bribe warders to let them leap headlong from the train before it crosses the border, he must now, alone and without papers or funds in a foreign country, somehow find his way back ‘illegally’ into the country of his birth.

It is in this spirit that many international students from Africa are identified as different and others who do not belong, which consequently result in a xenophobic attitude and even violence while in public spaces.

6.2. Public space and xenophobia

The issue of xenophobia is present in everyday life experiences and it is an attitude that the majority South Africans hold. At a shopping centre, Tumani from Kenya experienced xenophobic attitudes from her friend who works at Shoprite, Mowbray.
There was one time I went to Shoprite, there is a Shoprite in Mowbray, I remember this lady she was staying at UCT residence just very closer to Mowbray Shoprite, and that is our shopping centre, this lady knew us, we used to greet one another but this one time I think she had her own issues, I had bought a lot of things at that time that I needed a plastic bag but what she did she gave me a very tine one and I asked her “looking at all things I have bought, do they fit in there?” She then pulled the bigger plastic and threw it to me. Even today I normally go there to buy small things but I have never gone to her, if I see her in a certain section I don’t go to that till at all. Now you can imagine somebody did that because she obviously knew that we are not from here, we used to talk, but now even if we meet on the street, we just pass one another (Tumani, Kenya).

Apart from this shopping experience, Tumani has also experienced xenophobic behaviours from her neighbour and her security guard.

I remember we moved from UCT residence to outside UCT in 2005. And the same same time, in January when we moved our car was stolen at night from that complex and it was the first incident that has ever been reported. There is a 24 hours security guard and there is the patrol, but the car disappeared. It was such a big issue only then when now we started of course the security company and the insurance company had to get involved, so the two companies investigated, the car was later found in Khayelitsha and the people who were involved were the security guard and the other guy who stays there until today. They just hate you because you are not from here. After that we bought another car, I could see the wife of that guy, she looks so annoyed, you can see even when we pass each other she looks so annoyed like what are they doing here.

From the above experience, xenophobic attitudes are everywhere, in whatever local nationals do to those non-nationals whom they perceive as different not only culturally but also economically, where the Tumani’s neighbours still felt uncomfortable to see these foreigners succeeding. Conclusively, xenophobic attitude has something to do with jealousy. Foreign students also experience xenophobia from those whom they work with, in the off campus institutions. Kofi from Burundi, a student in school of nursing, tells his discriminatory practices he was subjected to at the hospital where he does his practicals as part of the academic year programme.

At the hospital where I am doing the practicals, there are these nurses, they really hurt us, what they do they call us and our names sound foreign you know, and when they ask for the ID we give them refugee papers hum...they then start talking about you in their language and when they mark our practicals they give us very low marks which really affect our overall marks because this mark that we get from the practical goes to our year mark. So you see, we are just treated badly because of who we are and where we come from.
From these experiences the hatred in people who perceive others as different is like inborn thing. Xenophobia therefore is our daily life experience. To remind us again about the conceptualisations of xenophobia, which I discussed in detail in Chapter 2: it is said to be characterised by a negative attitude towards foreigners, dislike, fear, or hatred (Harris, 2002:2). It appears that in South Africa, wherever people are perceived as “different”, there is xenophobia expressed in various forms such as discrimination, assaults, attitude and verbal abuse.

6.3. Use of “Makwerekwere”: A xenophobic slogan/terminology

The stereotype of “Makwerekwere” is frequently used by local nationals, a derogatory term commonly used to refer to international African immigrants in South Africa (Harris, 2002:7; Harris, 2001). Following this, African international students also are victims of stereotypes where they are sometimes called “Makwerekwere”, indicating a stuttering language use, or the inability to speak any indigenous South African languages. Although the term “Makwerekwere” is even used in media to describe a foreigner or non-local, it has definite negative connotations (Danso & McDonald, 2001 and Nyamnjoh, 2006).

Figure 11: A map of Africa viewed by the South African xenophobic perspective
Looking at this cartoon by the well-known cartoonist Jonathan Shapiro, known as Zapiro, a satirical map of Africa, xenophobic attitude is in all that people say and do towards the foreigners. The word “makwerekwere”, “alien”, and other terminologies are used on the map to refer to the rest of Africa. Congolese people from the DRC, are referred to as “car guards”, the line of largely informal work that many foreigners engage into in order to make a living. The labeling is therefore one of the measures of how xenophobia is prevalent in South Africa. That is a reflection of how South Africans commonly perceive people from the rest of Africa.

During my field work, I was curious to find out what foreign students think about this terminology. One student said that the word “kwerekwere” originated from the perception by locals that foreigners’ language is so faster, unclear and stuttering, so they called foreigners “those makwerekwere”. This is a xenophobic attitude, of course, not in the least because it wrongly assumes that any foreign language would sound the same way. Of course, this perception has little relation to reality, or only in a twisted way: it is not about how people’s language stutter but it is about that hatred and fear they hold once they meet people whom they perceive as different.

Most of my research participants reported hearing the use of this hurtful terminology when they move around outside the UWC campus, in taxis, or when going around shopping malls and other public spaces:

For me being black; well when you are naturally black, people expect you to speak South African languages and when people look at me especially in the taxi for some reasons, they naturally assume I am a South African, and so like with little thing like change, I want my change in a taxi and I speak to the guy in English, he is usually just abusive and it seems he has regarded me as those coconut South Africans who don’t want to recognise who they are, and it is even worse when he realises you don’t just speak Xhosa but you don’t just speak any South African language and there is whole “you amakwerekwere” type of thing. It may not be brightened out there because he says ahh you are makwerekwere and then all people in taxi laugh and then they start talking about xenophobia or how foreigners are coming to take over or they just ignore it as if this person here has not just been verbally abusive (Marian, Zimbabwe).

The term is used by very many people in public spaces; it exemplifies how local nationals can verbally abuse foreigners. In the story she told me (above), Marian described, what many other African international students also told me about, namely how local nationals, on and
off campus, always expect every black person to be able to speak the local language, therefore whenever a black person requests something and expresses him or herself in English language, this tends to be met with much negative attitude. A foreign student from UWC told me her xenophobic experience that she faced when she was trying to buy something to eat from a shop:

I went to Bellville, and I saw these other things made in flour which looked like mandazi\(^{19}\) that we make from home, here in Xhosa language they call them “maguinya”, and I approached the lady who was selling them there, and I was so excited and asked her how they call them, because I was really happy to see them after a long time since I left home. And this lady answered me that they call them “makwerekwere”. I bought some and went back to the residence very excited and I told two of my friends that I have bought “makwerekwere” so they can come and we share them. What? They asked me amazingly and they asked me if I knew what the word meant I then show them the “mandazi” and they laughed at me saying that the term is used to stereotype foreigners. I could not believe that, until I asked different people and found out that it was the case. After few days I went back to the same quiosk to face the woman who insulted me and she was not there. I really felt hurt both emotionally and psychologically.

The above experience is developed from the local nationals negative mind that all people with black skin if they cannot speak the native language then they are not part of those who deserve a better treatment. During my interviews, I asked one of my participants what he thinks makes locals tell who is a foreigner and who is not, and he responded:

The language, when they speak their local language and you can’t respond and also the appearance plays a role because they always believe we look different (Bongani, Kenya).

The same stereotype experiences are found with taxi drivers and conductors, not only because one has asked something in English but because of some other signifiers that you are identified as a foreigner therefore you remain a victim of stereotypes, and may suffer verbal abuse.

I observed a related incidence during my field work. It was on a Saturday morning, when I went with female two friends to Century City, a huge shopping mall in the northern suburbs of Cape Town. My friends wanted to shop for cloth for the Christmas holidays. Before leaving the student residence one of the friends said that we must have the small amount of money or changed money for transport to avoid much debate for change and so on. I was

\(^{19}\) These are the flour made short bread that we make in East Africa
with them and I went as a researcher though, discussing from the residence till Cape Town where we got another taxi to century city.

The mini-bus we were in was impounded at a road-block, though, and the driver decided to pass the passengers (including ourselves) on to a fellow taxi conductor, who was going into the same destination. We took our seats, I was sitting in the back of the vehicle and my friends were sitting on the bench in front of me when the taxi conductor turned to them, expressing a xenophobic attitude. He wanted them to pay again. They refused, saying, that they had paid already. He was only telling these two passengers, although there were seven of us who had embarked on that mini-bus. He insisted however that they had to pay, and in the process insulted them. The conductor was a South African citizen, who then said, “you makwerekwere” you must pay. Then keeping on shouting to them one of my friends became emotional and was like, why do you call us makwerekwere, is that a name? Then in the taxi there were two black South African students from UCT, one of them stood and said to the conductor, ”stop harassing these people, where do you know them from?” That was how she asked.

The other one also said to the driver that if he continued harassing my friends she would call the director of the bus department and informed him that she got the number. After this encounter one of the UCT students disembarked while the other one had to remain until we got off together. After harassing the foreign women in Xhosa, again mentioning “makwerekwere”, and being convinced by fellow South Africans that his attitude is abnormal then the conductor kept quiet. That national student from UCT did not hesitate to say to the conductor: “no wonder why South Africa’s name is negatively labelled worldwide, you contribute to such situations and you must be ashamed”.

The above incident is commonly reported by students. My observations helped me to confirm what I got from informal discussions and interviews. My central argument is that the term “makwerekwere” among other forms of negative attitude, is commonly exercised by local nationals whenever biocultural differences are identified. Foreign national from the rest of Africa, have experienced much insult coupled with the violent practices due to the fact that they are “others”, perceived as a threat to the well being of nationals (Culbertson, 2009:112). The use of the latter term has to do with hatred and jealousy than fear. Looking at the study on the foreign experience by Harris (2001:97), migrants from other parts of Africa are
stereotyped and are targets of xenophobic violence on the basis of telling them “you makwerekwere”. So this term holds much of hatred expressions than fear.

Apart from the above, I observed another case at the Waterfront beach restaurant located at the V&A Waterfront (see figure 12), where foreign students were subjected to an unpleasant experience as a result of their inability to speak Xhosa, a South African native language.

![Figure 12: A map illustrating the observation area at KFC in the V&A Waterfront](image)

**Source:** Munuo N. University of the Western Cape 2011.

The case was as follows:

It was on a Saturday, 18 December 2010, when I joined a group of international African students who were going to the beach Waterfront, and throughout our journey to the beach, we were discussing how hot it was and how we might find the place busy. We arrived at the beach; some wanted to go into the water and did so, while the rest of us just wanted to feel the fresh air and the breeze from the ocean. Thereafter, we went to the restaurant (KFC, a popular South African fast-food chain) since we were very hungry and thirsty. While we were waiting for our orders to come, a group of coloured people were sitting at the table next to ours; when they saw us to be so close, they shifted to another table.
On the other hand, the woman who served us asked something in Xhosa but none of us responded since we did not understand what she was saying; when I then responded in English, she claimed that she did not understand English. This we found rather interesting: how come she was serving those coloureds in English. We had to leave with our food and we asked them to package them as takeaways. Then a man from Cameroun said that One day the same incidence happened to him when he was in a restaurant (Spur in Parrow\textsuperscript{20}) and they could not respond or serve quickly because they were busy attending to those with white or coloured skin, he then had to leave angry and shouted to the waiter who then responded in English that “it is like that, I work here but I come from Malawi and am voiceless here, I just observe and wonder, I fear to talk and be told to quit my job”.

From my observations, I realised that even in those places where people are doing business to get profit, they give an ill treatment to the client who is perceived as the “other”. In other words, the focus to business and profit making changes automatically, and this shows how much xenophobia is in South Africa even in those spaces where one expects to be cared of as we always hear from a saying that “A customer is a King”. That principle does not apply in shops and restaurant of South Africa especially those of low or middle class people.

**Violence against foreigners**

At higher learning institutions like UWC, xenophobia manifests itself in social exclusion, discriminatory practices, negative attitude and verbal abuse. It is a different case when students venture off campus, where they may become targets of xenophobic violence.

Kofi from Burundi was once attacked on his way from home, by people who heard him speaking on the phone. He was convinced that these were people who knew him because he was caught on his short way from the neighbouring Belhar suburb to the UWC campus, and this incident occurred in broad daylight. He said:

> It was on a Saturday afternoon around 2 pm, I was walking from my place to campus. These other 2 guys were in front of me, having their bags by their backs and I thought they were students too. When they saw me, they started walking slowly but they did it like in a joking way I could not guess anything. One of them stood aside like he wants to help himself and when I was walking closer he turned to me and said you, where

\textsuperscript{20} Parrow is suburb in Cape Town, which has a shopping mall with restaurant inside the mall, where people go and have their lunches after shopping.
are you to, bring all you have, I gave them my phone and they took my jacket too, and they started beating me. I lost my consciousness while I was lying down there and it was very cold, till I realised I was lying in the grasses and tried to recall everything and I stood and continued to campus. When I reached there I went to report to the Campus Protection Services office, they were like, and do you know who were they? Not really but they were coloured then I was asked “how do you know they were coloured”? I then kept quiet and they said that they saw what was happening through the camera, they saw the guys running and me lying down, I don’t know how true that was (Kofi, Burundi).

A similar incident happened to another student, when he was walking around his residence area in the Retreat suburb.

I was coming from school and it was in the evening but not very dark. From the train station to where I stay, there is a walk of 10 minutes or so. Every day when I pass by, I see these young men who are seated there playing some games, speaking in their local languages and they used to greet me saying “buti buti” (“brother brother”) and I could respond. That day I don’t know what really came in their minds after I have stayed there for more than 4 years, they knew me very well, and then they attacked me and slashed me with a knife on my neck. I survived, and went to the clinic but from that day onwards I started changed my walk side.

As argued by various researchers, the xenophobia phenomenon takes a form of “violence” mainly in the informal settlements where the majority of residents are jobless spending their time seated counting who passes by and who buys what. This is the same area where the residences are economically deprived (Tshitereke, 1999; Harris, 2001; Misago et al; Barbali; 2009). However, since violence comes in many forms, the foreign student above was physically attacked and he had to change the walk area because he knew that the area where he stays is not safe, it has so many young people who just consume drugs, he said.

6.4. Off-campus institutional xenophobia: Home Affairs experience

International students, irrespective of whether they are in South Africa on a study visa or have refugee papers, all have to visit the department of Home Affairs, in order to submit an application or renew their existing residence permit. The fact that UWC has no international students’ office that can facilitate the application process, students tend to go there in person. Most of my research participants have reported that the processing of their visas has been delayed, and that they had to wait for long periods before being helped by an official. This often has dire consequences for international students. Tumani from Kenya, for instance,
experienced an incident where she could not register or attend classes because her study visa renewal was delayed with no justifications.

There was a delay, my visa was delayed, we went at Home Affairs in Wynberg I don’t know how many times, I was always asked to wait and wait or sometimes you go there nobody is willing to attend to you. So you fight, and when you go to the coloured people, they help you but you can see the anger, black people will ignore you.

The delay in the visa was also reported by various students including Baptist from Zimbabwe. Baptist however was mainly frustrated by the treatment he gets from the officials of home affairs when he tried to follow up on his visa.

I applied for student visa extension I have not got it yet and by the end of this March; it will be six months since I applied. When I ask they do not give me explanations, they just tell me that the visas are still in Pretoria that they do not have them with, and that is all.

With refugee papers it is another issue, because students whose applications for refugee status have not yet been approved will have to visit the Home Affairs every three months to renew their permits, Kofi told me about this regular procedure, which he found to be very disheartening. When it is the renewal time he feels half sick, says Kofi:

The process of extending our permits at Home affairs has its own story to tell. It is like they are tired of refugees. For instance the last time when I went for permit extension, I slept at home affairs for 3 days and only on the 4th day that is when I managed to get the visa, and went home. I had to sleep there because people there come early in the morning, so you have to be there at least 4 or 5 am to be on the queue. They have this system of taking 20 people (10 men and 10 women) for a day, and later they will tell you that their system is down go and come back any other day (Kofi, Burundi)

Kofi’s experience is not unique, but common to other African international students whom I managed to talk to, who also have to have their asylum seeker permits extended every three months. This affects their studies because when it is the extension time you do not have excuse of not going to Home Affairs for at least three days spending a day and nights there while other students are in classes.
6.5. Know your space: coping with xenophobic experiences in public

Most students employ various strategies while they are outside campus, as a way of keeping away from any xenophobic harm. Keeping silent in public spaces, changing the walk ways and shopping spaces and performing the other, are some of the strategies that these students employ like any other African migrant in the country.

I just make sure that wherever I go is either I am with a South African friend who speaks the language who speaks on my behalf or I just remain quiet and I don’t ask questions (Marian, Zimbabwe).

The above student applies the “silence” strategy because she has already experienced a xenophobic attitude, when she asked for change from a mini-bus taxi driver, in English. Therefore by keeping quiet she avoids rendering an opportunity for harassments and possibly even worse practices than that.

Drawing on several months of research in Alexandra (a township in Johannesburg), Hehenkamp (2010) states that African migrants in South Africa use stigma management and strategies of otherness performance to become “invisible” within the communities, among whom they live. Since they are aware of the signifiers, some prefer to keep silent whenever they are in public places because they know that failure to speak a native language and even their accent can cause harassment and other xenophobic attitudes. Others prefer not to be in contact with those with whom they share the same signifiers; yet, some even decide to modify their physical appearance while others change their places of shopping, and walk sides (Ibid).

Whereas Marian decides to keep silent in public spaces in order to keep invisible in the eyes of locals, Bongani from Kenya prefers to apply some of few words of local language he learned, when greeting and saying thanks as a way of trying to integrate. This embraces what Hehenkamp (2010) referred to as stigma management where migrants manage their discreditable stigma signums in order to conceal their personal identity and to deceive their audience. However, from Bongani’s experience, it is not an intention to mislead the audience but his strategy of showing them that he is part of them.

The only way I used to get what I want in peace especially in terms of daily services from here, I created a culture of not running away from locals. I engage with them not fully but I try to show them that I am part of them.
Another strategy that I employ to avoid the negative attitude from the service providers is to greet them and say thanks in their local language. I had to learn simple words such as how to say hi in Xhosa and Africans, and also how to say thanks in those local languages that are mainly applied in Cape Town and at UWC. When you greet them in their local language, they still hear from your accent that you are a foreigner but it makes them happy that you are making effort to learn their languages so they give you a better treatment (Bongani, Kenya).

Bongani had to learn the native language basics as a way of managing his otherness which is always a frustrating factor with locals. Marian also employs a similar strategy when she is in Johannesburg where she spends more hours at the bus station when waiting to connect to the buses to Zimbabwe. She makes sure that she hides her otherness by staying quiet or managing her stigma.

In areas like Johannesburg, is a very different scenario. Because if I want to go home I have to pass through Johannesburg, and when am in Johannesburg I make sure that whatever happens I don’t speak in my language. If someone asks something in a South African language, I make sure that I pretend to understand or not to understand. I mean I know the basics of “andiyazi” (a Xhosa word meaning “I don’t know”) which basically means I don’t know, so even if I don’t understand what some one is saying I prefer to answer them in that way “andiyazi” and then they just leave me alone because I know the consequences of not speaking any of their native languages and not being a South African is far more worse on that side (Marian, Zimbabwe).

Knowing the spaces therefore helps Marian to learn what strategies to adopt in order to be not threatened. She knows that while she can walk with a friend or keep silence in Cape Town, the same case might not easily apply in Johannesburg, the place which is known to be more xenophobic (Hehenkamp, 2010). Other students also feel that changing the shopping spaces and walk sides can help them hide from xenophobic attitudes. Another foreign student told me how she can rather spend more but gets better less stressful services. “I enjoy doing my shopping from Tygervalley [a shopping mall in the northern suburbs of Cape Town] you know. Before I used to buy my food stuff from Bellville but due to the certain attitude I find there, I then changed. In Tygervalley you get a better service and it might be because that place is full of high class people who do their shopping, therefore the service providers also consider you as a tourist or someone who has got money” (A foreign student from Nigeria).

Travelling to Tygervalley to shop for everyday items that can still be found in retail outlets near the UWC campus is a sign that students prefer to even spend more on transport, but at least, they feel that they are treated more as human beings. This also reveals that off campus
xenophobic experiences seem to be related to socio-economic class stratification, which is not the case on campus. While in Tygervalley although with a black skin, but you are not perceived as a threat since you have your own money to be able to shop from there. This perception therefore feeds on classifying people as them depending on where they seek their service from.

Others also prefer to change the walk side where they can feel not excluded or targeted as such. During my informal discussions with the students in Hector Peterson Residence, a certain student told me that he prefers to go for shopping at Parow Sanlam centre, where he feels safer in mini-bus taxis running on the Parow route than in Bellville taxis. He added that he feels safe to use the Parow taxi after 6 pm but he cannot do the same with the Bellville taxi. Students, who reside at HPR, use train to and from Cape Town city, which passes via Unibell station (the station where the majority UWC students get off and on the train to and from campus). As experienced by many passengers, using the Bellville to Cape Town train via Unibell station is not safe. Therefore, foreign students have their strategies to cope with any xenophobic incident while on the train.

![Figure 13: Train from Bellville to Cape Town via Unibell, dropping off UWC students](image)

What I observed was that foreign students in the trains (see figure 6) cope by putting their phones on silent mode or even switching them off completely to avoid the ringing in public, since these students do not want to disclose their identity when answering the phone where
their local languages or English accent can mark them as targets of xenophobic hostility or even violence.

I also observed that foreign students either those who stay on campus or outside, use a strategy of boarding the train coaches that have many people and this is mainly the third class spaces and once they get in they do not speak at all. One foreign student, we boarded the train at the same time but I was not going as far as she was going. When I wanted to enter a certain train coach she pulled me to run to the other one which was full of passengers. I asked her why she preferred to use that coach and not the other one and she told me that when the coach has more young males or generally only a few passengers, it is more dangerous than travelling in one, which is occupied by a number of people. “These young guys can rob, can kill you know”, she added. So once foreign students board a train, they pretend to be tired, or reading a book until they reach their destinations. All these strategies embrace similar tactics: avoiding contact with anyone in public, hiding a potentially telling language and accent, and other signifiers of otherness.

African migrants in South Africa are mostly identified as “other” by just relying on their visible differences thus their dress styles, hair styles, physical appearance and accent (Harris, 2002). After being aware of what makes them a target to xenophobia, migrants cope by keeping silent in public spaces and covering the otherness to become invisible in the eyes of locals (Hehenkamp, 2010). For instance the world cup period had the after match threats that there would be new incidents of xenophobia soon after the match (Linden, 2010). Foreigners including students were then very cautious about what would happen by then. Students started strategies of making themselves invisible by practicing misrepresentation, covering their otherness to look like locals.

It was in my observations that during and after the FIFA soccer world cup in South Africa in June 2010, many foreign students had bought many T-shirts and hats with South African flags that written “South Africa” to look as locals and to challenge the audience. Others could wear non-formal clothes to look local whenever going to the public place. I observed a case that confirmed some of the strategies that foreign students adopt to hide their otherness.

It was on a Sunday, a day soon after the Word cup was ended, my colleagues and I (all of us were foreign students) from HPR were going to the Roman Catholic Church in Bellville. I
was smartly dressed in my beautiful African attire, and one of the other women carried a very expensive handbag. A colleague looked at us and said, no, “I am not going with you guys”. Why my dear? I asked. She then asked me if I was not aware of the xenophobia which was feared to break out again and the prevalent feelings among many South Africans on the ground; she reminded us of the threats made by local nationals that after the world cup, all African foreigners would be taught a lesson. She was serious about that, and therefore, she was dressed casually in a simple casual trouser with a jersey, plus a hat just to cover her hairstyle which is not found here in South Africa but in East Africa.

She added that, no one must contribute to the hate and differences that these locals already hold for foreigners. So I had to change my clothing and went to church as if we were going to the market, i.e., dressed in a very basic style. This came hard on us, as we discussed among the group since back home in our East African countries we are used to be smartly dressed on Sundays. Later, I approached her for a discussion about the incidence and she assured me that in the public spaces including transport, she never talks unless she sees that the area is safe such as at church or even at high class shopping places such as Tygervalley.

6.6. Conclusion

The xenophobic experiences in the public spaces vary depending on many factors. The mode of transport, walk sides, shopping places, and residence areas count in order to understand what foreign students experience off campus. The incidents reported as experiences of xenophobia outside, include but not limited to the verbal abuse and language insults on the taxis, in the shopping malls among other places as well as physical assaults.

While international African students know how they are signified as foreigners, this chapter has documented some of the strategies that these students employ to keep invisible in the eye of locals. To many, the space matter is crucial, therefore they have adapted to the culture of changing spaces where they do their shopping from. Those who go for shopping in the Tygervally mall for instance, find the customer service far much better than in the shops of Bellville, which has a shopping centre much closer to the university. It is so probably because at Tygervalley there is a mixture of people moving around and shopping, and the majority are middle and upper class so those who go there are also identified and classified as people who
are not a threat but who contribute to the economy. This chapter also looked at possible strategies that students employ to pass as same as locals. The act of invisibility was documented where students make themselves invisible by wearing South Africa labelled T-shirts, dressing in a simple way when using a train, and keeping silence in such spaces that are apparently not safe.
CHAPTER SEVEN: Conclusion

In this thesis I investigated how African international students at UWC experience xenophobia on and off campus. While there have been no large scale of xenophobia reported at South African higher learning institutions, this study found that foreign African students experience subtle xenophobia within the institution, and in their interactions with fellow students in the classrooms, residence halls and the social spaces of the university. It revealed that UWC students from other African countries are subjected to the same xenophobic attitudes and behaviours of South Africans, as any other African immigrant when venturing outside the university’s campus.

Although the university’s mission statement promises foreign students to accommodate them as an integral part of the UWC community, the research informants reported that they were not comfortable with the manner in which the university management and staff treat them upon their arrival and throughout their stay at UWC. The study found that both on campus and outside the university, African international students have to deal with similar forms of xenophobia, especially social exclusion, discrimination, stereotyping and verbal abuse. Off campus students may in addition also experience xenophobia manifesting in physical violence. With regard to experiences on the UWC campus, foreign students find the registration period at the beginning of the academic year particularly challenging.

During the registration period the research participants reported that they find it stressful that they have to produce much paperwork, including the renewal of their study visas, the arrangement of medical aid schemes, and particularly the fact that, unlike the local national students, they are requested to pay the whole amount of their tuition and residence fees upfront. The majority of international African students claimed that they felt discriminated against, especially by the policy of the UWC student credit management where international students are asked to pay their fees upfront, and due to the fact that non-national students are excluded from most of the bursaries available to UWC students.

In addition, it was reported by some of the participants that due to xenophobic attitudes in some departments, academic merit awards are no longer given, reportedly because
international students had in the past been “over-represented” among the awardees. The beginning of the academic year is also the time when international students, especially those who enrol at UWC for the first time, find themselves faced with problems of finding lodging on campus since the university’s residence administration makes no special allowance for international students but allocates residence rooms strictly on a “first come-first serve” basis.

For many African international students the registration period is the time when they sometimes bitterly conclude that they feel that they, as persons and the contributions they make, are not valued by the university. The research also found that the problems related to legal requirements and practices, which cause difficulties for international African students, are exacerbated at UWC because the university has no support structures for international students in place. This is in contrast to the other universities in the Western Cape Province, which have dedicated offices to assist international students, irrespective of their country of origin. UWC, on the other hand, provides support only for those international students who are at the university through formal exchange programmes, and who mostly hail from Europe and North America.

While African international students face special problems at the beginning of the academic year, such as those related to accommodation and registration, this research found that xenophobic attitudes and behaviours are daily life experiences. They encounter discriminatory and exclusionary attitudes and behaviours on the part of university administrators, academic departments, and even in their interactions with fellow students in class rooms, student residence halls, and other social spaces on the campus. The discriminatory practices include verbal abuse, slow and often delayed services, and daily social exclusion; international students reflect on these kinds of experiences that they meet in their daily life as xenophobia. This is despite their awareness that the xenophobic experience is perhaps not conscious, overt hostility but rooted in neglect and a lack of professionalism on the part of university staff.

The thesis found that because at higher learning institutions we find mostly people of the social middle classes, xenophobia is expressed in subtle ways through negative attitudes and behaviours towards foreign students. However, while physical violence is absent, psychological and emotional abuse also hurt: “Whatever mistreatment we receive at UWC, it
is xenophobia because when you attack my personal feelings you hurt me emotionally, if you attack my body you hurt me physically, but the end result is I am affected, so it is xenophobia,” as one of the key informants, Marian from Zimbabwe, expressed it.

On the other hand, with regard to off campus xenophobic experiences, students spoke about xenophobic incidents in public transport, during visits to shopping malls as well as incidents when they go to seek services, for instance in hospitals or the offices of the Department of Home Affairs. When they are out there, foreign students are identified as the other on the basis of their failure to speak the native language of South Africa, by their accent, or by just their physical appearance and dress code. This make foreign students prone to become victims of stereotyping as “you makwerekwere”, abusive treatment in shopping centres, and verbal abuse from any number of people they meet while being out there.

In order to be able to concentrate on their studies and excel academically as they would want, international African students have come up with strategies that they employ to cope with xenophobic experiences, both on and off campus. The choices concerning strategies employed on campus are rather limited because the students have not much of an option especially where they have to deal with everyday experiences; they cannot avoid those since they need to meet again and again with the same administration staff, or even the academic departmental staff.

Those strategies that they adopt on campus include keeping silent about negative attitudes and practices, trying to not paying attention to those, and, in a proactive way, trying to learn some basic words in commonly spoken local languages, in order to say “hi”, “thanks” and “bye”. Outside the campus, students adopt a range of strategies of invisibility by remaining silent, learning basic words for greetings and thanks, changing their walking routes and shopping areas, and consciously adopting South African dress styles, such as branded t-shirts and other locally common garments in order to cover their otherness.

As a contribution to the existing literature therefore, the study has considered some of the explanations of xenophobia at higher learning institution according to the existing literature (Rouhani, 2002; Shindondola, 2002). The findings of the present thesis have shown that in addition to earlier reported verbal and language abuse, exclusion and the blame for taking jobs that foreign students experience from local national students and staff, at some South
African Higher learning institutions, students are also discriminated at the academic level, e.g., the discontinuation of merit awards due to the “over-representation” of foreign students among the awardees and also blame that foreign students would receive preferential treatment from lecturers.

In conclusion, this study has documented more xenophobic attitudes and behaviours experienced by international African students from within the university as an institution and its campus than those found outside campus. This is probably so because students spend more time on campus than they move around outside campus, therefore they are likely to experience more on campus, where they deal with the institutional staff on daily basis. Another analysis might suggest that because, as this study has shown, foreign students are already aware of their signifiers as “others” and have adopted the above discussed strategies; therefore, they may be likely to face less xenophobia outside the campus since they are not forced to talk (much) while being out there, whereas on campus they have to raise their voices for any service rendered.

Based on the above, I would like to conclude this study by making a number of suggestions; this is done so that the institution may be able to ameliorate the situation, and contribute to a climate where foreign African students can feel at home and the university can succeed in its endeavours of internationalisation. While a number of studies have documented the reasons behind xenophobia as derived from a lack of knowledge, anxiety, competition of scarce resources and the like (Harris, 2002; HSRC, 2008; Misago et all 2009 among others) this study concludes that in addition, at UWC, international students experience xenophobic attitudes and behaviours from both staff and students, which are rooted in jealousy and misinformation, such as the wrong impression that all international students are well endowed with money.

The research also found that a lack of monitoring and evaluation within the institutional bureaucracy, as well as insufficient staff training and a lack of professionalism found among some members of the institution’s administrative and even some academic staff, resulted in poor service, occasional abuse. As the research participants pointed out on many occasions there is a general perception among foreign African students that at UWC there is a lack of value attached to international students. These perceptions result from a lack of concern
among the executive management to address international students, which causes the impression that international students are not recognised by the rest of the university and hence not regarded as important. It has also been lamented that there is a lack of collective cultural learning activities on campus where local national and international students could interact; thus, as the study found, international students are perceived often as a threat.

Finally, I would like to point out that the unfortunate findings seem to be largely caused by the lack of a proper institutional and internationalisation policy at UWC. It is a special concern that the university’s IRO currently deals only with exchange students, but provides no support for other international students, especially those from the African continent, who have no office, which would be dedicated to attend to their special needs and queries. It is therefore recommended that the university extends the mandate of its IRO to also include the responsibility to assist all international students.

I would also recommend further studies on xenophobia on the UWC campus and its impact on the institution and students in order to create more awareness of xenophobia at higher learning institutions through research and documentation. This study has found a wide range of xenophobic attitudes and behaviours experienced by international African students, which it unfortunately could not all document due to the limitations of an MA mini-thesis.
REFERENCES


Moradi, F. Color-line; Minority students’ encounters at the University of Stellenbosch. Master Thesis in Sociology: Uppsala University, Sweden.


University of the Western Cape (UWC) calendar (2009).

University of the Western Cape (UWC) prospectus (2010).

University of the Western Cape (UWC) Fees schedule handbook (2010).


Appendix I:

Figure 14: Number of international students at UWC by country of citizenship 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Angola</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Malawi</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benin</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mauritius</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mozambique</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Botswana</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>Namibia</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burkina Faso</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burundi</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cameroon</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Palestine</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congo</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Qatar</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eritrea</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Refugee/Asylum Seekers</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gabon</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Seychelles</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gambia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sierra Leone</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Swaziland</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivory coast</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>UK/Great Britain</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korea</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Zaire (DRC)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesotho</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Zambia</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libya</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td>332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madagascar</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>2036</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UWC institutional planning unit